

EORA: a unique library service

Charmaine Caskey, manager of campus and collection services, Sydney Institute of Technology Library

The EORA Centre for Aboriginal Studies, within the Sydney Institute of Technology, is the first of its kind in TAFE NSW to produce and deliver vocational education and training programs in the visual and performing arts to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Eora Centre was established in 1984 in the inner Sydney suburb of Redfern before relocating to the nearby suburb of Chippendale in 1993. The Centre takes the name Eora from the indigenous people who originally lived in the area, and courses are designed to provide equality of educational access and vocational training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Courses offered at the Centre include visual and performing arts, theatre arts, video techniques, photography, print making, contemporary music, Aboriginal studies and general education subjects.

The Centre features 'state-of-the-art' facilities including a 150-seat theatre, gallery space and studios for audio recording, photography, video production, screen printing, painting, theatre arts and fine arts.

Established in March 1994, the library at Eora provides information services, study facilities and a small, unique collection of resources in a range of formats which support Eora's specialist educational programs. The Eora library is managed by a full-time campus librarian, which



EORA student, Beatrice Hains works on an acrylic on fabric

is an identified position. Recently the library received approval to participate in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Career Development Strategy for the library and information sector, a joint initiative of the Australian Library and Information Association and the Department of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. Under the Strategy we hope to employ a cadet librarian and a cadet library technician who will gain experience in the Eora library and in several of our other campus libraries.

Since the end of 1996, the library has provided access to the TAFE NSW Online Library Information System, a shared database of all TAFE NSW library collections. Access to electronic sources of information is currently being expanded, and two products which are proving most popular are the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* on CD-ROM; and the interactive multi-media CD-ROM *Indigenous Australia: an Aboriginal community focus*. The latter was produced by the TAFE NSW Aboriginal Development Division, with support from various organisations including the New South Wales Board of Studies, and the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. Also in high demand is the Centre's collection of 200 music CDs housed in the library.

The Eora Centre offers a friendly supportive learning environment promoting positive images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture while encouraging individual creativity and self expression. A measure of the Centre's success lies in the fact that past students have gained employment as television producers, stage managers, poets, playwrights, animators, musicians and artists. Through the provision of specialist professional expertise, targeted services, resources and facilities, the library aims to support students and staff in achieving the educational goals of the Centre. ■



Two contemporary music students performing