



*Expanding Ideas; Creating Change*

# **Annual Report 2022 - 2023**

## Strategic Goals 2020-2022

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### **thriving**

CRU will be a sustainable organisation which delivers on its vision and values.

### **delivering**

CRU will work with individuals, families, organisations, allies and the wider community to deliver on our mission.

### **learning**

CRU will continue to improve our work and seek out new ideas.

## Strategic Goals 2023-2025

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- 1.** Improve CRU's sustainability through increased funding from a wider variety of sources.
- 2.** Expand CRU's Fee for Service work to generate a stable independent income for CRU while building momentum towards our Vision.
- 3.** Expand CRU's reach, visibility and influence.
- 4.** Deliver a high-quality program of projects and events which further CRU's vision.
- 5.** Sustain a strong, clear, committed and consistent team including staff, Board and membership.



## CRU Vision and Mission

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### **our vision**

full and meaningful lives for people living with disability

### **our mission**

we inspire, challenge and equip people to embrace ideas, to take action and to build a movement for change.

This Annual Report covers our activities and performance for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

## Governance and Management of CRU

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The direction and management of Community Resource Unit is vested in the Board of Directors that is elected annually. The implementation of CRU programs is the responsibility of the CEO and the staff team

### Board

Josey McMahon, Chair  
Narissa Niesler, Secretary  
Laura Listopad (until April 2023)  
Cinnamon Morrissey  
Natalie Palelei  
Matt Stone  
Sherryn West, Chair - Finance

### Stewardship Group

Leanne Burke  
Lyn Farrell  
Bobby Noone  
Pam Spelling  
Tony Swords

### Staff

CEO, Margaret Rodgers  
Senior Consultant, Lisa Bridle

### Consultants

Sonia Adolphs  
Gina Barwell-Pickup  
Sharon Bourke  
Lindie Brengman  
Sue Duncan-Kemp  
Sonja Elliott  
Kelly Harrison (until 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023)  
Diana Kerr  
Catherine Laherty  
Danielle Mason  
Trish Murdoch  
Casey Northam (until 20<sup>th</sup> November 2022)  
Kyla Ranger  
Ainsley Robertson  
Jo Walters  
Suellen Welch

### Administration & Finance

Sonia Brown-Diaz (until 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023)  
Kathleen Fleming  
Kylie Harrison  
Kim Jensen

### Presenters

John Armstrong  
Ann Greer  
Michael Kendrick  
Janet Klees  
Bronwyn Moloney  
Rodney Mills  
Joyce-Lyn Smith  
Milton Tyree

Janene Parsons (until 7<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022)  
Meg Scattini  
Kerrie White

# Director's Report

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## Introduction

As Chairperson of CRU I want to welcome you to our AGM, whether you are attending in person or on-line. Your support is much appreciated.

I feel privileged to once again report on the activities of the Board of Directors for the year 2022 – 2023. As I reflected back over the year and previous years, I was surprised to learn that I was elected to the Board of Directors in 2014. I'm not sure where that time has gone but somehow it made me realise, how quickly time goes and how important it is to seize the moment and not waste precious time.

It has been another busy year for CRU and its board members. There have been some challenges, however, I believe that if we reflect on the challenges, listen to one another, wisdom allows us to move forward stronger as an organisation. These challenges are no different to the challenges that many small NGO's experience in a rather complex world of service delivery and funding models.

## Strategic Plan

In the latter part of 2022, Jon Eastgate facilitated a session with the board and CEO to develop Strategic Plan, which was built on the work by Elissa Farrow, the board, stewardship and invited guests in developing a vision for CRU in 2032. CRU's vision for society will be that people with disability are valued and living full and meaningful lives. As an organisation we want to be part of a movement that ignites, challenges, and equips people to embrace ideas, take action to build inclusive communities. The Strategic Plan set in place the steps needed to start the organisation on the path to achieving this vision.

## Values

We took time to reflect on the values that we believe are important for CRU (board, CEO, and staff) to have in order to carry out the work for people with disability to live full and meaningful lives. These values are as follows:

- **Inclusion:** We believe people living with disability are active and valued contributors to family, community, and economic life, which benefits everyone.
- **Diversity:** We celebrate that people have equal worth and respect each person's cultures, life choices, abilities, preferences, and aspirations. We are better together.
- **Relationships:** We believe we are not isolated individuals and that people living with disability are entitled to opportunities to engage in same range of personal relationships as anyone else.
- **Courage:** We hold firm to our vision and support others to do so, even when that is not popular.
- **Creativity:** We encourage people to dream of and create what could be, not be limited by what is.
- **Wisdom:** We know that solutions to issues for people living with disability are not simple and require careful thought, research, leadership, and action.

- Choice: We nurture and encourage practices which enable people living with disability to discern genuine, valued options and support them to make informed decisions.

## **Culture**

We reflected on the things that we do not want CRU to be which gave focus to the culture that we want to CRU to continue to have such as:

- CRU remains a grass root organisation.
- We enable the voice and presence of people with disability in the communities they belong to.
- Formal and informal opportunities are available for leadership by people living with disability.
- Our organisational culture is welcoming and consistent with our values.
- We instil social justice principles and the declaration of human rights for people with disability in everything we do.
- Our culture supports staff and Board growth, their well-being and enables them to live our values.
- We have the wisdom and courage to see emerging need and work collaboratively towards meeting it.
- We communicate broadly the stories of our ideas and the progress we make.
- We want the lived experience of people with disability and families to be central to our work.
- CRU to remain reflective of our diverse communities.

