

Sewing and Printing Projects Help Coff's Harbour Aborigines

Adult education projects in sewing and silk screen printing begun last year have proved of increasing interest and value to Aboriginal people of Coff's Harbour.

Mr N. R. Lawson, welfare officer at Coff's Harbour, said adult education for Aborigines in the area began last year. The Committee for Aboriginal Welfare wrote to the local branch of the Save the Children Fund, which decided to establish a sewing class.

In August, 1966, the Coff's Harbour *Advocate* carried an appeal for treadle sewing machines, at the request of the Aborigines Welfare Board through the S.T.C.F. Six of the nine machines donated were reclaimed and became the foundation of the sewing class.

Sewing Classes

Ladies of the Church and Life movement, which was formed shortly before the *Advocate* appeal, volunteered to act as instructors for the planned sewing classes.

The classes have been most successful. They are held every Monday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the S.T.C.F. pre-school kindergarten on the Woolgoolga Road Aboriginal Reserve.

Fourteen women and girls have attended the classes. Among them are Mesdames Kim Craig, Susan Hoskins, L. Laurie and J. Smith, and Misses Daphne Wilson, Anita Quinlan, Jenny Yuke, Marie Craig and Judith Kelly.

Judith Kelly hopes to enrol in the Dressmaking With Patterns course at Coff's Harbour Technical College. Mrs Corben, one of the sewing class helpers, will introduce Judith to her teacher and fellow class members so that she will feel at home among friends.

About twelve of the ladies who volunteered act as sewing instructors; among them are Mesdames B. Landale, M. Collins, and O. Nobbs.

Welfare officer Lawson said that the instructors were greatly surprised recently by the Aboriginal students' request that the sewing lessons be extended to a second day each week. As an alternative to this, knitting classes have been planned.

Bowraville

The people of Bowraville Aboriginal Reserve have their share of the donated sewing machines, and Mrs Ussher and other volunteers have been giving lessons in Aboriginal homes there.

Another indication of the success of the scheme is the request by students for cooking classes at Bowraville and Bellwood Reserves. These classes are planned to begin before the end of the year.

Screen Printing Project

The silk screen printing project, unique in this field, is another successful venture involving Aboriginal women at Coff's Harbour.

At the gift store on the Macauley's Headland banana plantation, the town's major tourist attraction, about 2,000 tourists a day watch as Aboriginal women operate screen printing equipment which turns out material for sarongs, shifts and beach wear.

In January this year, the Coff's Harbour *Advocate* ran a front-page story about the project; the story was reprinted soon after in Brisbane's *Sunday Mail*.

The *Advocate* said:

Here under the tuition of Mr Tony La Spina, Arts teacher at Coff's Harbour High School, Aborigine women produce silk screen printed materials for women's shifts, sarongs and beach wear.