

arising from award restructuring, in which the librarians may be disadvantaged. ALIA does not normally involve itself in individual industrial disagreements or disputes, but the Association has a strong interest in ensuring that the status of the profession is recognised and enhanced.

Classification arrangements (for ex-

ample in NSW Local Government) where different professional groups are integrated into a single-stream structure have potential benefits for librarians, because librarianship has often been undervalued relative to other groups. But historical inequities will only be corrected if the new structure properly recognises the status of

library staff. If it does not, a new set of inappropriate relativities could be set in place, with opportunities for redressing them possibly years away.

I would be most interested to hear from members who are having difficulties of this kind, so that ALIA can make representations to the authorities concerned. ■

The Australian Book Fair 1993

To be opened by Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal, a great Australian

Aboriginal elder and author Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal, custodian of the land Minjerribah, will embody the spirit and intent of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People when she officiates at the opening of the second Australian Book Fair to be held at Darling Harbour on 26 and 27 June, 1993.

Oodgeroo, writer, artist, lecturer, poet, was born Kathleen Jean Mary Ruska on 3 November 1920, on North Stradbroke, an island in Moreton Bay about 30 kilometres east of Brisbane, and the home of the Noonuccal tribe. At the age of 13, and as an Aborigine with no future in the State Education System, Kath went into domestic service in Brisbane, from which she was rescued by serving in the Australian Women's Army Services in WWII. She married Bruce Walker, a waterside worker in Brisbane, and had two sons Denis and Vivian.

The sixties saw Kath become a prominent figure as she wrote and spoke for Aboriginal Rights. In 1965 her first volume of verse and the first by an Australian Aborigine, *We Are Going*, was published by The Jacaranda Press (with the encouragement of Judith Wright and the aid of a Commonwealth Literary Fund). Her second volume, *The Dawn is at Hand*, followed in 1966. They were to be the forerunners of a considerable output which includes short stories, speeches, paintings, drama and film.

The Civil Rights struggle of the 60s

and 70s saw Kath active on many local, State and, later, National Committees. In 1969 Kath Walker was the Australian delegate to the World Council of Churches



Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal

Consultation on Racism in London, bringing the plight of her people to overseas attention for the first time. This was the beginning of many journeys overseas: Fiji, Malaysia, PNG and Nigeria (surviving a plane hijack on her way home).

In 1978-79 she won a Fulbright Scholarship and Myer Travel Grant to the USA. In these same years, almost as if it were a necessary antidote to travel, she established Moongalba, or 'sitting down place', a five-hectare piece of coastal bushland on North Stradbroke Island where archaeological evidence shows that her ancestors had been in occupation for over 20 000 years. There in her caravan she welcomed visitors of all ages and races.

For many Aboriginal and Islander children from the cities, this was their first experience of the natural way of life of their ancestors. For people of other races it

was a rare insight into another culture. To date, over 28 000 children and adults have learned about Aboriginal food-gathering practices, participated in a revival of arts and crafts, and listened to aboriginal story tellers, and by so doing have come to understand, and more particularly respect, the often fragile but sustaining interrelationships of Australian nature.

The seventies and eighties saw more books and films, and also Kath's close involvement with the Land Rights Movement, which culminated in despair when the Federal Labour Government refused to honour its promise to enact National Land Rights Legislation.

So Kath Walker became Oodgeroo of the tribe Noonuccal, custodian of the land Minjerribah. Many of her awards she retained but in 1987, as a Bicentennial protest, she returned the insignia of the MBE (awarded back in 1970) to the Crown. Notwithstanding this action, Oodgeroo and her son Kabul (Vivian) were scriptwriters and producers for the Dreamtime story *The Rainbow Serpent*, which was a major feature of the Australian Pavilion at the World Expo 88. 1988 was also the year of the award of an honorary Doctor of Letters from Macquarie University, and the following year Griffith University awarded her the degree of Doctor of the University. And in 1990 she published the third edition of *My People*, which includes the rich detail of her own biography.



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