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media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Australia has lost one of its most outstanding musicians

February 18, 2010

The sudden death of Aboriginal artist and activist Ruby Hunter was a terrible loss to the Australian and Aboriginal community, said New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council Chairperson, Bev Manton today.

"The New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council was shocked to hear of her passing away," Chairperson Manton said in Sydney.

"Ruby, a Ngarrindjeri woman, was born at a billabong near the banks of the Murray River in South Australia. She used her enormous talents to promote the culture of her people."

When only eight years old, she was forcibly removed from her family and grew up in foster homes and institutions, eventually living on the streets in Adelaide where she met Archie Roach.

They formed one of the longest lasting and most influential duos in Australian music, and in particular in Aboriginal music.

"She worked closely with people at a grass roots level, especially those less certain about themselves, under the demands of both their own and western cultures.

"Her dedication to those who had fallen on hard times was recognised by the mainstream community. This was reflected in her songs and music.

"Ruby was blessed with a gift for just being there — being there when anybody needed her. She gave herself and everything she could to make thousands of people feel good. She was a mother figure and trusted helpmate and adviser to generations of Aboriginal people".

Chairperson Manton said outside of her contribution to music, Ruby Hunter spent most of her time sharing her knowledge and her culture with school children throughout Australia through her music.

"Ruby will be remembered by all who knew her for her stately presence and her passion for her people.

"Our thoughts go to Archie, her husband and their family and community. I hope they can take comfort from the memory of her achievements," Chairperson Manton said.

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