## **The Work of the Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors had 10 board meetings during the year. We continued the practise which began during COVID of meeting on-line, only coming face to face on a quarterly basis. This allowed for the three regional board members to be involved. In May Laura Listopad resigned due to personal reasons. Thank-you Laura for your wisdom and contribution to the board. Your questions for clarification on various matters were welcomed as it deepened our reflections and discussions.

## **Sub-committees**

Most Board Directors are also involved in sub-committees to assist in driving the work of CRU forward. The two sub-committees are the Finance and Business Development sub-committee and the Quality and Risk sub-committee. The Finance and Business Development sub-committee combined the two sub-committee of business and finance together. Sherryn, Matt, Margaret, and I have been on this sub-committee. At the end of this financial year, we once again find ourselves in the last year of a number of funding grants. However, as in the past, with the true CRU spirit we will embrace the funding challenges before us.

CRU continues with the 'Fee for Service' (FFS) arm as a way to diversify our funding so that we are not totally reliant on government funding. It is our hope to grow and develop FFS arm as a way to fund the core work of CRU rather than our future being dependent on the whim of government. This provides an opportunity for CRU to work with people with disability and their families to build their capacity to better self-direct their lives. Evidence supports the fact that people with disability who are living full and meaningful lives are those who are able to self-direct their lives themselves or have the appropriate support from families and allies to do so.

Crucial Training Options (CTO), a joint project between CRU and Staffing Options is now a registered training organisation. The good news is that it is operational with 3 students enrolled in the Cert III in

Disability Support. It has been 3 years in the making and has had many challenges along the way. As well, it is now able to offer First Aid, CPR and one day training in the administration of medication. I would recommend that anyone who is interested in doing the Cert III in disability enrol with Crucial Training Options as it will be training with social justice, diversity, and inclusive values at its core. Margaret in her CEO report will speak to other FFS activities that CRU is currently involved with. I will also leave Margaret to comment on the various grants that CRU receives and the amazing work that is carried as a result of receiving such funding grants.

The Quality and Risk Sub-committee meets twice a year and is responsible for ensuring that CRU remains compliant. They are responsible for ensuring that internal audits are completed in a timely manner, the various registers are kept up to date, continuous improvement actions are completed, complaints (if any) are dealt with in a timely manner – all of this to ensure that CRU is ready for the annual external audit. CRU has good processes in place to ensure successful passing of the external audit. Narissa, Natalie and Margaret are on this subcommittee along with Kim and Danielle from the staff team. The Board of Directors appreciate the work that this subcommittee does.

### **The Stewardship Group**

Approximately 10 years ago it was identified that CRU could benefit from having a Stewardship Group to assist the Board in their thinking around the important issues that impact CRU and their work. The Stewardship Group has a Safeguarding role and met three times during the year. Members are appointed by the Board of Directors and are people who have the necessary experience, skills, and knowledge to act as good stewards. They are people who have a strong connection to CRU, lived experience of disability and a strong orientation to full and inclusive lives for people with disability. Board of Directors also attend the Stewardship meetings. I would like to thank each of the Stewardship Group members who give of their time voluntarily. These people are Leanne Burke, Bobby Noone, Lyn Farrell, Tony Swords, and Pam Spelling.

### **NACBO**

In 2015 CRU was instrumental in establishing NACBO – National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations. This is a national network of six not-for-profit, values based, capacity building organisations, where there is a shared vision and belief that all people with a disability are valued citizens and have the right to contribute to society through social and economic participation. Members of the alliance provide, information, education, mentoring, planning, peer support and leadership development. I am the Board member that was privileged to attend these national meetings. This year there were two meetings held in Melbourne. CRU finds these meetings very useful as the other members are very supportive of one another as they each grapple with similar issues and challenges of operating in a very complex world.

The work of NACBO was evaluated by the Social Policy Research Centre of University of New South Wales. It found that people with disability who connected with one of the NACBO organisations reported better outcomes as a result of their contact. People gained more independence, had a greater sense of belonging to their local community, had valued social roles, and were able to contribute to the social and economic fabric of society. People were attending mainstream schools, worked, and studied and lived in homes of their own choice.

## **CRU Team**

We can be very proud of the work that CRU undertakes. CRU has a very dedicated staff team who are committed to the values of CRU and the vision that people with disability should be living full, meaningful, and inclusive lives. I am fortunate in that I do have contact with various members of the staff team as a result of having a family member with disability and my own business where I need to work alongside a CRU consultant from time to time. This staff team is led by Margaret whose commitment to the work of CRU has been outstanding. I am proud of you all and take this opportunity on behalf of the Board of Directors to thank you for the contribution you make to CRU and to the lives of people with disability and their families.

## **Leadership**

CRU still prioritises the development of leaders and leadership as a critical element of change. It is inspiring to see young people with disability and young families with children with disability take on leadership roles. Sometimes it is easier to just go with the flow of the usual responses of what is on offer rather than take the harder road of full inclusionary practice.

During the year CRU launched three booklets – Why Advocacy Matters – a resource for families; Why Succession Planning Matters – a resource for families to plan for the future; and Why Employment Matters – a handbook for Job Seekers. These booklets were funded from Anne Cross Leadership Project. Rebecca Ward worked alongside CRU in developing the booklets on advocacy and succession planning to honour the work that Jeremy Ward had been so committed to throughout his life. Rebecca, on behalf of the Board of Directors thank you for the contribution and your commitment to this important piece of leadership work. There was an ‘electric buzz’ at the launch as so many people were keen to catch up with one another as there had not been celebrations occurring prior to this due to the impact of COVID. It was a magical night and one to remember.

