

## **THE FORMATION OF F.L.A.G.**

The next step was to bring all these interested people together while the enthusiasm generated by the Fun Day was still fresh in their minds. This proved more difficult than we had anticipated. Although interested, people were reluctant to commit themselves to take an active part. Only five people came to the first meeting. Although we were with the numbers, much was achieved at that meeting. A group was formed - F.L.A.G. (Family Leisure Activities Group), and decided that its first project would be to run a school holidays programme in September. Since we needed money to run the programme, fundraising became F.L.A.G.

's first task – a stall at the Woodridge Trash and Treasure Market. The time we spent collecting, sorting, pricing and serving on the stall consolidated relationships and helped clarify purposes.

The four mornings of activities during the school holidays were again held in Meakin Park. Luckily we were blessed with beautiful spring weather and the problem of what to do should it rain did not arise. Denise and Margaret, two of the founding members of F.L.A.G, did much of the hard work, but as the holiday programme progresses there were offers of help from other quarters. Some teenagers brought their horses to give the youngsters rides, while others offered computer paper, plaster cast moulds, paints and occasionally even money. Most of the activities catered for primary school age children, and held little interest for local teenagers. This, together with the obvious enjoyment of the mothers in the craft activities gave us ideas for the future.

The programme provided games for the children and, even more importantly for the future of F.L.A.G.; it allowed their mothers (and a few fathers) to get to know each other. As they ate their picnic lunches, the conversation often turned from the day's programme to a wide range of possibilities for community activities, such as arts and crafts group, youth groups and further fun days. But it seemed we always came back to the same problem – where to accommodate these activities.

F.L.A.G's next meeting was a tremendous success. With eight new people, the energy and enthusiasm knew no bounds! The original members (Gloria, Denise and Margaret) came well prepared with an agenda and many ideas to discuss. Naturally, discussion centred around a review of the Fun Day and the School Holidays programme. The sense of pride in these achievements was infectious and people at the meeting took up the idea of community self-sufficiency with enthusiasm.

The meeting was a turning point for the community of Kingston East. Sitting close together around a dining room table eating sandwiches and drinking coffee, the ideas for activities within our suburb flowed thick and fast. The possibilities seemed endless – child care, counselling, after school care, family support, youth groups, playgroups, holiday activities, craft groups, adult education courses..... Unlike the programmes that F.L.A.G had previously arranged, this new list of activities and services obviously required public accommodation rather than a member's house or backyard. Thus the task changed from simply providing local, family entertainment to establishing a venue for a wider range of community activities and services.

At one point during the meeting, when it seemed that we were getting carried away with our enthusiasm, a lone voice of experience spoke up. "Hold on!! Hold on!! Do you know what you are getting yourselves into? It's going to take a lot of time and a lot of hard work!" Sue, who was to become our Publicity Officer, knew from her experience with the Asthma Foundation how much work would be involved in the organisation of such a venture. However, while her timely statement brought us back to reality, it did not dull the enthusiasm. What it did do was to help us look at the practical steps we now had to take. We saw that we had to become incorporated. We planned further fundraising via a Weekend Garage Sale at Margaret's place, and we agreed to visit a nearby and recently established community centre, the Logan West Community Centre. We also decided on a 'get to know you' barbeque for F.L.A.G members and families.

Gloria took on the job of contacting the Justice Department about incorporation and approval for fundraising. She was horrified to discover that our early fundraising for F.L.A.G had been illegal. Although we had been innocent of any attempt to circumvent the quite strict and formal rules of the Justice Department, this discovery did spur on our determination to become an incorporated body as soon as possible.

The visit to Logan West proved interesting and informative. Wendy had been a driving force behind its establishment eighteen months previously, and she was happy to talk to us. She explained that the Logan City Council had paid for the house and land, local business had donated building materials for its improvement, and the Federal Government was supplying funds for a Home Care Service based at the Centre. She insisted, "It can never happen again!" Nevertheless, she suggested that local entrepreneurs might be able to donate a house that would otherwise be demolished to make way for new shopping developments in Logan City. We were impressed with this idea. We realised that it was important to become aware of available local resources. The other important advice we got from our visit was to keep our activities responsive to local needs, and not be unduly influenced by outside pressures.