



Pictured: Dancers performing at the Iman People's NAIDOC celebrations.

Star of Taroom guides Iman home

MORE than 600 people celebrated NAIDOC week in the sunshine on Iman country, which includes the Wandoan region, on July 23.

It's hard for Elders Aunty Heather Tobane and Uncle Stuey White to articulate exactly what it's like to come home.

Uncle Stuey's mother Marcia Hopkins was the last baby born at Bundulla before the Iman were moved to Woorabinda.

"This is about bringing us all together, home is where your roots are," he explains.

"There's over one thousand Iman across Australia and overseas, but this is their home."

The Iman are also known as the Hornett or Wardingarri people. Wardingarri means "Meeting Place on the Dawson River".

For the Elders, NAIDOC events not only teach their descendants about their culture, they also engage the broader community and the companies which live and operate on Iman lands.

Aunty Heather's 11-year-old grandson Roystan Tobane was one of those who learnt about the Iman through storytelling and dancing on the day.

Many property owners came along with Aunty Heather hopeful these connections may lead to repatriation of significant artefacts like the Star of Taroom, a 160kg groove stone removed from Iman country 45 years ago.

"Last year we had the Star of Taroom come home after decades and it was like something that was missing was back with us, our old people had come home to rest," she said.

"So we hope this will encourage anyone who has artefacts to work with us to bring them home to where they belong."

Senex Energy Community Relations Manager Trevor Robertson said Senex was delighted to support the celebrations and with the turnout of young people on the day.

"These young people are the future custodians of the Iman land and it was wonderful to see them involved in the ceremonies and dancing," he said.

"Senex places great importance on cultural heritage and works with the Iman as the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate to ensure all of our employees are aware of their responsibilities and obligations to respect and protect this land."

The Iman conducts cultural heritage field surveys for Senex to identify geographical areas of significance and artefacts and also inducts employees before they start work on country.

The surveys have resulted in some artefacts being returned to the 'Wardingarri Keeping Place' in Taroom.

"Senex is working on Iman lands and we want to learn more about them and their heritage and things like surveys and supporting NAIDOC events help us do this," Trevor said.

Uncle Stuey sums it up succinctly.

"We don't want to live in the past, we want to work with companies like Senex and the community to share our story and heritage so we can move forward together."