

Public library services
to Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander people in New South Wales



Public Library Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

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Foreword

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land as I bring this publication to your attention.

The area of public library services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an acknowledged area of importance. In 2004 the State Library of New South Wales conducted a survey of public libraries to document the collections and services which were available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The survey revealed some interesting programs and collections in New South Wales public libraries.

To highlight these programs and services a seminar was organised by the State Library and held in May 2005. The following papers are a selection of those originally presented at the *Public library services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* seminar.

These papers have been published with the aim of reaching a wider audience and to inspire and encourage the development of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Kathleen Bresnahan
Assistant State Librarian, Public Library Services

July 2006

Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in New South Wales Public Libraries: Survey results

Ellen Forsyth
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Introduction

In mid 2003 informal discussions between the State Library and the Local Government and Shires Associations emphasised the need for a better understanding of public library services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their use and non-use of public libraries.

While a certain amount of information was available, there was insufficient for informed decision making as the annual statistical return collected by the State Library does not specifically ask for data relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This made it difficult to adequately describe what research needed to be undertaken to support and promote the development and provision of services and programs.

Following discussions with the Public Library Network Research Committee, it was decided to initially survey the New South Wales public library network to gather information about services, staff and collections provided for this target group. The Committee agreed that this was the first step in developing a proposal for in-depth research into the use and non-use of public libraries by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Background

In June 2004 surveys were emailed to each public library service in New South Wales to find information about the services, staff and collections provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The annual statistical data collected by the State Library Public Library Services division does not cover this area in detail, so very little information on the extent of these services was available. Anecdotally it was believed that several New South Wales public libraries were providing services targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within their communities. The survey was to establish the nature and extent of public library services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in New South Wales; including:

- the extent of current collections and services targeting Indigenous communities; and
- which public libraries employ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff, and in what positions these staff are employed.

Survey results

Staff

Fourteen New South Wales public libraries have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as staff. The sixteen positions filled include library officer,

library assistant, administration assistant - Aboriginal designated, acting library manager, mobile library driver/operator, cataloguer and Aboriginal researcher.

The total number of staff in New South Wales public libraries is 2,315.98.¹ The 16 positions held by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people are equivalent to 0.69% of library staff in New South Wales. From the 2001 Census New South Wales has a population of 6,371,745 including 119,865 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who comprise 1.88% of the population. For the library community to match this percentage there would need to be 44 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people employed in public libraries.

Services, programs or events

Thirty-five out of 98 library services provide targeted library services/special events/programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their communities.

The targeted programs include:

- monthly storytime with Aboriginal pre-schools
- local Aboriginal classes visiting a library on a regular basis
- NAIDOC Week displays and events, exhibitions
- Reconciliation Week displays and events
- talks with Aboriginal elders regarding local Indigenous history
- cultural awareness programs
- creation of family history database including photographs
- recording relevant events regionally.

Collections targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Fifteen libraries have designated collections targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the primary users of the collection. These collections include *The Koori Mail*, picture books, posters, non-fiction, artefacts on display, basic literacy material, Aboriginal studies material, an Indigenous archive and separate reference collection. Some libraries do not appear to differentiate between their collections *for* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their collections *about* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The collections range from modest in size (30 items) to larger (about 300 titles to 743 titles), or may be located at a specific branch of a library service.

Resources are frequently marked with flag stickers.

Collections about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Fifty-eight out of ninety-eight libraries have a designated collection of library resources *about* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Three libraries did not reply to this question. Some of this material seemed to be the same as the items in the collections targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

¹ *Public Library Statistics 2002/03*, Sydney, State Library of New South Wales, 2004, p74

people. Some libraries have a centralised collection, others at all branches, and for some it is a single branch collection.

Designated Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Services Community Liaison Officer or similar position

There are thirty-three designated Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Services Community Liaison Officers across the state.

These job titles include Indigenous Liaison Officer, Community Development Officer – Projects, Aboriginal Community Development Officer, Indigenous Community Development Worker and Aboriginal Community Development Officer.

There are other designated Aboriginal positions within some councils. Six councils share the one position of Aboriginal Heritage Manager, three share an Aboriginal Heritage Sites Manager and five share an Aboriginal Community Development Worker.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Services Consultative Committees

Twenty-eight councils have an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Services consultative committee.

Further comments including planned services

Fifty two libraries had no plans for this area of service. Two libraries noted that this area was not applicable to their plans. Three libraries had no comment. Forty one libraries did have plans and these included:

- examining the possibility of an Aboriginal trainee placement;
- social plan consultative processes which have been established to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to provide input into the social plan;
- currently researching what services and resources other libraries are providing to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee. They will discuss these findings with the Committee with a view to implementing some targeted programs in the second half of this year;
- original inhabitants acknowledged at the commencement of all Council functions and events.

For a more detailed analysis of the survey please go to www.sl.nsw.gov.au/pls/publications/pdf/june2004.pdf

Libraries and Knowledge Centres in the Northern Territory

Cate Richmond
Assistant Director, Libraries and Knowledge Centres
Northern Territory Library



Wadeye Library and Knowledge Centre

Introduction

In June 2004, the Northern Territory Library (NTL) implemented a new Libraries and Knowledge Centres model in eight communities in the Top End. This paper discusses the model for library services in Indigenous communities, explains the implementation process and explores some of the challenges in providing Indigenous library services in remote locations. Two case studies illustrate what we have learned and how the model is being applied in specific communities. This paper also discusses the database that is being made available to communities to enable them to organise, store and make accessible digitised material related to their cultural heritage.

NTL role and goals

The Northern Territory Library is responsible for developing communities by providing access to appropriate library services for all Territorians. NTL has four main goals:

- develop communities through libraries
- connect people to information
- preserve NT documentary and cultural heritage
- help people learn.

Background

The NT public library sector is different from other states in that we have a centralised approach to library services. NTL manages a central library management system for 52 sites.

The Libraries and Knowledge Centres (LKC) unit provides support and training to public libraries, community libraries and school libraries across the Territory. In addition, the LKC Unit is directly responsible for providing library services at two joint-use (school and community) libraries at Taminmin and Nhulunbuy.

