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QPPD Conference Report: Access '93 Inclusion in life

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Abstract

The convenor of the Queensland Parents of People with a Disability Conference in 1993 on "Inclusion in Life" provides an overview of the conference which was attended by Dr Marsha Forest and Mr Jack Pearpoint from USA (who ran workshops on Circles of Friends, a concept they developed in the States). Included in the overview are 3 pages summarising "what people said at the conference" which provide excellent quotes and trigger points for discussion on children's education, adults' services, lobbying and other issues. **Keyword:** Community Development

QPPD CONFERENCE - ACCESS 93: INCLUSION IN LIFE 6 - 9 MARCH, 1993

What an amazing conference! As Conference Convenor I feel very happy to have been a part of the organisation and presentation of this event which seemed to touch so many personally. For something of the magnitude that the conference became, it was organised very quickly - around 3 or 4 months once we received confirmation that our visitors Dr Marsha Forest and Mr Jack Pearpoint were definitely coming. Our conference committee consisted of Amanda Lyons, Cheryl Simpson and myself ably assisted by Conference Organiser, Margaret Rodgers and the other staff members - Jan Dyke, Pam Watson & Sally Barone. The QPPD office ran on full-steam and more during the lead up to the conference and somehow it doesn't appear to have slowed down since.

First day jitters affected all of us as our first presentation an open forum entitled "Strategies for Inclusive Education" sponsored by the Inclusion Network, got under way. Marsha & Jack presented as a team throughout the day and their imaginative and at times emotional address lifted our spirits and challenged others to look beyond their reality and reach out for their dreams. QPPD has several of Jack's graphic facilitation posters which provided a visual enhancement for Marsha's words. We were reminded of the strength of the network by the involvement of the Canadian Geese (who can forget!), changing leaders when the person at the front is tiring, working in teams to support one another, inviting others to join and never allowing anyone to struggle alone. Further involving the audience Marsha & Jack invited people to put on DeBono's hats to solve problems creatively. Also during the day Jack & Marsha showed a video and described the MAPS process for assessing the needs of a student in the regular classroom. MAPS involves the student with a disability, his/her classmates, parents, school professionals and others as invited by the family in the decision making.

I cannot describe adequately the energy that went into the presentation of this forum. I can remember videos, slides, music, the graphics, the laughter (and tears), and most of all, the enormous number of people who came to listen and be involved.

7 March - The first official day of the conference - "Parents in Advocacy".

A day of sharing of the wisdom - old and new. Queensland parents as well as parents from throughout Australia spoke about personal and community initiatives. The keynote address, "Inclusion in Life" was presented as the theme of the conference by three parents, one of whom has a disability.

During the day parent representatives of advocacy or action groups from throughout Queensland and Australia shared their local perspectives of interest to be raised as issues for the future. Following the final presentations which were addressing parent action, conference delegates enjoyed a meal together then gathered with facilitators for a parent only evening which separated men's and women's issues. The format of the parent evening was both surprising and challenging and everyone would have experienced their own unique outcome.

8 March - "Issues in Inclusive Education, Accommodation & Community Life"

The day began with everyone together in the main theatre to listen to speakers describe inclusion initiatives in other states. After morning tea though, the conference broke into two separate streams which ran concurrently addressing the two themes of Education and Accommodation and Inclusive Communities.

A highlight of the day for me was the children's perceptions of inclusion and judging by the responses on our feedback forms many others enjoyed their natural presentations. (This isn't just because my son was one of them either - but he was good wasn't he?)

Many people contributed to these sessions which covered such topics as parent and educational initiatives; people, family and services making changes; and making connections with the community.

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QPPD CONFERENCE - ACCESS 93: INCLUSION IN LIFE (cont'd)

A Plenary Session was held late in the afternoon but the attendance at this important forum was disappointing especially as this was an opportunity to have issues raised for the future. Luckily those who did attend contributed with enthusiasm and provided plenty of food for thought.

A barbecue followed with many a tired looking conference participant dragging themselves to their "digs" for a much needed rest.

9 March - "Workshops"

How do you choose when so many interesting topics are offered? I guess it happens every time there are choices of workshops to attend.

