

Information Sheet No. 15



Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

MARGARET COLBUNG – Aboriginal Medical Service

- 1944, Aug 15** - Born in Narrogin, WA.
- 1973** - Married Allan Mallard in Carnarvon.
- 1974** - Joined National Aboriginal Conference as Mid West delegate.
- 1980** - Helped found Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (GRAMS).
- 1997** - Became Chief Executive Officer of GRAMS.



Margaret Colbung. Photo courtesy of Geraldton Regional Library, P 69.

Margaret Colbung helped establish the first Aboriginal Medical Service in Geraldton in 1980 and has been an active member in many Aboriginal organisations in the City over the years since.

Born in Narrogin in 1944, Margaret trained as a nurse at Royal Perth Hospital and worked around the State for many years before settling in Geraldton in 1976 with her husband, Allan Mallard. Margaret was already active in the National Aboriginal Council, having been elected as its Mid West representative two years earlier, and in 1978 she joined a sub-committee of the Aboriginal Boomerang Council which was charged with trying to establish an Aboriginal Medical Service in Geraldton.

The Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service eventually opened its doors in April 1980 in a section of the Boomerang Council Headquarters in Beachlands. Refused



government funding, it drew its meagre budget from the Boomerang Council and charities such as Catholic Relief Appeal. A doctor from the Aboriginal Medical Service in Melbourne flew over to help establish the service and became its only paid employee. The rest of the staff – nurse, receptionist, health worker, field officer, administrator and book-keeper – worked on a voluntary basis for two years.

In 1981 the Centre finally received Federal Government funding and its services gradually expanded until a new medical centre was opened in Rangeway in 1992. Margaret Colbung served on the National Aboriginal Conference for eight years, until it was disbanded in the early 1980s. She was Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Medical Service from 1992 to 1996, and became its Chief Executive Officer in 1997. She has also served on the WA Government Clinical Advisory Committee on Prison Health, on the National Cancer Council and the Aboriginal Justice Council.

Margaret is a highly respected Noongar Elder who continues to work actively in Aboriginal affairs.

References

*Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 35.*

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).