There are 22 community libraries, most of which are located in Indigenous communities across the Top End, with several in the southern region. These libraries are staffed by Community Library Officers (CLOs) and are usually open between 10 and 30 hours per week. NTL provides an annual grant to Community Government Councils to cover library operating costs and salaries. A separate annual amount is allocated for the purchase of library resources.

Ongoing training and support is provided to CLOs by NTL. This involves site visits and regular telephone and email contact. A website offers further support through procedures and manuals, tips for running programs and activities, recommended web pages, lists of Indigenous resources, etc. A CLO Forum is held in Darwin each year and all CLOs are supported to attend. The forum consists of three days of training and development activities. The theme of last year's forum was 'Building links for reading' with the focus on early childhood learning and library programs to support literacy.

Community libraries contain a range of resources including books, magazines, videos and DVDs. All libraries have at least one computer that is available for public use and most have Internet access. Through the Internet library clients have access to the combined online catalogue of NT libraries and to a range of online resources including the *Health and Wellness Resource Centre* and e-books such as *TumbleBooks*. The most popular material is the Indigenous collection, which is shelved in a specially designated area and is identified by an Aboriginal flag on the spine of each item. The most widely used resources are those that relate to local community and family groups.

LKC Model

In recent years there has been growing interest in the concept of Indigenous Knowledge Centres as Indigenous communities explore ways to preserve their cultural heritage and provide appropriate access to it. Many communities are now focussing on the repatriation of local material and grappling with ways to preserve old photographs, tape and video recordings and documents. There is recognition that these items need to be preserved in a digital format. In communities where digitisation is well advanced, there is further recognition of the need to structure and organise this digital material so that it can be easily retrieved.

Some communities are actively engaged in work to record local languages that are in danger of extinction as elders pass away. There is high demand for access to local material and for the provision of personal copies of family photographs and recordings of songs and stories.

In 2003, NTL funded three pilot knowledge centre projects in Galiwin'ku, Wadeye and Anmatjere. The projects were driven by community members and in each case different software and management systems were used. The term 'knowledge centre' has many different interpretations and the challenge for NTL was to develop a model which was based on the role of the community library, and which would be sustainable through provision of ongoing support and training. Evaluation of the three pilot centres clearly indicated that NTL needed a consistent model for library services in remote communities. The model needed to be flexible enough to suit individual community needs, and able to be supported by NTL.

The LKC model is built on the services that we already provide through community libraries. It is presented as a series of building blocks comprised of traditional library concepts plus Indigenous knowledge concepts. The model outlines the essential components and who is responsible for providing each of these. Components include the library system, community knowledge, a knowledge database and the facility to link local communities through a regional knowledge network. Flexibility is achieved through the community deciding which components suit their needs. Sustainability is achieved through NTL support in the areas of library resources, provision of a database and ongoing training and support including maintenance of the software.

The key focus for libraries is on literacy, access to information and preservation of culture. The model has the potential to facilitate 'joining up' of other government and non-government services such as Indigenous literacy and language centres, community archiving facilities, and arts and culture centres. Training in all aspects of managing the library and knowledge centre enables community members to develop or increase their skills.

In summary, libraries and knowledge centres:

- provide access to knowledge and information through core library services including English literacy and information literacy programs;
- enable the acquisition and preservation of local knowledge;
- provide training and support to community members engaged in acquiring and preserving knowledge; and
- provide access to recreational activities for all groups within the community.

Indigenous knowledge & databases

A key component of the model is the database of digitised local material. NTL evaluated several products before selecting the *Ara Irititja* software that was developed specifically for Pitjantjatjara communities in Central Australia. This database has a simple, user-friendly interface and a proven record of successful implementation and use by Indigenous people. An important feature of the database is the ability to restrict access to individual items to cater for cultural sensitivities.

NTL has negotiated a Territory-wide licence for *Ara Irititja*, which allows it to be installed in all NT public libraries at no cost to local communities. Ongoing licence fees are met by NTL. *Ara Irititja* has been re-branded for NT library use as *Our Story*. Each community is encouraged to choose a local name for their database, for example in Wadeye the database is known as Murrinh Nekinigme. In all cases, the community owns the content in the database and data is stored according to rules set by community leaders.

Our experience has taught us that communities and individuals have many different interpretations of both the concept of knowledge and the purpose of a knowledge database. Our role is to work with communities to ensure that their LKC (including the database) meets local needs within the framework of their cultural, legal and social structures. This has led to different implementations in different communities, however all remain based on the LKC model, and are therefore sustainable by NTL.

Implementation

Implementation of the model began in June 2004. In the first phase of the project, we are focusing on eight communities across three regions:

- Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining (East Arnhem)
- Wadeye and Peppimenarti (Port Keats/Daly River)
- Umbakumba, Angurugu and Alyangula (Groote).

Consultation with communities is based on a project plan that clearly states the project goals and objectives and the roles and responsibilities of both the Community Council and NTL. The plan requires approval from the Community Council and NTL, as well as acceptance by CLOs and community leaders.

Our Story has now been installed in five communities. Training of CLOs and other local staff is well underway, with LKC staff visiting communities regularly for ongoing consultation and training. The successful implementation of each LKC depends on a number of critical factors, most importantly the involvement of one or more local champions to drive the project from within the community.

Wadeye Library and Knowledge Centre

The Wadeye LKC is located in the rural transaction centre along with other community services. The room is small but the facility is very well used and the Council is currently considering options to extend it. The Community Library staff are involved in a range of cultural activities in the community, including research through the local language centre and management of the local radio broadcasting service.

Prior to commencing the LKC project Wadeye already had a significant amount of digitised material including songs, videos and photographs. The sheer number of digitised files however, made it difficult to manage the items and it was not possible to easily retrieve specific images or recordings.

In the six months since *Our Story* was installed, more than 8500 items have been added to the database. A group of elders is working with LKC staff to determine access levels for each item. Groups such as elders and school children are providing content to enrich items in the database and to make them searchable and accessible. These sessions are usually facilitated by local library staff member with assistance from community people.

The ability to view items through the database has greatly enhanced the process of adding information (metadata) to each item. Material identified as public is accessible to the entire community through a computer located in the LKC. Back-up processes are now in place to ensure data is not lost due to hardware or power failure. A read-only copy of the database is available at the school.



