

Coolibah Day Centre

"It is a great personal achievement when someone who has had a severe stroke can once again eat the scones they made themselves".

Some of the elderly people attending the Brotherhood's new Day Centre in Fitzroy perhaps never imagined that happening. Sister Lyn Bathurst and her staff have developed a wide variety of therapeutic activities for people who have been in hospital suffering from strokes, arthritis, or similar conditions. Once they have left hospital and the concentrated therapy they have received, the Coolibah Day Centre will help them to stay at that level. The Centre is an extension of the Coolibah Club for pensioners and has been funded by the Hospitals and Charities Commission.

"We have about 50 coming each week for cooking sessions, gardening, discussion groups, and just simple occupations to keep them interested and busy", Sister Bathurst said. "For so many elderly people the main problem is loneliness. We want them to stay independent, in their own homes, instead of relying on hospitals or other institutions."



Coolibah Day Centre Stall Elfrieda Sullivan (left) and Betty Bradbury show a group how to make hanging baskets and bottle gardens.



Sister Lyn Bathurst (left) and Coolibah Club member Miss Bishop wind nylon offcuts in the Day Centre.

DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

Michael Barrow, aged 16 years, from St Joseph's Marist Brothers College in North Fitzroy, spent an afternoon at Limurru Cottage, the Brotherhood's Fitzroy child care centre, and this is the report he wrote for his Social Action Group at school.

"When I arrived at the building I was greeted quite warmly. I was introduced to several people and then I was led out the back — up the garden path. They asked me when the others were coming, if I wanted a drink or something to eat; then basically they said get down to work. They had it all worked out, what they wanted the 'menfolk' to do — sand down the doll's furniture and possibly repaint it all later.

So I leaned over and picked some sandpaper and for two hours I sanded, scraped, worked, sweated, wore down my knuckles, and got fragments of green paint all over my clothes, in my eyes, ears, nose, and hair. I never finished all the sanding that they wanted done, but I tried. They had at least eight different articles of furniture there and I finished one wardrobe and half a dresser — I did a very thorough job. I also tried to replace a leg to its old position on a dresser, but unfortunately I was not very effective with a 'hammer and nails' job.

The organisation cares for little children while school is on,

and other children also after school hours; this gives mothers in the Housing Commission area it is, an opportunity to work during the day. I helped make their furniture a different colour, nothing spectacular — but probably essential. All the way through my two hours and fifteen minutes I explained at least ninety-seven times to ninety-seven different kids what I was doing.

From this experience I have learnt that there still is people who centre their lives around helping others. And I have also found that (although it is limited) I have a general capacity to make other people happy."