

## **IIDL Presentation – Dublin Ireland.**

I want to start with an introduction of who we are and the context in Queensland and then talk to you about what we therefore choose to invest in. We come from a big state; we have a big vision which is “Full and Meaningful lives for people living with disability”. We have a small team and we are undergoing enormous change in Australia with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Given all that, we need to ask ourselves what we think are the most important things we can do with our time and the resources we have.

### **WHAT DOES CRU INVEST IN?**

1. **We invest in grass roots change** ...we set out to equip people with disabilities, families, friends *and* their workers ( support workers, co-ordinators, managers, academics) to lead their own change.

- We aim to inspire and encourage ... but also challenge what is not in the best interests of people
- top down systemic or political change is important but it’s not the piece we try to work on
- We do take government funding but we are not service providers- this gives us some independence,
- Our members are people with disability, families and workers. It’s unusual to have an organisation catering for all stakeholders. Given that diversity, our conversations are usually at the values level which is relevant to all.
- Fortunately, when it comes to achieving our mission, CRU is not just the little team who works in the office - we see CRU as all the people, families and workers who hear our message of inclusion and are prepared to take it seriously and work to achieve it.
- CRU is also the people who write for our periodical CRUcial Times; who present at workshops; who we can call on to talk with someone or speak at a meeting or join us in influencing change in some shape or form.

2. **Resourcing people to lead their own change and connecting people to each other**

- Building the capacity of people to imagine, plan, reclaim, reflect and do.
- We develop resources eg videos, website, books
- Bring speakers and ideas from other states and countries to challenge our thinking
- We try to work in a way that links people to each other and doesn’t bring everything back to CRU
- We regularly engage in individual conversations ... but don’t have the capacity to be immersed in individual projects. Occasionally if there is something particularly significant or symbolic we will invest if we believe that that will influence systemic change.
- We seek to build a movement for change –we want more than isolated pockets of disconnected action ... the combination of the efforts is critical.

### 3. Partnerships and collaborations

We seek out partnerships for a number of reasons. We want to magnify our efforts and partnerships enable us to work on some very big issues that we wouldn't tackle alone. We know that we can't do everything and we don't want to reinvent what is already being done by others.

Some recent examples of our partnerships are:

- collaborations around ensuring that some groups who are harder to serve don't miss out on the opportunities of the new funding scheme eg people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; people who are homeless, leaving prison, or living in private hostels.
- A national project focusing on the workforce issues encountered in self-managed arrangements.
- We join with others to lobby at both a state and national level.
- It's much harder to work in partnerships but its worth it.

### 4. Discerning the messages that will last-

Over the years some of the fundamental concerns of people don't change but they may need to be addressed in a different way as contexts change. We are wary of fads. At this time of transitioning to a new funding scheme in Australia there is lots of distraction and focus on funding. There are lots of 'special' groups emerging. It is more critical than ever that we deliver messages that will endure, for example:

- Inclusion in community for all – we strive to be clear, coherent and uncompromising about this without becoming arrogant and judgemental.
- Strong and tested frameworks like Social Role Valorisation that show us why people are marginalised and what we are up against when we want to include people in community are helpful.
- Encouraging people and their families to take charge - to claim their authority; not allow themselves to be talked into arrangements for their member with a disability that they would never accept for someone else.
- Understanding the place of Funding -How do you use it well? Exploring what you can and can't buy with funding. It's important to have the support you require and a say over that but you can't buy relationships or a life of meaning or purpose with funding.
- In our state a lot of people are getting funding for the first time and a lot are getting an increase so we need to talk about how to blend funded services into your life without losing family and friends either because they think they are not needed or they give up trying to fit around rostered staff.
- Linked to that is the notion of sorting out what is Family business and what is Service Business and what is the negotiated grey area in between. We work to encourage parents to think deeply about what they can hand over to services and what they should never entrust to strangers. And very importantly thinking about who will do that when you are no longer able to.

5. What's not being talked about – with the distraction of a big new funding scheme it's important that someone still talks about the things that won't be funded by that scheme like all children going to local schools together and real pay for real jobs so that people with disability can have careers and move out of poverty.

6. Last but not least ... **Intentional Leadership development** – we believe that change needs leaders and that we can help to grow those leaders. This challenges our habit of waiting for someone else, the mysterious ‘they’ who should make things better.

- CRU has offered intentional leadership development for over 25 years through courses, retreats, seminars, publications and also through opportunities to write or speak.
- Every year we run events that are designed to foster the leadership of people with disability, families and workers but since 2012 we have placed a particular emphasis on family leadership development.
- We have bad habits of saying family but meaning parents (or mothers) so we are trying to offer opportunities where it’s more likely that fathers can attend.
- Increasing inclusion of adult brothers and sisters
- We intentionally seek out families with young children to refresh the movement for change.
- We try to foster collaborative leadership efforts –we are currently supporting and nurturing the development of a new parent voice which focuses on inclusive education.
- Recently we have hosted conversations with emerging leaders who are workers and allies consulting with them about what will help them to make their contribution.

## **CONCLUSION**

This has been a very quick tour of CRU and through this I hope you will have heard about what we do - workshops, courses, conferences, publications like CT, some individual work or small strategic projects, leadership development

But I hope that you will have also heard why we do what we do ... what underpins everything we do is a desire for change ... we don’t believe that life is good enough for people with disabilities in our state and we believe that with careful thought, a bit of courage and working together we can take steps every day to address that.

**Margaret Rodgers,**

CEO

Community Resource Unit (CRU)

Brisbane Queensland,

Australia.

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