WARNING
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this publication contains images of people who have passed away.
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VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HONOUR ROLL 27
Now in its sixth year, the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll proudly recognises and celebrates the important contributions Aboriginal Victorians, past and present, have made to our state.

Every Honour Roll inductee has made Victoria a better and fairer place. They deserve our respect, admiration, gratitude and recognition.

This year, 10 outstanding people will join the Honour Roll, bringing the total number of inductees to 89.

These ten people have helped shape, and continue to shape Victoria and we are a better and richer state because of their contributions.

The stories of inductees showcase determination through adversity, deep connections to country, culture and community, and commitment to social justice.

These stories are not just important to the Victorian Aboriginal community, they are central to every Victorian and the fabric of this state. Because Aboriginal stories are Victorian stories and Aboriginal history is Victorian history.

I congratulate all the inductees. Their stories are inspirational.

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier
It is my great pleasure to introduce the 10 inductees to the 2016 Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll.

The Honour Roll offers us an opportunity to learn about the important contributions made by Aboriginal people, both past and present, to their community and to our state.

It also enables us to tell their remarkable stories as a legacy for future generations.

The stories we are recognising with the Honour Roll should resonate deeply and offer inspiration to all Victorians. They tell us of courage and determination in the face of great adversity. The stories describe the struggles faced by people who have devoted their lives to helping others and creating a fair and just society.

Our Government is taking the steps to advance self-determination and create a new relationship between government and Aboriginal people, while at the same time embracing Victoria’s Aboriginal culture and history as a shared source of pride for all.

Working together, I am sure we will achieve real change and work towards a future in which the living culture of this country’s First Peoples enriches all Victorians.

These Honour Roll stories deserve to be shared with all Victorians and each year the Honour Roll takes to the road to visit communities across the state.

Choosing the inductees from the many worthy nominations each year is no easy task and the Honour Roll Advisory Panel should be commended for the work they do in making their recommendations.

There are still many untold stories of Aboriginal people in Victoria who have made significant contributions and I look forward to seeing many more names recognised on the Honour Roll in the future.

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
A PANGERANG WOMAN WHO STAYED TRUE TO HER COUNTRY

Mary Jane or Gunyuk Milawa was a Pangerang woman whose traditional life was broken by European settlement in Victoria, but who chose to maintain her contact with her country.

She is thought to have been born around 1830 in the area now covered by the City of Wangaratta in north central Victoria. Non-Aboriginal pastoralists began to settle in this country around 1837.

It is not known what became of Mary Jane’s parents. However, she and her sister Luana went with Wiradjuri people to live at Wahgunyah or Lake Moodemere, near present day Rutherglen. Lake Moodemere was a traditional camping place and remained a semi-official reserve until it was gazetted as a permanent reserve in 1892. It remained a reserve until around 1937.

Mary Jane is said to have pined for her own country, however, and returned as a young woman to live on the banks of the Ovens River between Wangaratta and Milawa.

She was living at a time when there were several attempts to move Aboriginal Victorians onto missions and reserves. This was first attempted through the Aboriginal Protectorate system, which began in 1839. Under this system, a Protectorate Station for the Aboriginal people of the north central parts of Victoria was established at Mitchellstown and the Protector for the area tried to encourage Aboriginal people to move onto the station.

From 1860, the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines encouraged the movement of Victorian Aboriginal people onto one of the six major mission stations and reserves: Framlingham, Lake Condah, Lake Tyers, Ebenezer, Ramahyuck and Coranderrk.

By the Board’s own admission, however, many Aboriginal Victorians preferred to remain outside of the mission stations, many of them working for pastoralists. The government appointed local guardians in areas that were not close to mission stations. The guardians were able to distribute clothing, blankets and basic rations to Aboriginal people living in the area.
In 1877 there were ten Aboriginal men, five Aboriginal women and one Aboriginal child listed as living in the Wangaratta district. Perhaps Mary Jane was the last of this small group to remain in the Wangaratta area for she was called ‘the last of the Pangerang’ when she died in 1888. She was buried in the Wangaratta Cemetery.

Mary Jane’s story was passed down by her sister Luana to her children and grandchildren. Pangerang Elder Freddie Dowling, Mary Jane’s great-great nephew, learned the story from his father and grandmother. In 1988, a century after her death, Freddie presented the City of Wangaratta with a plaque commemorating Mary Jane, as a reminder of her links with the land.

Mary Jane’s story is also celebrated by a plaque dedicated to her memory on the Bullawah Cultural Trail which runs along the banks of the Ovens River in Wangaratta. The Trail was established in 2016 to celebrate Aboriginal culture and heritage and honour Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders who have made a significant contribution to the local community.

Through her life, Mary Jane showed determination to remain on her own country, despite the many forces at work to destroy her connection to her culture and traditional land.

Government policies and the dispossession of land moved many Victorian Aboriginal people far from their own country. By 1871, it was reported that ‘tribal relations and family ties are much interfered with by the whites, who now occupy the whole colony’.

In her determination to live her life on her own country, Mary Jane symbolises the spirit of resistance to this dispossession and a resolve to maintain connections to country, no matter what the cost.

1 Report of the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, 1871
A FRONT LINE WORKER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Gunditjmara Elder Frances Gallagher has an unwavering commitment to social justice and has worked in many roles to make a difference in people’s lives in whatever way she can.

Frances was born in Bendigo, one of Violet Ella Winters’ eight children. She was raised by an aunt at Framlingham in western Victoria where living conditions for residents during the 1930s were described as ‘pitiable’. Educational opportunities for children at Framlingham were very limited and Frances received little schooling.

At sixteen Frances moved to Hamilton where she worked at a flax mill. She recalls that racism was rife, but she rose above the taunts, remembering that the land on which she was walking was her people’s land.

Her first husband was killed in a road accident, leaving her with eight children to raise. Like many Victorian Aboriginal people in the 1950s, she scraped together a living by picking fruit and vegetables, moving from place to place to follow the work.

