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Congress congratulates winners honoured by NAIDOC Awards

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples (Congress) congratulates the ten winners of the 2017 National NAIDOC Awards Ceremony, which took place in Cairns on Saturday, 1 July 2017. The awards, which are announced every year by the National NAIDOC Committee, focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals who have made important contributions to the community.

The National NAIDOC Awards are announced at an annual ceremony and ball at the end of every NAIDOC Week in the focus city chosen for that year. Contributions recognised by the Awards include outstanding work towards improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives in communities, promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues or excelling in their chosen field.

This year Congress celebrates the achievements of:

- Minjerribah Moorgumpin Elders-in-Council Aboriginal Corporation (QLD) – Caring for Country Award winner
- Latia Scheffe (QLD) – Youth of the Year
- Elverina Johnson (QLD) – Artist of the Year
- Dr James Charles (SA) – Scholar of the Year
- Sharee Yamashita (QLD) – Apprentice of the Year
- Amanda Reid (NSW) – Sportsperson of the Year
- Faye Carr (QLD) – Female Elder of the Year
- Ollie George (WA) – Male Elder of the Year
- Patrick Mills (QLD/SA) – Person of the Year
- Dianne Ryder (WA) – Lifetime Achievement Award winner

Congress congratulates its members like Elverina Johnson, a Gurugulu and Indinji Gimuy woman from Yarrabah who has taken home the Award for Artist of the Year. Ms Johnson has been involved in the arts industry for over 30 years, bringing her talent as a singer, songwriter, playwright, actor, photographer and artist. She has produced songs on topics such as reconciliation and social issues, and believes the arts can celebrate culture and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Ms Johnson has committed her time to volunteer as a community worker in Yarrabah, attempting to improve school attendance rates by increasing the engagement of parents. She has also established a biennial Indigenous women's conference at Yarrabah which has been adopted as a model for other communities.

Congress is grateful for such dedication and effort towards the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, families and communities. We support the work of these, and many other extraordinary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and support the ongoing recognition of their success.

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