

Media Release

27 March 2026



NITV to broadcast farewell to Rhoda Roberts AO with special coverage and week-long tribute



National Indigenous Television (NITV) will provide special live coverage of the funeral of proud Widjabul Wиейbal First Nations Cultural trailblazer, Rhoda Roberts AO, to be held on Tuesday 31 March at St Carthage's Cathedral in Lismore, her beloved Bundjalung Country.

At the request of Rhoda's family, NITV will broadcast the funeral service from 12:15pm AEDT on Tuesday, available on NITV, SBS On Demand and on [NITV Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). The broadcast will be presented by NITV's Head of News and Current Affairs, Natalie Ahmat, and SBS and NITV's National Indigenous Affairs Editor, John Paul Janke. NITV's coverage reflects the family's wishes to make this moment of farewell accessible to the many people and communities she was connected to, worked with, and touched through her life and work.

Later that evening, NITV will commence a week of special programming, paying tribute to Rhoda's immense contribution across culture, theatre, arts, dance, media, journalism and public life in Australia, including as the inaugural SBS Elder in Residence.



Rhoda Roberts AO: A Lasting Legacy is a curated collection of programs airing nightly from Tuesday 31 March to Monday 6 April. The collection honours the breadth of Rhoda's work as one of Australia's most influential leaders in the arts and creative sector, and recognises her pioneering role in strengthening First Nations representation. It offers Australians an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate her remarkable achievements and enduring cultural impact, following her passing on Saturday 21 March, aged 66.

Each evening, SBS Director, First Nations, Tanya Denning-Orman, will provide a special introduction, offering insight into Rhoda's impact across the many areas she shaped, and why each program holds significance in telling her story.

"On Tuesday, we come together to farewell Rhoda, guided by her family, her community and her spirit," Denning-Orman said. "We are honoured to share this moment with people across the country and around the world, for all those who walked with her, learned from her, and who want to come together to say goodbye, in keeping with the wishes of Rhoda and her family.

"We are also marking her extraordinary legacy with a dedicated week of programming - a time for cultural remembrance, storytelling and collective reflection. From her powerful orations as SBS's inaugural Elder in Residence to her one-woman show *My Cousin Frank*, and her deep love of music, dance and storytelling, Rhoda carried culture into every space with strength, pride and purpose. This collection is a tribute to her passion, fierce advocacy and enduring commitment to creating pathways for the next generation, and all she has left for us to carry on."

"As Rhoda returns to the Dreaming, we honour a life that lives on in the stories we tell and the work we carry forward in her name," Denning-Orman said.

NITV's seven-day collection of programming, *Rhoda Roberts AO: A Lasting Legacy*, includes:

Forever Held in Country

Tuesday 31 March at 8:25pm on NITV and SBS on Demand

This slow TV program pays tribute to Bundjalung Widjabul Wиейbal woman, Rhoda Roberts AO, tracing her enduring connection to Country. Guided by the four winds, the journey travels across the continent, beginning on Bundjalung Country. Rhoda's cultural leadership helped establish Welcome to Country as an integral part of Australia's national life - not as a symbolic act, but as a step toward meaningful recognition and lasting change for First Nations peoples.

2024 SBS Elder In Residence Oration with Stan Grant

Wednesday 1 April at 8:25pm on NITV and SBS On Demand

Appointed as SBS's inaugural Elder in Residence in 2021, Rhoda Roberts AO delivered three SBS Elder in Residence Orations. In this powerful conversation with Wiradjuri man and renowned journalist Stan Grant, Rhoda reflects on the 2024 NAIDOC Week theme, 'Keep the Fire Burning, Blak Loud and Proud'. Known for her groundbreaking work in the arts, this program honours her leadership and impact in journalism revealing the strength of her voice and the legacy she leaves for all Australians.

My Cousin Frank

Thursday 2 April at 8:30pm on NITV and SBS On Demand

NITV is proud to premiere the one-woman stage show, *My Cousin Frank*, on national television. Written and performed by Rhoda, *My Cousin Frank* tells the true story of her cousin, Francis "Frank" Roberts, Australia's first Aboriginal Olympian. This powerful performance was recorded at the Sydney Opera House in December last year, following sold out performances in other cities, directed by Kirk Page and produced by Northern Rivers Performing Arts (NOPRA). It



traces Frank's journey to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics as a boxer, his fight for justice as a non-citizen in his own country, and his resilience in the face of colonial adversity. *My Cousin Frank* provides insight into the Roberts family, and into the story of Cubawee, the Aboriginal reserve where Frank grew up, outside of Lismore.

