



Victorian Aboriginal Education
Association Incorporated

WURREKER AWARDS

Nominations Booklet

2026

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Key dates

Nominations open

23 April 2026

Nominations close

16 June 2026

Awards Night

15 October 2026

***Dates subject to change**

President's Message



VAEAI is proud to celebrate 21 years of the Annual Wurreker Awards.

Delivered in partnership with the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR), the Wurreker Awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of individuals and organisations across Victorian Koorie education and training. These awards shine a light on the dedication, innovation and leadership that is strengthening outcomes for the Koorie Community.

The Wurreker Strategy represents the partnership between TAFEs and the Koorie Community, working together to improve education and training outcomes and to build clear pathways into employment. VAEAI continues to strengthen partnerships across the sector to support Koorie students to complete courses and access diverse pathways through VET and university qualifications, as well as meaningful employment.

As the peak body for Koorie education and training in Victoria, VAEAI is working closely with DJSIR and the Department of Education to inform the development of Victoria's next First Nations Education Strategy.

VAEAI also leads sector-wide collaboration through the biannual Training and Skills Koorie Education Workforce Forum, which brings together the Wurreker workforce from all Victorian TAFEs. In addition, VAEAI co-chairs the Koorie Skills Working Group in partnership with DJSIR, supporting coordinated action and shared accountability across the system.

Through the Toorong Marnong Accord, VAEAI brings together Victoria's nine universities to expand opportunities and strengthen pathways for the Koorie Community into higher education. An initiative of this partnership, the Koorie Big Day Out provides Year 9–12 students with opportunities to explore academic aspirations in a culturally safe and supportive environment. In 2026, over 180 participants attended the Metro Koorie Big Day Out – a record-breaking event. We are also looking forward in anticipation to the upcoming Koorie Big Day Out in Warrnambool.

President's Message Continued

Within the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) sector, VAEAI's Learn Locals Project is supporting increased engagement and stronger relationships between Learn Local service providers and the Koorie Community. In February 2026, VAEAI and the Victorian Skills Authority hosted the Self-determination, Treaty and Koorie Prosperity Symposium, bringing together more than 200 participants from Industry Advisory Groups to strengthen employment pathways for the Koorie Community.

At the national level, VAEAI continues to support the growth of the First Nations VET workforce and improve cultural competency across Registered Training Organisations through the National Skills Agreement Bilateral Implementation Plan Project, aligned with Closing the Gap Priority Reform 3: Transforming Government Organisations.

Recent data trends show encouraging progress. Over the past few years, trends of Victorian Koorie students completing Year 12 suggest small increases in enrolments into certificate and diploma courses. Over the past nine years, there have been increases in apprenticeships and employment. Since 2019, Koorie student VET completion rates have increased by 2–3 per cent.

Beyond the data, there is much to celebrate: the strength of partnerships, innovative initiatives and the achievements of individuals, service providers and employers who champion Koorie education and training across Victoria. In this 21st year of the Wurreker Awards, we invite our Community and partners to continue supporting and celebrating this important work. By sharing examples of best practice and recognising the great achievements in this space, we can inspire meaningful change and build stronger outcomes for our Community in education and training.



Geraldine Atkinson

VAEAI President

Selection process

The selection process for each Award category is as follows:

Call for Nominations

Opening date is the 23rd April 2026. Nominations will close on 16th June 2026

Addressing Eligibility Requirements

Nominees must meet the eligibility requirements outlined in each of the categories. Nominations that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be considered.

Selection Panel

Selection panels will consist of people who have specialist knowledge in vocational education and training, adult education, higher education and employment.

Shortlisting

Shortlisting of award nominations will be undertaken by members of a selection panel based on how well nominees address the selection criteria for each award category. Shortlisted nominees will be invited to attend the awards ceremony as VAEAI guests.

Interviews

Nominees who meet the selection criteria will participate in a phone interview with members of the relevant Selection Panel at least four weeks prior to the Awards ceremony.

Assessment of Nominations

Each award category will be judged on a points system that will be applied at both the shortlisting and interview stages of the selection process.

Finalist announcement

Upon the completion of judging and interviews, finalist will be announced publicly.

Decision Dates

Final decisions concerning Award Winners will be made upon completion of all nominee interviews for each Award category. Award winners will not be notified until the Awards ceremony which will be held in 2025.

Awards Night

Formal presentation of finalist and announcing winners of the 2026 Wurreker Awards.

Individual awards

Individual Awards eligibility requirements

Previous finalists are eligible to
nominate for this years awards.

Community Based Employee

Outstanding achievement in community based employment programs or initiatives.

Eligibility

- Must be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
- Must be employed by a Victorian Community Based Organisation.
- Must have achieved excellent outcomes from participation in a community-based employment program or initiative.

Public Sector Employee

Outstanding achievement in public sector based employment programs or initiatives.

Eligibility

- Must be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
- Must be employed in the Victorian public sector.
- Must have made a significant contribution to their workplace and/or made significant progress in their career.

Private Sector Employee

Outstanding achievement in private sector based employment programs or initiatives.

Eligibility

- Must be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
- Must be employed by a Victorian Private Sector employer.
- Must have made a significant contribution to their workplace and/or made significant progress in their career.