## **Birthday Celebration**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023 CRU celebrated their 35<sup>th</sup> Birthday with the themes of Commitment, Leadership and Change. The celebration was held at the Exhibition and Convention Centre in South Brisbane. During the day local people told their inspiring stories which were centred around the themes of Commitment, Leadership, Change, Advocacy and Cooperation. Three of the speakers had a very long connection with CRU. In the evening another three speakers spoke about their connections with CRU and how CRU had impacted their lives both in a personal and professional way. All speakers for the day had been impacted by the stories of others and the work of CRU. Thank you to Valen and Sally from Townsville, Cathy and Josey from Gold Coast, Donna, Nazim and Kathy from Brisbane, Jane from Toowoomba, Pam and Katrina from Brisbane. Margaret did an excellent job of chairing during the day and Danielle did an equally fabulous job in the evening.

In closing, I would like to thank each of the Board of Directors, Sherryn, Narissa, Matt, Cinnamon and Natalie for their hard work and their unwavering commitment to CRU. You each bring your experience (most board members having lived experience of disability either as a person with disability and/or family member of a person with disability), skills, knowledge, wisdom, and passion. You have been a fabulous team to work with. Your contribution has been greatly appreciated.

This year we’re saying ‘good-bye’ to Sherryn who has been on the CRU board since 2012. You brought with you a unique set of skills and have been available to support the Board of Directors in their monitoring of the financial affairs of CRU. You will be missed. For a couple of years now we have

been discussing your replacement but guess what we were never able to find someone who has your unique set of skills. Again, thank you for the contribution you have given to CRU over the years. It is truly appreciated.

Thank you to members, subscribers, allies, Marg, and your amazing staff team. You all help to make CRU what it is.

A quote to finish off on '***As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it***'.

**Josey McMahon**  
Chairperson 2022 – 2023

## Finance Report

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On behalf of the Directors, I report on the financial activities of CRU and table the financial statements that represent the year end 30th June 2023, the 35th year of CRU!

As I reflect on the past 11 years in which I have been on the board of CRU and as a family member, I am inspired and proud of the impact of the work of CRU and its reach from families to workers to allies, supporters and friends. This would not have been possible without the financial capacity of the organisation to facilitate and deliver on the vision and mission over that time.

More recently CRU has had to navigate the change with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance scheme and the loss of the regular state government grant. This changed the landscape for CRU and saw the competitive tendering to federal government for capacity building and information linkage grants. Grants and income were also sought from other sources so as not to rely on a single source of income. CRU also generated income from consulting and other activities which we termed fee for service income.

This change to tendering of income has had some unintended consequences of having to mostly work with multiple sources of grants, at differing commencement and durations, translating into an uncertainty that percolates in the background and holds our focus to the more current and imminent cycle of grant tendering, reporting and acquittals.

This financial year, the revenue received was predominately from a mixture of various Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grants and a grant from the Department of Education. The total income for the year being \$1,949,105 in comparison to the previous year of \$1,673,088. The way grant income is received and recorded also brings some complexity as to the timing of when income is received versus when the accounting standards say we should recognise income when the work is completed. Revenue received in advance is \$958,967 and is recorded on the Balance sheet.

Expenditure for the financial year was slightly over projections by \$18,820. The main expenditure for the year being wages to employees. There was also an adjustment in the financial year of \$8814 to correct an incorrect accrual calculation in MYOB for Long Service Leave. The deficit was also increased by \$41,510 with the share of the operating losses for Crucial Training Options (CTO).

There was also an adjustment to the Balance Sheet for the security lease deposit for the previous year of \$12,375 in the equity account. The Balance Sheet shows the reduction in overall equity by \$47,936 from \$384,521 in 2022 to \$336,585 in 2023.

The net result of this and activities for the year is presented as a deficit in the financial statements for the year ended 30th June, 2022 of \$(69,144) in comparison to a deficit of \$(137,250) in the previous year.

I would like to thank the outgoing and incoming finance staff at CRU, Janene Parsons, Bill Kyle, Jen Upton and Trudy Ganderton for their work.

Thank you to Sue Bradnock and Jenny Fenner from Total Audit Services for the audited financial statements.

Finally, I would like to thank Margaret and the Directors for working together over the years and for their vision and leadership of CRU amidst the external threats and opportunities. Thirty-five years is a milestone achievement to celebrate and acknowledge and I am confident CRU will continue to provide an opportunity for people to collaborate, challenge and inspire each other!

