

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1087

Clare, Monica

(1924 - 1973)

Born	19240101, Dareel Queensland Australia
Died	19730713, Wollongong (?) New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Aboriginal leader, Aboriginal rights activist, Administrator

Summary

Monica Clare was the daughter of an Aboriginal shearer and an English women who died in childbirth when Monica was two years old. Taken into care at the age of seven, she and her brother grew up in a variety of foster homes in Sydney. After learning the finer arts of domestic service, Monica went out to work as a waitress and a factory hand.

In the 1950s, Monica became interested in Labor Politics. Her second husband, the trade unionist Leslie Clare, encouraged this interest and also encouraged her to be active in Aboriginal politics. She became the Secretary of the Aborigines Committee of the South Coast at Wollongong during the 1960s and, subsequently, of an Aboriginal committee called the South Coast Illawarra Tribe, from 1968 to 1973.

Monica Clare worked tirelessly for the political and social equality of Aboriginal people, and their independence. She died suddenly on National Aborigines Day, 13 July 1973.

Details

Monica Clare was born in 1924, at Dareel on the Mooni River, ten miles from Mungindi, on the Queensland side of the border. Her father was an Aboriginal shearer, and her mother, surnamed Scott, was English. The family roamed the upper Darling until Monica's mother died in childbirth in c.1926. In 1931 Monica and her younger brother were taken by Child Welfare. They were first taken to 'Yasmar' Home, Haberfield, in Sydney, and then to Redmyre Road, Strathfield, where Monica learned domestic service. By 1932 the two children were fostered to Bill and Stella Woodbury who owned a farm near Spencer on the lower Hawkesbury River. During World War Two, Monica worked as a servant, in the W.D.&H.O. Wills cigarette factory, as a waitress at a Greek café, and in Peggy Page, a well-known Sydney dress factory. Her first marriage ending in divorce, Monica became interested in Labor politics. In 1956 she met Leslie Clare, a well-known secretary of several trade unions, and decided to move to Wollongong. Leslie was sympathetic to Aboriginal people and took her to various Aboriginal missions along the New South Wales coast. They married in 1960.

Monica was the Secretary of the Aborigines Committee of the South Coast at Wollongong during the 1960s and subsequently of an Aboriginal committee called the South Coast Illawarra Tribe, from 1968 to 1973. She worked tirelessly for the political and social equality of Aboriginal people, and their independence. She died suddenly on National Aborigines Day, 13 July 1973, before she could revise and rewrite the manuscript for her autobiographical book Karobran: The Story of an Aboriginal Girl which was published in 1978.

Published resources

Book

Karobran: The Story of an Aboriginal Girl, Clare, Monica, 1978

Stories of herself when young : autobiographies of childhood by Australian women, Hooton, Joy W. (Joy Wendy), 1935-, 1990

Book Section

Who's been writing Blak?, Heiss, Anita, 2001

Journal Article

Yesterday's words : the editing of Monica Clare's Karobran, Jones, Jennifer, 2000

Review

Review of Review of Karoban, Jefferis, Barbara, 1980

Newspaper Article

Mrs Monica Clare, 1973

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

Papers of Monica Clare, 1978 [manuscript]

Author Details

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Created 24 September 2004

Last modified 12 February 2019