In the 1960s Frances moved to Fitzroy, where there was a growing Aboriginal community. Finding work in one of the many factories in Collingwood, she became all too aware of discriminatory and racist practices on the part of employers and some fellow employees. However, this did not deter her from ‘standing up for what was right’ when she witnessed unfair practices.

In the 1970s and 1980s there was a growing momentum in Victoria to establish Aboriginal community controlled services to improve health and welfare and advocate the rights of the Aboriginal community. Frances welcomed the opportunity to work in organisations which were directed by Aboriginal people and operated in culturally appropriate ways.

During this time she worked in a number of Aboriginal hostels. These included the Lady Gladys Nicholls Hostel for young Aboriginal women and the Elizabeth Hoffman (now Morgan) House for women and children escaping violence or homelessness. She also worked at the Margaret Tucker Hostel established in 1983 to provide refuge for vulnerable young women at risk in the criminal justice system or of being placed into care. She also worked for a time at the William T Onus Hostel for the homeless.
Work in the hostels was not always easy. But Frances was delighted to find that encouraging a sense of personal dignity and pride, while offering understanding and sympathy, was a more effective way of helping people than the rigid authoritarian practices imposed on Aboriginal Victorians in the past.

In 1982 the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service opened Koorie Kollij to train Aboriginal Community Health workers. Frances, then sixty, was one of the first to enrol.

Frances was one of the first Elders to serve on the Broadmeadows Koorie Court when it was established in 2004. Concerned that many offenders committed crimes because of confusion over their Aboriginal identity, she addressed defendants at their own level. She encouraged their sense of self-worth by reminding offenders that while they were ‘as good as anyone else’, they also had responsibilities to their families and their community.

Frances is dedicated to the welfare of Victorian Elders. She was one of a number of Victorian Elders, led by her friend Iris Lovett-Gardiner, who raised funds and campaigned for government support to establish culturally appropriate care for Elders. The result was the Aboriginal Community Elders Service (ACES) which opened in Brunswick in 1991. She later served as an ACES Board member.

Aware of the isolation and loneliness of many Elders in her own area in Whittlesea, Frances offered her own home as a place where they could find a welcome cuppa and a yarn. She also provided advice to the local council about how they could assist Elders living in the community.

Frances also took her own initiative by asking the council to provide a meeting place for Elders. Her vision was for a space where Elders could meet for a yarn and also run their own activities. The result was Elders Making a Difference which commenced in 2014 and runs a planned activity programme for local Elders who get together twice a week.

Never one to let obstacles deter her, Frances enrolled in a Visual Arts course at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University in her eighties. Specialising in painting, she earned a Diploma in Visual Arts and her work has been included in a number of exhibitions. Frances had ten children, four of whom have sadly passed away. She can now boast a family that includes grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

Now in her nineties, Frances maintains her indomitable spirit, calling out injustice, discrimination and paternalism when she sees them. Acutely aware throughout her life of the limitations imposed on Aboriginal people by discriminatory practices, she continues to walk with dignity and a sensitive, compassionate heart, still striving to make a difference wherever she can.
AN ENDURING FAITH IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

Wemba Wemba Elder Barbara Walker was a leader in establishing services for the Aboriginal community in the Dandenong area. Her involvement with welfare and education services, including her promotion of early childhood education, contributed significantly to the lives of those in her community.

Barbara was born in 1927 in Barham in the Riverina area of New South Wales. Barbara’s parents were Wallace Robert Egan of Lake Condah and Nancy Day of Moonahcullah, located forty kilometres north west of Deniliquin in New South Wales.

Barbara was one of ten children who grew up in Barham. Her education finished at grade three as that was the extent of schooling available to Aboriginal children in the Riverina area at the time. At 13 Barbara began work as a domestic hand on a sheep station.

In 1945, when Barbara was 18, she married Kevin Walker of Cummeragunja. The couple began married life in Echuca, but moved to a home at Moonahcullah in 1947. Moonahcullah settlement was established by the Aborigines Inland Mission, a broadly Protestant organisation.

Barbara and Kevin had ten children – five boys and five girls. Conditions were generally poor for Aboriginal women and their families in regional Australia. One aspect of this experienced by Barbara was being segregated from white women in the Deniliquin maternity hospital. As a consequence Barbara gave birth to most of her children on the hospital veranda.

Nevertheless Barbara and Kevin made the most of life at Moonahcullah. She recalled that, while her husband Kevin was often away from home shearing, her children had the freedom to play in the nearby bush and fish in the river. Despite a lack of running water and electricity, the small settlement had a strong and nurturing Aboriginal culture and was well supported by the Methodist Church.

When the mission was closed at Moonahcullah around 1961, Barbara and Kevin moved their large family to Doveton, near Melbourne, where there were greater opportunities for work and education. Kevin soon secured a position with the Gas and Fuel Corporation in Dandenong. Barbara found the adjustment to urban life difficult. She recalled that she would sit in her house looking out at the nearby hills and ‘yearn to be back in a place where I could go for walks and get mushrooms.”
Barbara had a strong connection with the Aborigines Advancement League and although the League’s activities were often based in the inner suburbs of Melbourne, she got to know many of the leaders and their families. Christmas was a special time when Barbara would take her ten children on the train from Dandenong to Northcote to see the League’s Christmas tree.

In the early 1970s in Dandenong the Walkers, along with other Aboriginal families in the area, including the Terrick, Harrison, Blow and Charles families, held meetings in their homes. They were concerned that the growing Koori community needed better support and access to services in their area. To remedy this situation they formed the Dandenong and District Aborigines Association in conjunction with the Victorian Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs. In 1975 the organization was incorporated and became the Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Society Limited (DDACSL).\(^3\) Initial government funding was provided to help develop programs that would address unemployment and life skills in the Koori community in Dandenong, Doveton, Hallam, Noble Park, a developing Endeavour Hills and as far afield as Healesville.

Barbara was the first voluntary Secretary of the Co-operative and the committee held regular meetings hosted by Barbara in her home in Doveton.

