





Foreword

On being asked to submit a short story on the time I spent working in the disability sector I had to ponder from which perspective my views should be presented. The CEO role was my work however my parent role was my driver. It is from the parent's perspective I tell you about my time in the sector.

I am, firstly, a parent of a young man with a disability that most of our town appears to know. His mother passed away in 1986, leaving me as his primary guardian.

My son was born in 1972 with a severe intellectual disability diagnosis. Working for Queensland Rail (QR) at the time, as a station master, I had to consider my working future on the basis of available services for my son. Due to infrastructure changes in QR requiring me to transfer away from the metropolitan areas, I decided to resign from the railway.

I started work in the disability sector in 1979 with Psychiatric Services, which eventually morphed into Disability Services Queensland (DSQ).

By 1988, I was beginning to question the direction the sector was going and with my son in long-term care with DSQ at that time it was not a good feeling. I teamed up with an active local group of parents who also wanted better lives for their sons and daughters outside of the Government offered structured institutions.

Queensland Parents of People With Disabilities (QPPD) was a growing movement statewide. These were the parents I gravitated toward locally.

QPPD was facilitating the development of not-for-profit organisations to establish direct services. At the same time both Federal and State legislation changed to allow funding for community-based lifestyles for people with disabilities.

The local group of parents I teamed up with established a supported employment service, a community access service, an accommodation service and the respite/accommodation service that would become known as Fraser Coast Family Networks (FCFN).

It was very busy times in the early 90s. I personally wrote the proposal and initial funding application for FCFN while I was Acting Villa Director for DSQ. I was then seconded from DSQ to FCFN to establish the service model for FCFN. Later my son moved from DSQ to the FCFN Accommodation Service.

It was while I worked with the group of local parents developing services above, I realised I had to come to terms with my conscience about my son's long-term future. All parents at some stage will ask themselves, "when I am no longer around, who will care for my child?", especially so if the child has a disability.

Over my 38 years in the sector, I spent countless hours with parents quietly observing their many varied, anxious emotional states of mind.

My experience made me determined to do the best I could for my son, knowing full well there are flaws in all systems. So, how do you make informed decisions for a person with limited communication skills?

As a guiding personal decision-making philosophy, I figured if my son is happy then I am happy. Let that be my primary rule.

Happiness has always been a consistent indicator of contentment in his life. No matter what my feelings are about the situation or what policy and legislation dictates, if he is happy then I live with his outward approval. After all, it is his life, not mine.

Changes to FCFN after I retired were inevitable as my departure coincided with the implementation of NDIS funding. A merger was always a possibility because I looked into two opportunities while I was still working.

When I was told about Multicap taking over FCFN, I was not totally on board with the idea due to the process and timing of the merger. That however was irrelevant, my main thoughts were now, what does this all mean for my son?

I could move him to another service provider, but that only pacifies my feelings. What about the long-term relationships he has with all the staff and people around him? I was not going to do what I have seen other families do over my time in the sector.

Simple - apply the rule and watch!

Staff I knew and trusted assisted where they could, and I kept quizzing my son. He demonstrated to me he was happy, so I simply kept my vigilance up.

Recently he has had major surgery in Brisbane and the local staff and Multicap in general have gone out of their way to ensure he was fully supported during that time. In the lead up to the surgery I witnessed a senior Multicap staff member in my son's medical interview ask very pertinent questions that actually changed the doctor's approach to his surgery considerations. I was impressed.

In summary, no service is perfect, not all people are perfect, you have to go with what you can see and feel. My son looks happy, he tells me he is happy and other people in our community say he always seems happy. So, to me, I cannot expect any better service for him.



Wayne
(right) with
his son Tony

I wish Multicap all the best for the future and will always be there for my son's staff.

Wayne Stark - B. Soc. Sc. & M. Soc. Sc.
Fraser Coast Family Networks Inc
CEO 1993 - 2017

Introduction

More than 25 years ago, a group of parents set out to create a better future for their sons and daughters. Their vision was to develop a respite service that would offer their children, and those of the Fraser Coast community a home away from home, with the same family values and ideals that they held dear. They worked together to secure funding from the Queensland Government for the organisation and in January of 1993, Fraser Coast Family Networks Inc. (FCFN) was born.

Originally named the Maryborough/Hervey Bay Respite Group Incorporated, the organisation quickly developed a reputation for their excellent short term accommodation support for young people with disabilities.

With the same values and family first priorities that the organisation is known for, FCFN built on its successful and long-standing foundation services of centre-based respite, accommodation support, vacation care, in home supports and day services and community access, to offer an even wider range of supports with innovative and unique ideas to enrich lives with new skills and experiences. Supports such as vacation care for children through the school holiday period, helping people in their own homes, and assisting people to experience the joy of community through outings and experiences.

One of FCFN signature supports developed from the desire for genuine community involvement into what is now known as the 'Adventure Team'. This very popular group travels to many locations all over the Fraser Coast, with the support of many local business. Participants are always having fun and doing something creative.

