



Creating Meaningful Lives: A forum
for families

REPORT

10 - 12 OCTOBER 2008

Twin Waters Resort

*Inspiring, encouraging
and emboldening parents
children with a disability*

Background

In light of Mamre's strategic plan and in response to an evaluation done by Michael Kendrick in 2006, who suggested that Mamre take a more proactive change agency role, a decision was made to change the focus of the Parent Program. In September 2007, the parent program began making the changes in terms of how it supported some of the ongoing groups and set the path to designing a leadership development plan.

The objectives of the parent program are to:

- Have an identifiable increase in vision, capacity and empowerment of families
- Support parents to have greater awareness of the challenges they face and
- Identify and support parents to take practical action and leadership.

One of the main strategies was to host a live-in conference for parents of children under 18, in October 2008. A highly successful conference was held by Mamre in 2005 and it was agreed that the goals of that conference were still valid for this one. One of the recommendations from the Inspirit Conference report was to host another similar event in 3 years time. At one stage it was thought to name this event "Inspirit 2008" however that posed issues for many, and it was agreed that the event be called "Creating Meaningful Lives: A forum for families", also referred to as "CML"

Purpose of Event

The goals of CML were to:

1. Explore and deepen a positive and inclusive vision for the lives of people with a disability and their families
2. Understand the broad social and service contexts which have a significant influence on the lives of people with a disability and their families
3. Understand the threats to people with a disability and their families who have a vision for an ordinary life
4. Develop practical strategies to put their vision into action.

Further, Mamre planned to intentionally identify potential parent/family leaders from those who attended, with a view to designing a plan to assist in their development. Mamre also saw CML as an opportunity for parent/family leaders as well as service workers to develop presentation skills and gain knowledge from the "elders" in the sector.

Planning

Anita Speed coordinated the planning and implementation of CML concurrently with her other work in the parent program. Her position was part time until the last 3 weeks prior to the event, where she worked full time for that period.

Planning began in October 2007, but began in earnest from the first Planning Day which was held on 22 February 2008.

The Planning Day was a whole day event that included staff and parents, facilitated by Jan Dyke. The outcome was a loose outline of the event, and a basic timeline. People who contributed at the planning day were:

- Sharon Gray
- Pam Rallings
- Yvonne and Rod Vincent
- Margaret Rodgers
- Margaret Ward
- Jeremy Ward
- Rachel Johnson
- Julie Johnson
- Bronwyn Moloney
- Tracy Pate
- Stephen Pate
- Toni Cannon (Carers Queensland)
- Dennis Donovan
- Lisa Bridle
- Anita Speed

A content committee was established to think through what topics needed to be covered in order to address the goals. The content committee met regularly from February to June, and then only came together occasionally when Anita needed further support. Members of the content committee were:

- Jeremy Ward
- Bronwyn Moloney
- Margaret Rodgers
- Despina Macris
- Kathryn Treston
- Margaret Ward
- Julie Johnson
- Rachel Johnson
- Leanne Burke

It was established that the content had to include aspects of building a vision, sustaining a vision and how to do this in families' own circumstances. It was also established the importance of involving adult people with a disability, and the need to include stories and that the focus would be on families that have a child under 18 years of age.

A further decision was made to use this forum to give opportunities to have young parents and service workers present material, supported by mentors who could hand over this information. It fits into Mamre's focus of succession and contributes to the development of parents and staff.

Jan Dyke was approached to mentor Natalie Kennedy, a young keyworker new to Mamre, and Jeremy Ward to support two young parents to also present. Bob Lee agreed to assist Lisa Bridle

Anita liaised with Toni Cannon from CQ over the period of planning, and the documentation and preparation process was shared. CQ used Mamre's Expressions of Interest, strategy of working with families through their keyworkers (CSO's in CQ's case), and used Mamre's letters and information documentation as templates. It was felt that the families from CQ that attended were well prepared.

Issues

After the planning day with Jan Dyke, a family came forward to express their concerns at some of the outcomes. Margaret Ward and Anita Speed visited the family to gather more information. They were concerned that:

- ❖ The event was too exclusive, seeing as it was only for families that had a child under 18 years
- ❖ Not being able to take their child would stop some parents from attending
- ❖ The distance to travel to Twin Waters was problematic for families in that it may be too far to go if there was an emergency
- ❖ The content needs to be made more clear
- ❖ The word "conference" was not appropriate as it excludes certain people from attending
- ❖ The need for presenters that are "experts" on certain topics, such as educators.

A decision was made to create an "Expression of Interest" process, change the frame of the event from conference to a live-in workshop, and take into consideration all of the points raised by the family in the planning of the event.

