

Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal)

- (1920–93)
- Poet, activist, educator

Kath Walker was born on North Stradbroke Island in Moreton Bay off Brisbane. As a young woman, she worked as a domestic and as a telephonist. She had a natural gift with words and was encouraged to pursue her writing. She became the first Aborigine to be published in Australia – and her first compilation of poetry was an immediate best-seller.

Kath used her writing as a bridge between white and black Australia. She wanted Indigenous Australians to be proud of their heritage and she wanted white Australia to understand Indigenous' ways and feelings. She wanted reconciliation.

She was able to use her profile as a poet to push the Indigenous cause.

Kath was secretary of the Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, and Queensland campaign organiser for the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

She was awarded an MBE in 1970 – which she handed back in 1988 as a mark of disappointment in the lack of progress made to reconcile Indigenous and white Australia.