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MEDIA RELEASE

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The importance of keeping Country clean: social enterprise celebrates NAIDOC Week

National social enterprise Resource Recovery Australia (RRA) is acknowledging the contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees play in the organisation's identity during NAIDOC Week.

Celebrating NAIDOC Week this week, RRA MidCoast Reviva Area Manager Russell Ping says Indigenous employees are a big part of RRA's identity, especially in the local area.

"There's a lot of Aboriginal guys working here and it's great to see them with stable jobs and seeing their self-worth grow," he said.

"They're also really positive role models for their friends and family and wider community, where there can be a reliance on Centrelink sometimes."

RRA is a national social enterprise that works in waste management to keep waste out of landfill, create jobs for people experiencing barriers to work and to engage and connect people in our communities. RRA operates in NSW, QLD and the ACT across eight regions.

It operates five sites across the MidCoast at Tuncurry, Taree, Bulahdelah, Stroud and Tea Gardens.

Mr Ping grew up in Taree, Biripi country. The father of five started working for RRA in Noosa four years ago and it wasn't long before he was managing the site. When the MidCoast Reviva Area Manager opportunity came up in May this year, he jumped at the chance.

"I've been away from the area for 30 years and I was really keen to come back. This is my Mum's Country, Worimi Country, and I'm really happy to be back down this way," he said.

"The waste industry was new to me when I started with RRA but I'm happy to be on board because it's really important to keep Country clean."

In 2021 the theme of NAIDOC Week is Heal Country and calls for all of us to continue to seek greater protections for our lands, our waters, our sacred sites and our cultural heritage from exploitation, desecration, and destruction.

Mr Ping says COVID-19 has meant NAIDOC Week events across the MidCoast have been postponed, but the week is still a good time for the Aboriginal community to catch up in other ways.

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“It’s important for us to acknowledge the time, talk about what’s happened in this country and it’s something for us to be strong about and take a stand on,” he said.

“It’s also important for the wider community to recognise events such as NAIDOC week, they are small steps in the right direction when it comes to closing the gap.

“We’ve come a long way in Australia but there’s heaps more to do and we need both parties to come to the table on this, we have to work together, not against each other.”

NAIDOC Week 2021 is being held from 11 – 4 July. It’s an opportunity for the nation to embrace First Nations’ cultural knowledge and understanding of Country as part of Australia’s national heritage and equally respect the culture and values of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as they do the cultures and values of all Australians. For more information visit: <https://www.naidoc.org.au/>

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