DDACSL formed a close association with the Gunai Lodge hostel, later renamed the Roy Harrison Hostel. The hostel was established to meet the needs of young Aboriginal men coming to Dandenong from Gippsland for apprenticeships, job training and educational purposes. From the mid-1970s both Kevin and Barbara Walker were members of the hostel’s Special Purpose Committee – Kevin as President and Barbara as Executive Secretary.\(^4\)

In the early 1970s Barbara was employed by the Victorian Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs as a Field Officer. She was Victoria’s first Aboriginal woman Field Officer, dealing with finance and housing. Barbara worked alongside Wayne Atkinson and Alick Jackomos, in Melbourne’s south west, to improve the lives of Aboriginal families through access to services.

From 1973 up until the late 1980s when she retired, Barbara worked for the Doveton Uniting Church as a kindergarten assistant. Her love of children and concern for her community played a significant role in encouraging Aboriginal children in the Doveton area to attend the kindergarten. She worked assiduously to promote the importance of early childhood education.

Barbara’s faith was important to her and she had a strong connection to the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship (AEF). She held the position of voluntary secretary of the AEF in Victoria for many years and would often welcome members into her home for meetings. The AEF was based in Port Augusta in South Australia and Barbara would often be found on cooking duty at their national gatherings.

Barbara Walker - mother to ten children, 35 grandchildren, 69 great-grandchildren, seven great-great-grandchildren (and counting) - was a warm and generous person. Her work in welfare, early childhood and church activities inspired her family, friends and the wider community. Barbara spent her retirement years back on her country at Elimdale near Moonahcullah in New South Wales.

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2 Newspaper article 1993, Walker family archive.
4 Report of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, year ended 30 June 1974
GWEN ATKINSON (THORPE)
(BORN 1932)

A DETERMINED ELDER AND DEDICATED COMMUNITY LEADER

Gwen Atkinson, a Gunaikurnai Elder, believed from a young age that anything was possible and set a plan for the type of life she wanted. Gwen found this life with her late husband, Sandy, sharing a life journey of 63 years which sadly ended on 13 April 2016.

Not one to be deterred by obstacles, Gwen has been a quiet achiever, helping to establish health services for her community and achieve native title recognition for the Gunaikurnai people.

Born at Lake Tyers, Gwen was the second youngest of five children born to Reg and Marjorie Thorpe (nee Green). Sadly, her mother passed away when Gwen was two years old. Gwen’s grandmothers helped Reg care for the children until his second marriage to Alice Pepper. Gwen has fond memories of the close community at Lake Tyers in the 1930s, where she gained a good educational foundation in her early years at the Lake Tyers School.

Gwen’s family moved to Melbourne during the Second World War. They lived in Collingwood and Reg worked at the Carlton and United Brewery. After the war, the family moved back to Gippsland, and Reg worked cutting sleepers. The family settled in Newmerella, 10 miles from Orbost. Although Reg encouraged Gwen to complete her schooling, she had other ideas. Gwen left school just before she reached the legal school leaving age of fourteen. She worked alongside her step-mother Alice picking peas and beans to supplement the family’s income.

Gwen moved to Melbourne as a teenager, working for a while in the Eagley Mills in Collingwood. At nineteen, while working at St Andrews Hospital, she decided to travel to Shepparton to pick fruit. In Shepparton Gwen met John (Sandy) Atkinson (2012 Honour Roll inductee). Gwen and Sandy were married within five weeks. It was the beginning of a long successful partnership.

Gwen worked as a shearer’s cook at a sheep station at Wakool, NSW, while Sandy was a station hand. During their nine years at Wakool, Gwen and Sandy’s five children were born. The family relocated to Swan Hill when Sandy had a job shearing at Moulamein station. During the week Gwen and the children stayed at Pental Island, on the Little Murray River. With no electricity or running water, Gwen used the river for washing purposes.

Gwen and Sandy moved to Mooroopna in 1963 and then, in 1965, settled in Tatura in a house that would remain the family’s permanent home. They soon became active in the local community, though Gwen’s first priority for 20 years was her children. Aware of her own limited access to secondary education, Gwen wanted to ensure her own children could easily get to school. Gwen joined the mothers’ club and did her share of canteen duty.

In 1975 as momentum gathered for community-directed Aboriginal health services, Gwen and Sandy played a part in establishing the Goulburn Valley Aboriginal Health Service and an Aboriginal housing and welfare corporation. Together with Frances Mathyssen, Gwen was enlisted to do a pilot program
to demonstrate that an Aboriginal Health Service in the Shepparton-Moorooroo district was necessary and workable. With few guidelines available, they did what was needed to get the health service underway. They visited Aboriginal families in the area to assess their needs and to encourage them to access health services. Gwen ferried community members to medical appointments, many of them in Melbourne. When Frances became unwell, Gwen continued on without pay for three months.

In 1978 the health and housing organisations amalgamated to become the Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and Health Service. Gwen continued on as the Health Service administrator for the next thirteen years. Her early reports on the service were used as examples for other regional Aboriginal health services. A study of Aboriginal children aged up to five in Shepparton, conducted with help from Rumbalara, led to the establishment in 1980 of the Victorian Working Party on Aboriginal Health and Rumbalara Aboriginal Health Cooperative to improve Aboriginal health in the region.

Gwen served on the Tatura Hospital Auxiliary Committee for many years and also worked at the Aborigines Advancement League’s Maloga Aged Care Hostel and Nursing Home in Nathalia, completing Certificates 3 and 4 in Aged Care. For three years she was a Councillor for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

Committed to giving back to her own Gunaikurnai people, Gwen was invited to become involved in the campaign to achieve native title over their country in Gippsland. Gwen remained dedicated to the campaign over fifteen years, seeing the achievement of a Native Title Settlement in 2010 as the outcome of a group effort, rather than the work of one or two individuals. Gwen believes the Native Title Settlement provides opportunities to help current and future generations of Gunaikurnai. A signatory to the historic agreement as a Gunaikurnai Elder, Gwen continues to serve as Chair of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation Elders’ Council.

