

# Kidspace Chermside History

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## INTRODUCTION

Kidspace is situated in 7th Brigade Park, Chermside, Brisbane, and is the greatest community built playground in Queensland.

Aspley Lions Club, in conjunction with Brisbane City Council, coordinated over 1,000 volunteers to build Kidspace over 10 consecutive days, in November, 1996.

## CONCEPT

The original idea for the community built Kidspace childrens playground came from Brisbane resident, Leslie Karantonis, who in mid 1994, approached Brisbane Council with a novel playground concept and sought Councils involvement in building a similar structure in Brisbane.



Terry Hampson, City Councillor for the Marchant Ward, was instrumental in obtaining Council approval for the project, and a perfect location for the playground was eventually secured at 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade Park, Murphy Road, Chermside, adjacent to the Mountains to Mangroves Wildlife Corridor.

The vast playground was to be the first of its kind in Queensland, utilising an ingenious plan from a progressive playground design company in the United States.

## PREPARATIONS

The Kidspace concept required that the playground be built by community volunteers, so Leslie approached Aspley Lions Club, seeking support. They enthusiastically took it on as their major project for 1996, to be carried out in partnership with Brisbane City Council.

Council allocated \$192,000 towards costs for the playground. Other major sponsors / supporters were Chermside Westfield Shopping Centre, Lend Lease Foundation, Kedron Wavell Services Club and Coles.

Additional funding was achieved by Aspley Lions Club selling Kidspace fence palings at \$25 each, with the donors name engraved on the plank.



Site preparation and poles being lifted into place

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## COMMITTEE

The *Chermside Community Kidspace Committee* was formed, chaired by Aspley Lions Club President, Brian Cleveland. The committee, consisting of a salaried coordinator, Lions Club members and interested residents, enthusiastically set about coordinating appeals for donations of labour, expertise, equipment, materials and tools to help build the playground.

Aspley Lions member, George Cave, worked tirelessly to source materials, some of which were obtained either by donation or at invoice price, thereby greatly reducing the final cost of the project.



## DESIGN

The Kidspace playground basic design was developed by the USA firm of Leathers & Associates.

In November 1995, Kelly Hayes from the USA, conducted research at various schools in the Chermside area to find out what children wanted in a playground and their requirements were incorporated into the final design.

The result was a creative playground with towers, slides, ramps, cargo nets, swings, flying fox and balance beams to make up an inter-active creation.

Due to the harsh summer heat in Brisbane, a roof covering was also included in the design specifications.



## VOLUNTEERS

The plan was to build the entire playground over 10 days with a thousand volunteers - but the volunteers were still to be found!

The committee set to work on recruitment, by promoting public awareness through media releases, information booths at shopping centres and displaying posters in areas likely to spark interest.

Local State Parliamentarian, Terry Sullivan, visited schools to promote the project and Aspley Lions Club members walked the streets delivering pamphlets to households in the area, seeking support.

Eventually 971 men, women and children signed on. They came from the general community and included students, apprentices from TAFE, scouts, guides, church groups, child-care centres, army reserve forces, low risk correctional services inmates and members of community service organisations.

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As well as the construction volunteers, State Emergency Services provided security and logistics, St John Ambulance supplied the first aid, Coles donated food, and Red Cross and Sandgate Apex Club prepared the meals. Child minding was provided by local child-care centres and the daughters of some Lions Club members baby sat at the volunteers homes.

### **SUPERVISION**

BCC employed a salaried Project Manager who had overall responsibility for the successful planning, execution, monitoring, control and closure of the job.

A pre-build review of operations was carried out by Leathers consultant, Ken Lunn, who flew in from the USA on the 2 October, 1996 and was billeted by Aspley Lions. Ken checked all details of the planning and organisation, as well as inspecting the site and making recommendations to facilitate the build.

On-site building supervision was provided by 2 representatives from Leathers & Associates, Dana and Jeff, who had also travelled from the USA to Australia. They had 2 jobs to oversee while in Australia, the Ballarat playground build in mid November, and Kidspace Chermside, in late November. They were accommodated in a self-contained unit at the Tufnell Childcare Centre.



### **THE BUILD**

Preliminary works, post hole digging and framing were carried out from Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1996. Volunteers dug post holes using heavy boring machinery and Brisbane City Council supplied specialised pole lifting equipment and operators.

On the Friday afternoon a typical Brisbane thunder storm struck, deluging the site and causing it to become a muddy mess, but the workers carried on regardless.

From Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November until Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1996 nearly 1,000 individuals, working 3 shifts per day, enthusiastically toiled to build the enormous structure, some working until 11:00pm at night under floodlights!

The project was completed on time, just 10 days after commencement!

Heatwave conditions were experienced on the Saturday, with the temperature at Brisbane Airport reaching 34.2 degrees. It was considerably hotter at Kidspace, so shower sprays were set up to help cool the workers!



Heatwave conditions were experienced

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## AWARDS

- 1) Aspley Lions Club was awarded the *Ted Tremayne Memorial Trophy for Community Service* at the 1998 Lilley Electorate Australia Day Awards, acknowledging their achievements in coordinating the building of Kidspace.
- 2) Queensland State Premier, Rob Borbidge, personally wrote to Aspley Lions Club, congratulating them on creating such a fine asset for Queensland.
- 3) Aspley Lions Clubs efforts in the coordinating and building of Kidspace were recognized by winning the National Australia Banks Community Link Award for the *Best Service Club Project*. The prize money totalled \$20,000 and Aspley Lions committed the funds to go towards the cost of providing a roof over the structure.



## THE ROOF

The original Kidspace design included provisions for a roof, so an architect was engaged to design a suitable and unique covering - no other similar playground had ever had a roof built over it before!

A local builder was awarded the contract, and to fund the roofing costs, Kedron Wavell Services Club donated \$30,000 and Aspley Lions Club donated their \$20,000 NAB Community Link prize money. A funding shortfall was made up by Council contribution and additional fundraising by the Lions Club. The roof was completed in 1998.



## USAGE AND IMPROVEMENTS

Weekends and school holidays are crowded with families who utilise Kidspace and the associated facilities.

Aspley Lions Club has built picnic areas and barbeque shade huts to enhance the appeal of the facility. Council has also supplied a half court basketball area, a mini skating rink, BMX bike and rollerblading area, cricket pitch and a rebound wall. It even has push-bike tracks with road signs to introduce children to road safety.

During 2001-02, in conjunction with Greening Australia, Olympic2000 and numerous volunteers, Aspley Lions Club coordinated the planting of 4,000 native trees adjacent to Kidspace, to further beautify the area and provide shade.

The area has become immensely popular as a party venue and playgroup meeting place. Bring a picnic and make a day of it!

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### FACILITIES

BBQ facilities (electric), car park, toilets, tree shaded areas, picnic shelters, cycling tracks, walking tracks, basketball court, skating rink, cricket pitch, rebound wall, disabled access.

### References:



- National Australia Bank Community Link Magazine, Feb 1998
- The Lion Magazine, June 1998, Volume 27, No 8
- Photographs by A. Treherne and W. Whatley
- Aspley Lions Club archival records
- Chermside Historical Society
- Interviews with involved persons