

# Years of dedication recognised

Robin Hempel, Litchfield Shire Citizen of the Year

Robin Hempel, community librarian at Taminmin Community Library was named Litchfield Shire Citizen of the Year at the recent Australia Day celebrations. Robin was nominated for her work at the library. As a measure of the respect the community has for Robin, she received not one, but three nominations for the award.

According to Litchfield Shire president Mary Walshe: 'Robin was selected for her dedication to the community above and beyond her normal duties, but the fact that really stood out about Robin was the

number of nominations and the quality of each of the nomination forms.'

Friends of Taminmin Library president, Kerry Mott, said 'Robin is forever busy — she has an overwhelming capacity to serve the community, that's her driving desire. Robin is always very upfront about herself, what you see is what you get.'

Robin commented after winning the award: 'I have put an enormous amount of my life and time into this library, but still, I'm just a government employee doing my job and it is unusual for a public servant to receive such an award.'

'To me, receiving the award whilst still the current manager, indicates the amount of support the community have for their library and the services it offers. I believe they have appreciated having a very hands-on librarian, spending time in the community,' she said. Taminmin Community Library is proof that libraries really do change lives (see p14).

The Taminmin Community Library is the only free facility that the Litchfield Shire has. It is a haven for many residents and an avenue for inspiration for those living in isolation. The library has reached out well beyond the boundaries of Litchfield Shire. Under Robin's leadership it has supported Aboriginal community libraries, supported library services to remote communities with the Mobile Community Information centre and delivered a service to Daguragu and Kalkaring communities at Wave Hills.

Robin was able to build the library's services, staff and funding by winning two prestigious awards, one in 1997, a Networking the Nation grant, entitled 'Hyper highway to Humpty Doo', of \$160 000 for the first public rural area internet access. And in 1997 the library won an award for the 'Preserving our past' oral histories project. Robin also won the 1999 ALIA NT Library and Information Organisation Innovation Award, recognising her outstanding ability in the management of special projects which have greatly benefited her two major client groups — the public of the Litchfield Shire and the staff and students of Taminmin High School.

Robin and her staff have extended the library program into Rural Old Timers Service, hold library programs for children under five years old, run school holiday programs, provide services to the housebound, sick and disabled, and taken on the Country Borrowers Service.

The library has also provided training, rehabilitation and employment opportunities for many rural women at various levels in the library profession.

*Our thanks to the Litchfield Times for their assistance in preparing this article.*

## Free public access rewarded...

And the next winner could be you!

The Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) is seeking applicants for the third annual Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Access to Learning Award, an international award given to a library, library agency or comparable organisation that has been innovative in providing free public access to information.

'The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation established this award to give organisations an opportunity to expand programs that provide access to information for all people,' said Deanna Marcum, president of the Council on Library and Information Resources.

The Access to Learning Award includes a grant of up to \$1 million. Applications are available at <http://www.clir.org/fellowships/gates/gates.html>. They must be postmarked by 15 April 2002, for consideration.

An international advisory committee of librarians and information technology experts will review applications based on efforts to make technology freely accessible to the public, train the public in using technology, educate staff on technology use and reach out to underserved communities. Only organisations outside the United States are eligible for consideration.

The award will be announced and presented at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) meeting in Glasgow in August 2002. A detailed, written case study of the award recipient's work will be published in print and online by CLIR.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is dedicated to improving people's lives by sharing advances in health and learning with the global community. Led by Bill Gates' father, William H Gates Sr, and Patty Stonesifer, the Seattle-based foundation has an asset base of \$24.2 billion. For more information, visit <http://www.gatesfoundation.org>. ■