

Vale

Aboriginal activist and actor Rosalie Kunothe-Monks dies aged 85



Rosalie Kunothe-Monks was the Northern Territory Australian of the Year in 2015.

By Josh Dye
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Rosalie Kunothe-Monks, Aboriginal activist and film star, has died aged 85.

The Arrernte and Anmatjerre woman was born in 1937 at remote Utopia station in the Northern Territory where she lived until the age of nine.

She has been remembered as someone who played an active social and political role advocating for Aboriginal people.

In 1955, Kunothe-Monks played the lead role in classic Australian film *Jedda*.

She then spent 10 years as a nun in an Anglican convent in Melbourne before setting up Victoria's first Aboriginal hostel, where she lobbied for housing, education and medical care for Indigenous Australians.

After returning home to the NT, Kunothe-Monks sought election to the NT Legislative Assembly to prevent the building of a dam on sacred land.

She was not elected but continued opposing plans for the project, which was torn up in 1992. In 2008 she became president of the NT's Barkly Shire.

She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the Aboriginal community in 1993, and received the NT Australian of the Year award in 2015. Appearing on the ABC's Q&A program in 2014, she famously spoke out against Aboriginal assimilation.

"My language [lives on] in spite of whiteness trying to penetrate into my brain by assimilationists," she said.

"I am alive. I am here and now and I speak my language. I practise my cultural essence of me. Don't try and suppress me and don't call me a problem. I am not the problem."

Malarndirri McCarthy, a federal Labor senator for NT, paid tribute to the "beautiful" woman.

"Ms Kunoth-Monks was a formidable force, an outstanding woman, elder, NT leader and Australian icon, whose legacy of strong social justice values will be missed deeply," she wrote on social media.

Olympian and former politician Nova Peris described Kunoth-Monks as "a staunch Arrernte Anmatjere woman, a true leader and warrior for human rights. A relentless social and political activist."

Kunoth-Monks died surrounded by family in Alice Spring hospital on Wednesday after having several strokes, Melbourne Indigenous radio station 3KND reported.

The family of Rosalie Kunoth-Monks gave permission for her image to be published.