



Australian Federation of Credit
Union Leagues

THE WALGETT CREDIT UNION

The Walgett Credit Union is an “unqualified success” according to Dermott Ryan of the Australian Federation of Credit Union Leagues.

But that is not to say that the recently established, integrated union is without its problems. The importance of the Walgett scheme is that it provides the model for similar organizations among Aboriginal and underprivileged communities throughout the State.

Basically a credit union is a group of people with a common bond, who agree to save regularly together and lend these savings to one another at the lowest possible rate of interest, the interest rate being the fee that is charged to the borrower. The purpose of such schemes is that they provide a means for people to assist each other in improving their financial position.

The Walgett Credit Union consists of over 100 local people, evenly divided between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. They are united by the common bond of a well-defined community area

which serves the purpose of bringing them into contact with one another and of giving them a strong sense of responsibility to the entire group.

The credit union is owned and controlled solely by its members, each of whom has one vote. Membership is gained either by banking one's savings with the union or by borrowing from it. The members elect a board of directors whose responsibility is to manage the credit union on behalf of the members.

The first steps towards the establishment of the Walgett Union were made early last year when representatives of the national association of credit unions and Reg Saunders of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs went to Walgett to investigate the possibility of establishing a union there. When approached the Aboriginal people indicated they wanted an integrated rather than an all-black union.

The Federation of Credit Union Leagues was motivated by the desire to spread the movement into depressed areas. Reg Saunders suggested