

Mt Ommaney Special School's Imagination Station

Abigail attends Mt Ommaney Special School. She has cerebral palsy, epilepsy and vision impairment. She is a happy girl with an infectious personality and her smile lights up the room. Following her family's participation in our special drama/play program Imagination Station, Abigail's mum, Tennille, said;



This program enabled our family to come together for the first time and experience an activity outside the home. Abigail's 3 younger brothers were enthused about attending somewhere that was not focused only on Abigail and her needs. As parents it was exciting that we did not have to think about access to the event. Everyone was included. Imagination Station provided an opportunity for our boys to experience an activity that was 'normal' and for our entire family have fun and giggles together. Nowhere else have we had this opportunity!

Drama at Mt Ommaney Special School

Mt Ommaney Special School's drama program really changes our students' lives and is helping others by providing an example for others across Australia and beyond. This impact has been recognized nationally, with a 2011 NAB Schools First Impact award, and at state level, a 2014 Education Queensland Excellence in Education Showcase award. The program outcomes were the focus of a documentary [Just Imagine](#), which was selected for screening at the 2013 Brazilian International Disability Film Festival.

Serving the community

Imagination Station was developed in response to a request from the P&C. School families were keen to address the lack of recreational activities for children with disabilities and their siblings in Brisbane's west. The program delivers multiple benefits for the local community:

- ❖ Engaging children with complex special needs, in meaningful ways, with fun recreational activities
- ❖ Developing lifelong supportive networks between siblings of children with disabilities
- ❖ Connecting parents of children with disabilities, providing opportunities to share their knowledge and experiences
- ❖ Providing a unique and valuable opportunity to engage fathers of children with disabilities with their child's education

100% of families have reported that this is the only time they have been able to access a program where their child with a disability has been included as an equal alongside their able bodied siblings.

The team

Imagination Station is delivered by Ainsley Robbins of Drama Armour. The program was designed by Ainsley in collaboration with the school's Education Program Officer, Jim Green and Belinda Berrington from The Song Room. The Song Room is a national not for profit that has an excellent track record providing arts education for disadvantaged children across Australia.

What do our families say?

- ✓ "Fun productive time out! It is an activity that all siblings and peers can enjoy and interact together in an appropriate environment, which can be very hard to find! It is safe and there are no judgment looks."
- ✓ "Our daughter is having the opportunity to engage with typically developing children and try to play with them. It is an opportunity for us to play with our daughter. "
- ✓ "The positives are interactions between students and siblings, siblings and other students, siblings and siblings. Also seeing the happy smiles on faces of all children in attendance. "

The future

Imagination Station began as a pilot program in 2014 with funding from a Commonwealth Bank Community grant. Data from parent feedback surveys demonstrated multiple benefits and a commitment to increase the group, making it available to more families of children with a disability in Brisbane's west.



However, due to the diverse range of needs within the group, each session requires significant planning time and a high ratio of assistants to facilitate participation. We simply cannot pass the entire cost onto families. The program, and its many benefits, will only be sustainable through generous supporters.

How you or your company can help

Your help will provide families of children with disabilities with opportunities that many in the community take for granted. You can be part of creating a community of social inclusion and equality. You can help develop lifelong supportive networks that are so needed by families like Abigail's. **Just \$8,000 will secure the future of Imagination Station to continue achieving these life changing outcomes until 2017.**

Maybe you have the means to donate or to encourage your company to do that. Maybe Imagination Station might be the beneficiary from a raffle or event you run. There's lots of ways to help and donations are tax deductible. [Donate now](#) or contact Jim Green at jgree345@eq.edu.au for more information.

"Being disabled should not mean being disqualified from having access to every aspect of life."

Emma Thompson