

A Day in the Life of a Social Educator



I first became involved with Mater Dei in early 2000 when my son, Steven, who was diagnosed with a border line learning disability, joined the Mater Dei Satellite class at John Therry High School. The staff put us in touch with professionals who could help Steven and he was also able to complete his T-VET studies through this class. It was the first time in his schooling life that Steven felt happy in his relationship with his teacher. This was the best blessing our family had ever had, and to this day, I am very grateful. So, when I noticed a position advertised for a Social Educator with Mater Dei, I jumped at the chance and applied. I was so excited when I got the phone call and was told I had the position.

I have worked in the Family Resource and Residential Program (FRP) at Richardson house since September 2007. I work different shifts, so every day is a different day.

My primary responsibilities are to provide support and guidance to the students living in the house. On any one night there are five students and two Social Educators at Richardson house. We teach the students life skills to help with their own independence and encourage them to learn as many skills as possible.

The day begins at 6.30am when my alarm goes off. At 6.45am I get two students up and supervise them getting dressed and making their beds. We then start preparing breakfast. At 7.00am the other three students get up and we supervise

them getting dressed and making their beds. Those students then start to get their breakfast organized. We all try to sit down together and have breakfast. Cleaning up after breakfast is important and everybody helps with the filling of the dishwasher and the tidying of the kitchen. Then each student does their personal hygiene of brushing teeth and doing their hair. Then the taxis arrive to take the students to school.

The students start to arrive back to residence from school at about 3.15pm. In the afternoons we do general cleaning duties like vacuuming and dusting, and the students get their lunches ready for the following day. We do reading, homework, play board games or watch TV. Everyone helps get dinner ready and clean up afterwards. After dinner it is time for the students to relax and enjoy their own interests like listening to music. Then it is time to get showered, clean teeth and get ready for bed. Everything is done to a routine which helps each student to learn. Some students may need a little prompting some days, which means we just ask them "what comes next?". It is very rewarding watching the students learn and to be able to do it for themselves.

I feel very proud that I have been given this opportunity to make a difference to these students' lives and to help them develop skills necessary for independent living.

Shirley Williams