Radiance

Friday 3 April at 9:00pm on NITV and SBS on Demand

In 1993, alongside Lydia Miller, Rhoda Roberts commissioned Louis Nowra's *Radiance* and starred in its acclaimed Belvoir St Theatre production. It became a defining work of the Blak Theatre Movement. The screen adaptation, directed by Rachel Perkins and starring Deborah Mailman, follows three sisters who reunite after their mother's death, confronting family tensions and shared histories. It marked a breakthrough moment, with Mailman becoming the first Aboriginal woman to win an AFI Award.

2012 From the Heart of the Nation Concert

Saturday 4 April at 8:35pm on NITV and SBS On Demand

On 12 December 2012, NITV launched on free-to-air television, as part of the SBS network. To celebrate the occasion, a special concert was broadcast from Uluru, featuring some of Australia's best Indigenous artists. At the heart of this historic day was Rhoda Roberts AO who not only co-hosted live coverage of the launch broadcast, but was pivotal in bringing the celebration to Uluru — working with deep cultural respect and strong relationships with Anangu to deliver a powerful concert of national significance. Hosted by Ernie Dingo, the concert featured iconic First Nations artists including Troy Cassar-Daley, Frank Yamma, Christine Anu, Casey Donovan and Warren H Williams, performing in celebration of the strength, resilience and talent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Cubawee: Tribute to Rhoda Roberts AO

Sunday 5 April at 8:30pm on NITV and SBS On Demand

Following a performance of *My Cousin Frank* at the Sydney Opera House in December last year, friends, colleagues, political figures and cultural leaders gathered to honour Rhoda Roberts' remarkable contribution to Australian arts and culture. Among tributes, Quandamooka man, celebrated playwright, artistic director and friend Wesley Enoch, reflects on Rhoda's powerful intersection of theatre, arts and politics - and how she reshaped national stages. The Governor General of Australia, Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, pays homage to Rhoda's family, recognising the foundation that grounded her leadership. John Morse OAM, Rhoda's mentor, speaks to her extraordinary role in bringing Country to life, including her pivotal contribution to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, a moment that carried First Nations cultures to the world.

Garma Bunggul

Monday 6 April at 9:30pm on NITV and SBS On Demand

Rhoda Roberts played a key role in elevating Yolŋu culture on the national and international stage. Through her longstanding relationship with the Yolŋu people and the Yothu Yindi Foundation, she helped shape the early vision of the Garma Festival of Traditional Cultures, as a space where culture is centred, sovereign and strong. The Garma Festival has become one of Australia's largest Indigenous gatherings and most significant Indigenous affairs forum. This program will showcase the strength and beauty of Yolŋu cultural practice through Bunggul – a powerful expression of storytelling, movement and connection to Country, showcased at the Festival each afternoon as the sun sets at Gulkula.



Following the week of dedicated programming, *Rhoda Roberts AO: A Lasting Legacy*, will be available as a collection on SBS On Demand.

This programming will also encore on SBS throughout April.

NITV will broadcast the funeral of Rhoda Roberts AO, from 12:15-2:10pm AEDT, Tuesday 31 March, on NITV, SBS On Demand, NITV Facebook and on the NITV YouTube channel.

***Rhoda Roberts AO: A Lasting Legacy* will feature on NITV and SBS On Demand from Tuesday 31 March to Monday 6 April.**

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For further information and images, please contact:

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Please refer to the Media Guidelines and Cultural Protocols provided for further information about coverage of this event.

NITV is the only media outlet permitted access within the venue to capture the service, at the family's request. The live broadcast feed will be available to other broadcasters (SBS MCR DVN Split with NITV top left bug). For further information or requests, contact Sarah Vahtola.

Media use approval

In consideration of Indigenous cultural protocols, SBS and NITV has gained permission to use and reproduce Rhoda's name, voice and image, and are doing so in line with her wishes. We also continue to consult with her family and community.

Media are permitted to use and reproduce Rhoda's name, voice and image. Media may refer to her as Rhoda Roberts AO, a Widjabul Wиейbal woman of the Bundjalung nation. Supplied image/s are approved for all media use. All video and audio content is also approved for media use.

** We acknowledge that Widjabul Wиейbal is also spelt Widjabul Wia-bal or Widjabul Wiyabal.*



SBS acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

This media release features 'The Great Ancestral Eel', an artwork reflecting the Story of Country developed by Rhoda Roberts AO for SBS and NITV. The artwork was created Ngarbal Gamilaraay artist and NITV graphic designer, Jeremy Worrall. It is proudly on display as you enter SBS and NITV's headquarters in Artarmon, Sydney, on Cammeraygal Country.