In 2023, FCFN merged with Multicap, an organisation with the

same values and family-centred priorities, to enable greater access to support for clients and opportunities for staff.

"Fraser Coast Family Network provides whole of life solutions. We can help you achieve your goals by assisting with family support, early intervention solutions and supported living, and we can help you to achieve the best things in life such as preparing for the future, being part of the community, going to school, finding a home, going on holidays and becoming independent."



About Fraser Coast Family Networks

Mission

To work with participants and their nominees to provide a professional, confidential and responsive support service.

Vision

To enhance an inclusive community built on trust, respect and equality, where people with a disability live the life they choose.

Values

We believe that participants and their nominees should and must control their own plan in a truly inclusive and equitable community.

Choice and Control

All of the supports we provide have you at the centre and are designed to provide you with greater choice and control in how you live your life. We are committed to providing connected and integrated services by partnering and collaborating with other providers to offer you a whole-of-life spectrum of supports.

We listen to your goals, your aspirations - whether that be through work, learning, day-to-day living, hobbies or your relationships - so we can support you in achieving them.

We work together with you to deliver you the supports you would like, in the way you would like them - not just today, but in the future - to enable you to live as independently and inclusively as possible.

Our Supports



Respite (short term accommodation)



Vacation Care



Supported Independent Living (SIL)



Adventure Team



In Home Support



Community Inclusion



Custom Support

A new adventure for Roslyn

After 30 years of office work, Roslyn took a leap of faith to try something new, and she couldn't be happier.

"I had a big think outside the box and decided I'd like to try disability support work," she said. "I'd gotten to know a disability support worker who would bring her clients to the market day at the church where I worked, and I thought that looked like something I'd like to try. And I absolutely love it - it's fantastic!"

As her admin role with the local church came to an end, Roslyn signed up to complete a Certificate III in Disability and on graduation got a job with Fraser Coast Family Networks as a disability support worker (DSW).

After six months providing care and support to two residents at a supported independent living (SIL) home, Roslyn took a role with the Adventure Team.

The Adventure Team is a group activity-based support taking participants 'out and about in the community' providing interesting, meaningful and fun adventures.

"We have so much fun," she said. "The clients just love it and so do I. I've probably been to a few places I hadn't been to before, so it's nice from that perspective too."

Roslyn has taken participants on adventures throughout Maryborough, Tin Can Bay and Hervey Bay doing everything from ten pin bowling, woodwork at the local Men's Shed and sailing.

"I love Fridays because they go sailing down at Tin Can Bay. The retired people from sailing get their sail boats out and put in their own time to take our participants sailing. They are learning



Roslyn (left)
and Raewyn

to sail and working towards their coxswain certificates."

Roslyn said the smiles on the participants faces and seeing them achieving their goals was incredibly rewarding.

"Even if we go ten pin bowling and they get a strike, their smile just lights up their whole face," she said. "You might be having a bad day but then you see their smiles and your bad day is gone."

When she's not out and about with the Adventure Team, Roslyn continues to support participants in SIL and provides one-on-one support.

"Seeing the clients taking steps and doing something more and better each week as they work towards their goals is very satisfying," she said.

"I'm so grateful to Fraser Coast Family Networks for the opportunity - I just love my job."

Jason and Julie's love story

You just never know where or when you're going to meet 'the one'. For Jason and Julie, it was on a routine Friday night bus trip to the bowling alley.

"We were on the bus on our way to ten pin bowling on a Friday night," Julie said. "Jason was looking over at me and asked if I was single. When I said yes, he asked me to go out with him."

Eight years later the couple married and live happily and independently in Maryborough.

"Jason is a great husband and a great support," Julie said. "He makes me laugh too."

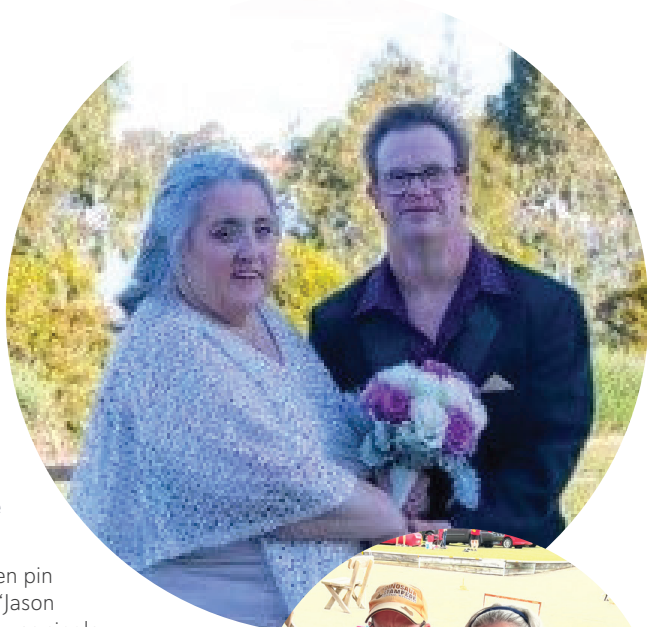
As customers of Fraser Coast Family Networks Community Access Service, the couple enjoy a busy social life doing everything from outings to the park and trips to Hervey Bay.