In recent years Gwen has used the legacy of her grandfather, Corporal Henry (Harry) Thorpe, to inspire the wider Aboriginal community. Henry was a decorated First World War soldier whose story can be read in the 2014 Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll booklet, available online at www.dpc.vic.gov.au/vahr. With Gwen’s permission, Henry’s gravestone was moved from France to the Australian War Memorial’s First World War gallery in 2015. His story also features in an exhibition about Aboriginal soldiers who have served Australia since Federation.

From her family Gwen has learnt to never lose sight of the bigger picture. She maintains a positive approach to life, believing that, despite whatever hardships are thrown in your path, you should never be afraid to be what you want to be.
CLARA LUTTRELL-GARISAU
(1933-1999)

A TIRELESS WORKER ON BEHALF OF HER COMMUNITY

Clara Luttrell-Garisau, better known as Aunty Claire, devoted her life to improving outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Her active involvement in a number of movements, particularly those related to women and children, and her championship of NAIDOC, earned her widespread respect and affection amongst the Victorian Aboriginal community and beyond.

Clara spent her first few years at Cummeragunja Aboriginal Reserve, across the border in New South Wales.

Clara’s parents instilled a strong work ethic in their children. As a young woman, she was a skilled cyclist who competed in local and regional competitions. She met and married Edward ‘Snowy’ Luttrell, a Tasmanian bricklayer, who was cycling around the mainland on a working holiday but got no further than Shepparton when he met Clara. They had five young children under the age of seven when Edward died prematurely of pneumonia.

With five children to support, Clara set about earning some qualifications. In 1963 she moved to Melbourne with her younger sister, Roma, to study nursing. The sisters were the first Aboriginal women to gain nursing qualifications at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

A proud Yorta Yorta woman, Clara was born in Echuca, the second eldest of Thomas and Mary (nee Hamilton) James’ fourteen children. She was the grand-daughter of Shadrach James, an influential teacher who had taught future Aboriginal leaders such as William Cooper and Douglas Nicholls at Cummeragunja Aboriginal Reserve, across the border in New South Wales.

While working as a nurse in Melbourne, Clara mixed with the growing Aboriginal community in and around Fitzroy, many of whom she had known since childhood. It was at this time that she met Fred Garisau, who would become her second husband. They eventually settled in West Heidelberg with Clara’s children - Michael, John, Janene, Peter and Paul.

In 1973 Aboriginal activists established the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) in Gertrude Street Fitzroy. Clara became the first nurse at the service and was one of the team that canvassed Aboriginal people living in the inner city and the western suburbs on the need to establish a dental service. The VAHS Dental Service, established soon after, was the first community-controlled dental service in Australia.

Clara joined with Aunty Edna Brown who was concerned that many in the Aboriginal community were unable to afford proper funerals or burials. Together they worked to raise money for a funeral fund, organising barbecues and cabaret nights at the Collingwood Town Hall. Their pioneering efforts led to the establishment of the Aboriginal Funeral Service.
Clara’s standing in the community was such that, in the mid-1970s, Pastor Sir Doug and Lady Gladys Nicholls requested that she become the manageress of the Gladys Nicholls Hostel, operated by the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL). Sir Doug and Lady Gladys had been behind the opening of the hostel in 1960, hoping to provide a safe and culturally supportive home for Aboriginal girls and young women, and later boys, coming to Melbourne for study or work.

Clara managed the hostel for over 25 years, taking a caring but very firm hand with the young people for whom she was responsible. She was often on call to pick up young women who had been released from juvenile justice centres and bring them back to the hostel or to Margaret Tucker Hostel.

Despite having a full-time job at the hostel and a family of her own to care for, Clara continued to give to the community in a multitude of other ways. She was concerned by the domestic violence endured by many Aboriginal women. Together with Elizabeth Hoffman and Eleanor Harding, she worked to establish the Elizabeth Hoffman House (now called the Elizabeth Morgan House) which opened in the early 1970s.

Clara was also well-known in the community for her role in raising the profile of NAIDOC as a celebration of Aboriginal history and culture and the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

She chaired Victoria’s NAIDOC Committee for 25 years, advocating on behalf of the committee to the national body and distributing funds for NAIDOC Week celebrations each year to Victorian organisations. Clara was also a representative on the National NAIDOC Committee for eleven of those years. Her contribution to NAIDOC was recognised by a posthumous award from the National Committee in 2005.

For many members of the Victorian Aboriginal community, Clara’s crowning achievement was her organisation of the annual Miss NAIDOC contest and the NAIDOC Week Ball at the San Remo Ballroom in Carlton. She was determined that the ball would offer a memorable night at a cost that was affordable to as many people as possible. Her generosity in providing free tickets to those in need meant there was often some last minute reshuffling to fit everyone in on the night.

Clara was also a Board member for a number of Aboriginal community controlled service organisations. She was a Chairperson and Board member of the Aboriginal Community Elders Service and a Board member of the Aborigines Advancement League, Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Elizabeth Morgan House and the Margaret Tucker Hostel for girls.

Known for her happy but forthright personality, Clara earned widespread respect for her heartfelt efforts to help her people. To her children, she provided a positive role model of how to care for community.

Sadly, she was taken by cancer shortly after her retirement from the Lady Gladys Nicholls Hostel in 1999. Her legacy lives on in the many community-run organisations that she helped to nurture and in her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE WHO INSPIRES HER COMMUNITY

Aunty Pam Pedersen is a Yorta Yorta woman and Elder of the Victorian Aboriginal community. She is a shining example to young and old alike through her involvement in the Koorie Court system and through her sporting achievements.

Born in 1943, Aunty Pam is the youngest daughter of Sir Douglas and Lady Gladys Nicholls. Pam and her siblings Nora, Bevan, Lillian and Ralph spent most of their childhood in the Melbourne suburbs of Fitzroy and Northcote where Pam remembers her home as a hub for the community and her parents as insightful leaders and fighters for the rights and welfare of Aboriginal people. She would often come home from school to a house full of people: ‘Mum would find beds for whoever needed them. We’d share our bedrooms with whatever guests we had.’ While Aunty Pam has followed in the footsteps of her parents, being involved in activities which support and assist the Aboriginal community, she has also forged her own path.

