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WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM
MACKELLAR GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL



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Six Aboriginal girls participated in this program in 1977. The girls board at Kirinari Girls Hostel, Allambie Heights.

Mr Landy, the Headmaster of the Far West Hospital School, agreed to have the girls work in the school. I also sought permission for two of the girls to work in the hospital; this was granted by the sister-in-charge of the hospital.

The girls spent each Monday working with the teachers in the school and in the hospital.

For the first three weeks I collected the girls each day from the hostel, took them to the school and then home again. They then travelled independently to and from the hostel and school. This they did with no mishaps. As the girls were from isolated country areas, I was concerned about the travelling, even though it involved catching one bus for a relatively short distance.

The aims of the program were to -

1. Motivate the girls into staying on at school to complete their school certificate, hopefully their higher school certificate.
2. Encourage them to become teachers. Before commencing this program I took them on a tour of Sydney Teachers College. Dr McCloughan was extremely helpful in this regard.
3. Give the girls confidence in meeting new people and working with them.
4. For the girls to realize how important it is for them to be able to select a career which will enable them to be independent; to realize that the only way they can achieve

this is through education; hence the importance of staying on at school.

Before the girls became involved in the program they were warned that if their school work fell behind in any way they would have to opt out and be replaced by someone else.

I would like to point out the extreme contrasts in living situations the girls experienced when they came to Kirinari. The majority of the girls were from settlements; the conditions under which they lived were appalling and certainly not conducive to study.

Mr Landy and his staff could not speak too highly of the girls. Their confidence increased and the girls greeted the teachers each morning, whereas in the initial stages of the program they were extremely shy.

Several of the girls said they would like to become teachers or aides; at least this program gave them something to aspire to.

The Aboriginal children at the Far West benefitted as well from the girls coming each Monday. Some of the children were from the same settlements as the girls and therefore had someone to relate to in strange surroundings.

This year, (1978), with the permission of Mr T. Payne, Director of North Sydney Regional Office, Mrs Lowe, Principal of Mackellar Girls High and Mrs Scholes, house parent, I plan to extend the program by asking business houses in the Manly area if they would be willing to have the girls work one day each week.

I see this Work Experience Program as a continuing one throughout the school year. A roster will be drawn up so the girls can rotate on perhaps a five weekly basis.

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