

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0153

Dixon, Patricia

(- 2001)

Died 30 September, 2001

Occupation Politician

Summary

Patricia Dixon was the first aboriginal woman elected to local parliament in New South Wales, and the first Aboriginal woman federal candidate for the ALP.

Details

A Dungguddy woman, Patricia Dixon was born on the Macleay River near Kempsey, New South Wales and raised on a reserve near Bellbrook. Her extended family included many aunts and uncles, nine sisters and three brothers, but Patricia was separated from her family at the age of 13. Sent away by the Aboriginal Welfare Board, she worked in domestic service in a wealthy private home in Sydney.

As an Aboriginal person growing up in the 1950s, she was excluded from high school, but attended primary school, and eventually returned to study as a mature-age student.

After working in Sydney for several years, Patricia married Doug Dixon and had two sons, Graham and Douglas. The family soon moved to Armidale, where Patricia worked as a cleaner. She joined the Labor party in the late 70's, and her involvement in local politics began. Much of her work since then focussed on enhancing Aboriginal involvement in local governance and mainstream civic affairs. In 1983 she was elected to Armidale City Council, becoming the first Aboriginal person elected to local government in NSW. Working with Lowitje (Lois) O'Donoghue, she saw numbers of Aboriginal people participating in local councils nationally build to over 600 in 1998.

Dixon spent over 17 years in local government, serving on the Armidale City Council as a member and, for three years, as Deputy Mayor. She also worked for the Australian Local Government Association (Canberra) and the Department of Local Government in NSW. She served as Chairperson of the Armidale & District Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place; was a member of the NSW State Committee for Reconciliation; and was the Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Medical Service in Armidale at the time of her death.

In 1997, Patricia Dixon was pre-selected by the Australian Labor Party in the seat of New England, becoming the first Aboriginal woman federal candidate for the ALP. She passed away just before the 2001 Federal Election was called.

Published resources

Resource

Excerpt of speech by Lowitja (Lois) O'Donoghue, Lowitja O'Donoghue, 1998,
<http://labor.net.au/emilyslist/news/speeches/980321Lowitja.html>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Journal Article

Hope for us all. -The importance of local government in strengthening Aboriginal communities., Pat Dixon, 1993

Newspaper Article

Uphill Battle for Stronghold Seat, Hill, K., 1997

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