

## THE KINGSTON EAST NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP

We decided that a name change was now in order. F.L.A.G no longer represented what we were trying to achieve. We became Kingston East Neighbourhood Group (K.E.N.G. for short) and F.L.A.G was then a sub-group of the larger committee, with the continuing role of organising family leisure activities. K.E.N.G's first priority was incorporation. We had to formulate our goals and objectives, write a constitution and establish a formal committee. We decided to have official office bearers, but agreed that the work load be shared amongst all members, not just those who had the titles.

As a result of our visit to Logan West Community Centre, we realised that K.E.N.G needed to be well-known within the area and have the support of local government, local business and, most importantly local people. We decided to hold a public meeting to introduce ourselves to local politicians, welfare agencies and the media. The date was set for 13<sup>th</sup> November, the venue at Cathy's, on the few of us with a Queensland style highset house.

With local elections coming up in four months time and the Federal election one month away, we were able to lobby for support from the various candidates. We felt that it was important that we be very clear about our aims and objectives by the 13<sup>th</sup>, so we spent the next three meetings writing a constitution and preparing the papers for incorporation. Of course, these meetings were not all work. We laughed and talked together over lunch, strengthening friendship and common understanding.

Meanwhile, the problems in Logan City had once again caught the media's attention. Mick and Pat's involvement with youth led to an interview with a reporter from the Courier Mail, and at Mick's suggestion we were also interviewed. We were determined to tell the reporter the positive things that were happening in our community, but found she wasn't really interested. Beyond describing us as "a bright glow on the horizon of Kingston", she was more interested in paedophilia and the mythical streets where unmarried mothers were 'deliberately' becoming pregnant.

The articles that resulted, 'City in Crisis'<sup>6</sup> sparked an angry response from K.E.N.G members. We wrote a letter to the Editor, detailing our work and describing ourselves as ' just one example of the optimism and energy that exists in Logan City'<sup>7</sup> The letter stressed that we were no different to other people in other suburbs and 'that we needed to be supported in our efforts, not degraded, ignored and looked down upon'.<sup>8</sup> This letter to the Courier Mail,, along with our regular press releases in the local papers, brought K.E.N.G to the attention of many more people in the Kingston area.

Other reactions to "City in Crisis" ranged from resigned acceptance of Logan City's negative image to outright surprise. As one woman who had recently moved to Logan from interstate said, "I thought this was a nice place to live, until I read the papers. Now I don't know if I want to live her after all!" Intended as a joke, her comment nevertheless illustrates the way that negative media reports can shape communities self image.

While K.E.N.G's main aim was to find a building for a community centre, we recognised we had to encourage groups and/or activities that might eventually be based at the centre. A youth group was an obvious need in the area. We had not adequately catered for teenagers, either at the Fun Day or in the School Holidays programme. We began a youth group. At first, most of the young people were children of K.E.N.G members, but gradually other local teenagers joined the group and met weekly at different people's houses.

Some people had expressed interest in craft activities, particularly Barbara, a committee member who offered her house as a venue. We had heard of an arts and crafts bus run by a local church group. They drove the bus to various parts in Logan City and set up for a morning's arts and crafts. We negotiated with them to park their bus outside Barbara's house on Monday mornings, with us organising the child minding. While grateful for the opportunity to use their equipment and expertise, we felt vaguely uncomfortable with the arrangement. It seemed that something was being done for us rather than with us, that they were giving and we were simply taking. However, with all too few resources at our disposal to enable us to organise our own crafts sessions, the arts and crafts bus continued to visit. We hoped that with the establishment of our own community centre we would eventually be able to run these craft mornings ourselves.

The playgroup had now been running for three months and another one had begun. Both groups had joined the Playgroup Association and were making plans to buy play equipment. Some of the members of these groups and other people that we had met through door knocking and the F.L.A.G. activities were playing tennis or attending fitness classes on a weekly basis. We encouraged all these groups to send a representative to the November 13<sup>th</sup> meeting to show that sectors of the community were already well organised and that a venue could be put to good use immediately.