

NEW BEGINNING

In the first two or three weeks we familiarised ourselves with the physical environment – the houses, street layout, parks, and the local resources, both government and voluntary. We also visited community centres in other parts of Brisbane to find out what they were doing and how they had started. While this was important ground work, we had yet to make contact with the community of East Kingston. The prospect of meeting people, and the problem of exactly how to go about it, was frightening.

As places to meet local people, the schools and shopping centres had limitations. Their catchment areas were much larger than the specific area in which we were working. To meet people of East Kingston we had to approach them in their homes. We were wary of how we would be received, so we made tentative plans to take around some sort of survey, to give us a reason to knock on people's doors and to give us something to talk about. We soon found this unnecessary. People had seen us walking around the area and they were quite curious about who we were. When we knocked on their doors, we were welcomed in.

Our first attempt at doorknocking was a nerve-racking experience. After running out of excuses and virtually prising ourselves out of our house, we approached a young woman in the house opposite. Margie was to become quite involved in the community, but on our first meeting she was naturally, quite wary of two strangers at her door. She told us later, that at first she had thought we were trying to sell something or push religion! She was rather curious about what we were doing in the neighbourhood. This encouraged us, but the response wasn't always quite so positive. A few times we were greeted with 'None today, thanks' even after we'd explained who we were.

For us, as beginning workers in an unfamiliar community, door-knocking was an obvious way to introduce ourselves to people. We met people on their own territory and, over a cup of coffee, were able to talk about what it was like to live in East Kingston. We door-knocked together because it gave us confidence and increased our contacts with people. However, we soon realised that, as a way of meeting people, door-knocking had drawbacks. It was slow, time-consuming and emotionally draining. We began to take advantage of any opportunity to meet people – in the street, in parks, on the queue at the phone box, at the lock school sports day, and at Tupperware parties.

We found that there were three issues that kept coming up in our conversations with people. These were the isolation of women, (particularly those with small children), the need for locally-based inexpensive family entertainment, and the general lack of resources, such as halls and public transport in the area. We also discovered that people did not know about many of the resources that did exist in Logan City – and consequently under utilised them.