
ASRA Award 2017

Luise Hercus (1926-2018)



Figure 1

At ASRA's 2017 conference we were honoured by the attendance of renowned linguist Luise Hercus, then in her 92nd year. The presentation of the 2017 ASRA Award to Luise at AITSIS, in the company of many of her peers and friends, was a touching and appropriate recognition of Luise's lifelong dedication to the maintenance of Australian Indigenous language through sound recording and linguistic research.

While Luise's advanced age precluded her from attending the ASRA dinner as is customary for award winners, it did not prevent her continuing the work that was her passion. She is reported to have continued working on the documentation of her research until a few weeks before she passed away.

The sad news of Luise's passing in May 2018 is tempered by our knowledge of the full and productive life that Luise led, and the tremendous legacy she leaves as a result of a lifetime of painstaking

work. Luise was held in the highest esteem by all who knew her, and her work is a precious treasure to the communities whose languages she recorded and studied.

Luise approached her work more as a vocation than a profession. Tireless and unceasing, selfless and generous with her time, her knowledge and her skill, Luise's devotion to her work seems to arise from a recognition of its importance to generations of Indigenous people. The care and respect with which she treated her informants and the knowledge that they shared with her is well known.

Luise has rightly been the recipient of several honours. She became a member of the Order of Australia in 1995 and her entire catalogue of sound recordings was listed on the Sounds of Australia registry in 2012. Luise published prolifically, with 163 attributed catalogued works.

An overview of Luise's professional activities and accomplishments is included in this journal, thanks to Luise's colleagues and friends Kazuko Obata and Grace Koch. Kazuko and Grace have lost a great friend and colleague in Luise, but I am sure they have many happy memories to cherish.

ASRA is delighted to publish this announcement of the presentation of the 2017 ASRA Award to Luise Hercus for excellence in linguistic sound recording and research.

Matthew Davies

Figures:

1. Luise Hercus photograph courtesy AIATSIS