Another issue was that of funding. A submission was raised to Disability Services Queensland (DSQ) however the results from that were not known until a few weeks before the event. Although some other funds were sourced, it would have been very difficult to continue with the event if the DSQ funds were not approved. There were a couple of sponsors, however not as many as hoped.

The Governance Board expressed concern at the name "Inspirit 2008", as it was thought that families would expect a similar event as in 2005. This would be especially problematic as this was an event for only a certain demographic of families.

There were many expressions of interest from families and it was thought that the positions would be filled relatively easily, however a number of families withdrew in the final weeks. Most reasons were around important appointments having come up, sick children, or one of the attendees were having to go away for work.

Originally, Mamre hoped to support 100 participants, however the budget was became very large. There were some concerns on how to manage that number of people when looking at some hard information, so it was agreed to bring the maximum number to 60. The final number was 46.

Funding

In the first instance, Margaret Ward and Anita Speed met with Graham Schlecht, CEO of Carers Queensland, to see if he could assist in providing funds. An agreement was made that CQ would provide \$20,000 in exchange for 12 places at the forum. This contribution was reduced to \$15,000 when numbers were lowered to a maximum of 60.

The Young Children's Program – South transferred \$4000 to cover the support costs of families that were attending CML from that program.

A joint submission was sent to DSQ and as mentioned, it was approved about a month before the event. Other submissions including National Disability Conference funding, St George Foundation, Ian Potter Foundation, and a number of sponsorship requests were not approved.

A sponsorship request letter was sent to all accountants and solicitors that were identified as "preferred providers" from the Pave the Way project. One solicitor, Flower and Hart, provided sponsorship for one couple (\$1850) and we agreed to give out brochures and pens. We also agreed for them to provide a half-page advertisement for publication in Mamrebia.

Another sponsorship was provided anonymously for \$1850.

Staffing Options donated \$500 which we used to pay for the Bush Band.

Families were asked to pay \$150 per couple to attend the weekend.

Support and the role of keyworkers

See appendix 1 for detailed costs for support. The keyworkers role was to liaise with the family to work out what support was required. They were asked to encourage families to look at what informal networks they could draw from and then look at what paid supports would be needed. Many families used their own budgets and keyworkers liaised with Commonwealth Carers and Carelink Centre to provide funding for support. Other families required

support through the Creating Meaningful Lives funding. Carers Queensland supported the families that attended through their own processes.

It was also decided that a response to support would be given on an individual basis. This meant asking each family what it would take for them to get there. If for example, a family would not leave a young child for that period of time, then we would support them to take the child with them and provide a carer while they attended the sessions. However, we were not providing support workers to support children in groups at the venue, or use any form of blanket support approaches. It was hoped that this would model some thinking for families to look at exactly they would need by way of support, that suited their unique family's needs.

Preparing Families

It was primarily the keyworker's role to support families to prepare for the event. It was reported by some keyworkers that the process was very helpful in beginning discussions on future planning. Anita met with the keyworkers individually, and at keyworker/coordinator meetings to support them in this role. Anita worked with families that did not have a keyworker, and liaised with Carers Queensland to assist them to support their regional families who were further supported through their local CSO (Community Service Officer).

Event

The live in event was held at Twin Waters Resort at Mudjmba, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. It is a 5-star rated hotel and conferencing centre with many facilities and activities that can be expected from a venue of this kind. The staff were flexible, helpful and made changes as required often at the last minute. The venue is expensive, however they did make accommodations on some costs. A big expense was in cancellation fees, however.

Mamre looked for venues that could accommodate 100 live-in participants. There weren't many within a 2-hour radius of Brisbane. It also had to be accessible.

It was decided that we would use high quality audio/visual support in order to contribute to atmosphere and flow of the event. It has been noted in other events (not of Mamre's) that inadequate audio/visual support can severely detract from the impact of presentations. Although expensive, the audio/visual support was very good.

Staging was supplied to include a ramp in the event that any presenters or participants that used a wheelchair was able to get to the lecturn. It was an added but necessary cost.

Black Eye Advertising was approached to assist in developing a banner for the event. They prepared two banners and holding slide which was of a high

quality. The agency markedly reduced their costs, and although there were issues on getting the banners to us in time, they made accommodations and produced materials of a very high quality. Currently, one banner is at Newmarket and the other is at Mt Gravatt offices

Chairs/MCs

The role of the Chairs/Masters of Ceremony was to each host a day and ensure the flow of the proceedings. Kathryn Treston hosted Friday, Bronwyn Moloney hosted Saturday and Julie Johnson hosted Sunday. Each brought their own style to the proceedings and their hospitality was well received. Further, their role included facilitating a session on Saturday to assist participants to integrate the material they had heard so far, and in a style they each chose. At the event, 3 sessions were reduced to 2 sessions. Kathryn and Julie facilitated a creative, vision board making session, and Bronwyn and Natalie Kennedy supported a discussion-based session that used strength cards. Participants acknowledged the importance of having the space to “funnel down” the material into their own lived experience.

