

Karen is one of those extraordinary people who puts her heart and soul into everything she does. For more than 16 years at Marist180, she has championed the dignity of young people, strengthened relationships and helped nurture a culture where everyone feels valued, respected and included.

At the heart of Karen's practice is her belief that every young person deserves to be recognised for who they are. She understands the importance of identity, belonging and meaningful connections, particularly for young people who have experienced separation from family and community.

Karen is not afraid to challenge practices that compromise a young person's dignity. She advocates for their individual needs and encourages colleagues to look beyond behaviour, listen to their stories and recognise the experiences that have shaped their lives.

Her commitment to building meaningful and enduring relationships is evident in the young people who continue to reach out to her years after leaving care.

Karen's influence extends well beyond the young people she directly supports. She generously shares her knowledge, mentors colleagues and leads by example, fostering a culture of compassion, inclusion and respect for individual backgrounds and experiences.

These qualities reflect the principles at the heart of our NAIDOC Staff Awards and the foundations of culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people: listening with humility, honouring identity, advocating for others and recognising the importance of connection and belonging.

When asked what legacy she hopes to leave, Karen's answer was simple: kindness. For Karen, kindness means standing up for others, recognising their worth and continuing to show up when it matters most.

Much of what Karen does goes unseen. She doesn't simply demonstrate our organisational values and culture; she lives and breathes them every day. In the words of her nominator, Karen truly is the heart of our organisation.

Marist 180