



## Getting close at putalina



COUNTRY singer Bob Wilson, from Launceston, with his aunt Joan Clark, from Hobart, at this month's putalina festival in Tasmania. Hundreds of people turned out for the annual cultural celebration, which is the state's biggest Aboriginal community get-together. See our coverage on pages 32-33. Picture: Jillian Mundy

# 'Stop trying to control our people'

By RUDI MAXWELL



NORTHERN Territorian of the Year Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, an Arrernte-Alyawarra woman, told the *Koori Mail* that

governments must stop attempting to control First Nations people.

"We are to take our place within a modern-day Australian context, whilst remaining intact with our culture and language," she said. "We want to see early childhood learning in First Nations culture."

"We are not about to let our culture die. We have survived this long against brutal and psychological assaults like the NT intervention and we are up and running and we are going to fight."

"On Invasion Day I would like to say that any intelligent government would have thought

for a certain section of the community of Australia, the First People, January 26 and Captain Cook's arrival is not a day we can celebrate together, a day we can all celebrate this great nation of ours."

Ms Kunoth-Monks is also a spokesperson for the Freedom Summit, which last week gathered in Canberra for three days of networking and peaceful talks about issues of concern for First Nations people.

"I believe there is a momentum building," she said.

"I feel it, not only with First Nations people, but also amongst our brothers and sisters of different colours. It is not colour that counts, it is the policies of this Government that are repressive and the fact they feel they are in control of a section of humanity in this land."

"This land belongs to us, we more than share it."

"And we have also gained awareness of some of the anti-

human rights policies of this Government and bureaucracies – that is to cease."

The finalist in the 2015 Australian of the Year award said she would like to see a move towards eliminating poverty and disparagement of First Nations people by all governments.

"Last year was not a good one for us First Nations people," Ms Kunoth-Monks said. "It's no good mincing words, the truth is that through propaganda our people have been made to look sub-human, when the most noble people who show absolute control over themselves are First Nations people."

Ms Kunoth-Monks also paid tribute to the Australian of the Year winner Rosie Batty, saying she was a strong woman who deserved the award.

As well as the gathering in Canberra, protests were staged around the nation on January 26, including marches in Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart.



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