**Sherryn West**

Finance Chairperson 2022 – 2023

## P&L Statement

**COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT LTD  
STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS  
YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023**

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>INCOME</b>			
Revenue	2	1,949,105	1,673,088
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	1(f)	<u>1,949,105</u>	<u>1,673,088</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Cost of Sales	5	209,970	162,351
<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>		<u>1,739,135</u>	<u>1,510,736</u>
Administration Costs	4	127,851	92,632
Amortisation Expense		129,614	122,220
Depreciation		21,489	22,626
Employee Benefits Expenses		1,433,474	1,328,064
Motor Vehicle Expense		1,640	1,460
Interest Expense		4,373	4,825
Other Expenses		38,008	26,948
Occupancy Expenses		10,321	13,030
Share in profit or loss in Crucial Options Training Pty Ltd		41,510	36,182
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<u>1,808,280</u>	<u>1,647,987</u>
<b>SURPLUS BEFORE INCOME TAX</b>		(69,144)	(137,250)
Income tax expense	1(b)	-	-
<b>SURPLUS AFTER INCOME TAX</b>		<u>(69,144)</u>	<u>(137,250)</u>

## Financial Position Statement

**COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT LTD  
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
AS AT 30 JUNE 2023**

	Note	<u>2023</u> \$	<u>2022</u> \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash Assets	6	1,434,076	1,648,243
Trade Debtors		166,598	91,042
Inventory		9,497	16,918
Other assets		6,523	15,299
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>1,616,695</u>	<u>1,771,502</u>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Investment - Crucial Training Options	7	1,964	18,475
Plant and equipment	8	20,308	30,341
Right of Use Assets	8	255,342	122,282
Leasehold Improvement	8	5,238	16,694
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>282,852</u>	<u>187,792</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<u>1,899,547</u>	<u>1,959,294</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade and other payables	9	1,096,785	1,212,245
Provisions	10	190,967	214,817
Lease Liability	11	132,197	67,250
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>1,419,948</u>	<u>1,494,312</u>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Provisions	10	20,154	13,210
Lease Liability	11	122,859	67,250
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>143,013</u>	<u>80,460</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<u>1,562,962</u>	<u>1,574,772</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>336,585</u>	<u>384,521</u>
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>			
Accumulated surplus brought forward		165,968	278,904
Capital Reserve		236,029	236,029
Reserves		3,733	6,839
Surplus/(Loss) for the year		<u>(69,144)</u>	<u>(137,250)</u>
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>		<u>336,585</u>	<u>384,521</u>

Why It Matters Booklet Launch – Anne Cross Leadership Initiative

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023





**Thinking About Work  
Milton Tyree Special Event – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023**



**CRU in Canberra at the Imagine More Conference  
May 2023**



CRU at the Janet Klees event in November 2022



# CEO Report

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CRU started the year with three strategic goals – thriving, delivering, and learning. The Board undertook Strategic planning for 2023-2024 and reset the goals for the next two years to be to:

- Improve CRU's sustainability through increased funding from a wider variety of sources.
- Expand CRU's Fee for Service work to generate a stable independent income for CRU while building momentum towards our Vision.
- Expand CRU's reach, visibility, and influence.
- Deliver a high-quality program of projects and events which further CRU's vision.
- Sustain a strong, clear, committed, and consistent team including staff, Board and membership.

This report however will reflect our progress in meeting the 3 original goals during the year.

2022-2023 was the third year of operating under a new funding structure. We began the year expecting this to be the final year of the 4 ILC contracts and with a determination to use the resources well following the frustrations of operating during the pandemic. In October the Department of Social Services renegotiated all contracts including a welcome extension to June 2024.

With the shifts in funding, our challenge remains to ensure that people with disabilities their families and allies can continue to access as easily as possible the information, encouragement, hope and inspiration that they look to CRU for. We want to ensure that the changes in funding sources and agreements don't impact on the response that people get when they connect with us by phone, email, website or at a CRU event.

Not everything that we believe is important is funded under the new arrangements and through this year we have continued to explore creative ways to include these offerings.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic lessened during the year. We worked from home during August and September 2022 but since then have been predominantly office based and numbers at face-to-face events have steadily increased.

## GOAL 1:

### Thriving: CRU will be a sustainable organisation which delivers on its vision and values

Apart from monthly Board meetings, the Directors of CRU are actively engaged in additional sub-committee work, stewardship group meetings and planning. Josey has resumed her role with the National Alliance attending the face-to-face meetings. This has been a very significant contribution of time and expertise. The Directors commitment and hard work has been invaluable to CRU and to me as CEO through the year. To increase the strategic financial oversight of the organisation the board engaged Raj Gohain to work as a strategic financial advisor between July and January and Raj will continue that role in the new year.

The Stewardship group met in November and March. This group, Leanne, Lyn, Tony, Bobby and Pam bring great ideas and suggestions and provide ongoing support as a sounding board to the Directors and to me as CEO.

CRU's staffing model has changed in recent years to meet the new style of working and to allow our workforce to expand and contract.

This year Sharon, Sonja, Sue, Trish, Bronwyn and Suellen though not based as employees in the office were involved in the delivery of CRU work. They are a valuable extension to the team. Ann Greer, Michael Kendrick, John Armstrong, Rod Mills, Joyce-Lyn Smith, Neil Barringham and Jane Sherwin are all long-term supporters of CRU and also presented workshops for us during the year. We were delighted to once again be able to host two international presenters in person. Janet Klees visited from Toronto in November and Milton Tyree from Kentucky in May.

As a small organization we rely on external contractors and professionals to assist with various aspects of running CRU. We are fortunate to have committed and reliable contacts that we trust. Some of these people have worked with CRU for many years. This year I want to thank Pauline Heaney, Jon Eastgate, Mark O'Reilly, Cinta Graves, Angela Jones, Chelsea Graves, Sue Bradnock, and Brendon Donohue who have worked closely with us this year to promote, develop, and safeguard CRU in a whole variety of ways.

CRU can only operate as it does because of the many people who share their stories and experience, respond to our requests to support others, and promote our work. They are a critical part of what makes CRU work.

