

Foreword

Yes, it is true, I am Fairy Sparkle. For many years now I have been “working for the common good”, visiting the sick in hospitals, especially children, inspiring garden sanctuaries in hospitals and developing Karaoke style software for sick kids to sing at home.

I was deeply touched when Fiona asked me to write this Foreword, considering the many, many people she knows. It struck me that, to write a good “Foreword”, we first need to go “backward” ...

In saying that, I am humbly delighted to introduce Fiona Rossiter and her family here in *Growing Great Families*. The first I knew of Fiona was via an email in April 2001 in response to a story about my work in the *Family Circle* magazine in February 2001. She asked for my permission to present the possibility of my special garden to the Board at Orange Base Hospital. Of course I said YES!

Little did I know at the time what that YES would mean. Fiona was and still is a theatre nurse at OBH. She was married to Paul and at the time they had five children. After a flurry of emails and a YES to proceed from OBH I went to Orange to meet Fiona in July 2001.

I will never forget that trip. It was the start of a life-long friendship. I met with the committee Fiona had rallied. There would be a Fairy-Tale Ball, a Fairy-Express Train Ride, a Golf Day, more than one “Pub-Crawl” in Fairy Wings, Penny the Pig — and all to raise money for the garden. I quickly realised that if Fiona commits to something it happens!

The Fairy Sparkle Garden at Orange Base Hospital opened in November 2002 after a huge effort by the community, the committee and championed every step of the way by Fiona, supported by Paul and their family. This time together in Orange has left a profound legacy which is living on in the new hospital development.

I have heartfelt memories of a special night at Fiona and Paul’s. We were in the TV room after dinner, talking and laughing with the kids all nestled into their comfy lounge and I knew I had been “adopted”. I watched Paul and Fiona together. I saw a deep bond of love and trust, of commitment to each

other and their kids. Each of the kids knew they were loved and special and they knew they belonged. At one point I needed to go to the bathroom — let’s face it, even a Fairy has to “twinkle”. In the laundry I was amused to find a huge pile of shoes of different sizes and styles. This is what being in a big, robust, energetic family must be like, for it also represented their entwined journeys, where this family has been and where it is going.

It wasn’t always this way. Fiona and Paul arrived in Orange without extended family or friends. It is easy to understand why building their own extended family through new friends, work associates, the community and growing their own family — including caring for less fortunate children — became so important to them.

I am not surprised they have written the book you are holding. *Growing Great Families* is born out of a great love and desire to share their learning, their experience, their passion for life and their support for other families as they and you negotiate the highs and lows of parenting together. Through this book they provide an invitation for dialogue. Let the dialogue begin with you ...

Fairy Sparkle

www.fairysparkle.com