Materials

Participants were given a folder for each couple that contained brochures for Pave the Way, brochures from the sponsor, timetable of the weekend, “Inspire, Encourage, Embolden” magnets, evaluation forms and some articles. Participants also had a bound book of readings that included positive stories, and relevant articles around the topics that were presented. It also included some handouts for certain presentations.

A CD of the presentations were sent to all participants after the event.

During one of the presentations, participants were asked to fill out a NICAN postcard (what happens when someone is in community, and when they aren't) which Mamre sent back to them after the event. Participants were asked to list their actions on this postcard in order to jog their memories after they returned home.

Learnings and Recommendations

At the post-event debrief, it was agreed that strongly ensuring participants attend in couples was a very good strategy. Most of them were both parents, however some mothers came with friends and other family members who were active in the child's life. Two divorced couples attended also.

It was also agreed that enforcing attendance for the whole event was useful. A few participants still were not able to get to the event until later on Friday (mostly to the bad weather and traffic conditions), and some other people did not come until Saturday morning. A number of couples arrived at different times, which ensured that at least one of the participants in that couple could be present for the whole weekend. It was noted that most of the participants

were very diligent in ensuring they attend the whole weekend despite having to make considerable arrangements in order to do so.

The cost to couples for the weekend was \$150.00. A number of participants asked if they had to cover accommodation as well, as this amount was quite small. It was agreed at the debriefing that it is reasonable to charge couples more to attend, whilst still ensuring that arrangements be made for those that may have financial difficulties.

A lot of material was packed into the Saturday, finishing off with a “funnelling” exercise to integrate the material into couples’ own experience. Despite this, the evaluations showed that there was too much information in too short a time on the Saturday. Some participants suggested a longer lunch break, and some more time to integrate the information.

It was noted that supporting keyworkers to work with families to prepare for the event was a good strategy. Some keyworkers reported that they would have like more time to prepare, and that information of the event would have been useful during the June support plan round. They also suggested some more meeting time to brief them of the event, apart from the short periods of time during service meetings and keyworker/coordinator meetings.

The original plan was to invite 100 participants to be involved but a smaller number no more than 50 seems to have been a good number to manage.

Appendix 1 Costs of Event

Item	Expense	Income
Planning Day - groceries	\$115.00	
Planning Day - Jan Dyke	\$750.00	
Deposit Twin Waters	\$3,920.00	
2nd instalment	\$14,112.00	
payment attendees		\$ 2,100.00
support	\$436.75	
support	\$1,353.56	
support -	\$100.00	
support -	\$300.00	
support	\$50.00	
materials	\$19.99	
instalment Twin Waters	\$6,350.00	
audio/visual	\$7,170.90	
banners	\$338.50	
support for Lawton	\$860.00	
materials	\$52.42	
Staffing Options		\$ 500.00
Carers Queensland		\$ 15,000.00
DSQ		\$ 30,000.00
Final instalment Twin Waters	\$12,697.75	
Michael Kendrick	5165.22	
Mary Kenny	\$270.00	
Band	\$500.00	
payment Parent Program		\$ 10,000.00
Flower and Hart		\$ 1,850.00
Fuel for Paul - travel	\$65.80	
video tapes and parking	\$115.00	
materials for creative workshop	\$68.30	
Jan Dyke	\$700.00	
TOTAL	\$55,510.29	\$59,450.00

Feedback

Evaluations

Attendees were asked to provide feedback via evaluation forms. Responses to questions are below:

What did you expect to gain from this event?