### **Partnerships:**

The National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) has been operating for eight years. Three of the funding grants are with members of this consortia. We met face to face in Melbourne in January 2023 for the first time in 3 years and again in April. Board members from each organisation are attending more regularly which is beneficial to share knowledge of governance. Through the various projects staff are also working with staff from other states which is building our practice and networks. During the year, we worked together on measuring the outcomes of capacity building nationally over time. We also developed a joint proposal for a philanthropy group to invest in grassroots leadership development across Australia. After many months of negotiations, we were informed in March this year that we were unsuccessful, and we are seeking funding elsewhere.

CRU has been a member of the International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL) since 2011 and I am currently a member of the Australian Reference group. This work was also impacted by COVID 19. CRU worked with Plumtree (NSW), McKenzie Centre, NZ and Imagine More (ACT) to deliver a series of webinars on Family Leadership in 2022 and I attended a small gathering in Christchurch in October 2022. I also joined reference group members, senior DSS staff and the international IIDL leadership team at a meeting in Canberra in early November.

CRU is a member of the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education, convened by Children and Young People with Disability, Australia (CYDA) and through that group has collaborated on a number of important reports and recommendations. Lisa represented CRU on that group during the year and she and I attended a face-to-face meeting of members in Melbourne in April that was helpful for future planning.

The Anne Cross Leadership Initiative, established in 2017 to honour Anne's contribution is a partnership between Uniting Care and CRU. This year we developed and launched a series of three small booklets titled Why it Matters - on Employment, Succession and Advocacy. Kyla Ranger led the work on the Employment booklet and Rebecca Altaffer worked with us to capture her father Jeremy

Ward's work on advocacy and succession in the other two booklets. This generous donation of time and expertise by Rebecca was greatly appreciated. I also want to thank the focus group who assisted us to consider what families needed in 2023, Luke Garske, Sherryn West, Laura Listopad, Julie VanOosten, Leanne Burke and Karlie Lassig.

CRU has continued to support and promote Social Role Valorisation as a foundational framework. We have worked with the national body, ASRVA to safeguard SRV training in Australia and to this end, CRU supports two staff members who are interested in becoming SRV trainers. We regularly run the 2-day course, 'Towards a Better Life' for people with disabilities and their families and provide some practical support to the local group known as Values in Action, VIAA.

### **Government funding:**

CRU is engaged in four Information Linkages and Capacity Building funding grants (ILC) one individually and three as part of consortia. These are administered by the federal Department of Social Services. These were all renegotiated in October 2022 and will now finish in June 2024. There were also two contracts with Queensland government.

The grants are as follows:

1. Information provision, "My Home: My Way" as part of a consortia. This work began in November 2019 and will continue some limited activity til June 2024.
2. My home: My Way Making Individualised Living Options real – also as part of a consortia will finish in June 2024.
3. Individual capacity building work. This work began in April 2020 and will conclude in June 2024. This is specific to CRU, relatively flexible and covers the cost of continuing some of what we have regarded as our core work.
4. Economic participation "From School to Work project" as part of a consortia. This work began 1st July 2020 and will finish in June 2024.
5. July to December 2022 we had two short extensions to our funding for Inclusive Education. A new contract was awarded in January 2023 and will continue til December 2025.
6. Vocational placements in the homes of people with disability project (Feb- Oct 2022) with Department of Employment, Small Business and Training.

Our work to resource and support paid workers does not currently receive government funding but is offered by CRU on a fee for service basis and workers are also welcome to attend most of the events offered to families. 2022-2023 was the first year of our subscription program. Themes addressed were Supported Decision Making, Creating a real home, Inclusion and reflective practice. Our thanks to Julie Van Oosten, Kelly, Meegan and Danielle for their work on this initiative. Engagement has not been as strong as we had expected, and we spent time reviewing in June before launching Year 2 in July 2023 and will monitor closely in the new year.

As a small organization we are always concerned about how visible we are. This year we had a steady increase in Facebook followers to 4500. Email remains our strongest medium with over 7000 individuals and 527 organisations receiving emails from CRU.

We participated in the following consultations or meetings:

- Community of Practice with Carers Qld on transition to adult life.
- Dept of Education, Central Qld, Restrictive Practices working group
- NDIA Home and Living Group
- Disability and Palliative Care Knowledge framework working group.
- The NDIS Review started in October 2022 and during the year CRU made two written submissions; Conducted focus group for CYDA with families of children under 8 and attended meetings with a focus on ILC, children under 8 and safeguarding. We were pleased that the chair Bruce Bonyhady could attend the NACBO meeting in April 2023.
- Productivity Commission consultation on Inclusive Education
- Education Advocates meeting
- Research consultation on peer support models for young families
- The Haven open day
- Microenterprise project QDN

We gave presentations to:

- NDIS Review gathering, Melbourne.
- Belonging Matters conference – 2 presentations
- Community Living Project SA – presentation on friendship and belonging.
- New Paradigm on Restrictive practices – accompanied by family speakers Helen Mills, Sonia Greenough and Ashleigh Hodgetts.
- IIDL Family Leadership exchange
- Edmund Rice Foundation
- ECHO – Qld Health
- Down Syndrome Education conference
- Springwood Rd Special School Inclusion Café
- Sunnybank Special School – accompanied by Jack Baggoley

Members of the team attended training and development through:

- IIDL gathering in Christchurch.
- Imagine More conference, Canberra.
- School to Work conference, Sydney.
- ASRVA gatherings online
- Family Advocacy Model Coherency workshop online
- NDIS worker screening training
- Website training
- Belonging Matters Conference, online.
- First Nations cultural awareness training
- QUT Inclusive Education forum
- QUT forum on suspensions and exclusions
- Illume Conference
- Autism at Work
- 4 in-house development days for consultants

**Income generation:**

In a bid to help CRU transition to a more secure financial footing we will continue to grow and develop our fee for service arm. Our long-term vision is that this arm of CRU will fund the core functions of CRU, rather than our future being so dependent on the vagaries of government funding programs.

