



KEMPSEY
Shire Council

DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES REPORT

13th November 2007

DCCS5	LIVING LIBRARIES AT KEMPSEY
FILE: 261	GB (NRN) {Folio No. *}

SUMMARY:

Reporting on the proposal to introduce a "Living Library" in Kempsey. Living Libraries are a great vehicle for promoting a depth of knowledge and understanding among members of the community.

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DESCRIPTION:

The concept of Living Libraries originates in Scandinavia. A Living Library consists of people who consider themselves to be outside the mainstream of society, such as adoptees, migrants and refugees, people who have survived a life threatening illness, people with a mental illness, gay people and Aboriginal people, who volunteer to become Living Books. These Living Books are then "borrowed" by "readers" for perhaps half an hour for a conversation and then "returned". These conversations or sessions take place under supervision, in the library.

The concept has been enthusiastically and successfully adopted by Lismore City Library where it has been operating once a month for twelve months. It is also about to be implemented by the Baulkham Hills, Gosford and City of Sydney libraries.

Terry Wilson, Executive Officer of the Mid North Coast Regional Council for Social Development is enthusiastic about a partnership for the identification and training of potential Living Books. The people who volunteer and are selected for this role will need to be trained in how to protect themselves emotionally and how to deal with potentially intrusive questions. The running of each session would be handled as part of library operations.

The project has the potential to address target groups and issues raised in the Social Plan demonstrating that Council is committed in the development of understanding and harmony among various segments of the community. This community building project has a limited lifespan of perhaps a year or two.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- *Environmental*

No environmental implications

- **Social**

The social impact could be considerable if the project is successful. People who offer themselves as Living Books would add to general understanding within the community of what it is like to be different in some ways, and would also benefit from discussing with friendly people issues or events that have had a major impact on their lives.

- **Economic (Financial)**

The funding would come from the State Library subsidy for libraries, which is to be earmarked for special projects.

- **Policy or Statutory**

No policy implications

- **Director's Review**

The Living Libraries project would have a positive effect in the community as it provides for enhanced social cohesion and will take positive steps in promoting community development.

The program would be introduced on a trial basis, and would be subject to review.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council support the "Living Library" project.

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G B Snape
DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES