

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** IMP0079

## O'Donoghue, Lowitja

(1932 - 2024)

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**Born** 1 August, 1932, Indulkana South Australia Australia

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**Died** 4 February, 2024

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**Occupation** Community worker, Nurse

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### Summary

A Pitjantjatjara woman, Lowitja O'Donoghue has worked for Aboriginal organisations or in Indigenous affairs for the last 30 years. She was the Founding Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 1990-1996. O'Donoghue is one of the most prominent members of the stolen generation.

In 2010 Australia's national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, The Lowitja Institute, was named in O'Donoghue's honour.

### Details

Born in 1932, in Indulkana, South Australia, Pitjantjatjara woman Lowita O'Donoghue was separated from her family at the age of two. She was taken by missionaries to the Colebrook Children's home and brought up, by the name of Lois, under the white education system. O'Donoghue attended Unley General Technical High School, then trained as a nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. She worked as a nurse from 1961-1972, partly among Aboriginal communities in northern South Australia. She was a member of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (1970-1972), and later regional director of the Adelaide Department of Aboriginal Affairs (1975-1976). O'Donoghue has since worked in various capacities in the areas of health, housing, community development, Aboriginal and Islander studies, Native Title and the Sydney Olympics.

O'Donoghue has received many awards and accolades for her work, including being named Australian of the Year (1984), a National Living Treasure (1998), winning the Advance Australia award in 1982 and being appointed a member of the Order of Australia in 1977, a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1983, and a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in 1999. O'Donoghue was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Physicians (1998) and the Royal College of Nursing. She also holds an Honorary Doctorate of Law from the Australian National University and Notre Dame University, and is a Doctor of Flinders University, as well as the Australian National University (ANU), University of South Australia and Queensland University of Technology (QUT). She has been a Professorial Fellow at Flinders University since 2000.

### Events

#### 2001 - 2001

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

## Published resources

### **Edited Book**

Who's Who in Australia 2002, Herd, Margaret, 2002

The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

### **Book**

Living in South Australia : a social history, Elizabeth Kwan, 1987

Notable lives : profiles of 21 South Australians, Cockburn, Stewart, 1997

Women in politics: voices from the Commonwealth, 1999

### **Site Exhibition**

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html>

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders>

### **Resource**

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

### **Author Details**

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