While this is the purpose, what we choose to offer and how we offer it will of course be determined by the values and priorities of CRU. As this work is interconnected with all other CRU work the details of it will be described under the second goal of Delivery. At a time when much of our work is defined in advance the flexibility of the offerings under the fee for service arm of CRU is its strength. These requests are met by staff from across CRU, including our casual team, depending on the skills and experience required.

Crucial Training Options (CTO), the RTO developed in partnership with Staffing Options was launched in August 2022 and began offering First Aid and CPR to the public by May 2023. Changes to the curriculum late in 2022 delayed our start to the Certificate III and Diploma. We are fortunate that CRU staff members Diana Kerr and Danielle Mason and Debbie Wiseman from Staffing Options have joined the staff of CTO. I want to acknowledge Carol Brosi from Staffing Options who has been a great partner in this work. I also want to thank Danielle for her ongoing work and Lisa Heyson who joined us as training co-ordinator early in 2023.

We have had a challenging year this year with regard to financial management at CRU. Janene Parsons, our finance officer since 2017 finished up at the end of 2022. She was replaced by Bill Kyle who worked with us til mid-2023. Unfortunately, this change in staff coincided with the need to renegotiate all 5 of our funding agreements. The Board has invested in additional resources and Jen Upton joined the team as bookkeeper in March 2023 and Trudy Ganderton as Finance officer in late August. We hope that having more time and two people will safeguard this critical piece of CRU. I want to express my thanks to Janene, Bill, Jen and Trudy.

## **GOAL 2:**

**DELIVERING: CRU will work with individuals, families, organisations, allies and the wider community to deliver on our mission.**

### **i. What we focused on:**

I want to describe here the areas of focus of the work of CRU, rather than the particular projects or funding streams that we currently have to support the work in those areas.

### **Inclusive Education:**

Our main strategy to further Inclusive Education is the Families for Inclusive Education project funded by the Qld Dept of Education. This involved the delivery of workshops across the state; peer network development; webinars and resources to build the capacity of families to advocate for, nurture, and sustain their child's successful participation in inclusive education. The new contract from January 2023 also includes the delivery of regional workshops to school personnel. Lisa led this project and was joined by Lindie and Ainsley as consultants and Sonia and Meg in administration. Kyla also supported the team. The team has worked to hard to invest in family leadership through the annual peer support training in Brisbane; connecting with families while on regional visits and assisting families to develop and share their stories at workshops including with school personnel.

## **Finding a job:**

This year, the main way that we could resource people on finding or creating employment was through the School to Work initiative which aims to support high school students with disability and their families to engage with employment. Initially an information strategy to help students and their families build confidence and explore what work could look like for them we made some changes in late 2022 to deepen the strategy. Along with webinars and workshops we have also offered forums and working groups to help families bring their ideas to reality. We met with interstate consortia partners, Resourcing Inclusive Communities NSW and Imagine More ACT through the year to share ideas and resources. Gina Barwell worked with Casey Northam and then Sonja Elliott to deliver this project.

The presentation by Milton Tyree from Kentucky on Customised Employment in late May was a highlight with over 120 people attending. This was open to all and benefited more than just the secondary students and their families.

In addition to School to work, CRU has also offered an online workshop on employment for jobseekers of all ages three times this year.

## **A home of your own:**

Our strongest contribution to this work has been through our involvement in the My Home My Way projects, which includes the Making Individualised Living Options (ILO) real partnership.

There is a lot of interest in people having homes of their own and we are keen to find ways to support people to achieve this in a personalised and sustainable way.

As a consortia member, we contributed to the My Home: My Way website launched in August 2022 including the development of two videos and two podcasts. I want to thank the Livingstone and Harrison families; Jill Hole and her son Matt, Bobby Noone and Sherryn West for agreeing to share their stories with us. I also want to thank Luke Cowan for his presentation at the online workshop in June.

Danielle and Jo led the ILO work for CRU offering large group presentations, smaller meetings and individual conversations to families and their supporters to assist them to understand and assess the benefits and limits of this funding type. The ILO toolkit was launched by the lead agency, Valued Lives in March 2022.

CRU also offered the My Home: My Way workshop in Toowoomba and Townsville during the year.

## **Shaping Great lives:**

School, work and home are key elements of a good life but there are other skills and frameworks that are also critical to ensure people are safely and deeply embedded in community. To assist people to shape great lives we offered workshops on advocacy skills; understanding intellectual disability; responding well to challenging behaviour, sensory and movement difference, connecting to community; friendships and relationships; succession and planning for the future,

We have tried to offer events that would appeal to people new to this sector and events that can deepen the understanding of people who have been journeying with us for a long time. I thank

Catherine for her strong lead on the majority of this work. Through the year, she was supported by Diana, Casey, Jo, Sonia and Shalee.