- ❖ *A better knowledge and focus on how to “plan” a future for B*
- ❖ *Improve support networks*
- ❖ *Education to take action to achieve the plans and dreams that the speakers talk about*
- ❖ *Information*
- ❖ *Development and growth in a better understanding on function as a family unit, how to apply one self*
- ❖ *Some ideas on how to create a “normal” productive life for my son*
- ❖ *Information, help about my vision for C and how to make it happen. Plus nice food and surroundings!*
- ❖ *No idea*
- ❖ *Information on how to deal with people*
- ❖ *Create meaningful vision of what will hold, discover and learn about a whole host of possibilities, feel at peace, make friends*
- ❖ *Strategies for securing an independent and fulfilling future for our B*
- ❖ *Information about creating meaningful ...*
- ❖ *Ideas, inspiration*
- ❖ *To gather information in order to support K (friend who’s a mum) better in her journey with J.*
- ❖ *Had no preconceptions. Wasn’t sure what it was about*
- ❖ *I was unsure what I would gain at the start. It became very clear, very soon that a lot was going to be gained.*
- ❖ *A relaxing weekend and some ideas for future direction in C’s life.*
- ❖ *Be empowered; challenged and inspired; and increase practical knowledge*
- ❖ *I was open but had high expectations*
- ❖ *I expected to find out more technical details with family trusts and finance*
- ❖ *A type of plan for M’s future or help to plan for what to expect in his future*
- ❖ *Guide us to making our son M have his future creative, meaningful and help to be accepted in the community.*
- ❖ *Ideas, tools, reassurance on how to make L’s life more fulfilling*
- ❖ *Building a better future for my child and learning how to deal with organisations better*
- ❖ *New ideas, companionship; rest, recreation*
- ❖ *Ideas, tools and concepts to create a meaningful life for my child*
- ❖ *Exploring our vision for a sustained support network for B*
- ❖ *To get inspired to continue to offer as a full a life as possible for our children and let the children have every opportunity*

- ❖ *Information about future challenges likely to be confronted by our family*
- ❖ *I was unsure of what to expect but if we could gain further knowledge to help A and his two sisters to achieve a better life I would be well satisfied*
- ❖ *Knowledge. To know more about disability and how to implement measures.*

All said their expectations were met except for three participants who said:

- ❖ *No – Everyone talks about vision, planning and dreaming. I would like to hear the HOW TO*
- ❖ *No, but it didn't matter as I realise this is only one aspect of my vision (this participant referred to expectations around financial planning and family trusts)*
- ❖ *Yes to new ideas and companionship, but no to rest and relaxation. No – a longer midday break for a walk/chill/reflection*

Did you find the content of the event interesting?

All participants responded yes.

- ❖ *M. Kendrick was interesting – not heard him before*
- ❖ *Very informative, enjoy the mind challenge*
- ❖ *There was a lot of things out there that I didn't realise*
- ❖ *Very useful info and easy to understand*
- ❖ *It worth the fight*
- ❖ *Lots of thought provoking ideas to take away, digest and act upon*
- ❖ *Challenging, though provoking and extremely interesting*
- ❖ *Appreciated the in-depth practical research; time long reflections very succinctly presented*
- ❖ *Fulfilling; ideas presented; options; choices. Heartwrenching – was like a counselling weekend, emotional*
- ❖ *Yes – a lot to digest but time-poor families appreciate good, effective use of time.*
- ❖ *Lots of information has been taken on board*
- ❖ *Very stimulating*
- ❖ *Dreams can become reality*
- ❖ *Very interesting – I found new insights into how I/we should approach problems and how to solve them*
- ❖ *The content gave much food for thought*

Which session was most useful to you, and why?

- ❖ *“Building a vision” – realising today is yesterday's future, so plan now*
- ❖ *All sessions content absolutely relevant and can be applied to our situation*
- ❖ *All good*
- ❖ *All sessions were good as made me think about the future*
- ❖ *All session found I could relate , self evaluate as individual person, family unit*

- ❖ *Vision – how to create a vision. Just made me realise you can never start too early and not put it off*
- ❖ *Hard to say! Mary’s session I found very practical and the “right relationship” lecture was helpful and clear. I enjoyed the creative workshop immensely and it will keep me focussed as a visual reminder at home*
- ❖ *Advocacy. I have trouble with it.*
- ❖ *Mary Kenny*
- ❖ *Michael’s vision concept. Unreal to real*
- ❖ *Natalie. Lots of information, young and enthusiastic*
- ❖ *Michael’s imagining better – made it all seem possible. Jeremy Ward’s session – so powerful*
- ❖ *Friday and all Saturday*
- ❖ *The importance of informal networks and community. Forced me to look at potential people to invite into my life*
- ❖ *Natural authority of families*
- ❖ *How to build a vision. Jeremy Ward. To see a successful vision re the process of how to get there*
- ❖ *Michael Kendrick – all of them*
- ❖ *Michael’s “imagining better” and Jeremy’s story. Gave me a sense of direction and inspiration*
- ❖ *Right relationships framework and analysis. Spoke from all perspectives. Families; workers; systems and bureaucracy*
- ❖ *Natalie and Lisa on day two.*
- ❖ *Jeremy Ward’s story really helped me focus on importance of relationships. Lisa Bridle’s talk on advocacy helped confirm it is OK to be intimidated, and have others help*
- ❖ *At this point in M’s life, I think Lisa Bridle hit home the most – but all areas was beneficial to us.*
- ❖ *Michael Kendrick – dealing with services*
- ❖ *Dan and David’s journey – what can be achieved. Michael’s sessions – thought provoking*
- ❖ *Right relationship and working with formal services because it made me realise I can pass my point across.*
- ❖ *Every session was useful/practical/real*
- ❖ *David Rallings and Dan Read gave me hope. Michael K’s sessions empowered me. Lisa Bridle’s session was very informative*
- ❖ *Michael Kendrick – any session*
- ❖ *Positive ways of keeping a vision – you have to have a vision to make it a reality*
- ❖ *Having David and Dan’s stories really made us feel hope and inspiration*
- ❖ *Michael’s summary at the end was very powerful and encompassed all the other sessions. All were good*
- ❖ *The closing session was so informative and inspirational. Michael was able to give so much hope for the future.*

