

## Tric Gotley



When you are the parent of a disabled child, you often lack the social networks that operate in mainstream education because of the different type of educational facilities these children are often in. There may not be tuckshop or reading group or other activities where parents get a chance to meet each other. As a result, you often feel isolated and don't have avenues to ventilate concerns and worries to other parents who would understand what you are experiencing. This is certainly my experience of having my son in special education, compared with my experience of mainstream education.

*“With the introduction of the MyTime group there was a perceptible change in this feeling of isolation as I met other parents who could understand the challenges of having a child with special needs.”*

It provides a forum for practical discussion of what resources are available in the community for support but also provides emotional support as parents share their own stories. It also sets up a caring community where some parents can support other parents. By way of example, there was a mother in our group whose son had been on a waiting list for surgery for 2 years with no immediate date in sight. Through our contacts in the medical system we were able to expedite this surgery and a few months after telling her story at our MyTime session, the surgery was organised and completed.

There are countless other examples of this type of help that are a direct result of our MyTime sessions, and it is my view that the strong support of our principal and the enthusiasm of our coordinator has put in place the underpinnings of a school that has now a stronger, more supported parent group.