Women from Wadeye Library and Knowledge Centre working on the *Our Story* database

The LKC team undertook a pilot training program in Wadeye aimed at engaging youth and other interested community members in a range of skills required for the successful administration and development of the database. A training model was developed, which is now being used to train people in other communities. We also encourage and support library staff to undertake formal qualifications in areas such as library service and administration. Several local people have recently been employed to work on aspects of the database.

Galiwin'ku Knowledge Centre

There was strong community vision for the establishment of a knowledge centre in Galiwin'ku. Unlike all other LKC sites, Galiwin'ku does not have a community library, although NTL provided initial funding to establish the Knowledge Centre. The Centre is housed in a small building that is not large enough to display library resources or allow access for more than a few people at a time.

Although NTL staff had some involvement in the initial planning, the Knowledge Centre had quite different objectives to that envisaged by NTL. For the first 18 months of its operation NTL had minimal involvement with the Centre. When the Knowledge Centre was established, a database was selected and purchased, however the software proved to be difficult to access and use, did not meet community needs and therefore failed to engage community members.

From a library perspective it was difficult for NTL to determine how to support this very different Knowledge Centre model. Without ongoing involvement in the Centre NTL was not able to provide the building blocks that underpin the model. With the purchase of the *Ara Irititja* software, NTL had something to offer the Galiwin'ku Knowledge Centre by way of a functioning, easy to use database supported by NTL.

Interest in the database has been encouraging, especially from community groups who are actively engaged in research. It soon became clear that local needs and Yolngu cultural and knowledge structures required a different approach. However, the LKC model proved to be robust enough to cater for these needs.

Challenges

It is extremely challenging to provide appropriate levels of support to community library staff living in remote locations. Many of them have sole responsibility for the library service so they face the difficulty of working alone and being professionally isolated. NTL needs to develop smarter and more helpful ways of providing remote staff with support and training.

It can be difficult to find and retain library staff. External factors also play a part, such as changing council staff, unsuitable buildings and unreliable technology and networks. NTL tries to create opportunities for more paid employment in communities but ongoing funding opportunities are limited.

The rewards are also numerous. All communities in Phase One of the project have responded very positively to the opportunity for a community-owned software product that will not only preserve some of their cultural heritage, but also provide easy access to it. Links between groups in communities are being strengthened as they work together to share resources.

In Galiwin'ku for example, the Literacy Centre at the school has a wealth of local material that is used as part of the curriculum. This can now be digitally stored and preserved in *Our Story* and appropriate material made accessible to the wider community through the Knowledge Centre. In many locations community library staff are enthusiastically running school holiday programs and promoting literacy through storytelling sessions and other activities. At Angurugu on Groote Island library staff are being mentored by local people with support from NTL.

Future directions

The first six months of implementation have shown that a consistent model supported by NTL and using appropriate software is beginning to meet community needs. In June Professor Martin Nakata of the University of Technology Sydney will lead a research project to evaluate our LKC model. The academic research team will visit three communities to evaluate the model. The evaluation will provide a snapshot of progress and establish some baseline information to guide our future developments. It may also provide us with the evidence required to seek further funding.

We have recently been invited to participate in the National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance. The project team has identified that LKCs will play an important role in ensuring that recordings can be made accessible to communities. NTL is working with the National Library, Archives and IATSIS to develop appropriate standards and guidelines for preservation, digitisation and collection management.

Why libraries?

Why are libraries involved in this work? Kay Raseroka, President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Director of University of Botswana Library Services, recently reminded librarians of our core value of equitable access to information. She stressed that librarians are leaders in the use of technology and we have the skills and expertise to deliver, organise, access and facilitate engagement with information. She argued that children need to engage with print as well as oral traditions and training in information literacy should begin in the cradle. She reminded us that libraries need to adapt and contextualise information for different groups.²

Literacy is a fundamental principle of library service. In August 2004, the NT Minister for Local Government, Mr John Ah Kit, made a statement to Parliament in which he said:

One of the aims of libraries is to preserve our Indigenous culture and encourage community development. A vital key to this is to increase opportunities for libraries in remote areas to assist in the development of information literacy and basic literacy skills.³

The community library is a focal point for access to information, recreation, learning and literacy. At community libraries people have free access to local information and resources and, if required, to resources beyond their community via the library network. Delivery of these services is made possible by the infrastructure provided by community councils and the expertise and commitment of library staff.

² **Raseroka, K.** (2004) *An Exciting and Challenging time for IFLA: opportunities for transformation*. ALIA 2004 Biennial Conference, 21-24 September, 2004.

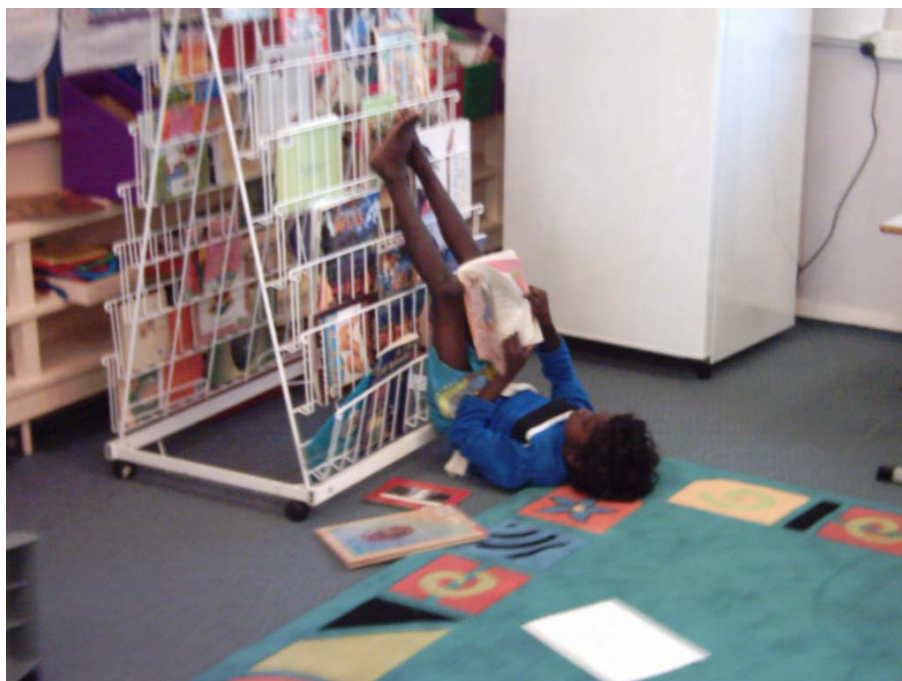
³ **Ah Kit, J.** (2004). *Ministerial Statement on Library Services*. Debates – Ninth Assembly, First Session - 17/08/2004 - Parliamentary Record No: 21.

