

Sporting library benefits whole community

Sandy Hansen, Burke Shire Sporting Library

In July 1999 the Burke Shire Sporting Library commenced operation. The library was established through funds from an innovation grant from the State Library of Queensland. The service, which complements a new outdoor sporting facility, loans sporting equipment that would otherwise not be affordable and enables indigenous and isolated youth to participate in team and community sports.

Burke Shire Library provides for approximately 400 people. Approximately half of the Shire's residents live on isolated rural properties. Burke Shire Library responded to a community need by providing young people with positive activities and introducing them to the library's facilities.

Setting up the sporting library

It was determined that the equipment in the collection should complement the sports that could be played on the new council-built multi-purpose courts as well as what local sporting carnivals required. Only quality equipment was purchased: a decision which has paid dividends with all the equipment standing up to almost constant use, with little or no maintenance required.

The sporting equipment is stored in large protective mobile wire baskets which are kept inside the library. Individual items are available for loan, as well as sport kits for team sports like cricket and soft-ball. All the sporting equipment is individually labeled and clearly recognisable.

The library created 'consent forms' which need to be completed before equipment can be borrowed from the sporting collection. There is also a sporting equipment register which catalogues all of our equipment — each item is identified with individual bar codes. There is a sporting library 'lending book' which is used in conjunction with the Quolls computer system to keep track of the equipment. However, one of the great pleasures of working in a small shire library is the ability to be more flexible and informal than our large city contemporaries — our clientele is so small that we know who has what without the need for much bureaucracy.

And the reaction?

The popularity of the project is obvious from the positive comments and reaction, the increase in our library memberships and the constant lending of the equipment. The response has been great. Clients are taking care of the equipment and returning it on time.

The library has seen significant increase in membership numbers, especially in the young adult age group, one of the groups targeted in the grant.

The rural properties membership has increased by forty per cent: the sporting library has increased the profile of the library and the library's other more traditional facilities are being utilised.

The sporting library has become an integral part of the sporting facilities available in the town. As our sporting profile continues to grow the sporting library facility will no doubt continue to grow in popularity.

Without doubt the sporting library has been a great success and a service to our Shire, its popularity continues to grow and more uses for our sporting equipment have been sought. There is a strong sense of pride within our community when something is achieved which is of a great benefit to us all. There has been no negative feedback only positive comments and I believe the strength of the library and its facilities will only continue to grow.

I would like to thank the State library for its forward and innovative thinking in making available funds for such projects. ■

About the Shire of Burke



The Morning Glory over the old racetrack Photo: Rob Thompson

The Shire of Burke is located in north west Queensland at the bottom of the Gulf of Carpentaria. It covers a geographical area of 41 802 square kilometres and serves a population of roughly 400. There are two main communities: Burketown, with a population of 175, and Gregory Downs with a population of twenty-five. Within the Shire, but excluded from Council's management is the Doomadgee Aboriginal Community Council which has a population of approximately 1500.

The character of the Shire is predominantly rural, the major commer-

cial activities consist of cattle, tourism, fishing and recently the development of the Pasmenco Century mine.

The Shire of Burke is also home to the 'Morning Glory' roll cloud formations that extend from horizon to horizon in a long arc. Recent studies have shown the Morning Glory formations often extend in length for over 1000 kilometres. Burketown is one of the few places in the world where one can witness such meteorological phenomenon. For information on the shire, or the Morning Glory phenomenon see the Shire website at <http://www.burkeshirecouncil.com/index.htm> ■