Will you be able to use the information and strategies provided?

- ❖ Yes

- ❖ Vision and plans are only as good as the action taken to get there.
How do I learn about what is required to take action
- ❖ Hope so
- ❖ Yes – open my mind to value myself as individual as a family
- ❖ Yes – I am gonna try and start to create a vision and inner circle for my son
- ❖ Yes – In so many ways
- ❖ Yes – In my work life with individuals/families/work colleagues and personal networks as well.
- ❖ Yes – I have two or three simple tasks to continue with
- ❖ Yes – in all facets of live for our family and in my professional life too!
- ❖ Yes – lots of ideas for all the family and life generally
- ❖ Yes – with the knowledge provided we will be able to do more

What, if anything, will you do with this information when you are back home and back into your regular routine?

- ❖ Organise to make time for planning, in my regular routine
- ❖ Share it with our loved ones, our church community, “Parents of Students with a Disability “ Group (Carers Queensland), Cairns ADS Support Group Inc (www.carg.org.au), school community
- ❖ Write a list of questions – review my plan and find the education that will help me take action
- ❖ Think over it and try to think more broadly in terms of my family member
- ❖ Do my best to implement into home environment and social aspect of life
- ❖ Start trying to create more social contacts for my son in order to create a vision
- ❖ Share with husband and mum. Make some calls to people I want to bring into my inner circle. Contact Pave the Way.
- ❖ Try to improve our inner circle more contact etc
- ❖ We hope to create a circle of friends and supporters
- ❖ Move the family focus from survival to enjoying life
- ❖ Its good to know you’re doing the right things and its worth fighting for
- ❖ Put it into action! Create the vision, reach out, ask for help, share the vision
- ❖ Create more friendships for B, have more quality time with C.
- ❖ Don’t make assumptions about what is good for C.
- ❖ I will act on most of it over time
- ❖ Support K with her decisions and perhaps even gently push her to act (*person attending as support person for mother*)
- ❖ Form a social club for our children and involve people in our lives more
- ❖ Use it to form a plan – a vision – for the family and all of its members
- ❖ Reflect, implement ideas and DREAM
- ❖ Write it up, obtain copies, share with others in my networks, etc. Be conscious to use my vision board and make more of them
- ❖ Create/expand circle of friendships/create opportunities for B’s future “positive” – band, attend music festivals
- ❖ Reconnect with friends

- ❖ Help us to be stronger at times and meetings with groups etc
- ❖ Put into action
- ❖ Develop L's plan
- ❖ Start to build a better life for our family
- ❖ Don't get stuck in starting blocks – extend the dreams to action, pick up phone and make a BBQ/coffee date, be nicer (genuinely) to service providers
- ❖ Ask people to join us in planning our child's life
- ❖ Whatever we have time for – develop a strong future for our family
- ❖ Work with S and talk about where the family is going and share our visions with other people
- ❖ Review and then move forward with work with schools, teachers and A's parents
- ❖ Will try to implement some of the things learned and will have more confidence 6 months ahead

Comments on Facilitators:

