

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGIONAL

NAIDOC AWARDS 2026



NOMINATION GUIDE AND FORM

Hosted by Wollongong City Council

Join the celebrations Nominate today



The Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards (the NAIDOC Awards) celebrate the amazing contributions and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the following categories:

- Elder of the Year (Aunty or Uncle)
 - ◊ NAIDOC Aunty of the Year
 - ◊ NAIDOC Uncle of the Year
- NAIDOC Community Member of the Year
- NAIDOC Young Achievers of the Year (x 2)
- NAIDOC Caring for Country and Culture
- NAIDOC Aboriginal Community Volunteer of the Year
- NAIDOC Organisation of the Year (Not-for-profit or Business)
- Outstanding Contribution to Reconciliation (Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal)

If you know someone, or an organisation or business in Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama or Shoalhaven, that has made a big difference in our community, you can nominate them for a NAIDOC Award.

The winners will be announced at the Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards 2026. This ceremony will take place on Saturday, 18 July 2026, at the University of Wollongong.

For more information about the Regional NAIDOC Awards 2026 please visit our website.

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/naidoc-awards



The nomination process

Nominations open
9am, Monday 2 February 2026

Nominations close
5pm, Friday 20 March 2026

Nominations assessed by selection panel
April 2026

Winners announced
NAIDOC Awards Ceremony
at University of Wollongong





How to nominate

To submit an application, either:

1. Complete an online form - fill out the form [online here](#)

2. Complete a digital form - fill out a paper copy, then scan and email it to participate@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

3. Complete a paper form - fill out a paper copy and drop it off at your local Council office (Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, or Shoalhaven) or post it to Council:

**C/O Regional NAIDOC Awards
Wollongong City Council
Level 5
Locked Bag 8821
Wollongong DC NSW 2500**

Other information

Consider letting the nominee know that you are nominating them and seek their support/permission.

We might ask you for more information after receiving your nomination form.

If you have any queries about the NAIDOC Awards or would like help completing your application please contact Julie Street-Smith - participate@wollongong.nsw.gov.au or call 4227 7412

Nominations for the NAIDOC Awards close at 5pm on Friday 20 March 2026.



Who can be nominated?

- ☐ An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, community group, organisation, service, or business*.
- ☐ The nominee must be known as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person by the local community. Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are eligible for all award categories.
- ☐ The nominee must live, work, study, or do business in the Shoalhaven, Kiama, Shellharbour, or Wollongong Local Government Areas.
- ☐ If the nominee has won an award in one category during the last three years, they can't be nominated again for that specific category. They can be nominated for a different award category.
- ☐ Nominees for "Elder of the Year" (Aunty/Uncle) category must be recognised as an Elder within their local Aboriginal community.
- ☐ Nominees for "Young Achiever" category must be a young person between 12 and 25 years old.

*Outstanding Contribution to Reconciliation (Non-Aboriginal) is the only category which Non-Aboriginal people or groups are eligible for.

How will the winners be selected?

The assessment panel will consider the following things:

- How has the nominee been an inspiration or role model for others in the community?
- How has this nominee shown outstanding contribution to the community?
- How has this made things better for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?

The awards



NAIDOC Elder of the Year (Aunty or Uncle)

This award celebrates the actions and accomplishments of an Elder who has made a positive impact within their local Aboriginal community and beyond. This award recognises how an Elder has contributed to their local Aboriginal community, shared their culture, and supported mob.

TWO winners will be selected for this award category

- NAIDOC Elder of the Year - Uncle
- NAIDOC Elder of the Year - Aunty

NAIDOC Community Member of the Year

This award recognises a community member who has been actively making a positive impact within their local Aboriginal community and beyond. It honours individuals who care about their community and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives.

This award acknowledges remarkable contributions through employment, studies and volunteering – **any combination of community work** can be recognised for this award.

Examples of previous winners for this award category include:

- A community member who works for a local Aboriginal organisation and facilitates programs for the community which share culture and creates a sense of community and friendship
- A community member who has been working on preserving and sharing Dharawal language through a combination of PHD studies, personal interest and self-employment, to develop free resources for sharing and teaching language
- A community member who is partially retired, and spends their free time visiting local schools to teach Aboriginal art and culture, share yarning circles and encourage reconciliation.

ONE winner will be selected for this award category

NAIDOC Young Achiever of the Year

This award recognises young achievers who have shown excellence and leadership within their chosen field. They are seen as great role models for their local Aboriginal community, and go above and beyond in their community contributions.

The award aims to celebrate leadership and achievements in different areas for example sports, school and academics, creative arts, volunteering, and mentoring etc.

Up to TWO winners may be selected for this award category

NAIDOC Organisation of the Year

This award recognises Aboriginal organisations, services and business which make exceptional contributions to the local Aboriginal community and/or demonstrate excellence through business practice or social impact initiatives.

Examples of what a business or organisation can be nominated for include: employment initiatives, teaching cultural awareness programs, promoting and selling Aboriginal creative arts, facilitating Aboriginal community programs or initiatives.

Up to TWO winners may be selected for this award category:

- NAIDOC Organisation of the Year (Not-for-profit)
- NAIDOC Organisation of the Year (Business)

NAIDOC Caring for Country and Culture

This award recognises the overall contributions towards Caring for Country and Culture, and can be awarded to community members, organisations, projects, or businesses who Care for Country and Culture across the Shoalhaven and/or Illawarra regions.