As a young woman she worked in child care, education, and in various offices in Melbourne as a secretary. In 1978 she married Erik Pedersen and is mother to two children, Adam and Kim.

Aunty Pam recently worked with Jesuit Social Services, a social change organisation, where she assisted young people and their families who had come in contact with the criminal justice system. She worked for this organisation in a capacity building role. In the past she has worked with the Victorian Department of Education, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Attorney-General’s Department and the Victorian Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Prevention Service. For 22 years she was a valued staff member of the law firm Maurice Blackburn.

Aunty Pam is a dedicated Elder sitting on the Children’s Koorie Court, County Koorie Court, Melbourne Magistrates Court, Heidelberg Children’s Court and the Adult Parole Board of Victoria.

She began her involvement with the Koorie Court in 2004 and continues to make an outstanding contribution. She offers wise counsel to young people appearing
in the court, generously sharing her own experiences and supporting young people to think about their behaviour, their position in the community and the importance of a law-abiding lifestyle. At times, the work can be challenging and confronting but Aunty Pam is recognised for her calm disposition throughout the most difficult of cases. In her words: ‘If I can help any of our young people, just to give them a good talking to so that they may stay out of trouble, it’s a bonus. And I’m there to try and do the best job that I can for our young ones and also the elder people as well.’

Aunty Pam regularly attends Koorie Court Reference group meetings, assists in training Elders for ‘newer’ courts and speaks at seminars and conferences on her experience in the court. In addition to this, she takes an active role in many community organisations, volunteering on numerous boards and committees including the Aborigines Advancement League, the Tarwirri Elders and Respected Panel Nillumbik Reconciliation Group. She has also been a director of the Worawa Aboriginal Girls College at Healesville and an ambassador for the Victorian NAIDOC Committee.

When not involved in community and social justice matters, she can probably be found in the swimming pool, riding her bike, or pounding the pavement. As a young woman Pam was involved in athletics, but it was later in life that she became serious about health and well-being through sporting activities. At 50 she decided to get active, initially for her own health but then as a way of getting the message out to community members that they needed to take care of their health through regular exercise, healthy diets and community and social interaction. From walking she progressed to fun runs and then to triathlons. She competed in her first triathlon at the age of 59. In 2016 at the age of 73 she completed her nineteenth Mothers’ Day Classic Run and is on track to make it twenty in 2017.

Aunty Pam has represented Victoria and Australia at the World Masters Games, in swimming (both in the pool and open water), in running and cycling (doing half marathons and triathlons) and in sailing events. A sporting highlight was being a member of the winning crew in the 1996 Melbourne to Devonport Yacht Race. In 2005 she was the NAIDOC National Sportsperson of the Year. Her proudest sporting moment was to represent her people in the opening ceremony and baton relay for the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

Aunty Pam is always keen to promote the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle. While she inspires the community through her own sporting achievements, she is also involved with several sporting organisations. She is an ambassador for the Indigenous Marathon Foundation, a member of the Carlton Football Club Reconciliation Action Plan Advisory Group, a member of the AFL Dreamtime Working Group and on the board of The Long Walk.

Aunty Pam has received numerous awards over the years outside the sporting arena. These include an Australia Day Federal Award and ‘Koorie Women Mean Business’ awards in 1997, 2002 and 2004. Her motto is, “If you can dream it, you can achieve it.”
JUDITH ‘JACKO’ JACKSON
(BORN 1950)

WORKING AT THE GRASSROOTS TO BUILD HEALTHIER LIVES

Judith Jackson, a Gunggari woman and Elder, is regarded by many as the glue that binds the Aboriginal community in the City of Port Phillip. With wisdom gained from her own early struggles, she has helped make a difference to the health of many community members in Melbourne’s inner southern suburbs, earning universal respect and affection.

Better known as ‘Jacko’, Judith was born in Roma, Queensland to Edward an ex-serviceman who had served in Papua New Guinea during World War II, and May Jackson (nee Fernando). The oldest of the five Jackson children, Judith had six older siblings from her mother’s first marriage.

Edward worked at ring barking, shearing and fencing, while May was a hotel cook who also took in washing. The family lived in a camp along with many other Aboriginal families until they were able to move into their own house. Judith remembers evenings around the campfire as her older brothers scared her with ghost stories.

There was not much time for childhood. As her younger sister suffered from rheumatic fever Judith was often kept home from school to care for her and carry out chores around the house, which was always overflowing with visitors. Judith left school in grade six.

Judith was only eleven when a visitor to the house began to sexually abuse her. She attempted to run away twice, once getting as far as her uncle’s house almost 200 kilometres away. She was returned home to receive physical punishment from an older brother and little sympathy from her mother.

Sent to work as a domestic servant on a rural station at the age of thirteen, Judith ran away again, this time with Val, a girl working on a neighbouring property. They made for Brisbane, to the Convent of the Good Shepherd, where Val had grown up.

After seven months at the convent, Judith was sent to work on a property near Rockhampton. At the time Queensland law allowed employers to retain the bulk of their Aboriginal employees’ wages in trust. Like many other workers, Judith never saw most of the money she earned at this job.

At fifteen Judith set off for Brisbane again where two elderly women, Peggy and Betty, took her in. She worked at casual jobs, waitressing, cooking or in canning factories, with a social life based in inner city hotels.

Judith met her first boyfriend, a merchant sailor, in a hotel, following him to Melbourne for a while. Pregnant with her first child, John, she returned to Brisbane to share a flat with Peggy, Betty and another friend, Pat. However Judith’s mother removed John from her when he was an infant. Judith later had a long-term relationship with a Swedish merchant sailor, Soren with whom she had two children, Lissa and Jason, in the early 1970s after she had settled back in the St Kilda area in Melbourne.

Though a drinker from the age of fifteen, Judith continued to work as a hotel cook and raise her children. However, when she was fifty, ill-health made her swear off alcohol.
As a client of Inner South Community Health (ISCH), a not-for-profit community health service based in the City of Port Phillip, Judith began to offer her services as a volunteer. At first she put her energies into attending family violence meetings.

