

*****MEDIA RELEASE*****

Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation celebrates their elders for NAIDOC Week

6 July 2023

In celebration of NAIDOC Week 2023, and to commemorate this year's NAIDOC theme 'For Our Elders', Caritas Australia's First Australian partner, Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, held a cultural event today in Mount DrUITT in Western Sydney.

With activities including a smoking ceremony, performances from Garabara Dance Group, Yangkay Cultural Connect and Muggera Dance Group that ultimate focus of the day was to celebrate the elders of Baabayn.

Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation was founded by five Aboriginal Elders from Western Sydney – home to Australia's largest urban First Australian population. The work of Baabayn (which means 'Ancestral Woman' in Gumbaynggirr language) involves initiatives such as Family Group gatherings, a Homework Club, a Mums and Bubs group and a youth group for young First Australians to connect with their Culture.

Janaya Hickey, Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation's Program Manager and Event Coordinator, said:

"NAIDOC week is a significant Event for all Aboriginal people. This week happens annually, it's a week of dance, storytelling and connecting. Recognising those who did it before us and who will do it after us, keeping culture alive through connections and knowledge. Connected to land, elders and song lines."

"We collaborate with other local services and educate them on cultural protocols by sharing and showing traditions we carry within our heritage. They become our allies and walk beside us to better work with our people and to have better understanding of cultural respect and diversity."

"This year's theme 'For our Elders' is perfect. We learn from the elders, they show us the way, how to maintain our culture and care for land. The land and culture continue to be passed down generations for many years. We come from the soil and will go back."

Caritas Australia works in close partnership with First Australian-led organisations like Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, to support programs that focus on intergenerational healing, strengthening cultural identity and spirituality, livelihood opportunities, and advocacy.

"NAIDOC Week is a special time for Indigenous Australians. It is a time to rejoice and celebrate our culture, our history and our achievements and this year it is about celebrating our elders and the path they have forged for the generations that follow them," said Christine Rhazi, Caritas Australia's First Australians Associate Director.

"This year with the Voice referendum, we honour their legacy, their suffering, their survival, their strength and most importantly their hopes."

"What the elders at Baabayn Corporation have done, and continue to do, for their community is irreplaceable. They fill an important gap for young Indigenous women,

connecting them to their culture and history. Today, this week and always, we celebrate and give thanks to them,” said Ms Rhazi.

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NOTE: Christine Rhazi, Caritas Australia’s First Australians Associate Director is available for interview.

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