Michael Kendrick

- ❖ I loved his Canadian humour. It made his speeches easy to listen to
- ❖ A very dry wit
- ❖ Good message
- ❖ Dry, academic, educational. Very interesting change from personal stories and experiences. Good length of time for intro to topic.
- ❖ Informative, he planted information in my head that I didn't realise
- ❖ Excellent! Well presented, easy to relate to. Obviously very knowledgeable but presented at a good level for all to understand and good pace. Loved the humour!
- ❖ Very good
- ❖ Very interesting
- ❖ Like watching a rock polished into a gem. A great communicator.
- ❖ Thought he would be more indepth. Was OK as his sessions were short
- ❖ Simply outstanding! I could listen to Michael forever. Captivating
- ❖ Excellent!
- ❖ Very insightful
- ❖ Interesting/funny
- ❖ Authoritative, knowledgeable
- ❖ Enjoyed his presentations. Looking forward to visiting the website
- ❖ Brilliant
- ❖ Excellent, interesting, humorous, inspirational. The best speaker I have ever heard.
- ❖ Excellent, unpretentious, humorous
- ❖ Intriguing, interesting, fulfilling, clear, motivational, clarity
- ❖ Very personable. Some concepts were a bit too academic, but I was able to follow the central message and theme of each presentation
- ❖ Excellent and mildly funny
- ❖ Outstanding – not too much he doesn't know
- ❖ Good to hear again now that we are at a different stage of the journey

- ❖ Very well spoken, very easy to understand what point he was putting across
- ❖ Great communicator!! Easy style, idiosyncratic with all those capital letters in powerpoint presentation – but I think I get it!! I feel I have gained a lot from his presentation and from social contact over dinner discussing all the unmentionables: sex, politics, music.
- ❖ Brilliant
- ❖ Very accessible and informative
- ❖ Spoke in terms that was easy to understand and take on board
- ❖ Wonderful speaker and obviously a very wise man with extensive experience. He was just wonderful to listen to and we were very grateful to hear him
- ❖ A fascinating and thought provoking speaker who has the ability to motivate you without the hype
- ❖ What a wonderful man with such an experience of life. So uplifting and imparts knowledge and hope

Catherine Raju

- ❖ Not here for her talk, but it was great
- ❖ Good
- ❖ Missed this lecture
- ❖ Personable and well organised
- ❖ Very good
- ❖ Enjoyed listening to all the speakers as a group. Has helped us confirm we are doing a lot of things right for our sons
- ❖ Beautifully spoken, gentle and powerful message. The photos were so moving and created the opportunity to hope
- ❖ Informative
- ❖ Were not here sorry
- ❖ Good presentations
- ❖ Lovely, inspirational, created a spiritual framework for the weekend
- ❖ Warm, approachable
- ❖ Empowering content
- ❖ Very subtle presentation
- ❖ Always good to be with
- ❖ Glad we found Mamre foundation and she was a pleasure to talk to
- ❖ Very talented presenter – drew you into her message with the visuals and a little of her own experience
- ❖ Poignant
- ❖ Great “soft” opening
- ❖ Always find it inspiring to see and hear other people’s story and full life – and see images
- ❖ Great
- ❖ An excellent presentation done in a subtle manner but with great emphasis
- ❖

Natalie Kennedy

- ❖ Good talk although I got a bit lost in her “technocratic managerialism”???
- ❖ Good to see passion in a young person – speaks clearly, just a little too fast
- ❖ Well done! Little too fast and too much technical/educational ideas. Move too much and fiddle. Lots of good info but too much. Bit depressing to be told how good the ordinary road is when we have been thrown to the segregated.
- ❖ I like the way Natalie shows interest in a ? as a grow. As we were cutting and pasting, interest in knowing grow to understand how parents view the child’s future (*difficult to read this*)
- ❖ Amazing – showing the two paths really kicked me in the heart and at first made me self doubt my decisions
- ❖ Good first job. A little fast and probably a bit too much material, a bit overwhelming! A simpler message would be good. Be careful not to make it come across as negative to families
- ❖ Very good
- ❖ A good picture backwards for someone new into the world of disabled persons.
- ❖ Fantastic
- ❖ Passionate. Will be a great asset in years to come (too much info in one session – too much on ppt)
- ❖ Impressive!
- ❖ Nervous, but good information. She has potential
- ❖ Thought provoking
- ❖ Really got a lot out of Natalie’s presentation and having experienced the same issues have been encouraged to continue advocating
- ❖ Found the material was not relevant to me
- ❖ Enthusiastic and driven. Gave me hope for positive change from gen y.
- ❖ Vital, excellent
- ❖ Knowledgeable – delightful ray of sunshine
- ❖ An interesting theme with the two roads
- ❖ Good content. Delivery too fast! Hard to take all in
- ❖ Outstanding effort and she will be a huge asset to Mamre in the future
- ❖ Interesting comments about regression of policies of government
- ❖ Well done Natalie. Very clear, well spoken – you done a great job.
- ❖ Great content! Delivery needs development. Was best when she spoke away from ‘script’. Lovely. Definitely succeeded.
- ❖ Informative
- ❖ Brilliant – energetic – enthusiastic
- ❖ Had lots of interesting facts and makes you think about the whole concept of belonging
- ❖ Great
- ❖ A very well prepared address that made you rethink our approach to how to do things
- ❖ What a bright future she has. A really interesting and educational talk

