

*family*

A D V O C A C Y

PO Box 502  
Epping NSW 1710

305/16-18 Cambridge St  
Epping NSW 2121

Phone: (02) 9869 0866  
Facsimile: (02) 9869 0722

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Author: Ball, Donna

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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.

**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  
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS ARE NOW AVAILABLE**

**Please forward a copy of the Access 93:Inclusion in Life Proceedings to:**

**Name:**.....

**Address:**.....

..... **Post Code** .....

**I have enclosed \$5.00 cheque/cash**

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID AT THE CONFERENCE

Feedback given to QPPD at the Plenary Session.

### HOW SHOULD THIS HAPPEN?

PROMOTE THE VISION  
OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION  
AS A RIGHT

SHARE POSITIVE STORIES WIDELY

LOBBY FOR MOVEMENT TOWARDS  
GREATER NUMBERS OF CHILDREN  
INCLUDED IN REGULAR SCHOOL  
AND LESS IN SEGREGATED SETTINGS

LOBBY THOSE IN POWER -  
CONTINUE TO TELL STORIES OF HOW  
INCLUSION DOES WORK

STAND OUR GROUND  
ON INCLUSION WHEN  
CHALLENGED

REWARD AND ENCOURAGE  
GOOD PRACTICES

CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AND SHARE OUR  
KNOWLEDGE OF PRACTICES THAT WORK

PROMOTE REVERSAL OF  
ASCERTAINMENT AND  
OTHER LABELLING  
PROCESSES

PUSH FOR LEGISLATIVE  
CHANGE TO BACK  
INCLUSIVE POLICIES

PROMOTE PRACTICES  
WHICH ENABLE INCLUSION TO  
HAPPEN

INCLUDE CHILDREN'S  
VOICES IN THE LOBBYING AND  
STORY TELLING

LOOK FOR WIN/WIN SITUATIONS

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID AT THE CONFERENCE

Feedback given to QPPD at the Plenary Session.

### MESSAGES QPPD SHOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BELIEVE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL  
CAN HAPPEN - ALL MEANS ALL

ENSURE INCLUSION IS NOT JUST "IN"  
BUT "WITH"

ENSURE ALL CHILDREN  
HAVE A RIGHT TO  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

CONSIDER WAYS OF CHANGING ATTITUDES  
OF PEOPLE WITH VESTED INTERESTS

EDUCATE THE EDUCATORS ABOUT  
INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

REDUCE BUDGETS FOR  
SEGREGATED FACILITIES

STAND UP TO THE PUSH  
FOR SEGREGATED SCHOOLS

GIVE PARENTS ACCESS  
TO INFORMATION

BE SCEPTICAL OF FADS

LET'S START NOW TOGETHER -  
THIS IS THE FUTURE

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION  
NOT PART OF THE PROBLEM

AVOID EXCLUSION  
FROM REGULAR SCHOOLS

DEVELOP INCLUSIVE PRACTICES  
- POLICY IS NOT ENOUGH

AVOID PRACTICES THAT  
LABEL CHILDREN

DON'T USE DEFICIT BASED TESTS  
- SHOW UP ABILITIES AND  
GIFTS INSTEAD

BUDGET FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

REALLOCATE PEOPLE, RESOURCES,  
TIME AND MONEY

INVOLVE PARENTS IN COLLABORATION  
ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN

CONSIDER NOT IF BUT WHEN -  
WE WON'T GO AWAY

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID AT THE CONFERENCE

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

RAISE AWARENESS OF DIFFERENT  
MODELS OF SERVICE RESPONSE

CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE  
THE CHARITY ETHIC

EMPHASISE INAPPROPRIATE  
USE OF CURRENT FUNDING

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

LOBBY POLICY MAKERS TO  
HAVE VISIONS INCLUDED IN  
PLANNING IN GOVERNMENT

TAKE INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE TO  
LOOK AT REAL LIFE

PUBLICISE RIGHTS VIOLATIONS  
AND EXPOSE WRONG DOINGS

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

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

GET INFORMATION TO USE  
AS COUNTER ARGUMENTS  
TO COST/BENEFIT

SEND LETTERS TO POLITICIANS  
RE ISSUES

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

HIGHLIGHT LACK OF RESPONSES  
IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

INCLUDE LOCAL PEOPLE IN  
MONITORING AND LOBBYING

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID AT THE CONFERENCE

Feedback given to QPPD at the Plenary Session.

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

