

Vale David Dalaithngu AM

The Australia Council wishes to acknowledge the passing of David Dalaithngu AM and recognise his extraordinary contribution to Australian arts and culture.

The Yolngu actor, dancer and painter from Arnhem Land performed at the Australia Council's first Aboriginal Arts Board meeting in 1973, and went on to achieve significant local and international acclaim during an acting career spanning 50 years.

Dalaithngu starred in numerous films including Walkabout, Last Wave, Crocodile Dundee, The Tracker, Rabbit-Proof Fence, Ten Canoes and Charlie's Country. His final film was a documentary about his own life, directed by Molly Reynolds, which was released earlier this year.

Among his impressive achievements, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1987, was awarded a Centenary Medal for his Australian contribution to society in 2001 and received the Australia Council's Red Ochre Award in 2013.

The Australia Council has been a long-time supporter of Dalaithngu since the early stages of his career, providing a number of grants during the 1970s which supported his training and development in film. The Council also provided support towards the film Manangrida which he produced and directed.

Australia Council CEO Adrian Collette AM said:

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of such an important artist and legend of Australian film. David Dalaithngu was a remarkable ambassador for First Nations representation in the film and screen industry. We were privileged to have witnessed the work of this one-of-a-kind artist and his legacy will endure. We pay our respects to his friends, family and Yolngu community."

Australia Council Executive Director First Nations Arts and Culture Franchesca Cubillo said:

"David Dalaithngu was a trailblazer and an inspiration for other First Nations actors and filmmakers. He helped to share First Nations culture and stories, and left an indelible mark on Australia and the world."