- ❖ I would love to participate and engage in so much more being from North Qld I feel isolated. Natalie offered to help with organising B with a band/music festival etc but then realised we lived in Townsville. I need a Natalie in Townsville – loved her personality, honesty – her whole being.
- ❖

Lisa Bridle

- ❖ Good and easy listening. Emotive as she shared her failure to have the school onside with her
- ❖ Clear sighted and focussed on child's needs above others. Genuine love shines out – vulnerability speaks volumes
- ❖ Good
- ❖ Comments on picking battles, realising family energy levels , very helpful
- ❖ I like her emotion, compassion, she showed me that. I also had stood back and left things too late, and to have a voice as I had trouble. To be clear with what value I see I would like to happen in my child's education
- ❖ Spirit – gave me the spirit to fight for my sons rights
- ❖ Good, helpful ideas on advocating. Realistic about having failures too. Thanks!
- ❖ Very good
- ❖ Inspiring
- ❖ Very real
- ❖ Truly moving. So honest. Engaging. Simple powerpoints, powerful message
- ❖ Down to earth. Easy to relate to.
- ❖ Helpful information
- ❖ Obviously condensing a big subject, a bit academic but will refine no doubt
- ❖ Great
- ❖ Empowering, inspiring
- ❖ Heartfelt and honest, and uplifting
- ❖ Can feel and understand emotional road; been there – still there
- ❖ A very clear presentation – everyone could take some points next time we need to advocate for our kids
- ❖ Excellent and good to be so personal as well as very professional
- ❖ Thankyou Lisa – you just made things become more realistic and we will be prepared for our future schooling years issues.
- ❖ Very special! Depth of sharing. I am in awe but feel less judgemental and more forgiving of my own journey, my own perceived 'failures' on behalf of my family
- ❖ Practical
- ❖ Clear and effective about taking up the fight
- ❖ Lisa spoke openly about being a parent and advocate and the fact at times you have to let go of some battles and reminded me of this
- ❖ Very strong woman who really shared her personal experiences. Quite an inspiration
- ❖ Lisa sincerity shone through and her message was to keep trying

- ❖ A pleasure to listen to, and the ideas she gave regarding schools.

Mary Kenny

- ❖ An example of what can be done even with her deafness and how she connected with the audience
- ❖ A vivacious person who has overcome a disability to show what can be achieved, as well as helping us to form a plan
- ❖ Wonderfully vibrant and interesting
- ❖ Full of enthusiasm
- ❖ Exciting – slightly disjointed in delivery but put it all together ie people to the plan
- ❖ Entertaining
- ❖ She grew on me as session extended. Very enlightening. I learnt a lot about myself
- ❖ What a happy and cheerful person. I hope my son with a hearing impairment can talk as well as her
- ❖ Exciting and expressional, and personal
- ❖ Very well presented – very energetic
- ❖ Motivational
- ❖ Inspirational, practical, open and sharing
- ❖ Funny, engaging, light hearted – awesome
- ❖ Great
- ❖ Great, unfortunately a bit rushed
- ❖ Inspiring!
- ❖ What an incredible dynamo! What is not to love
- ❖ Bubbly and fun, good closer
- ❖ Great lady. Common sense is not very common. What she shared is assumed but not known
- ❖ Very good
- ❖ Adorable! Happy and positive. I loved how this was a very practical exercise – not just something to think about but active.
- ❖ Professional – gave me the courage to draw a starting circle with which I can start to work with
- ❖ Great speaker, awesome human bean with great positive outlook. Go girl – luv ya
- ❖ Very vibrant and interactive
- ❖ Good
- ❖ Full of beans, happy and inclusive. Talk great

Other comments, suggestions and feedback from evaluation forms

- ❖ Everyone said that enough was done by Mamre to attend, and felt support
- ❖ Food Food Food!
- ❖ P and I would be very happy to write a letter of support to assist with securing funding for future events
- ❖ If I have the vision and I know the cost, where do I find the education to create the path? A speaker that talks about how to fund your path