I decided to join Marsha and Jack's session, Childrens' Circles of Friends and I wasn't disappointed. However, the other sessions on Legislation & Lifestyle - A Hypothetical, and Strategies for Making Good Decisions were enjoyed by their participants as well.

The dilemma continued with a decision having to be made about where to go in the afternoon. Workshop E - Advocacy Strategies for Inclusion in Education (predictable, I know), where useful tips for parents and professionals were shared and participants were encouraged to engage in practise exercises relating to some real life scenarios.

Being a parent of a young child my choice was based on issues which affect our family at the present time, so the other workshops attracted people interested in, Adults' Circles of Friends, or Transition to Adulthood, which of course will be my issues in some future conference.

Well I hope the closing session was an enjoyable surprise for those who could attend. Plenty of laughs, thanks, party streamers, more music and DANCING (thanks to Ruth Edwards who promised she would dance first). We felt that the conference had been such a success that we needed to celebrate and the feeling of unity and warmth in that great big theatre was a fitting end to four days which brought people together from all over Australia and some from Canada as well.

It is with mixed feelings that I recall the months of planning and the conference - some sadness that it is all over; of course relief as well, however mostly I feel very proud to have been associated with its presentation and with the people behind the scenes who all made it possible.

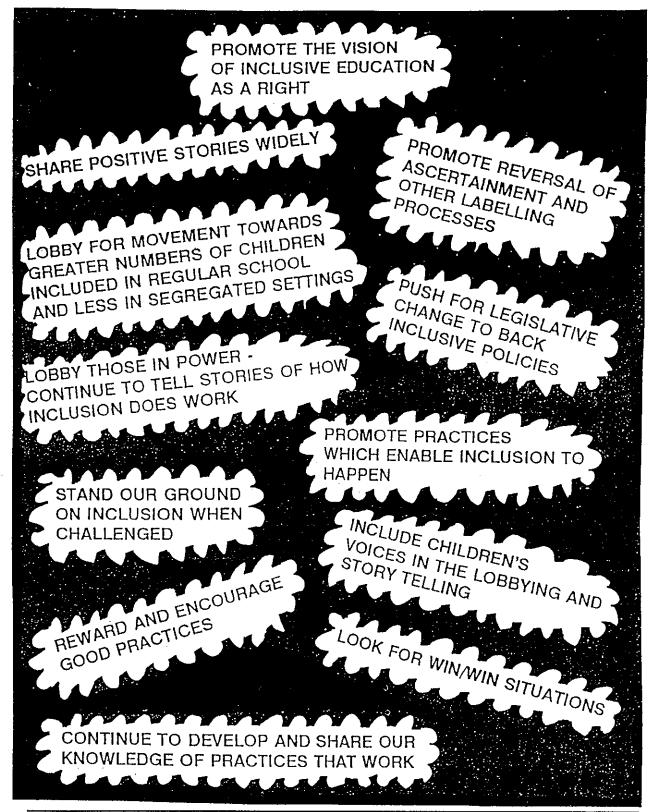
Donna Ball - QPPD Conference Convenor

| ACCESS 93:INCLUSION IN LIFE | |
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Feedback given to QPPD at the Plenary Session.
HOW SHOULD THIS HAPPEN?



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Feedback given to QPPD at the Plenary Session.

MESSAGES QPPD SHOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION BELIEVE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR AL NOT PART OF THE PROBLEM CAN HAPPEN - ALL MEANS ALL AVOID EXCLUSION ENSURE INCLUSION IS NOT JUST "IN" FROM REGULAR SCHOOLS BUT "WITH" DEVELOP INCLUSIVE PRACTICES ENSURE ALL CHILDREN POLICY IS NOT ENOUGH HAVE A RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CONSIDER WAYS OF CHANGING ATTITUDES OF PEOPLE WITH VESTED INTERESTS **AVOID PRACTICES THAT** LABEL CHILDREN EDUCATE THE EDUCATORS ABOUT INCLUSIVE PRACTICES DON'T USE DEFICIT BASED TESTS REDUCE BUDGETS FOR - SHOW UP ABILITIES AND SEGREGATED FACILITIES GIFTS INSTEAD BUDGET FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICES STAND UP TO THE PUSH FOR SEGREGATED SCHOOLS REALLOCATE PEOPLE, RESOURCES, GIVE PARENTS ACCESS INVOLVE PARENTS IN COLLABORATION ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN TO INFORMATION BE SCEPTICAL OF FADS LET'S START NOW TOGETHER CONSIDER NOT IF BUT WHEN WE WON'T GO AWAY THIS IS THE FUTURE

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Feedback given to QPPD at the Plenary Session. HOW SHOULD THIS HAPPEN?

