Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1068

O’Shane, Patricia

(1941 -)

Born	19410619, Mossman Queensland Australia
Occupation	Aboriginal rights activist, Barrister, Caf?© owner, Lawyer, Magistrate, Management consultant, Public servant, Tea University Chancellor

Summary

Patricia O’Shane was born in Northern Queensland in 1941. A noted activist for Indigenous rights, her achievements in the public sphere have been remarkable. She was the first Aboriginal Australian barrister (1976) and the first woman to be appointed to the New South Wales Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board (1979). When she was appointed permanent head of the New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs in 1981, she became not only the first Aboriginal person but also the first woman to become a permanent head of ministry in Australia.

Details

Patricia O’Shane was born in 1941 in the small township of Mossman, North Queensland. She attended State primary and high schools in Cairns, and was awarded a Teacher’s Scholarship, which enabled her to study full-time at the Queensland Teachers’ Training College, and part-time at the University of Queensland. After graduating from Teachers’ College, she taught at primary and high schools respectively before and after her marriage. In 1973, having received an Aboriginal study grant from the Federal Government, she undertook a Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of New South Wales, and completed the course at the end of 1975. In March 1976 she became Australia’s first Aboriginal Barrister at a ceremony in the New South Wales Supreme Court. In 1979 she was appointed a Member of the New South Wales Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board – the first female member in the Board’s 91-year history. She has worked with the New South Wales Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Aborigines, as Coordinator of the Aboriginal Task Force. In November 1981 Pat O’Shane was appointed permanent head of the New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, becoming not only the first Aboriginal person but also the first woman to become permanent head of a ministry in Australia.

Events

2001 - 2001
Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

Published resources

Book
Some Aboriginal women pathfinders : their difficulties and their achievements, Beeson, Margaret J (compiled by), [1980]

Indigenous Heroes and Leaders, Barlow, Alex and Hill, Marji, 2003

Tall Poppies: Nine Successful Australian Women Talk to Susan Mitchell, Mitchell, Susan, 1984

Splitting the World Open: Taller Poppies and Me, Mitchell, Susan, 2001

The wailing : a national Black oral history, Rintoul, Stuart., 1993

Murawina : Australian women of high achievement, Roberta Sykes ; photography by Sandy Edwards, 1993

The matriarchs: twelve Australian women talk about their lives to Susan Mitchell., Mitchell, Susan, 1987

Book Section
A Healthy Sense of Identity, O'Shane, Pat, 1984

Aboriginal women, Richards, Michaela, 1988

Aborigines and the criminal justice system, O'Shane, Patricia, 1992

Edited Book
Dhirrabuu Mari = Outstanding Indigenous Australians, Brown, Di, 2000

Magazine article
Rebel Magistrate with a passion for justice, Lawson, Kirsten, 2001

Journal Article
Australia's First Aboriginal Lawyer, 1976

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders

Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers

Resource Section
Law, Kerwin, Hollie and Rubenstein, Kim, 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0624b.htm

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Patricia O'Shane, 1998 [manuscript]

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