

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE4815

## McLean, Pantjiti Mary

(1930 - 2023)

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**Born** 1 January, 1930, Kaltukatjarra, Docker River Western Australia Australia

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**Died** 1 July, 2023, Kalgoorlie Western Australia Australia

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**Occupation** Artist

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### Details

Pantjiti Mary McLean was a Ngaatjatjarra woman from the Western Desert region who grew up leading a traditional life. In the 1950s she left the desert, walking to the Warburton Ranges with her husband and son, and then on to Cosmo Newbury in the Eastern Goldfields. When her son was taken by the government and placed in the Mount Margaret Mission, she followed and worked in the area as a stock woman mustering sheep. During this time a daughter was born and was also taken from her.

In c.1970 she moved to the Kalgoorlie Native Reserve, and then c.1980 to the Ninga Mia Community in Kalgoorlie, where she lived as a respected elder until 2008. She then moved into Kunkurangkalpa Aged Care.

During the 1980s Mary produced craftworks and traditional paintings, but a breakthrough came when she participated in the Warta Kutju (Wama Wanti) Street Art Project and met fibre artist Nalda Searles who became her friend and collaborator in 1992. Mary preferred painting and developed a unique figurative style of her own that captured her memories and stories. A sell-out exhibition of her work in Fremantle in 1993 launched her career. Commissions came her way and her work was exhibited around Australia.

Mary won many art awards, including the prestigious Telstra Indigenous Award in 1995. In 2001 she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters by Curtin University. Her work is represented in all major public and many private collections around Australia.

### Published resources

#### Catalogue

Pantjiti Mary McLean. *A Big Story: Paintings and Drawings*, Mclean, Pantjiti Mary, 2005

#### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

#### Site Exhibition

Karlkurla Gold: A History of the Women of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Criena Fitzgerald and National Foundation for Australian Women, 2012,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wikb/wikb-home.html>

### Author Details

Nalda Searles

**Created** 13 August 2012

**Last modified** 9 August 2024

## Digital resources



**Title:** Pantiji Mary McLean

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 3 May, 2023



**Title:** Pantiji-Mary-McLean-2002-at-Nalda-Searles-home.-Photograph-co

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 3 May, 2023