

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1227

Eatock, Pat

(1937 - 2015)

Nationality Australian

Born 14 December, 1937, Redcliffe Queensland Australia

Died 17 March, 2015, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia

Occupation Aboriginal rights activist, Academic, Filmmaker, Public servant, Women's rights activist

Summary

In 1972 Pat Eatock became the first Aboriginal to stand for Federal Parliament in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). She participated in the Aboriginal Embassy and Women's Liberation in 1972. In 1973 she became the first non-matriculated mature aged student at the Australian National University (ANU), graduating as a Bachelor of Arts in 1977. In 1975 she attended the 1975 *Women in Politics Conference* and the *International Women's Year World Conference* in Mexico City. She has worked as a public servant, university lecturer, and established and managed the Perleeka Aboriginal Television, producing films for community television and training Aboriginal film makers from 1992-96. Pat Eatock passed away on 17 March, 2015 after a long period of ill health.

Details

Pat Eatock was born at Redcliffe, Queensland on 14 December 1937. Her mother, Elizabeth Stephenson Anderson, was a Scottish immigrant, and her father, Roderick Eatock was of Aboriginal and English descent.

She had a disrupted education due to her father's mental illness and she left school at 14 to work in various factories. At 18 she moved to Sydney and married a cousin, Ron Eatock. They lived in Green Valley and by the time she was 26 she had had two miscarriages and five children, one of which was profoundly disabled.

She began to publicly identify as an Aboriginal in 1957 when she attended a meeting of the Union of Australian Women at which Faith Bandler spoke, but her political activities were limited by her family commitments until 1972, when she attended a FCAATSI land rights conference in Alice Springs with her sixth child.

In 1972 she left her husband and, with her baby, joined the Aboriginal Embassy in Canberra and participated in the protests against its removal. She lived initially in the Canberra headquarters of the Women's Liberation movement. She became the first Aboriginal candidate to stand for Federal parliament in the ACT when she campaigned, unsuccessfully, as an independent in the 1972 elections. Her platform, endorsed by the newly-formed Women's Electoral Lobby, focussed on Aboriginal, women's and children's issues.

In 1973 she enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree, becoming the first non-matriculated mature age student at the Australian National University. Majoring in Philosophy and History, she graduated in 1977. In 1975 she was sponsored by the government to attend the Alternative Tribune to the International Women's Year World Conference in Mexico City, and also attend the Women in Politics Conference in Canberra that year.

Her public service career included working as a Project Officer in the Department of Social Security's Aboriginal Unit (1978-81), and in the EEO unit of the NSW Department of TAFE (1987-89). In 1991-92 she lectured in community development at Curtin University, Western Australia. In December 1992 she established Perleeka Aboriginal Television, which she managed until its demise in 1996. Through it she trained Aboriginal film-makers, produced films for community television, and unsuccessfully attempted to open an Aboriginal TV channel. She taught Aboriginal Studies at James Cook University in 1997, and in 1999 undertook a one-year preliminary course with the intention of beginning a Masters degree in history at the University of Queensland.

In 2011 Pat Eatock came to public attention when she brought a case of racial discrimination against Andrew Bolt, journalist with the Herald and Weekly Times newspaper, the Herald Sun. The case was heard in the Federal Court of Australia. Bolt wrote a number of articles implying that people of fair skin who identified as Aboriginal did so for social and political advantage. Pat Eatock's case was upheld and the court directed the newspaper organisation to print a corrective notice.

Published resources

Article

Aunty Pat Eatock Passes Away Quietly After a Lifetime Of Glorious Noise Making, Graham, Chris, 2015, <https://newmatilda.com/2015/03/17/aunty-pat-eatock-passes-away-quietly-after-lifetime-glorious-noise-making>

A History of Section 18C and the Racial Discrimination Act, Marlow, Karina, 2016, <http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/08/16/history-section-18c-and-racial-discrimination-act>

Book Section

There's a Snake in My Caravan, Eatock, Pat, 1987

Pamphlet

A small but stinging twig : reflections of a black campaigner, Eatock, Pat, 1973

Journal Article

Black Demo, Eatock, Pat, 1973

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Federal Court of Australia: Eatock v Bolt (No 2) [2011] FCA 1180, Federal Court of Australia, 2011, http://www.justinian.com.au/storage/pdf/eatock_bolt_2.pdf

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

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

Resource Section

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

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

Pat Eatock interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens [sound recording]

[Interview with Pat Eatock for the 'Interchange' programme December 21, 1977: a 2XX Radio Station broadcast \[sound recording\] / interviewer: Biff Ward.](#)

Author Details

Ann-Mari Jordens

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