



CHIEF MINISTER

PARLIAMENT HOUSE
DARWIN NT 0800
TELEPHONE: (08) 8999 6222

GPO BOX 3146
DARWIN NT 0801
FACSIMILE: (08) 8999 6670

23 April, 1997

Mrs Pearl Ogden
3/121 Playford Street
PARAP NT 0804

Dear Pearl

I am pleased to enclose (*) an extract of Hansard which will be of interest to you.

Hansard is the official verbatim report of speeches made in the Legislative Assembly. As such, they form part of the official history of the Territory and are maintained for the life of our Parliament (effectively forever).

This particular extract from Hansard is taken from the Adjournment Debates where Members of Parliament have an opportunity to speak about people and events of significance in our community.

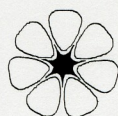
It was a privilege to be able to make these remarks about Elsie Raymond who was a remarkable Territorian.

Yours faithfully

A blue ink handwritten signature that reads "Shane".

Shane L. Stone

Encl (*)



Topic: Adjournment

Mr STONE (Chief Minister): Madam Deputy Speaker, It is with regret that I have learned of the passing of a senior Aboriginal elder, Elsie Raymond of the Wardaman people near Katherine. I am mindful and respectful of the ways of the Aboriginal people. In giving this speech tonight, I advise that I have been in contact with the Raymond family and Oliver Raymond has given permission for this speech and the use of his mother's name.

The Wardaman people take their names, kinship and social groupings through the matriarchal side of the family. At the time of her death, Elsie was the matriarch. Born Nonomarran and known to the family as 'Nono', her European name was Elsie. The Wardaman dreaming is the Lightning Brothers, seen at 2 massive painting sites on Willeroo and Delamere Stations, now well publicised by Bill Harney, an Aboriginal relative who conducts tours of the area. Many of the painting sites at Willeroo, Delamere and Innesvale Stations were visited by Elsie and her family when she was a child. In recent years, they have been the focus of research by archaeologists. There have been archaeological digs at several of the sites. In earlier times, the family travelled their walking paths, often walking from Delamere Station across Willeroo Station to Manbulloo Station, near Katherine.

Elsie was born to Wardaman parents, Maggie and Billycan, around 1930 on Delamere Station. She was the oldest living child of 6 children. Elsie was raised learning how to hunt, trap and cook bush tucker, always living in the traditional manner of the Wardaman people. During the war years, her family moved to Manbulloo Station. It was a frightening time for them - they had never seen so many whitefellas together at one time. It was there that her father, Billycan, died in the army hospital. Their whole existence at the time was dominated by Vestey's who owned the properties on which they were born, lived and worked. In the early 1920s, Billycan worked for the then Delamere Station manager, Ted Fogarty.

Elsie's mother, Maggie, came from that era of our history when part-Aboriginal children were often removed from their families by the authorities. She was to lose several children, as was Elsie. As a very young girl, Elsie, according to tribal law, was promised to a very old man in marriage. At the last minute, the family became upset with the prospective husband. He was rejected and the family took Elsie from Delamere Station to Willeroo Station. Elsie married Kaiser Raymond, a Mudbura man from Wave Hill Station. They were to have 6 children, including a set of twins who unfortunately died.

In the early 1970s, Elsie and her family were part of a pilot housing program. For the first time in her life, Elsie lived in a 'proper house', in Katherine. It was a difficult time for her, adapting to town living, putting her young children into school and trying to be fair to her relatives, some of whom were having

problems with the grog. She approached this in the same manner as she did everything in her life - with strength, with courage and with an enjoyment of life. Elsie was there for some time with her family but finally moved away, preferring the bush life to living in town. Many of the Wardaman people now live on Binjari, land granted under an excision from Manbulloo Station in 1990. It was there that Elsie moved, with many of her relatives, after problems were experienced at Kalano.

In the early 1990s, Elsie discovered that the new management at Manbulloo Station had bulldozed an area of land which contained 43 Aboriginal graves, including those of her grandmother and other members of her family. She was very irate and marched into the Katherine office of the Northern Land Council, demanding that they have representatives of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority mark the site and place a sign with the names of all of the deceased, both on that site and on another that she knew of. Staff of the NLC were in awe of her at that time. For an uneducated woman by European Australian standards, she showed great courage in taking on the NLC and demanding that the AAPA mark the site.

In 1990, Elsie and her family, as part of the Wurrkleni Association, were granted land which was an excision from Willeroo Station under the community living areas legislation. From then on, she divided her time between living at Wurrkleni and at Binjari. Elsie never left the Aboriginal way of life. She was active in all ceremonies in which members of her family were involved. She ensured that her family knew their Wardaman heritage by regularly taking them to painting sites out bush where, along with Tarpot, Billy Harney and others, the knowledge of their dreaming was shared. She was never slow to reprimand her relatives when they were drinking excessively and she was very disapproving of young women who drank and neglected their children. However, she was never judgmental and never refused them when they needed her. She was a lady of great spirit and character.

Elsie Raymond was keenly and actively involved with Dr Francesca Merlan, who spent a number of years working on a book entitled A Wardaman Grammar. Elsie patiently recorded the stories and language of her people for Dr Merlan. One day, when she was preparing to attend a young man's ceremony for one of her relatives, she said to Francesca Merlan in Wardaman: 'If you were black, your heart would be beating for him as mine is'. For the past few years, her stepfather, Tarpot, lived with her on a permanent basis and she looked after him in his old age. She was a very kind, loving and generous woman who was always surrounded by dozens of children, including her own grandchildren and others for whom she was caring. She was a well-loved and well-respected elder of her people, with a profound knowledge of the Victoria River region, its people and their histories. She was a Wardaman woman who was happy to live the traditional way and use European Australian things as and when she needed them in her life. I extend my personal sympathy to the family and friends of this courageous and outstanding Aboriginal Territorian.