The flexibility of the LKC model means that library services do not always have to be delivered within a designated library space. Library programs and services may better meet local needs if they are delivered elsewhere in the community (e.g. childcare centres, women's centres, museums, art centres etc.).

Literacy programs and the promotion of reading can occur anywhere, any time. Portable computer equipment enables database access wherever people need it, e.g. under a shady tree, or on a bush trip. All of this can be achieved without compromising the key components of the model.

Later this year NTL is planning to develop a kit for Indigenous parents and babies to promote literacy and reading from birth. The kit will be distributed to new parents in communities where there is a community library or LKC.

Flexibility, appropriate infrastructure, a user-friendly, robust database and ongoing expert library advice and support are the key elements in the delivery of library services in Indigenous communities in the NT. Our ongoing commitment to work with communities to develop local skills and to increase literacy through participation in library services ensures that Northern Territory Library is contributing to the development of strong, sustainable Indigenous communities.



Dwayne, age 8, from Pine Creek

Aboriginal Material Selection Day at Marrickville Council Library Services

Patou Clerc
Multicultural Librarian
Marrickville Council Library Services

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.

In March 2004, Marrickville Council Library Services held an Aboriginal material selection day, where members of the local Aboriginal community were invited to select some material for the library collection. This selection meeting fitted nicely within Marrickville Council and Library Services commitment to involve the community in their activities. Building ties with the Aboriginal community is particularly important and the selection meeting contributed to both strengthening existing and initiating new relationships.

The term Aboriginal within this document refers to all nations Indigenous to Australia including Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

From the Dreamtime to the present day

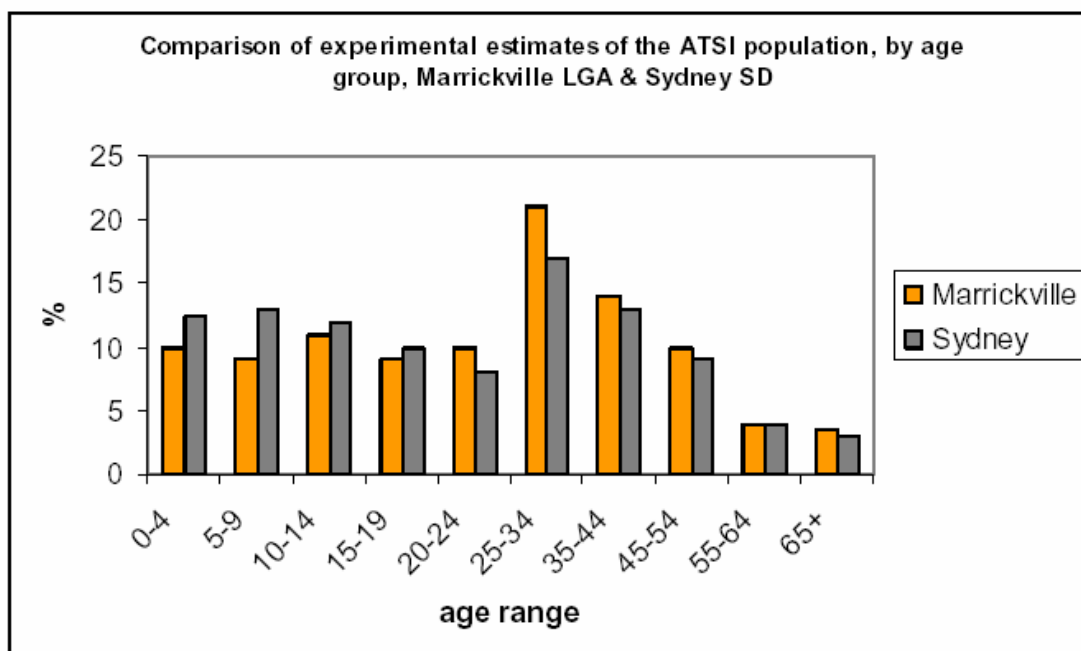
Aboriginal land began in the Dreamtime. The Aboriginal communities saw themselves as the custodians or caretakers of this unique environment. Their spiritual beliefs honoured this uniqueness by paying homage to their spiritual ancestors who had created a world in which all their needs were met.

Today, Aboriginal communities in the Sydney City region are part of a thriving metropolitan area, forming an important part of Sydney's cultural and spiritual mosaic. Cadigal country is a very different place to what it has ever been, and Cadigal people now share their land with Kooris from all over New South Wales and Australia who have made Sydney their home. Cadigal people have lived through changes in laws, landscapes and attitude. Across the generations, Kooris have argued for land rights, education, health, heritage, culture and employment, and sought political voice. Throughout all this change, Cadigal people have kept hold of their stories and traditions and are now educating the next generation about their unique culture.⁴

Aboriginal Population of Marrickville Local Government Area (LGA)

According to Census 2001, there are 983 people identifying as Aboriginal in the Marrickville LGA. However, reports from local community workers indicate that the population has grown over the last three to four years.

⁴ Excerpts from the Cadigal Wangal website at www.cadigalwangal.com.au



Source: 2004 ABS NSW Regional Profile Table 2.4.1

The chart above shows that the Aboriginal population in Marrickville is generally older than the average Aboriginal population across the Sydney Statistical Division. While this may be the case, compared to the rest of the population of the Marrickville local government area the age structure of the local Aboriginal community is quite young. In 2001 there were 342 Aboriginal persons aged 0-14 years living in the Marrickville local government area. This makes up 29% of the local Aboriginal population, while this age group is only 14.3% of the overall population of Marrickville LGA.

Council's commitment to Aboriginal Australians

Marrickville Council has a well established and strong commitment to the local Aboriginal community. The partnerships it has developed over the years provide a favourable climate for the delivery of library services to Aboriginal Australians.

