

Archive No. 73

Lesbian Festival and Conference 1990

The first planning meeting was held at the Jika Jika community centre on 18 September, 1988, where members of the lesbian community took on the task of organising the first Lesbian Festival in Australia. Eventually a Co-ordinating Collective formed to oversee the finances and the overall planning of the Festival. Another group undertook to organise the Lesbian Conference. Several smaller sub-groups were formed to organise various exhibitions, sports days, theatre events and a market. And a Lesbian Film Festival was also planned.

The Lesbian Festival was held 10 - 20 January, 1990. Some of the main activities, including the opening champagne breakfast, the market day, several plays including *Spot the Dyke* by Amazon Theatre and performances from Sydney's Witch Theatre and the ethnic group Voice of the Heart, a *Drawing the Line* exhibition, readings, workshops and heaps of music from musicians like George and Betty Little as well as bands such as Nice Girls Don't Spit, Sticky Beat, Suffering Jets and *Rapunzel Gets Down*, were all centred round the Footscray Community Arts Centre.

The *Standing Strong* concert was MCed by Betty Little and held at the Dallas Brookes Hall with an impressive line-up of musicians including Judy Small, Chris Falk, Mahinarangi Tocker (Aotearoa), Deborah Cheetham, Anique Camerduc and Alix Dobkin (USA). Eva Johnston's commissioned one-woman play, *What Do They Call Me*, was performed at the Guild Theatre at Melbourne Uni. And alternated with Donna Jackson's *Ca Va* and *Cooking with Marg*. The Pool Party was held at the Collingwood Swimming Pool, the Women's Own Warehouse Party took place at Festival Hall, the Lesbian Film Festival was at the Grierson Theatre and the State Film Centre and the Caviar Club provided the late night venue at the Festival Club 229 Queensbury Street, Carlton.

The Lesbian Conference, which was held at Melbourne Uni, 26 - 29 January, attracted over 1000 registrants and many dozens of workshops were held on topics as diverse as Grey Pride, Racism Awareness Game, Lesbians of the Left Bank of Paris since 1900, Women Against Prison, Talking About Sex, Sex – Doing It, What Do Dykes Do in Bed, Gay and Lesbian Immigration Task Force (GLITF), Dykes in Disguise, Lesbians Considering Motherhood and a Lesbian Oral History Project. The conference also included a video programme, exhibitions,

support groups, child-care and vegetarian lunches and Koori and Migrant Women's Spaces were provided. A 10% levy was placed on registrations to 'pay the rent'. Over \$5,000 was collected and went to the Aboriginal Community Elders Services (ACES) to help finance the Iris Lovett-Gardiner Aboriginal Elders Caring Place in Brunswick East.

On the last day a picnic was held down at St Kilda Beach where a plane flew overhead pulling a banner that read 'Lesbians Are Everywhere', a fitting finale to ten fantastic days of lesbian events.