We also took on a broad range of projects and initiatives during the year on a fee for service basis. Of the 35 engagements about 50% were from individuals and 50% from organisations. Some involved ongoing mentoring or training and others one off training or consulting.

We were successful in our tender to continue work with Logan City Council and offered 6 workshops to council staff during the year. We have developed an online learning module and updated the half day workshop. This work has been well received and I thank Sue Duncan-Kemp for her presentation of the workshops.

The Getting to the Heart of what matters workshop was offered four times with 70 support workers attending. This included our first online attempt offered over 4 sessions in February, which went well with 23 attending.

In March 2022, CRU began an update of the Optimal Individual Service Design course which was developed by Michael Kendrick. We have two roles –to convene an international governance group to safeguard the delivery of the course in the future. The second role is to work with Michael to update the presentation materials and make them accessible to a group of trainers.

With the assistance of CSIA we secured further funding to explore vocational placements in the homes of people with disability from Dept of Employment, Small Business and Training as part of the NDIS training and skills support strategy. (NTSSS). The new project was to develop and pilot *The Placement Agency* which was a key recommendation of Phase 1. We recommended that an agency or middleman be developed to facilitate placements. Phase 2 began in March 2022 and ran until December 2022. The timing of this project was unfortunate. We sought out students from many RTOs but because of the support worker shortage most were fully employed and not available or interested to participate in voluntary placements. While not achieving what we had hoped we trust that the learnings will still be useful in the future. We want to acknowledge the assistance of CSIA and others from this industry. I want to particularly thank our workplace supervisors and the focus group members Eirin Pinner, Gabrielle Bell, Anna Coventry, Narissa Niesler, and Bronwyn Rose for their contributions to these projects.

### **Using Support Well:**

Another important safeguard in this time of increased funding and resources is for people and their families to use their support well. We updated and delivered two workshops on this topic and a number of the peer networks focused on this too.

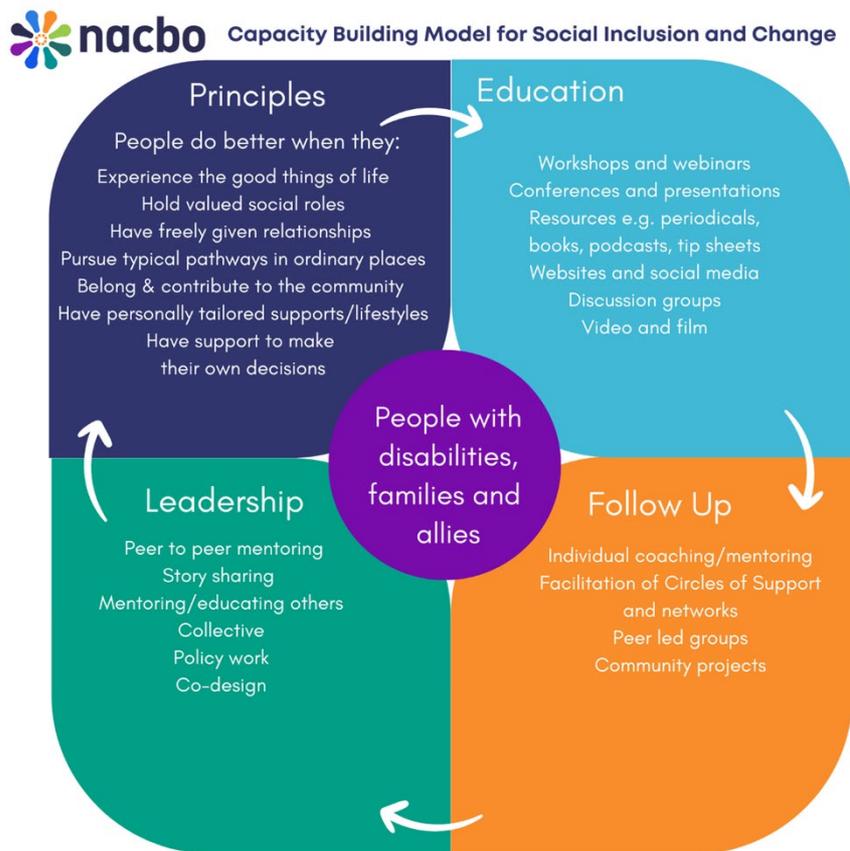
### **Leadership Development:**

CRU has not yet been successful in securing dedicated funding for leadership development. We keep leadership development on the agenda through ensuring that there are opportunities for deeper challenge, conversation and learning alongside our more introductory events.

From the long list of names included in this report, you will see that there were opportunities for leaders to share their stories at webinars, workshops and in publications. There were opportunities to contribute to thinking via focus groups on a number of topics and CRU was able to financially subsidise some travel and accommodation to assist the participation of regional people with disabilities and their families.

ii. **How we worked – our strategies for change:**

Our contributions to resourcing people to work for change contain the broad strategies of running events and also the distribution of resources to people around the state. These strategies provide information and sometimes they serve as an introduction to the work and thinking of CRU. In addition to this we are keen to provide opportunities for people to deepen their learning through individual conversations and connecting and linking with each other. Many people then go on to become leaders, resourcing others and creating change. This is not linear. People will go in and out of these phases as circumstances change. The National Alliance describes the capacity building work in the model below. This is the model that has been evaluated by the Social Policy Research Centre and shown to be very effective in building the capacity of people with disability and their families.