Marrickville Council has been working closely with the local Aboriginal community and working together, the Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee (MACC) was established. The committee advises Council on social issues and protocols and has been meeting bimonthly for the last 10 years.

Marrickville Council is proactive in the reconciliation process and, in 1996, made a Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Australians which has formed the basis of a good working relationship between the local Aboriginal community, Council, and non Indigenous members of the community. The statement acknowledges prior ownership and stresses Council's support to Aboriginal people and their culture.

The work of Council, the MACC and other partners has enabled the development of the Cadigal Wangal website which provides a community education resource and a place for Aboriginal voices in the telling of Aboriginal history⁵. The site which has received three commendation awards can also be accessed from the home page of Marrickville Council web site and the library catalogue.

Partnerships

There are a number of government departments and peak Aboriginal bodies providing a range of services for Marrickville Aboriginal residents, and amongst them an important partner for the library is the Inner West Aboriginal Community Company (IWACC), a centre for advocacy and referral services addressing the needs of Indigenous people.

Consultation

Marrickville Council has consulted with local Aboriginal people about social issues via a number of forums, including the bi-monthly MACC meetings, staff meetings at IWACC and a number of focus groups. All consultations have identified some common themes including: health, housing, justice and culture and heritage. Within the category of culture and heritage, the library has been seen as the important resource that it is. There is a strong commitment from the library and the local Aboriginal community to work together so that the library can continue to build up its resources about Aboriginal culture and heritage.

Aboriginal material selection day

The idea of a selection day involving the Aboriginal community fits within the overall goal of Marrickville Library to involve the community in its activities. In addition, library staff members attended MACC meetings and met representatives of the local aboriginal community. An evaluation of the Aboriginal collection showed that the collection was old and inappropriate.

The purpose of the day was twofold. Firstly we aimed to build the collection and initially two areas were targeted:

- material suitable for Aboriginal Studies for high school and other students, as well as interested community members, and
- quality picture books for the junior collection.

The second purpose of the day was to strengthen the bonds between the library and the local Aboriginal community with the ultimate goal to increase Aboriginal membership and involvement in the library's activities.

How we went about it

A day was chosen. We contacted our regular book suppliers asking them for expressions of interest in participating in the selection meeting. They were keen to participate. Five suppliers were selected and provided material, blurbs

⁵ www.cadigalwangal.com.au

and book lists. Community members were invited. Ten community members were able to attend the day.

The meeting was held all day which was an important factor as it made it possible for people with varying timetable needs to attend. Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea were provided. This was also an important consideration as it enabled some people to come during their lunch hour and it provided a social context. We currently have 2 Aboriginal staff members at Marrickville Library. One of these people fills an Aboriginal identified position which cannot be filled by a non Aboriginal person. Both these staff members helped on the day, which also contributed to a successful outcome.

Evaluation

The day provided a great opportunity to build relationships and meet people. The material on display was considered fine. The only problem we encountered with the material was that it was difficult to find Aboriginal stories relating to local Aboriginal people as most texts were about outback and Northern Territory communities.

An important factor toward the success of the day was that it couldn't have happened without the support of the local Aboriginal community and in particular the support of Lester Bostock, Aboriginal elder mentor and community adviser for IWACC and chairman of MACC. Lester is very supportive of the library and we are very lucky to have him on our side.

Where to now?

We aim to hold material selection days on a yearly basis in order to keep the collection fresh and up-to-date, and to continue involving the community in the collection development process.

We plan to form a consultative group involving library and council staff and members of the local aboriginal community, including organisations and individuals. We envisage that the group will focus on collection development, the building of partnerships with the Aboriginal community including the promotion of each others services, and the creation of activities that would encourage Aboriginal participation in the library as well as promoting Aboriginal culture and issues to the non-Indigenous community.

Note: Patou is now the Collection Development Librarian at Canterbury City Library

Indigenous Marketing Plan at the Great Lakes Library Service

Chris Jones
Manager, Library Services
Great Lakes Library Service

'It doesn't matter what direction you go. Sometimes you just have to go.'
Maskerade

This is a quote from my favourite author, Terry Pratchett. Sometimes it's worthwhile going on a journey even if you don't know the way.

The thing about journeys and decision-making is that often you only find out you've made a critical decision and taken the first step on a journey when you're already well down the track. This is the case for the Great Lakes Library Service and its relationship with the Indigenous community.

Now I could pretend that we had some cunning plan in place, and indeed we now do – but it all began with a very small step.

It all began without consultation.
It all began without vision.
It all began without a deep desire to engage the Indigenous community
It all began with redesigning our logo.

We had tried various avenues and mostly designs ended up crammed with dolphins. Now I like dolphins, but in Forster we've reached dolphin saturation point — they are everywhere — so we ended up approaching Tobwabba Art to redesign. All we asked was that there were no dolphins.
They came up with the logo below:



So — the first step had been taken. The next was to build on the relationship between Tobwabba Art and us. This wasn't so hard because we'd now established the library as an ally of the Indigenous community. We needed to do more – but what?

Then Tobwabba came to the fore – thanks to the efforts of their wonderful Director, Carol Conte. She suggested more artwork and then started sourcing grant funding. Thanks to the heavy involvement of the Arts Mid-North Coast we scored \$18 000 from the Regional Arts Board to install three great contemporary Indigenous art works. Of course, it's almost impossible to find full funding for a project so the library committed \$2000 towards the artwork — which gave \$20 000 all up. We also paid for the rendering of the walls — but the good news is that we paid for that from other grant funding.



Night Dreaming, by Terry Johnstone

Of all the artworks I think this one touched me most deeply. It is about the gods looking down from heaven through the Milky Way. The joined concentric rings represent campfires, which represent Aboriginal tribes and the breaks in the concentric rings represent the breaking down of Aboriginal culture and family relationships. As well as carrying a powerful message it truly is an awesome piece of artwork.



Pebbly Beach, by Ron Potter

This image is in the kid's section. It's unfortunate about the lighting but it really is an awesome artwork — around 6 metres long.



Worimi Waters, by Mandy Davis

This one is over the archway so people see it when they leave. It's about the locals in the area. It proved the most challenging because it was actually painted offsite, brought here in sections — mounted on the wall — then the gaps were filled — and the artists had to clamber up and paint them together.

