



GENEVIEVE'S STORY

Born on 19 November 1994 at Liverpool Hospital, Genevieve (pictured above on the right) arrived three months early, weighing only 1.2 kilos. In fact, Genevieve was so tiny she could fit in the palm of her dad's hand.

Except for a problem with her eyes, which oscillated, Genevieve seemed unaffected by her premature birth.

At about three years of age it became apparent that Genevieve wasn't reaching her milestones. After further assessments, she was diagnosed with a Global Development Delay and needed professional help to develop her speech and motor skills. She was also referred to an eye specialist and was prescribed glasses. Genevieve remembers not being able to watch television as she was unable to focus.

When Genevieve was nearly four years old, her mum, Gael, died. Genevieve and her dad, Mark, moved in with Mark's parents so that they could care for Genevieve during the day while Mark was at work. They were delighted to help, and did so with great enthusiasm.

Genevieve started school life at St Clare's at Narellan but wasn't coping very well. Mater Dei was suggested as an alternate option for her. She began school at Mater Dei when she was in Year 1 and after a successful year, transitioned to the Learning Centre at Our Lady Help of Christians School at Rosemeadow.

In March 2005, Mark and I met. I had a five year old daughter Kayla. We soon became a family, the girls had a "sister" and we all got along famously.

When Kayla was younger, she would read to Genevieve and didn't understand why Genevieve couldn't read. After we explained to her about Genevieve's delay, Kayla decided to become Genevieve's private tutor. Today Genevieve listens to

Kayla more than she listens to us and Kayla is very protective of Genevieve. We jokingly call Kayla Genevieve's "big sister."

When it came to deciding on a high school for Genevieve, we felt Mater Dei was the best educational setting for her. Genevieve has gained so much confidence since beginning at Mater Dei. Amongst her many achievements, she is particularly proud of attending the Living Skills Program, being the female lead character in the Mater Dei movie "Perfect love drives away all fear"; singing in the choirs that have performed at Mater Dei's Lipstick Luncheons and Foundation Dinners and being a House Captain.

Mark and I were married two years ago. This made Genevieve and Kayla really happy because now we were a "real family" in their eyes!

Genevieve is now in the Year 12 Satellite Class and is the girl School Captain at Mater Dei, a role she sees as important and undertakes conscientiously. She particularly enjoys going to Jenny's Kindergarten at Narellan Vale as part of her Structured Workplace Learning Program.

Our next challenge is to help Genevieve find suitable employment when she graduates from Year 12 in December this year.

We are very thankful to the staff and families at Mater Dei for being so supportive of Genevieve and our family during our journey so far. We are particularly grateful for the way her teachers have helped her become the best person that she can be and prepared her for living her adult life as independently as possible. Mind you, her black belt in Karate should also help here too!

Mark and I, Kayla and Genevieve's extended family are so very proud of her and love her very much.

Margaret Ryan.