



# Short St. Gallery



## Alison Nampitjinpa Anderson

Born: 1958  
Birth Place: Haasts Bluff  
Language Group: Luritja  
Region: Central/Western Desert

### Biography

Alison Nampitjinpa Anderson was born in a sandy riverbed outside Haasts Bluff in the western desert on the 28th of January 1958. She was brought up by her Luritja-Pintupi mother and Warlpiri father at Papunya settlement, before being dispatched to boarding school at St Philip's College in Alice Springs. After completing her studies she returned to Papunya and worked in a range of community positions, raising a family of her own. She speaks and writes four distinct indigenous languages and several other related dialects, is a mother of five grown children and has eight grandchildren.

In the early 1970s, while still in her early teens, she saw the origins of the western desert art movement at first hand: many of her close relations were among the most distinguished painters of the first generation, and she took up painting in her turn as a young woman, working first for Papunya Tula artists, then the Warumpi and Ngurratjuta art centres. She still paints today: her works are widely collected, and solo exhibitions of her art have been held in recent years in Sydney, Melbourne and Darwin. Her political career has been distinctive. She served for several years at the helm of her home community's council before being elected as an ATSIC commissioner in 1999.

After ATSIC's dissolution she contested the central desert seat of MacDonnell for the Labor Party in the 2005 Northern Territory election and won it with a strong majority. She was appointed a Minister in the Labor government but abandoned her ministry and party in protest at its continuing diversion of dedicated Aboriginal housing moneys from the Commonwealth. In the wake of the ensuing political crisis she sat as an independent for two years before joining the opposition Country Liberal Party.

This party won government in August 2012. She again won the central desert seat, now renamed after her grandfather, Albert Namatjira: again she won with an overwhelming majority.



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She was appointed Minister for Aboriginal Advancement and Regional Development in the new Government, which has a strong representation of traditional members. She is a keen defender of her people's languages, law and culture; a believer in even-handed co-operation between indigenous and mainstream Australians; and an advocate of excellence in education. Her familial ties stretch across large tracts of the western desert, as do her traditional links to the landscape. The country and what lies within it form the central subject of her paintings, and that world is never far distant from her thoughts. She retired from politics in 2016 and now devotes herself to her painting and her property in the bush.