

# Knysna welcomes Khayaletu Library



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Knysna, one of South Africa's most popular and picturesque towns, already has a network of several public libraries: Knysna, Hornlee, Leisure Isle and Masifunde. Now another one has been added to the family: Khayaletu.

## Background

The informal settlements - the northern areas of Knysna - stretch like a long belt behind Knysna with the result that having one central library is totally impractical. Due to the topography and lack of transport infrastructure, some inhabitants from the townships Nekkies, Bongani and Khayaletu, were not within easy reach of existing libraries. The municipality decided to make available a section of the rates office to be used as a library in the Khayaletu Township. These premises are situated at the east end of Knysna, just off the road to Diepwalle and Prince Alfred's Pass.

## Planning and renovations

Western Cape Provincial Library Service (WCPLS) subsidised the alterations and refurbishment with R150 000. The building required minimal structural change. It has a kitchen and ablution facilities and the building is securely fenced. Funds were mostly used for shelves and furniture.

Corrie de Swardt (formerly from the Department Housing and Planning) was responsible for the design. Jeanette Vosloo and Colleen Williams advised on the furniture lay-out in cooperation with Gillian Carter, Head of Department: Libraries and Museums. Knysna Municipality and Elna Cloete, regional librarian of George.

The design includes several windows with the result that the main room is light and airy. The colour



Top: Official opening by Councillor Nompumeleto Koti in her capacity as community education leader

Above: Computers available for public use are well used

Left: The library is light and airy

Below: Dedicated staff Librarian Ncumisa Mpayipeli (left) and Euginia Dladla. Ms Dladla visits crèches weekly and also runs a family literacy programme





Above: The library is very busy and the shelves emptied quickly after the opening

Below: A corner area has been set aside for children

Bottom: Gillian Carter, Head of Department: Libraries and Museums, Knysna Municipality in conversation with Dr Joy Cole, mayor of Knysna during the opening



scheme of white furniture and yellow walls with some blue splashes is rather attractive. The corner area on the right hand side of the library has been set aside for children and is furnished with a carpet, browser boxes, television and a video player. The library is stocked with approximately 4 000 books.

## Opening

The official opening in March 2006 was performed by Councillor Nompumeleto Koti in her capacity as community education leader.

Dr Joy Cole was there to give due mayoral honour to this significant occasion, along with Municipal Manager David Daniels, senior members of staff, representatives of the local community and provincial library staff from George.

## Staffing and operation

To get the library off the ground a decision was taken to staff it with a team of workers from the local libraries so that the various skills needed in the library could be professionally established.

Euginia Dladla initiated the now permanent family literacy programme and Ncumisa Mpayapeli was in charge of learner research and is now running the library. Tracy Goller, librarian, Knysna Public Library, has had the huge task of overseeing all the administration.

The rush of residents, particularly children, has resulted in this library becoming one of the busiest per capita in the area. Approximately 700 people registered as members. Mainly Xhosa and Afrikaans books are being read. The shelves emptied quickly after the opening with the result that more books were needed. An average of 2 000 books are circulated monthly. The library is open one full day and three afternoons per week.

## Outreach activities

The two computers available to the public are in constant demand. Basic computer classes are presented to five learners at present.

Euginia Dladla visits crèches weekly and also conducts a family literacy programme. Librarian Ncumisa Mpayipeli organises weekly video shows and story-telling sessions. Several holiday programmes such as pavement art, colouring-in activities and talks, are also very popular.

The library is also extensively used for school projects by the Percy Mdala High School learners as well as several other schools.

It has been a pleasure to be involved with the opening of such an active and successful library. Keep up the good work and good luck for the future!