

Kempsey library serving the Aboriginal community

A positive response to the Library Resource Van, says Gabi Brie



Kempsey Shire has an Aboriginal community which makes up approximately 10% of the total population. Due to various factors such as distance, socio-economic circumstances, no tradition of library use and an unwillingness to use non-Koori institutions, the library has

mini bookmobile, visiting schools with largely Aboriginal students in the Western reaches of the Shire, an alcoholics' rehabilitation centre near the beach to the East and places in between.

Alas, the Van ran out of funding two years ago. At this time, there were 60 regular borrowers on its fortnightly run and average borrowings of 200-300 books, magazines and cassettes per month.

Despite Council's willingness to assume responsibility for running costs, we were unable to find the funds for Christine's salary. The library was providing bookstock and backup but we still had to let our driver/operator go. Although grant applications, submissions and just plain please met with encouragement, it seemed that no one was willing to fund a local government initiative.

But we now have been able to supplement staff with a DEET subsidised employee, Faron Marshall, who has been a Library Assistant with us for 3 years, has now been able to assume responsibility for the service, at least for the next six months. He is keen and excited, a convert to the benefits that library use can confer and pleased to be outside the building! He has had to re-establish contact with key people, but the response has been positive. We can only spare him two days per week, so the schedule has had to be slightly reduced. However, we are all optimistic that it can work again.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the service has been, all along, that the number of Aboriginal library users at the library itself has been steadily growing. This is possibly due to the personal contacts that have been made, the knowledge that a familiar welcoming face will be there as well as other reasons such as more people studying. It is good to see a grow-

ing engagement with the community, a group that has had good reasons for being alienated from council-run facilities. Small towns are not always the most comfortable for minorities and in a small way, this service goes about combating that perception and that fact.

0055 25021— JOBLINE

Employers, your continuing support is vital

JOBLINE has been running for a month now, and the feedback we have received is that members have found it useful for both job searching and job filling.

Our warm thanks go to all those of you who have supported JOBLINE so far—your colleagues who have found employment as a result of your support will be even more appreciative. But continued support will be essential for the success of this service.

JOBLINE works! If you have a job vacancy in your organisation think about using JOBLINE as well as your other advertising for FREE to members, \$25 for non-members.

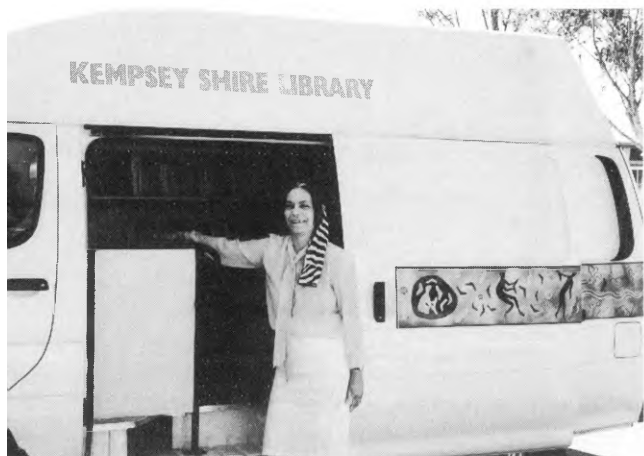
Job vacancy forms are available from Stacey Hilyard at the National Office.

And if you're looking for a job, call JOBLINE first: it will cost you only about 70c a minute, and it could be the best investment you'll ever make!

008 020071 — the ALIA freecall number

Those of you who use the National Office 008 020071 telephone number will have noticed that once again the real Stacey is answering you, not her recorded voice.

The 008 number is available from 9-5pm (Canberra time) Monday to Friday, and is for use by members only. Outside those hours, leave urgent messages on the (06) 285 1877 number, or by fax on (06) 282 2249.



Christine Jarrett and the Van

always had difficulty attracting Aboriginal users. This despite the fact that there has been more or less continuous employment of Koori staff for the past 15 years.

The Library Resource Van service was started in 1990, funded by a Library Council of NSW Special Grant and financial assistance from Kempsey Shire Council and DEET. The van, a modified Toyota Hi-Ace van, carpeted and fitted with shelving has a beautiful Dreamtime painting on the outside and the black, yellow and red motif inside. The painting was specially commissioned from a local artist and some of the panel's details are so entrancing that we use it on our stationery and notices relating to the Van.

A driver/operator was hired and trained in basic library procedures before starting the service. Christine Jarrett, seen here with the Van, had special qualifications: a great interest and enthusiasm for the cause of reading, information and literacy and the fact that she was welcome in all parts of Kempsey's rather segmented Aboriginal community. The Van service operated on a fortnightly time-table, rather like a