



## Peter's tale of hope inspiring

**MEET Peter Rowe, of Little Mountain.**  
 He was born with Down Syndrome, which hindered his ability to communicate. But through facilitated communication, Peter can now share his thoughts and dreams and has explored his creativity through poetry, art and children's stories.  
 ■ Read Peter's touching story on page 16.

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# Peter finds his voice

## Escape from world of frustrating silence

By NICOLE FUGE

FOR 30 years, Peter Rowe observed life.

He never took part in conversations, he was only spoken to.

He never told anyone how he was feeling; instead, he bottled his emotions until they ached.

No one knew there was an eloquent writer and brilliant artist inside.

Peter, 45, has Down Syndrome and it wasn't until 10 years ago, when he

was introduced to facilitated communication (FC), that he took hold of his personality with both hands and embraced it.

Peter's mum Betty, 80, is his voice, translating, as he spells every single word. It takes time, but it's time the pair has.

FC originated in Melbourne when Rosemary Crossley met a 14-year-old girl, named Annie, in hospital. She

taught her how to communicate through FC and Annie went on to complete university.

Peter then learned FC through a woman who learned from Rosemary. "I didn't go to the first meeting, they rang me up, he had cried all the way back to the respite centre," Betty said.

"It was sheer relief to find someone who could speak to me after years in

silence," Peter said.

"Then it was my time to cry," Betty said.

"I found almost a stranger, another person I hadn't known. It was pretty hard. What decisions have I made, what have we said to him that may have hurt him?"

But Betty's fears were allayed in Peter's first words, "I love you mum".

"It was pretty hard for both of us, but I already



knew you, but you didn't know me," he said.

Peter picked up FC immediately, as if he were trying to catch up on all those years lost.

"It was not hard for Peter, he went straight onto it. It's the support workers who have trouble," Betty said.

"It took you a long time but it was good when you broke through and could help me," Peter said.

"I was used to frustration, so frustration while Mum learnt was nothing to what it had been.

"I had no problem doing it, I could spell and put sentences together and my vocabulary is good as if I have always known how to write.

"(I learnt) from Sesame Street and copying from books and magazines and training myself for the day when I could use my knowledge and my gift for writing."

It wasn't long after Peter started using FC with the help of speech therapist Jane Remington-Gurney that his poetry blossomed.

In June 2009, Peter

enrolled at university to further his creative writing.

His first assignment was to write the opening chapter of a book.

"He wanted to write the first chapter of his life story," Betty said.

Peter eventually deferred from uni to concentrate on his book. The extra time has also enabled him to put more time into his painting and he has written four more children's books in his *Josh the Robot* series.

"I've always loved to

draw," Peter said.

Each story and illustration is intertwined with his thoughts and experiences.

"I dedicate my work to the children who know but can't tell, who hear but can't speak, who receive information from the world around them but can't sort it, and the children who are blessed with the gifts of a body in full working order. I pray you have as much fun reading and experiencing these stories as I have had writing and illustrating them."

## The Words Are Sticky

*by Peter Rowe*

**They stick to my tongue,  
They stick to my teeth,  
They stick to my voice,  
And it's hard to speak.  
They tangle me up,  
And make me choke,  
I so want to speak  
And that's no joke.**

**I try and I try,  
I push and I push,  
But the words all come out  
Jumbled and rushed.  
I choke on my tongue  
And sometimes I spit,  
I'm trying a word,  
But that is not it.**

**They're cheeky and sticky,  
They just won't come out  
But they seem much easier  
To speak, when I shout.  
I'll catch them one day  
When they all run by,  
And then on that day  
My speaking will fly.**

**I want you to know  
I think, just like you,  
But my words are all stuck  
In my mouth, just like glue.  
But where is the way  
To unstick all these thoughts?  
I hope it's in the  
Speech Therapy I bought.**

## Inside Your Dreams

*by Peter Rowe*

**Inside your dreams, there  
are things  
that live in your day.  
Inside your dreams, there  
are things  
that live in your past.  
Inside your dreams, there  
are things  
that may start to live  
tomorrow.  
Inside your dreams, you  
will always find yourself.  
Remember your dreams –  
they are your hopes and  
memories.**



**NEW WORLD:** Peter Rowe, born with Down Syndrome, is now a talented writer and illustrator.

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