

Pave the Way Newsletter

December 2009

Pave the Way Evaluation Report

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We are pleased to inform you that the report from the Evaluation, commissioned by Pave the Way in October 2008, is now available on our website www.pavetheway.org.au/resources/index.php. Thank you again to the many families who responded to the written survey or agreed to talk with the evaluation team last year. The positive feedback and the challenges posed by the recommendations have been of great benefit to us as we continue to clarify how we work with families throughout Queensland to assist them to imagine and plan for a good life and secure future for their family member.

We were particularly encouraged by evaluation feedback that indicates families are making contact with Pave the Way in a whole variety of ways and at times that suit them. For some, the contact is simply reading the newsletter or accessing the website from time to time; for others it might be attending a one day workshop and then reading some of our written information resources; for some people it might be ringing the office for specific legal information or for a conversation about some aspect of their planning for their family member. Other families might attend a live-in workshop and then ask Pave the Way to facilitate one or more planning sessions. Families who ask for assistance to establish a network or circle of support might come to this after a workshop or simply after a conversation with one of the team about their concerns regarding the future for their son or daughter.

It is not uncommon for people to have some initial involvement with Pave the Way and then not make contact again for a year or more when, as they say, “we are ready now to do something!” Whatever the type of contact, or when it is made, the important thing for us is that families realise that Pave the Way is a resource they can access when they are ready and one that they can continue to tap into over time.

One challenge from the Evaluation was for Pave the Way to find ways that families can network with and be of direct support to each other, if they are interested. Page 2 of this newsletter talks about the Family Conversations held in Brisbane this year and continues the suggestions for learning from other families which were offered in our September issue. A new initiative, the Family Forum planned for the end of March next year, will provide another opportunity for families to engage with each other.

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For further information on the Evaluation Report, please contact Pave the Way on (07) 3291 5800 or 1300 554 402 or by email pavetheway@mamre.org.au

Families Sharing Ideas and Strategies

Creating and sustaining a good and safe life for our family member with disability is an ongoing and often challenging process. In our September newsletter we talked about the possibility of gaining strength from hearing what other families are doing to turn their dreams into reality. Pave the Way believes that there is value in not only reading or hearing positive stories, but also in finding other people to meet with who share a common experience. Sharing ideas and practical solutions generates energy and has the potential to point people in new directions. Attending conferences and workshops, joining organisations such as Queensland Parents for People with a Disability (www.qppd.org), or Community Resource Unit (www.cru.org.au) and becoming involved in the Blue Skies Scenario (www.blue-skies.info/) are just some ways for families in Queensland to come together with others.

In line with this approach, Pave the Way recently held a series of Family Conversations on the north and south side of Brisbane around the theme of 'Sustaining a Support Circle'. For this first series of conversations invitations were sent to families who had contact with Pave the Way when establishing their circle. The aim of the gatherings was to give people the opportunity to connect with other families to share experiences and ideas and to brainstorm ways of resolving questions or difficulties that may have arisen. The discussions focused on solutions rather than problems as a way of moving towards positive outcomes.

Some of the topics which families wanted to explore included: how to maintain the momentum of the circle; the role of the circle in succession planning; how to involve the family member's peers in circle meetings; exploring the facilitator's role, and the involvement of siblings in a support circle, to name just a few.

Although Pave the Way offered some support for organising these initial conversations, the idea was not for Pave the Way to have an ongoing involvement but rather to facilitate families being put in touch with one another. Families were then able to decide whether they wanted to continue to meet, and if so, they explored together how they might do this. Families found that having this opportunity to explore ideas together in an informal conversational setting was worthwhile and it reinforced the notion that meeting and having discussions with others can be a good strategy for coming up with practical solutions.

Pave the Way is planning to hold further conversations around this and other topics both in Brisbane and in regional areas. The Family Forum planned for Saturday 27th March next year is another way for families who have similar hopes and dreams to come together to share ideas and come up with strategies for positive lives for their family members. Information about these events will be in the newsletter, on the website and sent to families on the mailing list.

Responses to the Family Conversations included:

- "Helped us to get re-energised."
 - "Other people's ideas helped us know where to start."
 - "Helped to clarify various issues."
 - "Having a specific topic for a conversation was a good idea."
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For further information please contact Pave the Way on (07) 3291 5800

Making a Will – cost considerations

An important part of planning for the future is to make sure our wills reflect our vision of what we want for our family members after we die. With good legal advice and planning, it is more likely that we can provide the financial support through our wills that our family members require.

Since the early days of Pave the Way, one of the common requests from families has been, *“Do you have the names of solicitors who practice in the area of wills and estates and who understand the issues we face as families who have a family member with disability?”*

Consequently, Pave the Way developed a list of solicitors that we believed would meet this request. In developing this panel, we took into account recommendations from families, the solicitors' expertise in wills and estates and their location. We have also provided information about seeking the advice of accountants and financial planners. Contact Pave the Way for this list of professionals.

For the majority of families who have a family member with disability, there is no such thing as a “simple will”. This area of law is increasingly complex. You might think your situation is straightforward but it may well be considered complex from a legal perspective. The provision of good legal advice will involve gathering detailed information, discussing your vision and plans and what you want to achieve through your will. The solicitor will advise you on the pros and cons of different strategies and design the appropriate legal documentation to meet your circumstances. Finally, he or she will need to ensure that your will, and any other associated documents, are properly executed.

The costs of preparing a will can be considerable. For this reason, Pave the Way has always strongly recommended that families discuss the question of fees on their initial consultation. The question of fees charged by solicitors and other professionals is an issue for determination between the professional and their client and is not a matter for Pave the Way.

It is important also to clarify what your solicitor is quoting to do. A comprehensive “estate plan” involves more than a will, so if you only want a will, make that clear. If the costs are likely to be an issue for you, then, in your planning, work out how you might cover those costs, just as you would when deciding to buy a new car. You can budget for, borrow for and pay off these costs, just as you can for any other financial outlay.

Pave the Way's information sheet, “Preparing a Will”, is designed to help you prepare for your visit to a solicitor. It is better to do this preparation and planning before the visit, rather than in the solicitor's office.

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Pave the Way

Pave the Way assists families throughout Queensland to clarify their vision for their family member with a disability and to plan to implement that vision. We encourage planning which is vision driven, 'whole of life', developmental, outside service planning and which safeguards family members in the long term. We believe it is other people who keep people safe and support the development of personal networks, including Support Circles.

Contact Us

Please contact us if you would like to be on our mailing list, or would like information or assistance developing a vision and plan or developing a support circle or similar network. If you are part of a group of families and would like us to come and talk about these issues, let us know.

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Upcoming Events

Building Lifelong Supports & Safeguards

Newmarket	4 December 2009	(PTW)
Kingaroy	February 2010 – date to be advised	(PTW)
Brisbane	14 March 2010	(PTW)

Planning for Now, Tomorrow and the Future

Brisbane	14 February 2010	(PTW)
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Family Forum

Brisbane	27 March 2010	(PTW)
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Regional Visits

Sharon Bourke

Cairns	11-13 December 2009
Cairns	February 2010 – date to be advised

Julie van Oosten

Bundaberg/Rockhampton	February 2010 – date to be advised
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To book into a workshop, please phone the relevant contact. For Pave the Way (PTW) phone (07) 3291 5800 or 1300 554 402. For regional visits please contact Julie van Oosten or Sharon Bourke on (07) 3291 5800 or 1300 554 402. You can also view the workshop and events calendar online at www.pavetheway.org.au/home/workshop-calendar.php.