

Archive No. 12

Jan Chapman-Davis (13 February 1947 -)

Jan was born in Geelong and raised in her grandmother's house with various aunts, uncles and cousins till she was six, then moved with her parents and siblings to their own house. She was educated at a Catholic school and left when she was fourteen to work in a shoe factory where she was taught on the job.

Jan married at 18, had four children and left in 1973, when the youngest was 12 months old, because she knew she was a lesbian. She went to live in a lesbian household in Brighton, the first of many over the ensuing years.

During the 1970s Jan was actively involved in various women's protests and marches and in 1975, International Women's Year, Jan was hired to run a handyman's workshop at Monash Uni for IWD week. In 1980 Jan got a job at Women's Liberation Halfway House and as well as the general duties of a paid worker supporting women who were dealing with domestic violence she participated in the making of the film, *Women Break Out*, where she had the job of boom operator.

In 1988 Jan went up to Sydney to participate in the Long March, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protest against the Bicentennial. She wanted to come to terms with herself as an Aboriginal person and felt she had to be there as much for her grandchildren, to pass on that indigenous heritage, as for herself.

Jan was eligible for Abstudy and went back to study, immersed herself in the activities and became a part of the Aboriginal community in Victoria. In much the same way as her Aboriginal grandmother was an important and influential person in her life from an early age, Jan has become an all-important influence on her nine grandchildren.

Despite the after effects of a broken hip, in later years Jan never lost her handyman skills and was still able to paint walls and put up shelving. She also loved doing gardening and growing her own vegies.