



MEDIA RELEASE

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Melbourne Woman Helping Indigenous Job Seekers Hailed a Hero

A Melbourne woman who has found new and innovative ways to help more Indigenous Australians into work has been hailed as a national employment hero.

Nicole Findlay, who [works for WISE Employment in East Burwood](#), was announced last night as the winner of the inaugural Excellence in Indigenous Employment Award at the prestigious NESA National Employment Awards for Excellence at a gala dinner in Melbourne.

NESA (National Employment Services Association) is the peak body for the Australian employment and related services industry.

For almost 20 years Nicole, Senior Project Officer - Indigenous Pathways, has worked alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country, creating programmes, policies and projects that boost their employment opportunities. She has specifically provided specialist Indigenous knowledge and support across all WISE operations and 50 offices nationally since 2006.

She plays a pivotal role in the development of all WISE's Indigenous policies, procedures, partnerships, service, performance, placements, procurement and training – and performs these functions in respectful consultation with Aboriginal partners. For example, Nicole co-founded, and for the past eight years has coordinated, the widely acclaimed Northern Indigenous Employment (NIE) partnership in inner north Melbourne. There are now 47 NIE-partner businesses that operate best practice Aboriginal employment strategies thanks to Nicole's dedication.

Nicole has just completed a pilot of a suite of specific strategies she developed to increase employment rates for Indigenous people throughout Victoria. The success of this programme has translated to WISE now rolling it out in the Northern Territory.

Host of the awards, National Employment Services Association (NESA) CEO, Sally Sinclair, said "Indigenous employment rates are much lower than the nation-wide labour force rate of 64.8 percent. The initiatives of specialists like Nicole are playing a pivotal role in changing this situation. So it's a very significant achievement for Nicole to be named as the inaugural winner."

"The employment and related services industry in Australia is all about helping people into sustained employment, and these Awards truly acknowledge the direct and lasting impact that employment consultants like Nicole have on people's lives," she said.

Four other awards were also announced:

- Australian Achiever of the Year, which recognises a job seeker who has overcome extraordinary disadvantage to embrace employment, was won by 22-year-old Tom McGann from Mornington (VIC).
- National Champion Employer of the Year, which recognises organisations that give disadvantaged Australians a fair go, was won by Sodexo, a services company that supports mining operations in Western Australia.
- National Employment Consultant of the Year recognises professionals who work to find jobs for disadvantaged Australians. It was won by Penelope Weatherall from Open Minds in Ipswich (QLD).
- The new Innovation in Disability – Team Award, which recognises employment service providers and employment organisations who have worked together to assist people with a disability, was won by FUSO Geelong and MatchWorks.

The NESA National Employment Services Awards for Excellence are now in their 12th year.

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Media:

Interviews with Nicole – through WISE's Doreen Micallef (0408 168 796)

NESA comments – Carole Gregson, Business Manager, NESA (0411 205 717)

General award enquiries - Liz Rivers, Awards Absolute [convenors] (07 5446 4299)