It was as we secured the funding that I realised we were on a journey now and it was time to bring in some structure. The library does have a structure to the development of its services. Central to the path the library is taking is a series of marketing plans aimed at key sectors of the community. Up to this point we had done one for youth and the business community — now — much sooner than expected I was going to have to do one for the Indigenous community.

I am not going into the structure of marketing plans in detail, but a marketing plan should be much, much more than talking about displays. It needs to be a strategic document. It needs good background research — containing demographics, trends, etc. It needs plenty of consultation. This took the form of a focus group involving key Indigenous organisations. And it needs to produce meaningful outcomes with timeframes attached.

The key goals we set ourselves out of the consultation were:

- to get the original artwork installed and launched;
- to get even more artwork installed;
- to create a separate Indigenous collection;
- Indigenous family history is a really tangled web – we need to develop our skills in this area;
- to get an Indigenous staff member; and
- to hold Indigenous programs.

Well, we got the artworks launched with much fanfare. We then sought grant funding for further artwork — a mosaic on the front of the library.



Mosaic on Forster Library entrance

We did this using the Regional Arts funding as a bargaining chip for a further \$10,000 from the Ministry of the Arts. You really can get on the funding merry-go-round if you jump on in the right place. At the time this talk was given the mosaic was being created and it has since been completed and mounted proudly on the front wall of the Forster Library. It is based around the library logo that was originally designed by the Indigenous community, and this adds a real sense of coming full circle.

But we still have some objectives looming:

- We have put stickers of Aboriginal flag on all books to identify items in the collection and will collate the items into one location by the end of the year — but it's a bit of a task.
- We have organised a genealogy workshop with library staff members, genealogy experts and members of the local Indigenous community will be involved. [Note: this has now occurred].

And then there are the goals on the horizon.

To properly do Indigenous programs we need an Indigenous staff member. This is much harder to get, largely because it is hard to get any new positions at the moment. We have made a foray into the Community Development Employment Program — but I would have to say this has been patchy at best. We need a permanent staff member and this is proving most challenging — but we're hanging in there. So that's on hold at the moment.

I have learnt that, as with so many things you have to be patient. We started this walk four years ago, and some of the dividends are only now paying off.

Don't try and measure things using membership. It's better to look at the relationships that develop. I know the library now has standing in the Indigenous community — and that is priceless. I knew how far we had got when one of the Aboriginal community greeted me as 'The Jones Boy'.

You need all parties on board — consult, consult, consult.

The trick is that sometimes it's more than two parties. I did find out after I had developed a good relationship with Tobwabba that in so doing I had alienated another section of the Aboriginal community. I didn't even realise I'd done this, and I'm now working on developing ties there.

And the marketing plan is great, but I think if I'd started out with it, it would have seemed like a *fait accompli* and I would have alienated people before I started. If you're interested in a copy of the Marketing Plan go to: www.greatlakes.nsw.gov.au/Library/downloads.htm

You'll also find there the library strategy (which is a bit old now) but it explains the framework of the marketing plans.

The journey has been fantastic and contains some of the most rewarding moments in my career. I have been privileged to have been part of it and you have no idea how much of a joy it is to be here talking about our successes.

It all yet another sign that long ago libraries left off just being about books and are taking part in important positive social change at a time when our very leaders would seem to lack the ability or morality to participate in such undertakings.

But the journey is far from over and will have many more hurdles along the way. And my hope for the future is that increasingly the sorts of things we're doing will become commonplace rather than unusual.

On a pleasing note, we have been shortlisted for a Local Government Cultural Award for the project – which I'll know about by Friday. [Note: The Great Lakes Library Service won a Cultural Award for Library Services for the three artworks – this was a hugely prestigious achievement and really made Council sit up and take notice.]

I will finish on one salient quote from Terry Pratchett — who truly does write with a good understanding of the nature of people.

They called themselves the Munrungs. It meant The People, or The True Human Beings. It's what most people call themselves, to begin with. And then one day the tribe meets some other people, and gives them a name like The Other People or, if it's not been a good day, The Enemy. If only they'd think up a name like Some More True Human Beings, it'd save a lot of trouble later on.

The Carpet People

Indigenous Collection at Inverell Library

Sonya Lange
Information Services Librarian
Inverell Shire Public Library

The Indigenous Collection at Inverell Library grew out of a realisation by staff that our library was not well frequented by the Indigenous community in Inverell. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures indicated that approximately 5 percent of Inverell's population is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent; however Indigenous users in the library were a rare sight. Further, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the Inverell Shire had been identified as a key target group in the Inverell Shire Council's Strategic Plan 2003. A strategic objective identified in the plan was to:

Advance the welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, recognising and promoting the inherent value of their culture and heritage and ensuring equitable and respected participation and access to all available services and facilities.

In order to best understand the needs of our Indigenous community, the Library Manager made contact with a number of Indigenous groups and community representatives. These groups included a local residents association, a reconciliation group and the Aboriginal Liaison officers for the local schools. The Manager attended a number of meetings with these groups which served a twofold purpose. Not only did we gain an understanding of the needs and concerns of the Indigenous community, but we also began to build a relationship, and an awareness in the community of the Library's ability to be a partner. As a result of these meetings, it became evident that the community didn't know that the library had much Indigenous material to offer.

We felt that the best way to improve usage of the collection was to make it more accessible. The traditional Dewey arrangement meant that resources were scattered throughout the library, diminishing the 'browse' factor, and making finding resources seem a bit 'complicated'. We gathered together all of the Indigenous related material, regardless of audience age, format or Dewey range, and housed it in one spot. The new location is close to the Circulation Desk, an area of high visibility. We put an Aboriginal flag sticker on the spine of all the items, and added an IND prefix to the call numbers. We found that we could then easily see the extent of our collection, and frankly, it wasn't great.

Improving the collection was obviously going to require an injection of cash, so a grant application to ATSIC (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) was undertaken. The application requested \$5000 to purchase Indigenous material in a wide range of formats, and addressing a range of age and literacy levels. A key feature of the application was the library's commitment to have the stock selection undertaken by members of the local Indigenous community. Once the application was successful, we asked a number of vendors to send us everything they had on approval, and then

invited the Indigenous community in to do the selection. The invitations were done informally, through the network of contacts previously established. Over 30 people of all ages came to the selection sessions, some of whom had never been to the library before. Stock selected included picture books, fiction, music, videos, and non-fiction titles dealing with a wide range of issues.

