

Vale Uncle Jack Charles

The Australia Council wishes to acknowledge the passing of beloved First Nations actor, musician and storyteller Uncle Jack Charles, and pay tribute to his contribution to Australian arts and culture.

The Boon Wurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Woiwurrung and Yorta Yorta man has been described as the ‘father of black theatre’. He co-founded the nation’s first Indigenous theatre group with Bob Maza in the 1970s and went on to make his mark as a performer for both stage and screen.

He starred in films including *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, *Bedevil*, *Blackfellas*, *Tom White* and *Pan*. The Ilbjerri Theatre production *Jack Charles V The Crown*, based on his life, debuted in Melbourne in 2010 and went on to tour both nationally and internationally.

A survivor of the Stolen Generations, he dedicated much of his life to furthering the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Earlier this year, he appeared before the Yoorrook Truth-Telling Commission.

Among his considerable achievements, Uncle Jack Charles received the Australia Council’s prestigious Red Ochre Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2019. Earlier this year he received the NAIDOC Male Elder of the year award.

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

“Uncle Jack Charles leaves behind an impressive legacy which demonstrates the power of arts and culture for truth-telling, resilience and healing. He’ll be remembered for his warmth, his strength of character and his incredible contribution to theatre, First Nations storytelling and to broader Australian culture.”

Permission has been given by the family to use Uncle Jack Charles name