- would be good. Could (an event) include a talk on how to get the education to take action once you have the plan.
- ❖ Wonderful to have such luxury and excellent food
 - ❖ (Suggest) a name tag box to leave name tags in the lecture room – so I don't leave name in hotel room
 - ❖ Lovely Mamre people everywhere
 - ❖ Venue was superb – faultless, food was plentiful and delicious.
 - ❖ There was one session that was quite long and I found that I wasn't absorbing information cos I was getting tired
 - ❖ Thankyou for opening up my eyes to what it is going to take to create a meaningful life for my son
 - ❖ (More info) – getting my legal will/trust info organised and understanding all that
 - ❖ (Suggest) build in a bit of time to ourselves to enjoy the facilities or have an event like archery or something. So us carers can unwind more. Saturday felt long but the smaller groups at the end came at the right time
 - ❖ It would be been nice to have everyone introduce a bit about themselves and their child at the start. Some people I never got a chance to meet or learn anything about. Otherwise it was great. Thank you.
 - ❖ Mamre has excellent staff. All speakers were very good. Lots of info, easy to understand
 - ❖ Not so many photos!
 - ❖ Could do with better lighting in conference room
 - ❖ It was like changing batteries in a torch. Brilliant weekend. WE wouldn't have make it without the child care
 - ❖ (Suggest) more information about the education system
 - ❖ Bronwyn made people feel very welcome. Great host. Anita done a great job putting it together. The bush dancing was a great ice breaker
 - ❖ (More information) what other programs can we slot into to help keep the momentum. How to overcome hurdles
 - ❖ Thank you Anita. Simply wonderful
 - ❖ Saturday was one session too long. Perhaps some very small group facilitation to allow some debriefing. It was rather overwhelming
 - ❖ I feel privileged to have attended and will forever be grateful for the opportunity
 - ❖ Would love to attend more. Always a bit forgotten in NQ.
 - ❖ Thank you
 - ❖ Would like to have the option of using the powerpoint handout to make comments next to the points.
 - ❖ (Suggest) perhaps a session or two on preactical issues for the families ie "how to get a lot from an IEP meeting" or similar – have them in a brain storming environment.
 - ❖ Outstanding – thank you!!
 - ❖ Everything we needed. Julie, Bronwyn, Ruth were awesome
 - ❖ No more Bon Jovi or Shannon Noll! Improve background music
 - ❖ Thank you so much
 - ❖ Thank you for the opportunity to attend; participate and hear, share and learn and be re-invigorated into the exciting future

- ❖ I would love to participate and engage in so much more being from North Qld I feel isolated. Natalie offered to help with organising B with a band/music festival etc but then realised we lived in Townsville. I need a Natalie in Townsville – loved her personality, honesty – her whole being.
- ❖ Perhaps Saturday was very full
- ❖ The subtle bush dance exercise was perfect for breaking the ice with everyone. Much better than other activities (ice breakers), as I felt the band really enjoyed it as much as the participants
- ❖ A little less content in one weekend, and more interaction
- ❖ Keep up the good work!
- ❖ Increase the size of tea and coffee cups at Novotel
- ❖ Thank you Mamre for letting us be a part of this weekend
- ❖ Need a longer midday break
- ❖ Brilliant. Thanks. sincere deep thanks.
- ❖ (more info) planning meeting – how to organise one
- ❖ (more info) how to implement the plan/vision
- ❖ (suggest) a list of names of all attendees at the start ie who is who
- ❖ Thank you to everyone that contributed to making it happen
- ❖ It would be great to have this annually
- ❖ Saturday was full of such wonderful information but would have benefitted from a small break in the afternoon so we could go for a walk/swim etc so just not so overwhelming
- ❖ Wonderful weekend thank you for allowing us the opportunity and we hope our beautiful daughter's life will be richer because of it. Thank you
- ❖ Was an excellent weekend and will surely benefit others in the future
- ❖ The venue was excellent and the catering was punctual and really enjoyable
- ❖ Maybe a spiritual short service on Sunday morning. Not of any one particular religion.

Unsolicited Feedback

There were a number of phone calls from participants, but below is some excerpts from emails that were received.

“Thank you for organising such a fantastic weekend. We both got so much from the experience and it was lovely to be able to share it together. Please let the rest of the Mamre people know how appreciative we are of being included in the weekend. Both S and I are very passionate allowing our children to have as many experiences and opportunities in life and allowing them to be able to chose how to live life”.

“Weekend was great! Very long and mentally exhausting ... But the information was great and more relevant to us than we might have thought seeing J is still only young. The place was beautiful too, Aaron was highly impressed by the food and we really enjoyed the experience, gave us a lot to think about. Also connecting with other parents was wonderful, we had been

quite worried as we didn't know anyone at all but everyone was lovely and it was really good to talk to people who understood and who had similar challenges.

"The conference was very inspirational and I have set myself two goals to follow up on".