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PEOPLE IN NEW SOUTH WALES THROUGH
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

NEW SOUTH WALES LOSES ANOTHER GREAT FIGHTER

1 June, 2009

The death of respected Aboriginal activist Bobby McLeod will be deeply felt by Aboriginal people and the wider community in New South Wales, the Chairperson of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC), Bev Manton, said today.

Bobby rose from humble beginnings in Wreck Bay to become a leading Aboriginal rights activist, poet, healer, musician and Yuin elder.

“It is true measure of the man that he rose from abject poverty to become a great and respected leader.

“As a young man Bobby became actively involved in the fight for Aboriginal rights in Australia and travelled the world speaking about his people’s position in Australia.

“In those days he spoke about the problems Aboriginal people faced because of a lack of housing and poor health which resulted in high infant mortality rates, disease, blindness and low life expectancy.

“He also spoke about the legal system, policing, constitutional change, customary law and how Indigenous cultures and languages were being destroyed, “ Ms Manton said.

His struggle against adversity was a constant reality from an early age, instilling in him a fierce determination to battle the odds for a better life for all.

“Although Bobby experienced almost every aspect of human adversity and deprivation of social justice, he never allowed these hurdles to negatively influence his efforts and his pursuit to reconcile the many differences between indigenous and non indigenous Australians,” Ms Manton said.

“During the 1970s Bobby McLeod had a reputation as a hard man and was regarded as a radical. That battle has taken him to the front line of the Black Movement, protesting on the lawns of Parliament House, and beyond.

“On his journey from poverty to Parliament House, Bobby experienced unemployment and discrimination that hardened his resolve to work within the political system to improve conditions for Aboriginal people.

He was also instrumental in the establishment of the Aboriginal Legal services. He also established the Doonooch Healing Centre, a rehabilitation facility that has helped thousands of Aboriginal Australians regain their health.

Mr McLeod was also well known as a singer, songwriter, performer, writer and political activists and along with the Doonooch Dancers performed at the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games

“A voice for our people, and of our people, has been stilled. But we will continue to hear it in our hearts forever.

“His memory will continue to inspire all who knew him.”

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