



## Earlier, rather than later, better for disability acceptance

**T**HE Cerebral Palsy League is hosting a free workshop in Toowoomba on Saturday which aims to build inclusive schools and communities across the Darling Downs.

According to Associate Professor Bob Jackson, children who learn to be inclusive in their school years, will go on to be more socially inclusive as adults and help create a more inclusive society.

Associate Professor Jackson said a recent study showed there was a positive difference between the attitudes of a group of children who had had a child with a disability in their pre-school for just one year, versus a group of other children who had not.

"Learning how to include children with a disability from a young age has a huge impact on attitudes later in life, from primary school, high school, right into higher education and the workforce," Associate Professor Jackson said.

"The inclusion of people with disability — and the acceptance that they can lead an ordinary life — is a very important decision for society to make, both for the individual and the community."

Associate Professor Jackson believes segregation and separation occurs very early in life for people born with disability.

"What people with disability

seek is an ordinary life. Yet, as a society, after centuries of exclusion, we do not believe that it is right for people with a disability to have an ordinary life. People with a disability are told that an ordinary life is not possible for them while every other person in society is able to have one. Children with disabilities are not normally asked "what do you want to be when you grow up?" like other children are.

"That is a massively powerful statement to a child. Yet there has been extensive research evidence to show that people with disability are better employees: they are more reliable, less likely to take sickies, more supportive of their company and highly motivated — basically, they hold jobs really well."

"People with a disability are told that an ordinary life is not possible for them while every other person in society is able to have one," Associate Professor Jackson said.

The workshop is for parents to develop a vision for their child's future and to encourage them to identify the steps required to make that vision a reality.

Engaging in Life will be held at the Toowoomba City Golf Club on Saturday from 9.30am-3pm.

For more information contact Pam Seymour on 4688 9400.