Judith always remembered that the St Kilda ‘parkies’ befriended her when she first arrived in Melbourne in 1967. Many were homeless Aboriginal people who gathered daily in the public gardens near Fitzroy Street. Judith encouraged ISCH to adopt new approaches to reach out to the ‘parkies’, such as holding committee meetings down at the park.

At their request, Judith asked the City of Port Phillip to support a weekly barbecue. With Council funding, ISCH auspiced what became known as the Wominjeka community barbecue for homeless people. Now in its eleventh year, the barbecue enables health workers and other service providers to meet informally with community members to tackle issues such as housing or accessing social support. Judith is proud that the number of ‘parkies’ has come down from thirty or forty to just a handful.

Judith was also instrumental in initiating fortnightly lunches at ISCH’s Our Rainbow Place, where the local Aboriginal community get together to share a meal and a yarn. For sixteen years Judith has shopped and prepared food for the lunches in her own home, promoting healthy food, and encouraging community members to keep in touch with each other.

In 2009 she helped run a possum skin cloak workshop led by well-known artist Vicky Couzens for residents of the Winja Ulupna Drug and Alcohol Recovery Centre for women. The participants designed panels for the cloak while discussing ways of preventing cervical cancer. The cloak now hangs in ISCH’s foyer in St Kilda.

Judith has also participated in an ISCH documentary to help local Aboriginal people tackle smoking issues. The documentary, Smoke Free and Deadly, has been shortlisted for a 2016 VicHealth award.

With permission from Boonwurrung Elder, Caroline Briggs, Judith performs acknowledgements to country at events within the City of Port Phillip when no Boonwurrung Elder is available. She is often asked to raise the Aboriginal flag at official council or agency functions. Judith is also a long-standing member of the Urban South Local Aboriginal Network.

After years of community work, Judith has also put her practical experience into formal study. At the age of sixty she gained a Certificate IV in Community Development.

She has received a number of awards for her outstanding community work. These include several Frances Pennington Housing Week Awards for volunteering, Life Membership of Inner South Community Health Service and, most recently, an Outstanding Achievement by a Volunteer Supporting Diversity Award from the Victorian Minister of Health.

Judith’s life has not been without tragedy. Her son, John, died at the age of twenty and her early years were filled with sadness. Although modest about her achievements, her innate capacity to give generously to so many others has made the rest of her life much happier.
A MUCH LOVED NURTURER OF HIS COMMUNITY

Glen Peters was a proud descendant of Coranderrk who identified as Yarra Yarra, Yorta Yorta and Nguraillum Wurrun. He earned universal love and respect amongst the Victorian Aboriginal community and beyond, not only for his devoted care and compassion, but for his dedication to ensuring that those who had passed were safely returned to their own country for their final journey.

Glen was born in Healesville, close to the former Coranderrk Aboriginal reserve where three generations of his family had lived since his Dja Dja Wurrung great-great grandmother was taken there circa 1863. He was the youngest of Glen and Valda Peters’ three sons.

Tragically, Glen senior was killed in a workplace accident at a timber mill when Glen was just eight months old. Glen’s mother was forced to move her three young sons away from their beloved Healesville. Together with older brothers Vincent and Russell, Glen spent his early years in their grandmother’s home in North Melbourne, surrounded by doting aunts and an uncle.

The young Glen is remembered as being an adventurous lad.

When his mother remarried, the family moved to Mentone, where he roamed the wide open spaces, learning to fish and hunt rabbits and snakes with a slug gun.

However, life was not easy and connections with family and community were disrupted by Glen’s mother’s second marriage. Glen endured further tragedy when his first wife, mother of his daughters, Krista and Nimi, was tragically killed at an early age.

In the late 1980s, Glen began to reconnect with the Aboriginal community, becoming involved with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) in a number of roles. He later took on the role of managing the Aboriginal funeral service, operated at that time by VAHS, before it was transferred back to the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League.

It was an essential, though not always easy job. The funeral service had originated in the 1960s as a funeral fund when Elder Aunty Edna Brown was concerned that many community members were being buried in paupers’ graves because they could not afford the cost of burial. Many community members were not able to afford to take deceased family members home to their own country to rest.
In the 1980s, Stewart Murray of the Aborigines Advancement League formalised the Aboriginal Funeral Service, buying an old hearse in which he carried those who had passed back to their own country. Later, Herb Patten carried on the funeral service as part of his duties at the League.

In Glen’s hands it became more than a job and more than a service. For twenty-five years he carried the funeral service with dignity, compassion and care, using it to create connections with community members and families across Victoria and beyond.

A perfectionist, he carefully managed all aspects of the sorry business in order to relieve pressure on grieving families and allow them space to mourn. Guided by his own deep spirituality, Glen insisted that funeral arrangements were culturally appropriate and the deceased were respected and honoured in culturally suitable ways.

Glen’s commitment led to long working hours. Distance did not matter. Concerned to carry people home to where they belonged, he drove to all corners of Victoria and beyond. It was nothing for him to travel interstate if needed. His knowledge of back roads and short cuts was legendary.

Glen’s respect and care for those who had passed was always evident. He also showed care for bereaved family members, taking time to sit with them and listen.

Glen’s commitment saw him develop connections across Victoria and beyond. He developed a vast knowledge of kinship and family connections across Victoria and a deep understanding of Victorian cultural groups.

Glen was hurt by premature and preventable deaths in the community and saw the links between cultural identity and health. This inspired him to dedicate time to helping to build healthy outcomes for the community. He served for over thirty years as a Board member and frequent chair of Yappera Children’s Services, a community-controlled child care and education service for Aboriginal pre-school children. He is remembered as a passionate advocate for Yappera’s culturally inclusive services as a means of developing a strong sense of identity in Aboriginal children. On behalf of Yappera he actively lobbied government agencies for adequate funding.

Glen’s interest in mentoring young people was evident in his long-standing role as coach of the Fitzroy All Stars Netball team. Though he was remembered as a tough coach, his team paid tribute to him by renaming themselves ‘Glen’s Stars’ after his death in 2015.

