

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1257

Colless, Daphne Rosina

(1928 - 2016)

Born 1 January, 1928, Ayr Queensland Australia

Died 10 June, 2016

Occupation Administrator, Community worker, Public servant

Summary

From working at the meatworks of Qeerah, Queensland, Rose Colless went on to be Queensland Commissioner for Aborigines and manage a centre for the rehabilitation of alcoholics before being presented with an Order of Australia Medal and an Australian human rights award.

Details

Daphne Rosina (Rose) Colless grew up in Ayr and Cairns, Queensland. She was offered a high school church scholarship, but her mother was persuaded by other children's (non-indigenous) mothers that this would be a waste of time. Rosina left school to do housework for ten shillings a week.

Colless worked at the meatworks at Qeerah from 1961 to 1973, becoming a union delegate before taking the position of Liaison Officer with the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, and later with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, visiting communities throughout north Queensland. In 1977 she became a Queensland Commissioner for Aborigines and advised the state government on indigenous issues. Her criticism of government actions on Aurukun and Mornington Island led to her losing this job.

In 1974 Colless became a director of Douglas House, a centre for the rehabilitation of alcoholics. In 1978 she became its manager, acquiring a farm on the tablelands and setting up meals in the park for the destitute.

Colless was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 1984, and in 1987 received an Australian human rights award.

Published resources

Edited Book

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

Book

Murawina : Australian women of high achievement, Roberta Sykes ; photography by Sandy Edwards, 1993

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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Created 27 July 2005

Last modified 8 August 2019