MAKE DISABILITY A POLITICAL ISSUE

CONTINUE TO BE SEEN, PUBLIC AND NOISY ON ISSUES

CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE THE CHARITY ETHIC

INFORM ABOUT SERVICE MODELS WHICH GIVE POWER BACK TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES TO RUN THEIR OWN LIVES

TAKE INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE TO LOOK AT REAL LIFE

CHALLENGE INSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND LOBBY TO GET DEINSTITUTIONALISATION BACK ON THE GOVERNMENT AGENDA

KEEP REITERATING OVER 80% ADULTS LIVE AT HOME WITH THEIR PARENTS

SEND LETTERS TO POLITICIANS RE ISSUES

HIGHLIGHT LACK OF RESPONSES. IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

GET INFORMATION TO USE AS COUNTER ARGUMENTS TO COST/BENEFIT

RAISE AWARENESS OF DIFFERENT

EMPHASISE INAPPROPRIATE

USE OF CURRENT FUNDING

LOBBY POLICY MAKERS TO HAVE VISIONS INCLUDED IN

PLANNING IN GOVERNMENT

PUBLICISE RIGHTS VIOLATIONS' AND EXPOSE WRONG DOINGS

MODELS OF SERVICE RESPONSE

CONTINUE TO QUESTION HOW MONEY IS SPENT AND SUGGEST PRIORITIES ARE WRONG

INCLUDE LOCAL PEOPLE IN MONITORING AND LOBBYING

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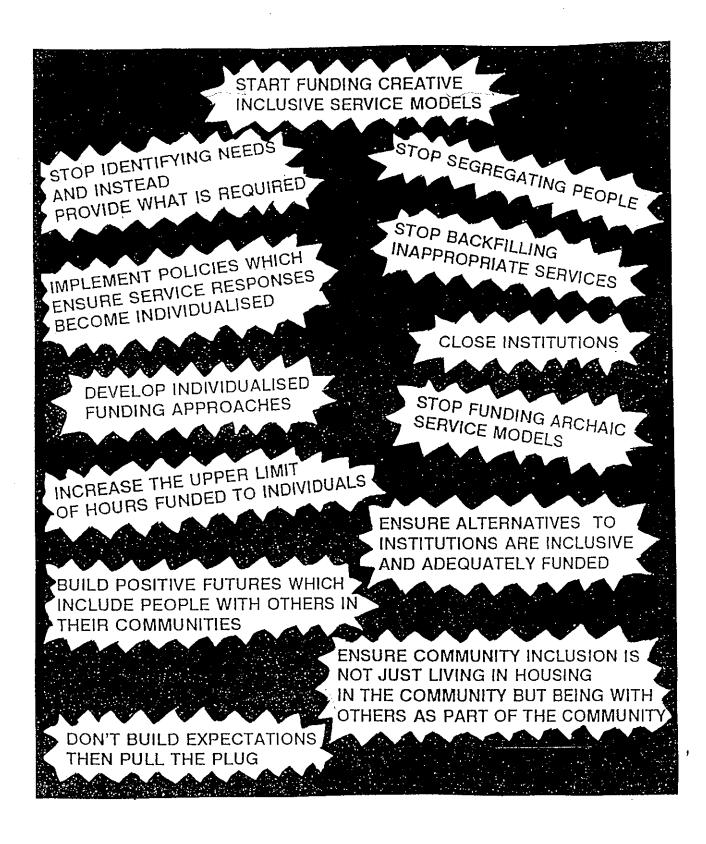
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Feedback given to QPPD at the Plenary Session.

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MESSAGES QPPD SHOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE TO GOVERNMENTS
ABOUT THE NATURE OF SERVICES TO ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES



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