Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1069

Bryant, Val

Occupation Health worker

Summary

Val Bryant was the first Aboriginal person to work in the Department of the Prime Minister. She is an Aboriginal health worker with both practical and academic understandings of the health issues confronting indigenous communities. She has published extensively on the problems of substance abuse in Aboriginal communities and has established and run rehabilitation centres in Sydney and Western Australia.

Details

Val Bryant became the first Aboriginal person to work in the Prime Minister's Department in Canberra, as a receptionist-typist. She also trained as a teleprinter operator and worked for the Overseas Telecommunications Corporation, before studying at Sydney Technical College for her School Certificate examination.

She started working with Aboriginal Alcoholics as a field officer with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs before establishing Benelong's Haven, the first Aboriginal alcohol and drug rehabilitation centre/hostel, in the inner Sydney suburb of Marrickville in 1974. She ran the hostel virtually single-handedly for six months before the Government gave her a grant. She has run six such centres in New South Wales and Western Australia.

In recognition of her services to the Aboriginal community, Val was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1978 and the World Healing Our Spirit Medal in 1994. She was presented with the award of the degree of Doctor of Education by the University of Newcastle.

Published resources

Book
Some Aboriginal women pathfinders : their difficulties and their achievements, Beeson, Margaret J (compiled by), [1980]

Journal Article
Female Alcoholism, Bryant, Val, 1987

Aboriginal Alcoholism - Where Are We Going White Man's Way or Black Man's Way, Bryant, Val and Carroll, James Cornelius, 1978

A Quiet Revolution, Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs

Newspaper Article
Interview with Val Bryant, Founder of Benelongs Haven, a half-way house for Aboriginal alcoholics in Sydney, 1977

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg

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