Teacher/Trainer

This category is open to both Koorie and Non-Koorie applicants, who have excelled in the delivery of training to Victorian Koorie students.

Eligibility

- Must be a Teacher / Trainer employed by a TAFE, Victorian Registered Training Organisation, Learn Local, University or Group Training Organisation.
- Must be able to demonstrate innovative, flexible and effective training delivery to Koorie students.

Submitting a nomination

1. Download the nomination form: <https://www.vaeai.org.au/9608/>
2. Complete the questions on the form.
3. Include at least two referees who can support your application.



Scan to download nomination forms

Nominations must be received by no later than close of business 16 June 2026.

If you have any queries regarding the VAEAI Wurreker Awards, please contact the VAEAI office on (03) 9481-0800 or wurrekerawards@vaeai.org.au or your Wurreker Regional Broker.

Individual award prompt questions

Community Based, Private and Public employee

1. What contributions has your nominee made towards their organisation and/or the Koorie community?
2. Why are they deserving of this Award?

Teacher/Trainer

1. Where do they work as a Teacher or Trainer?
2. How have they made a positive impact towards the learning development of Koorie students?
3. Why are they deserving of the Teacher/Trainer Award?

Employer Awards

Employer Awards eligibility requirements

Previous finalists are eligible to
nominate for this years awards.

Community Based Employer

Development and/or delivery of community employment programs or initiatives.

Eligibility

- Must be a Victorian Community Based Employer.
- Must be able to demonstrate good/best practice in the design and delivery of Koorie employment programs or initiatives.

Public Sector Employer

Development and/or delivery of innovative employment and training initiatives and/or programs.

Eligibility

- Must be a Victorian Public Sector or Local Government Employer.
- Must be able to demonstrate good/best practice in the design and delivery of Koorie employment programs or initiatives.

Private Sector Employer

Development and/or delivery of Innovative employment and training programs or initiatives.

Eligibility

- Must be a Victorian Private Sector Employer.
- Must be able to demonstrate innovation in employment and training targeted to Koorie people.

Submitting a nomination

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Employer award prompt questions

Public Sector Employer

1. What contributions has the nominee made towards the employment and development of Koorie learners?
2. How does the nominee engage community within their work and how do they demonstrate a shared respect, meaning and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace?
3. Why are they deserving of the Public Sector Employer Award?

Private Sector Employer

1. What contributions has the nominee made towards the employment and development of Koorie learners?
2. How does the nominee engage community within their work and how do they demonstrate a shared respect, meaning and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace?
3. Why are they deserving of the Private Sector Employer Award?

Community Based Employer

1. What contributions has your nominee made towards the employment and development of the Koorie community?
2. How does the nominee engage community within their work and how do they demonstrate a shared respect, meaning and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace?
3. Why are they deserving of the Community Based Employer Award?

Training Provider Awards

Training Provider Awards eligibility requirements

Previous finalists are eligible to nominate for this years awards.

Koorie Organisation – Dr Mary Atkinson Award

The development and/or delivery of training programs which build the skills of the workforce and the overall capabilities of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in Victoria.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be a Victorian Aboriginal Community controlled organisation.
- Must be able to demonstrate its role in the development and/or delivery of effective Koorie training programs.

Innovative Koorie Learner Pathways: TAFE Provider

This award is for new and innovative Community driven/led programs and initiatives (including partnerships) that have resulted in improved pathways and career or employment outcomes for Koorie learners in Victoria.

Eligibility

- Must be a Victorian TAFE Institute.
- Must be actively involved in community driven partnership arrangements which support career development and employment outcomes for its Koorie students.

Innovative Koorie Learner Pathways: Non-TAFE Provider

This award is for new and innovative Community driven/led programs and initiatives (including partnerships) that have resulted in improved pathways and career or employment outcomes for Koorie learners in Victoria.

Eligibility

- Must be either a Victorian Learn Local, Private Registered Training Organisation or University.
- Must support the Wurreeker Strategy through active involvement in community driven partnership arrangements which support career development and employment outcomes for its Koorie students.

Submitting a nomination

1. Download the nomination form: <https://www.vaeai.org.au/9608/>
2. Complete the questions on the form.
3. Include at least two referees who can support your application.



Scan to download nomination forms

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Training provider award prompt questions

Koorie Organisation – Dr Mary Atkinson Award

1. What programs or initiatives impressed you from this organisation?
2. Why are they deserving of the Dr.Mary Atkinson – Koorie Organisation Award?

Innovative Koorie Learner Pathways – TAFE Provider

1. Why are they deserving of the Innovative Koorie Learner Pathways TAFE Award?
2. What contributions has your nominee made towards driving programs, initiatives or partnerships in the TAFE sector?
3. How has the output of this provider resulted in improved pathways and career or employment outcomes for Koorie learners in Victoria?

Innovative Koorie Learner Pathways – Non-TAFE Provider

1. Why are they deserving of the Innovative Koorie Learner Pathways Award – Non-TAFE provider Award?
2. Is your nominee a community driven program or initiative that contributes to Koorie training and education?
3. How has your nominee contributed to improving pathways and career or employment outcomes for Koorie learners in Victoria?

Wurreker Broker Contacts

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