



Media Release

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## SBS brings powerful new commissioned documentary *Black Panther Woman*

**\*\*Australian television premiere\*\***

**Directed by Rachel Perkins and produced by Blackfella Films  
Sunday 1 November – 9.30pm on SBS**

Indigenous woman Marlene Cummins breaks a 40 year silence to tell the story of her abuse in the Australian Black protest movement in the new SBS commissioned documentary *Black Panther Woman*.

Produced by the multiple Logie award winning Blackfella Films (*First Contact*; *Redfern Now*) and directed by Rachel Perkins (*Bran Nue Dae*; *Mabo*), the documentary tells Cummins' moving story, beginning in 1972 when she fell in love with the leader of the Australian Black Panther Party, Denis Walker, and was absorbed into the party's tumultuous world.

The little known Brisbane chapter of the Black Panther Party was directly inspired by the American Panthers. They adapted their politics, militant black leather outfits and defiant attitude. Like their American comrades, they also raised suspicious attentions from the police and ASIO.

Yet unlike the Americans, who numbered in the thousands across America, the Australian chapter comprised just ten members. In one heady year, this small group of young Aboriginal people staged educational theatre shows, kept watch on the police with 'pig patrols' and were at the forefront of demonstrations including the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

Cummins' vulnerability and her belief in the movement made her a target for men in power. Marlene recalls the incident of her rape, after which she made the difficult decision to stay silent. Dedicated to the cause and distrustful of police, she, like many other Aboriginal women facing abuse, chose to stay silent to protect the movement from criticism.

Following the break-up of her relationship with Walker, Cummins spiralled into a cycle of addiction that left her on the streets.

Forty years later, and still struggling with addiction, *Black Panther Woman* finds Cummins looking back on her involvement in the Aboriginal protest movement from her housing commission flat in the community of Redfern. It culminates in her emotional journey to New York for a gathering of international Black Panthers.

*Black Panther Woman* is the previously unheard story of Marlene Cummins' ongoing battle with addiction and her attempts to heal. It's an important Australian film that adds Cummins' voice to those calling for a halt to the abuse of black women from within their own community.

Special Broadcasting Service

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“The premise of the film is relevant for all”, director/producer Rachel Perkins says. “To have a fair and just society, we must have leadership with integrity.”

**Follow Marlene Cummins’ moving journey when *Black Panther Woman* premieres at 9.30pm on Sunday 1 November on SBS. Follow the conversation on Twitter: #SBSdoco**