Glen is remembered as a gentle quiet man who saw the best in people and had an ability to communicate with anyone. At the same time, he was known to be determined to the point of stubbornness in the face of any injustice.

A devoted family man, Glen was much-loved by his wife Jackie, his four children, Krista, Nimi, Peter and Lisa, and his grandchildren. Yet he was also regarded as family by a community that stretched far wider. Even as he battled terminal illness, he was dedicated to ensuring that the final journey of every community member was achieved with respect, dignity and love.
ANGELA CLARKE
(BORN 1958)

A Gunditjmara warrior renowned for her integrity and passionate advocacy

Angela Clarke is a Gunditjmara woman who has had a significant impact on the well-being of the Victorian Aboriginal community and on communities across Australia. She is a quiet achiever, passionate about empowering Aboriginal people.

Angela was born in Melbourne and her memories of her early life in Fitzroy were shaped by her strong relationships with her Maltese father and her Gunditjmara grandparents Nin and Pop Clarke, who cared for her while her dad was at work.

Angela was devastated when her father died. She was in her early teens at the time and left high school after completing year 10.

In the following years she did waitressing, bar work, worked in a bakery and in family day care.

In the early 1980s, Angela was a single mother supporting her three children Ricky, Amy, and David. She was juggling three jobs, and also studying part-time. Angela was naturally drawn to working in community development, and her work included empowering migrant women, advocating for low-income public housing tenants, and teaching basic skills to unemployed young people.

Working with the Action Resource Centre exposed her to another world, and she developed a ‘hunger for advocacy’ on behalf of people struggling to survive on low incomes. She completed an Associate Diploma and then a Bachelor degree in Community Development. In later years she also completed a Masters of Public Health degree, studying at the Institute of Koorie Education, Deakin University.

In 1994 Angela was appointed as Koorie Hospital Liaison Officer at the Royal Children’s Hospital in Parkville. These positions had been introduced in 1982, following a recommendation to the Victorian Minister for Health by the Victorian Working Party on Aboriginal Health to create these positions in hospitals across the state. The aim was to tackle some of the barriers that prevented Aboriginal Victorians from accessing health services.

There had been four liaison officers at the Royal Children’s Hospital before Angela was appointed. Working in isolation and physically located in inaccessible offices, their effectiveness was hampered by a lack of understanding within the hospital of the barriers preventing Aboriginal patients and their families from fully accessing hospital services. Angela applied a holistic approach to the health of Aboriginal patients and their families, recognising that cultural health is central to Aboriginal well-being. With support from the hospital’s Chief Social Worker, she made strategic changes, including the appointment of two additional Koorie Liaison Officers at the hospital.

Angela worked to change hospital practice to ensure Koorie Liaison Officers were able to ‘walk with Aboriginal families’ on their journey at the hospital, and for this to be incorporated into everyday practice, across all hospital departments. The Liaison Workers also invested significant time into educating hospital staff and trainees about culturally appropriate practice for Aboriginal patients and their families.
Together with her co-workers, Neville Austin and Shawana Andrews, Angela documented the development of the liaison service in *Looking after our Own - Supporting Aboriginal families through the hospital experience*. This groundbreaking publication set out a clear historical background to the barriers to Aboriginal access to hospital services and served as a blueprint for other Koorie Liaison Officers. This helped to transform the way hospital services were offered to Aboriginal families across Victoria.

In 1999 Angela was appointed Deputy Director of the VicHealth Koorie Health Research and Community Development Unit (later called Onemda) at the University of Melbourne.

Taking a team approach, she was determined that the voices of the Koorie community should be central to both research and initiatives for improved community health.

As part of the Onemda team, Angela made sure that research projects undertaken would be respectful, inclusive and have meaningful outcomes for the Koorie community.

One of the many projects she greatly enjoyed was travelling throughout Victoria with Aunty Joan Vickery AM, gathering oral history stories of Elders who had played crucial roles in establishing Aboriginal community-controlled health services in the 1970s and 1980s.

These stories were later published as *Nyernila Koories Kila Degaia – Listen up to Koories Speak about Health*, documenting this important movement, and describing the reasons for the success of community-controlled health services in tackling Aboriginal health issues at a grass roots level.

Angela’s implicit understanding of the crucial connections between culture and identity for Aboriginal people also influenced her work as an Elder on the Koorie Courts. She was a board member of a number of Koorie organisations over the years, including the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Aboriginal Community Elders Services, the Ilbidjerri Theatre Company and the Koorie Heritage Trust.

Always committed to nurturing the voices of others, Angela carries out her professional and voluntary work through collaboration. Her strong work ethic has set an inspiring example for her children, grandchildren, as well as countless others.

Angela has always been a quiet achiever, preferring to let the legacy of her work speak for itself.
JOHN BAXTER
(BORN 1960)

A FEARLESS CHAMPION FOR RECONCILIATION AND EQUITY

John Baxter is a Latji Latji / Narungga man who believes change occurs when people take action. His philosophy has inspired him to advocate for reconciliation, for the rights of Aboriginal people living with disabilities and for a greater understanding of the past to improve outcomes for the future.

John is the second youngest of seven children to James Baxter, a railway worker, and his wife Lorna (Maud). Sadly two of his siblings died in infancy. Born in Robinvale in north-west Victoria in 1960, John was diagnosed with Spina bifida and transferred to Melbourne’s Royal Children’s Hospital when two weeks old. He remained in the hospital for two years.

This was the era of the Stolen Generations. When discharged from hospital, John was not returned to his family, but placed temporarily at Allambie Reception Centre, a children’s home in Burwood operated by the Victorian Government. He was later fostered by loving parents, who cared for a number of foster children, all with disabilities, in their Box Hill home.

Despite the restrictions imposed by his disability, John remembers a happy childhood home where his foster mother encouraged his awareness of his Aboriginality. He was highly motivated to do well at school and attended Yooralla School for disabled children in Balwyn for his primary education.