The new stock doubled the size of the existing collection, and made it more appealing and relevant to our local community. A well-publicised launch was held, with representatives from ATSIC, the Koori Mail and the local community in attendance. Whilst the library does not keep any statistics which allow us to monitor the racial identity of our patrons, there is anecdotal evidence to support increased patronage by the Indigenous community. This project received a 2004 Marketing Award for Public Libraries⁶. The library intends to continue to develop the collection, and work towards improving awareness. One project being planned is the painting of a large artwork to hang above the collection, to provide a strong visual focus.

The Library Manager's discussions with various Indigenous stakeholders had also revealed that there was a lack of employment opportunities for Indigenous youth in Inverell. It was felt that the employment of an Indigenous staff member in the library would serve the dual purposes of providing a role model for other Indigenous youth, and further developing our relationship with the Indigenous community. Inverell Shire Council was supportive of the idea, and proposed a traineeship be offered in the library to an Indigenous person. Bringing the idea to fruition involved applying for approval to advertise an 'identified' position. The process involved was lengthy, and sometimes frustrating, but ultimately worthwhile. Our main difficulty was that the Attorney Generals Department underwent internal change whilst our application was being considered, resulting in a lengthy delay.

A young, local person was appointed to the position of Indigenous Trainee: Circulation & Support Services Officer in November 2004. She is undertaking studies to become a qualified library technician, with the full cost of her studies being met by Inverell Shire Council. As the staff member's skills and experience grow, it is anticipated that she will become involved in the development and delivery of specific Indigenous targeted programs and projects. In the meantime, she is fulfilling a valuable purpose in providing a welcoming presence to the Indigenous community.

The efforts undertaken at Inverell Library are not particularly innovative, nor large scale. They are very valuable however, because they are premised upon identifying and attempting to meet the needs of our community. We did this through the building of relationships, through listening to what was said, and by actively sourcing external funding or assistance when required. We believe that there is much more that we can do, and we will approach it in the same way.

⁶ Awarded by the Public Libraries Marketing Group

Aboriginal people and public library partnerships

Kerry Avery
Department of Housing
Bega

Introduction

Local Government and the community see Aboriginal people as a group that needs to be respected as the custodians of the lands and waters, encouraged to participate in the community; have the opportunity for education as does the rest of the community and also be made aware of the services and resources available to them. Public libraries with their free access, multiple collections, long opening hours and community space are able to meet many of the needs of the Aboriginal community in a variety of practical ways.

According to information available at the Bega Valley Shire Libraries the percentage of Aboriginal people using public library services has increased. This increase in participation and use did not occur overnight, but over a number of years through the hard work of Library staff and the Aboriginal communities of the Shire. Over the years we have come across a number of barriers which we have endeavoured to address to further increase the participation of Aboriginal people.

Some of these barriers have been addressed by working in partnership with the Aboriginal communities of the Shire. We have been able to show respect by acknowledging the contribution their community can have to public libraries, encouraging the communities to make use of the resources available in public libraries and providing a source of education and leisure.

The partnership we have formed with our Shire's Aboriginal communities has been made possible through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding is a tripartite agreement between Bega Valley Shire Council, the three Local Aboriginal Lands Councils (Bega, Eden and Merrimans), and the Shire's Native Title Holders. This agreement has been put into place as a mark of reconciliation between the Bega Valley Shire Council and the Aboriginal people of the Shire.

The primary aim of the Memorandum of Understanding was to strengthen the relationship between Bega Valley Shire Council and the Shire's Aboriginal community. The MOU also establishes a framework for future communication, consultation, reconciliation and cooperation.

Importantly, the Memorandum of Understanding includes a number of key undertakings committed to by Bega Valley Shire Council. These undertakings include both practical and symbolic actions to endeavour to address some of

the barriers faced by Aboriginal people when accessing Local Government services.

Update on the MOU

In 2004, an independent review of the Memorandum of Understanding was conducted by an indigenous consultancy.

The methods of review were in person through individual meetings and community meetings, formal correspondence, and via the telephone.

Throughout the review the major priorities that emerged were:

- education
- health
- employment

Bega Valley Shire Council has reached a resolution to assist the Aboriginal communities to address some of these priorities with the following initiatives and strategies:

It has established an Education Scholarship for the three high schools at Bega, Eden and Narooma, with an annual budget of \$8,000;

A Health Initiative for Bega Valley Shire in partnership with Katungal Aboriginal Medical Service has been put in place, with an annual budget of \$5,000; and

Bega Valley Shire Council has developed an Employment Strategy as follows -

- 2001 — three mainstream Aboriginal staff
- 2002 — six Aboriginal designated positions
- 2005 — nine designated positions, three mainstream positions.

Council also received a number of awards for their employment initiatives:

- Commendation — Local Government Awards 2003
- Winner — Local Government Aboriginal Network Conference Council of the Year Awards 2003
- Winner — NSW Department of Education & Training, Business and Training Award 2003
- Winner — National Diversity at Work Awards 2004

How the Memorandum of Understanding has assisted Bega Valley Shire libraries

The MOU has assisted the public libraries of the Bega Valley Shire in a number of ways:

1. employment of Aboriginal people
2. increased membership of Aboriginal people
3. better access to local Aboriginal history

4. community support from Aboriginal people
5. participation of Bega Valley Shire Libraries in cultural celebrations

1. Employment

The Bega Valley Shire Libraries had in the past (prior to 2002) no Aboriginal employees. The Library was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in Bega Valley Shire Council's Aboriginal Traineeship Program 2002, which has led to one permanent designated position in the Bega Library.

Through recent negotiations with a local employment agency and the local Aboriginal Community Development Employment Program we have been able to restructure the permanent designated position. This restructure creates the opportunity for two Aboriginal people to be employed part time over two years, obtaining a Certificate 3 in Library Services and the opportunity to be employed permanently at Bega Library.

2. Increased library membership

The membership of Aboriginal people for Bega Valley Shire Libraries has in the past been lacking. This has however increased due to a variety of factors:

- the employment of Aboriginal staff;
- changes to Library policies; and
- an increased awareness of Library services to the Aboriginal communities.