"It's been good, and we had fun," Julie said. "They helped me to achieve my goals, and all of the people were always so friendly towards me and Jason."

Julie especially credits Troy (a disability support worker) for the work he has done with Jason: "They go off to the gym each week and Jason loves it."

Julie accesses In Home Supports to help with everything from personal care, cleaning and travel to medical appointments.

"I need some more help now because I have been sick," Julie said. "The support workers come to our house every day and they are very helpful.



Main photo:
Julie and
Jason on their
wedding day

They make life easier for both of us - I could not do it without them, and Jess (service manager) is great if I need something. I just call her and she makes things happen".

The couple now share their home with their three-year-old King Charles Spaniel, Toby.

Service Manager Jessica said it has been a pleasure to work as part of Jason and Julie's support team.

"It is rewarding to be a part of the love story that is Jason and Julie, knowing that the supports they receive from us allows them to live and love independently in their own home with their dog Toby," she said.

Gaining independence with support and encouragement

When siblings, Catherine and Justin, first moved out of home it was with some trepidation.

But with the endless encouragement and care from their family and support from Fraser Coast Family Networks they settled into their new life and haven't looked back.

Their mother Rita said, "it was important for them to make the move to learn to live independently and develop their skills and learn a few new ones."

Catherine 62, and Justin 59, have been long term customers of FCFN, both receiving care in the home and in the community since moving into their home almost 20 years ago.

Catherine is very social and loves getting out and about and particularly enjoys the 'A Team' (Adventure Team) activities.

Justin is more reserved. He works three days a week in a supported role and receives support in the home and community on his days off.

Justin also loves music and plays piano and guitar, and the organ at church. He also loves the op shops where he looks for old records and CDs of his favourite artists. He does that with the support of his long-term support worker, Troy, with whom he gets along very well. Troy and Justin swim weekly in the warmer weather.

Catherine and Justin enjoy cooking and take turns at cooking the nightly meal with the help of their support workers.

Rita lives in the house behind them, and they often exchange ingredients and sometimes recipes.

"Living so close means lots of regular 'catch ups'. Catherine visits several times a day to discuss family news and events. Justin visits every few days and mows my lawn and theirs," Rita said.

"So, we live close to each other, but each have our independence which works very well."



Catherine and Justin at their house.

Troy finds meaning with Fraser Coast

“I just love my customers – they are great and that’s what it’s all about for me.”

As a Disability Support Worker with Fraser Coast Family Networks, Troy feels like he’s struck gold.

“I love my work – I can’t imagine doing anything else,” he said. “It’s such a great industry to be in and Fraser Coast Family Networks has been terrific.”

Troy joined FCFN in 2015 after a 14-year career as an automotive spray painter. Looking for a change, he took a job with FCFN and started studying a Certificate III in Disability.

“I’ve always liked helping people, and at the time I had a friend who worked in the industry tell me they needed more male support workers, so I took the plunge and haven’t looked back,” he said.

Troy provides one-on-one support to clients in Maryborough and says every day with his clients is rewarding.

“They just brighten my day and appreciate everything I do with them,” he said. “To be part of their day and lives is the greatest thing.”

Troy says he loves seeing his customers achieve their goals, have fun and learn new skills.

“It’s all about choice and control,” Troy said. “Whether a client wants to go fishing, go to the gym, go op shopping or cook a meal at home, it’s up to them. We work together to decide what to do and work towards their goals.”

“They call themselves a family network for a reason,” he said. “I have never worked in such a supportive environment.”

“My managers are great, and I work with the most awesome customers and families,” Troy said. “Watching our customers grow, learn, achieve their goals and be happy – that’s the main thing for me.”



Troy (right)
with a
customer.

"I love seeing the smiles on the participants when they are truly enjoying themselves. When people achieve their goals, they are so proud and happy! It makes you realise the small things in life are so precious."

FCFN Staff Member

"The most inspiring part of my job is the participants who come into the office - they are always bright, cheerful, and happy to share their day. They have amazing talent and attitude. They inspire me to do better and give anything a go."

FCFN Staff Member

"Living in one of our SILs means you're never bored and looking for something to do or lonely and looking for someone to do it with - we've got activities, adventures and friends aplenty!"

FCFN Staff Member

"Among the highlights that stand out for us this year was our A Team being invited to play the curtain raiser game before the Maryborough Basketball Association Grand Final. Our guys put on a great show against a team of participants representing Bundaberg and oh boy did they get the crowd on their feet!"

FCFN Staff Member



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