He later attended Box Hill Technical School where the three storey building proved challenging for a boy on crutches. Nevertheless, he graduated and went on to complete an apprenticeship as a printer and graphic artist.

In his late teens John became more curious about his Aboriginal identity. Access to his early medical records provided some clues about his place of birth. With the support of his foster mother, he took the initiative to find his family and was reunited with his father, siblings and extended family in Robinvale. Sadly, his mother, who had returned to her own country in South Australia, had died before John could meet her. He was later able to connect with her family at Point Pearce on the Yorke Peninsula.

Reconnecting with his family had a profound impact on John and made him aware of how little he knew of his own culture. It also reinforced in his mind the crucial
role that family and culture play in developing identity. He also came to realise that an understanding of the past can lead to better outcomes for the future.

Living for much of his life in Melbourne’s eastern suburbs, John was inspired by historic Wurundjeri leaders such as William Barak and Simon Wonga, who advocated for the rights of their people in the 1800s. He also became aware that, because of past policies, many Aboriginal people living in Melbourne’s east were, like him, not traditional owners from that area.

During the twentieth century many Aboriginal children of the Stolen Generations were placed in the numerous children’s homes and institutions located in the City of Whitehorse. Keen for their story to be told, John participated in the production of two films dealing with their experiences: *Fractured*, produced by Link-Up Victoria and *Nobody’s Child*.

A passionate advocate for reconciliation and cross-cultural understanding, John believes programs or initiatives aiming to achieve reconciliation must be more than mere symbolic gestures. They must have practical outcomes which benefit Aboriginal people.

His strong conviction means he frequently acts as the ‘fly in the ointment’ in his advocacy work.

A Councillor with Reconciliation Victoria for a number of years, John is also a member of the Whitehorse Friends for Reconciliation group and contributed to the City Of Whitehorse Reconciliation Action Plan. He has also served on the City of Manningham Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group.

A great believer in the importance of culture and identity, John has been a driving force in uniting a number of groups to help stage Cultural Days at Blackburn Lakes Sanctuary, where Elders and teachers can pass on cultural knowledge to children and their families.

John is a champion for the rights of Aboriginal people living with disabilities. He was a founding member of Aboriginal Disability Network Victoria. He was one of the first Victorian representatives on the national peak body First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDNA) and later became its Director. As a disability support community consultant for FPDNA, John came face to face with the problems of those living with disabilities in remote or isolated communities.

John works to build links between the disabled and the services available to them and promotes culturally-inclusive practices in mainstream agencies. In 2013 he represented FPDNA at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva. In 2014 he made a presentation at a UN conference in New York.

John served on the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission’s Disability Reference Group from 2014 to 2016. In 2016 he was appointed to the Victorian Disability Advisory Council, which provides advice to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing.

John takes an active role in the life of Victoria’s Aboriginal community. He is President of the Committee of Management of the Koorie Night Market Incorporated, which operates at several locations around Victoria. The market aims to preserve culture, support Aboriginal businesses and craftspeople and create economic and social capital for the Aboriginal community.

John’s active life is based on the philosophy that it’s no good sitting back and watching things happen. He believes that, while the past cannot be changed, there are solutions to every problem that life throws up, if people are prepared to ‘walk together’ to find the way.
“The range of green leaves represent the diversity of Traditional Owners throughout Victoria and the shields that float inside them represent the resilience of our people over thousands of generations that we have been here.

The concentrated line work represents our unique symbolism that we use to explain our connection to country here in Victoria. The wavy blue lines represent the ocean and inland waterways that surround and run through Victoria.

The subtle arcs that run through the water bodies represent the importance of water and our relationship and responsibility to it.”

Our Culture, Your Culture

Mick Harding
VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HONOUR ROLL

INDUCTEES

2011
Dr Alf Bamblett
William Barak
Geraldine Briggs AO
Albert ‘Alby’ Clarke
William Cooper
Lester Marks Harradine
Merle Jackomos OAM
Melva Johnson
Johnny Mullagh or Unaarrimin
John Stewart Murray OAM JP
Sir Douglas Nicholls KCVO OBE JP
Lorraine ‘Bunta’ Patten
Dorothy Peters
Elizabeth Pike
Archie Roach AM
Joan Robinson
Lionel Rose MBE
Nessie Skuta OAM
Alma Thorpe
Joan Vickery AO

2012
William ‘Bill’ Onus
Lady Gladys Nicholls
Reginald Saunders MBE
Henry ‘Banjo’ Clarke
Iris Lovett-Gardiner AM
Mollie Dyer AM
John ‘Sandy’ Atkinson AM
Eleanor Harding
Mary Atkinson
Reg Blow
Kevin Coombs OAM
Ivy Bell
William ‘Lin’ Onus AM
Robert ‘Wally’ Cooper
Linda Twite

2013
Margaret Tucker MBE (C)
Harold Blair AM
Albert Mullett
Hyllus Maris
Fay Carter
Alfred John Henry Lovett
Leonard Charles Lovett
Frederick Amos Lovett
Edward McDonald Lovett
Herbert Stahle Lovett
Laura Bell
Herbert ‘Jock’ Austin
Beryl Booth
Valmai Heap

2014
Simon Wonga
Henry ‘Harry’ Thorpe
William Reginald Rawlings
Jack Patten
Edna Brown
Alice Thomas
Alfred ‘Boydie’ Turner
Winnifred Evelyn Quagliotti
Bessie Yarram
Margaret ‘Dharrul’ Wirrpanda
Beverley Peter
Walda Blow
Robert ‘Jumbo’ Pearce
Graham Atkinson
Phillip Cooper
VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HONOUR ROLL

INDUCTEES

2015

Robert Wandin
Constance ‘Connie’ Hart
Thomas John ‘Massa’ Clarke
Rita Watkins
Noel Tovey AM
Patricia Ockwell
Catherine Solomon
Clive Atkinson
Nancy Harrison
Georgina Lovett-Williams
Jill Gallagher AO
Ruby Hunter
Judith Cue-Ahmat
Richard Frankland
Kutcha Edwards