Examples of Caring for Country and Culture may include:

- Traditional land management practices e.g. fire management programs.
- Biodiversity programs or projects e.g. planting native bush tucker gardens.
- Sharing knowledge between Traditional Custodians and land managers, such as NPWS, to create ways of taking care of the land led by Aboriginal people.
- Delivering training and/or education that helps the community protect or maintain Country.
- Creating jobs and education opportunities to educate the wider community on the importance of Country e.g. cadetships or ranger programs.
- Sharing and reviving Aboriginal language: helping to keep Indigenous language alive by teaching classes, workshops and making learning materials.
- Celebrating culture and opportunities to build community pride through connection to cultural identity: putting on events that showcase and celebrate Aboriginal traditions and include storytelling, dancing, painting and cultural ceremonies.
- Honouring Elders: making sure Aboriginal Elders are respected and supported and their stories are passed down to younger generations.
- Improving awareness of Aboriginal stories and history within community: offering opportunities for people to learn through activities such as yarning groups, workshops, school programs or training sessions for organisations and businesses.

ONE winner will be selected for this award category

NAIDOC Aboriginal Community Volunteer of the Year

This award recognises a volunteer within the Aboriginal community. It honours an individual who is volunteering and actively helping and making a positive impact in their local Aboriginal community.

The award seeks to specifically acknowledge remarkable unpaid work and volunteer contributions.

Examples of previous winners for this award category include:

- An Elder who volunteers their time visiting local preschools and schools to do yarnning circles and Storytime, to share Aboriginal culture with the wider community.
- A community member who provided free community coaching for the local Aboriginal community, teaching and sharing their passion for running through a free drop-in community program where mob could walk, run and gather together for fitness.

ONE winner will be selected for this award category

Outstanding Contribution to Reconciliation

This award is for a person, group, organisation or business that has made an outstanding contribution towards reconciliation. This award recognises work which brings together all Australians and makes a positive and meaningful contribution towards reconciliation. This award category is open to either Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal people.

For the purpose of this award category reconciliation is defined as “strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.” (Defined by Reconciliation Australia)

Examples of reconciliation actions can include:

- Supporting positive two-way relationships built on trust and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal people.
- How this person or organisation works to overcome racism in the local community.
- Supporting and contributing to Closing the Gap initiatives within the local Aboriginal community e.g. programs or support for health and wellbeing, education and employment, economic wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, languages, digital inclusion.
- Bringing together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to create unity.
- Participating in truth-telling and helping to educate people to understand and accept the wrongs of the past and their impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Creating more opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the local community e.g. employment, education etc.

Up to TWO winners may be selected for this award category

- Outstanding Contribution to Reconciliation (Aboriginal)
- Outstanding Contribution to Reconciliation (Non-Aboriginal)

Nomination Form

The questions below are asking for information about the person or organisation you're nominating for an award. Please include all the necessary details and provide as much information as you can to support the application.

The assessment panel will review each nomination based only on the information given in this form and additional nomination information attachments if there is not enough space in the description box.



If you would like to nominate a person for the 2026 Regional NAIDOC Awards, please:

Complete the online form by scanning the QR code or clicking on the following link
[Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards 2026 - Nomination Form](#)
or complete the paper form below.



Which award are you nominating for?

- ☐ NAIDOC Aunty of the Year
- ☐ NAIDOC Uncle of the Year
- ☐ NAIDOC Community Member of the Year
- ☐ NAIDOC Young Achiever of the Year
- ☐ NAIDOC Caring for Country and Culture
- ☐ NAIDOC Organisation of the Year (Not-for Profit)
- ☐ NAIDOC Organisation of the Year (Business)
- ☐ NAIDOC Aboriginal Community Volunteer of the Year
- ☐ Outstanding Contribution to Reconciliation (Aboriginal)
- ☐ Outstanding Contribution to Reconciliation (Non-Aboriginal)

About the Nominee

The person you think should win an award

Their name: _____

Their phone number: _____

Their email address: _____

Their postal address: _____

Is the person, community group, organisation, service or business being nominated Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the nominee know that you have nominated them for an award?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

What Local Government Area do they live/work/operate in?

- ☐ Wollongong ☐ Kiama
☐ Shellharbour ☐ Shoalhaven

For Elder of the Year, is the nominee recognised as an Elder by others in their local community?

☐ Yes ☐ No

For Young Achiever of the Year, is the nominee between 12 and 25 years old?

☐ Yes ☐ No

For Young Achiever of the Year, what year were they born?_____

What pronouns does the nominee use?

☐ He/Him ☐ She/Her ☐ They/Them Other _____

Nomination Questions

If you need more space to write your answers, feel free to attach extra paper to this form.

Why should this nominee win an award?

Part 1: Please tell us about how they are an inspiration or role model for others in the community.

You can do this by telling a story about why they inspire you

[illegible]

Part 2: Please tell us about the outstanding things the nominee has done.

You can do this by listing their accomplishments and achievements below

Part 3: How has this person made things better for the Aboriginal community?

About the person filling in this form

Your name: _____

Your phone number: _____

Your email address: _____

Your relationship to the nominee: _____

To submit your application

Complete a paper form - you can print, fill out and scan a paper copy. There are three ways to submit a paper form application

1. Email it to; participate@wollongong.nsw.gov.au or
2. Drop it off at your local Council office (Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, or Shoalhaven) or
3. Post it to Wollongong Council:
C/O Regional NAIDOC Awards
Wollongong City Council
Level 5
Locked Bag 8821
Wollongong DC NSW 2500

Applications close at 5pm, Friday 20 March 2026



2026

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NAIDOC AWARDS



wollongong.nsw.gov.au/naidoc-awards



Front and back cover designs have been adapted from the painting: 'On Country - Where the mountains meet the sea' by Auntie Jodie Stewart.