

## PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

*During 2009, a group of compassionate, fun and strong mums (and grandmas!) gathered at Mater Dei to share their stories, to laugh, cry, encourage and draw support from one another, while their children attended an Early Learning Group run by the Bethany Early Intervention Program.*



Gai, our Facilitator (from CatholicCare's School Student & Family Program), writes "I have had the privilege of facilitating this wonderful group and thank every member from the bottom of my heart for letting me walk a little way with them as they travelled on their journey. I have been amazed at their courage, strength, optimism and sense of hope. While they care for the needs of their children and families, these mums also juggle the emotional and physical demands of caring for a child with special needs. They have travelled from that very first moment when intuitively there was something "not quite right", to the "where do we go from here?" Through the maze of appointments, assessments, specialists and services... and the journey continues".

Bethany's Manager, Vida Carmody, said of the program, "this pathway has also provided our mums with new roles - those as researcher, educator and advocate - as they seek answers and information; teach and impart their experiences to others; and lobby to get the most appropriate and best possible interventions for their child".

"We were able to share experiences: the highs, the lows, the disappointments, the frustrations and the challenges and are very grateful for the opportunity to participate and to know there are others who feel like we do: confused, stressed and often alone. I am looking forward to resuming our groups in 2010" said one of the mums.

*This wonderful program was made possible by the very generous donation of funds from United Way Sydney which paid for the salary of the Facilitator for the group each week. We thank United Way for making this funding available again in 2010.*