

Topic: ADJOURNMENT

Subject: Adjournment debate

Date: 08/16/1995

Member: Mr STONE

Status: Chief Minister

Information:

Extract from Adjournment Debate

Vai Stanton

Time prevented me from raising this matter in the last sittings of the Assembly. I refer to Vai Stanton, a well-known and respected community worker for many years, who passed away recently. Vai and I had our stoushes from time to time. I knew her through her association with FORWAARD, which is located in Stuart Park, but also through St Mary's parish.

Vai was the second oldest of 9 children and was born on 19 September 1929. In the 1930s, she and her sisters went to school in Katherine and the family was evacuated to Balaklava in South Australia during World War II. After the war, Vai worked at Katherine Hospital and married Jim Stanton in the old Catholic church there in 1948. Anxious to help young Aboriginal girls, Vai worked for the Native Affairs Department at Bagot during the 1950s, teaching the Aboriginal girls how to sew, herself having been trained in the art by her mother, Polly McGinness. FORWAARD is a project created by Vai and her sister Kathy. She was a foundation member and did a considerable amount of voluntary work before becoming its director. This was during the period 1971 to 1994. She served on the Yilli Rreung ATSIC Regional Council and was a foundation member of Karu, the Aboriginal Child Care Agency. She also served with Danila Dilba.

Vai Stanton was a strong believer in Aboriginal culture. She spoke often about her mother, a Gurindji woman, who was taken from the family when she was 6 years old and placed in the Darwin Aboriginal compound. Vai had a great affinity with nature and with Aboriginal relationship to the land. On one occasion, she said: 'We all have our own personal dreamings. Myself, I belong to the Monsoon Dreaming - thunder and lightning, the works. I think I am one of those people who really feels their dreaming. The build-up to the monsoon is very important to me. I feel it. I live it, I know that really bad hot days are going to end when the rains come. I am in tune with my dreaming'.

This great Territory woman was laid to rest after a lifetime of service to Aboriginal people. I offer my condolences to the Stanton and McGinness families on this sad occasion.