Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0079

O’Donoghue, Lowitja

(1932 - 2024)

Born	19320801, Indulkana South Australia Australia
Died	20240204, Adelaide South Australia Australia
Occupation	Community worker, Nurse

Summary

A Pitjantjatjara woman, Lowitja O’Donoghue worked for Aboriginal organisations or in Indigenous affairs for over 30 years. She was the Founding Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 1990-1996. O’Donoghue was 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, with 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 to 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 then 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), wining 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 was also awarded Honorary Doctorates from the Australian National University, Murdoch University, Notre Dame University, Flinders University, the University of South Australia, Queensland University of Technology, the University of Melbourne, the University of Sydney and the University of Adelaide. She was appointed a Professorial Fellow at Flinders University in 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

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