



www.alc.org.au

LIBERATE AND EMPOWER ABORIGINAL
PEOPLE IN NEW SOUTH WALES THROUGH
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

A life too short – the sad passing of Judy Chester

5 May, 2010

Chairperson of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, Bev Manton, today expressed her deep sadness at the death of Judy Chester, a significant figure in the land rights movement in NSW, but also a leading light in women's rights, trade unionism and Aboriginal education.

Ms Manton said Judy, who passed away on Sunday, May 2, after a brief battle with cancer, was instrumental in the founding of the Liverpool-based Gandangara Aboriginal Land Council.

"In fact, Judy was Gandangara's first chairperson," Ms Manton said. "More broadly, she played a significant role in Aboriginal Affairs in New South Wales for several decades."

Judy was the partner of Kevin Cook, one of the founders of the NSW Aboriginal Lands Rights network.

"Like Kevin, Judy honed her skills in the trade union movement.

"She was an active member of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), worked for the CPSU as a key union organiser as well as being instrumental in the establishment of the CPSU's Aboriginal network in New South Wales."

Ms Manton said Judy was also an active member of the women's movement and was a key figure in the establishment and growth of Tranby Aboriginal College at Glebe.

But it was Judy's determination to fight for land rights – and black rights - that Ms Manton most remembers.

"When it came to Aboriginal land, Judy was passionate about land rights and the need for Aboriginal people to secure land as an economic base for future generations.

"She deserves to be remembered not just as Kevin's partner, but in her own right as a great champion for her people, as someone who devoted her life to righting wrongs.

“Judy never backed down from her beliefs, nor compromised them. She committed her life and considerable energy to fighting against racism, ignorance and paternalism

“Judy was a great Australian who fought to try and make Australia a fairer and better country for us all.”

“Judy has left us early, as is the fate of too many Aboriginal men and women. She will be missed by both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community – Australia, and New South Wales in particular, is the poorer for her loss.”

“Our hearts are with her husband Kevin, who himself is in ill health, and their family at this time.

“May she rest in peace.”

Judy was 59 years of age.

A simple graveside service – in line with Judy’s wishes - will be held in Wellington at Wellington Cemetery at midday on Friday, May 7.

A LIFE TOO BRIEF - OBITUARY

Born in Wellington, New South Wales, the daughter of Tom and Sally Smith, the family moved to Sydney when Judy was 10 years of age.

But Judy never forgot the family’s connection to country at Nanima and Wellington’s Aboriginal Reserve just outside of the town.

Not only did she work tirelessly to establish the Gandangara Aboriginal Land Council, she was its first Chairperson.

Judy also played an active role in the development of Tranby Aboriginal College at Glebe.

Judy worked at Tranby for many years and during the 1980s and 1990s was a key figure in the establishment of Tranby’s many innovative community development programs, and served as a Board member of Tranby on a number of occasions.

Judy was also actively involved in the early development of a number of national Aboriginal organisations.

Judy was a cornerstone of partner Kevin Cook's life and attended the 25th anniversary celebrations to commemorate the establishment of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (ALRA) in 2007.

Together with Uncle Kevin, Judy also fought for black rights.

They shared all their aspirations and dreams together. They also spent over 25 years together.

Judy is survived by her three children and six grand children.

She was 59 years of age.

A simple graveside service – in line with Judy's wishes - will be held in Wellington at Wellington Cemetery at midday on Friday, May 7.

Further information: Chris Graham 0407 555328