3. Better access to local Aboriginal history

Previously the Bega libraries had limited information covering local Aboriginal history. Through the partnerships that have been formed with the local Aboriginal people access has now become available. This has been made possible through the local Aboriginal communities, the Local Aboriginal Lands Councils, the Aboriginal Cultural Centres, Projects and consultations involving the Aboriginal people.

4. Community support

- Since signing the Memorandum of Understanding the Bega Library has received Aboriginal community support in a variety of ways:
- Aboriginal arts and crafts;
- exhibits including works by local Aboriginal authors; and
- encouragement of other members of the community to utilise resources available at local libraries.

5. Cultural celebrations

Cultural celebrations are a time for Aboriginal people to celebrate their traditions and culture and where they exist today in modern society. The Libraries are now aware of these important occasions and are participating by:|

- exhibiting displays of Aboriginal works;
- inviting Aboriginal storytellers to come in and share their stories; and

- increasing the awareness of NAIDOC week, Reconciliation Week, National Sorry Day and the importance of these events to Aboriginal people.

Issues

Some of the issues that have been identified whilst working in partnership with the Aboriginal community are:

- participation of Aboriginal people in library services;
- storytelling;
- purchasing new resources;
- local history;
- cultural exhibits;
- library membership;
- access to library resources;
- returns; and
- protocols — trust/respect and knowledge.

[Note: Kerry Avery was born in the Bega Valley, and is a descendant of the Jeringer people of the Shoalhaven area (Mother's side) and Djunghutti & Gumbayngir people of the mid north coast of NSW (Father's side).

When Kerry wrote this paper she was the Aboriginal Community Development Officer at Bega Valley Shire Council. Her work involved liaising with the three Aboriginal communities at Bega, Eden and Wallaga, to enable these communities to have better access to local government services.]

A service beyond books

Noeline Briggs-Smith
Indigenous Unit
Northern Regional Library

Moree is located in north western New South Wales approximately two hours from the Queensland border. It is primarily an agricultural community producing a diverse range of produce including livestock, grain, cotton, and wheat. It is noted for its thriving cotton industry and of late, local products are being introduced such as olives, wines, pecan nuts and pastas. One of the most interesting and popular tourist attractions is the hot mineral pools.

The Northern Regional Library and Information Service in Moree covers 65 000 square kilometres and includes a number of areas with substantial Aboriginal settlements such as Brewarrina, Walgett, Boggabilla, Toomelah as well as Moree.

The current library policy on Aboriginal services ensures Aboriginal staff helps to provide a high profile relevant library service to the Aboriginal Murri people in the communities within the region. This aim was to employ Aboriginal staff who reflected, interpreted and sensitively approached their information needs.

In 1995 I was hired as a library assistant by Northern Regional Library. This made me the first Gamilaroi – Kamilaroi woman in the Indigenous Unit which will be renamed the Winanga-Li Centre later in 2006. As well as the usual library tasks, my role was to help get Aboriginal people into the library. This was not an easy task for barriers had to be broken because of the colour bar in the past that banned Aboriginal people from municipal buildings. Moree was the only town in Australia that had a municipal act banning people of Aboriginal appearance from all municipal buildings including spa baths, hence the 'Freedom Ride' in 1965.

This local act of discrimination flowed through to shops, schools, cafes, hospital, ambulance and a special section was roped off down the front for Aboriginal people in local cinemas.

In 1995 it soon became obvious that the Aboriginal people of Moree and its district wanted a service beyond books. They felt the need to tell their stories of the people and their country, more importantly they felt the need to explain their history, especially family history, to have it published and preserved for future generations to access and in what better form than in books with photographs.

They wished to have their history documented their way, they wanted to have a say in how their history was written and the Indigenous unit was born because many believed that their history was important. They believed Aboriginal history and family history is Australia's history.

The Indigenous unit was promoted as a central community resource and meeting centre to be used for the benefit of the wider community. Because the majority of Aboriginal people receive government welfare, the unit saved those wishing to do family history research from travelling to major cities for information.

The unit is part of the organisations set up throughout Australia to liaise and access information for the stolen generation and any other enquiries pertaining to Indigenous history.

The unit has gone beyond books and includes tapes, CDs, videos, talking books, art, artefacts, Aboriginal flag, Aboriginal decor, exhibitions, storytime, newspapers, magazines, resources, computers and all the things developed as a 'Keeping Place' for Aboriginal historical, cultural, political, vocational and educational information.

With the support of members from the Aboriginal community (who make up the Gamilaroi – Kamilaroi consultative group) who help with their guidance and knowledge, the unit has set a precedent with their collection of Aboriginal family genealogies; for knowing one's family, people and origins are of paramount interest.

With the gathering of genealogies and over 10 000 photographs, two books have already been published and a third is in process.

The Indigenous service unit expands into the community and beyond to other states of Australia, with cultural awareness, work shops, local Aboriginal history and family history which is taught in the schools and colleges of Technical And Further Education. Local cultural awareness workshops are conducted annually for doctors, police and teachers and this service is free of charge.

Local events are documented and placed in the library archives. Community meetings are attended and the unit has input into:

- Aboriginal grave and cemetery restoration;
- ceremonies of 'Bringing Their Spirits Home';
- movie premieres;
- consultation and bringing elders together for important community decisions;
- Aboriginal banners for the main street plus animal stencils, with Gamilaroi language;
- education Expos, dignitary visits;
- PowerPoint presentations promoting the local municipal council and its interaction with the Aboriginal community: and
- supplying language tapes and literature to those in prison along with helping them seek their identity through family history research.

The unit celebrated ten years of service on 9 March 2005 along with the launch of their website: <www.indigenousunit.com.au>

As well as working full time at the library I teach local and family history at TAFE as well as line dancing to the many school students at the annual Croc Festival.

In 1995 Aboriginal people felt unwanted and intimidated and when entering the library you would have, at that time, only seen one or two Aboriginal people in a week. Today they come in bus loads and Aboriginal library membership has soared.

I have received Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community awards, numerous certificates of appreciation and had a senator and governor foreword my books. I graduated at age 60 from university and received 'Citizen Of The Year' on Australia Day, 2004.

The Indigenous unit has proudly gone beyond books.