**Events:**

We delivered 87 events during the year with 1622 registrations. Please note this does not equate to 1622 individuals, as many people attend more than one event. Of these events, 46 were online either as webinars or more interactive online workshops or conversations and the remaining 41 were face to face. 16 of the face-to-face events were held in Brisbane and 25 in regional Queensland. CRU sought and obtained resources to ensure we could travel to more remote parts of Queensland and this year CRU staff also visited smaller centres such as Winton, Barcaldine, Longreach, Quilpie, Roma and Charleville.

There were over 700 registrations by workers to CRU events.

### **Resource development and distribution:**

The two websites play a key role in our communications, and we were able to upgrade our accessibility during the year. [www.cru.org.au](http://www.cru.org.au) and [thegoodlife.cru.org.au](http://thegoodlife.cru.org.au) combined had approximately 5600 sessions per month and 6000 Page Views per month this year.

I thank Kyla Ranger and the admin team for taking a lead on this work. We also engage Cinta Graves and Dan Holman with the work behind the scenes and Brendon Donohue checks our accessibility.

### **Individual conversations and consultations:**

There were 235 requests for information during the year via phone calls, emails and visits to the CRU office. Some of the calls are short just seeking some information, while others welcome the opportunity to talk through their own situation at more depth. We have sought and secured funding to provide this through two of our funded projects, in particular for people who are not NDIS participants or who are agency managed, and we are also happy to discuss the provision of this service on a fee for service basis for those who are self-managing and plan managing. About 50 of these calls were from people who are not family members and included teachers, professionals, workers and friends.

### **Connecting and linking:**

CRU played a role in bringing people together in a variety of ways. There are peer support strategies where people were linked in a semi-formal way, some facilitated by CRU and others started by CRU but now operating more independently. The majority of these are topic based and some geographical. We continued to support a family voice for children with mental illness and psychosocial disability and Raising Minds has now become incorporated. CRU also fosters and resources a network of peer supporters for inclusive education. Apart from these semi-formal networks, CRU also continued to connect people in more individualized ways.

### **Reaching out:**

Across CRU we have tried to reach out to families and organisations in communities that are unlikely to just respond to a CRU event flyer. For example, we have offered individual consultations and follow up to families from CALD backgrounds; customised a workshop for Vietnamese families and partnered in running workshops with the community engagement counsellors in the Education Department.

In addition to these workshops and webinars, CRU has convened a small working group since August 2020 to think about what is needed in our sector to assist people to do well in this new era with its new threats and opportunities. Morrie O'Conner, Toni Sumner, Benita Beirzynski, Leanne Burke, Maureen Fordyce, Neil Barringham, Bobby Noone and Danielle Mason make up the group and are particularly interested in the people who are most likely to miss out due to multiple life barriers. This project aims to pass on knowledge and use it to strengthen ongoing action and change. In October, after many attempts we were able to broaden this conversation and convened a gathering in New Farm with over 100 registrants. We had presentations from Central Qld Citizen Advocacy, Staffing Options, Chris and Jess sharing how they were working innovatively to overcome substantial barriers and there was rich discussion on what we could each do. This year we have begun work on a publication that will carry these themes further.

I want to express a huge thank you to the people who did all of this work. Some team members were engaged on particular projects, while others worked across the whole organisation, responding as

needed to an ever-changing workplace. I want to thank all the staff, casuals, part timers and full timers; those who are still with us and those who have left us during the year, for their careful thoughtful work, flexibility and commitment during the 2022/2023 year. While there is a long list of names at the front of this report, the full time equivalent sits at about 12 people.

### **GOAL 3: LEARNING: CRU will continue to improve our work and seek out new ideas.**

CRU has always sought feedback after events. To get to the deeper questions of what difference our work makes in people's lives, the National Alliance commissioned and participated in a two-year evaluation to gauge the impact of capacity building over time by the Social Policy Research Centre (Flinders University and the University of New South Wales). Thanks to Sonia Greenough and Shalee Gregson Quinn for their participation in the associated co-design group. The report was due for release in July 2023. During the process we were provided with the results of an accompanying survey of CRU that found that:

As a result of involvement with CRU:

- 86% of participants agreed that they felt more confident.
- 83% learnt and tried something new and 81% felt more connected with other people.
- Overall, 84% rated CRU as excellent or very good.

It was great to receive this feedback as a taster to the more comprehensive national report.

99 Consulting has been engaged by the School to Work consortia to evaluate the initiative. The feedback in 2022 was positive and affirming of our direction but gave us clear direction on how we could improve and deepen our works.

We thank you for taking the time to fill out surveys and those who agreed to be interviewed. We have also maintained our accreditation under ISO 2015.

### **Conclusion:**

As I said at the beginning, we started this year with a determination to use our resources well, following the frustrations of operating during the pandemic and I think we have achieved a renewed depth to our work during the year. If there is a silver lining to our uncertain future it would be that we regularly consider where we are investing our time and try to assess the potential legacy of the different aspects of our work. With this in mind, we remain committed to resourcing people with disabilities and their families with tried and tested knowledge about the most essential life domains and we remain committed to linking people with each other.

As we try to achieve our mission of full and meaningful lives for people living with disability in a chaotic and ever-changing environment I am heartened by the words of the ancient Stoic, Epictetus to "Make the best use of what is in your power and take the rest as it happens."



Margaret Rodgers  
Chief Executive Officer  
22/11/2023



*Expanding Ideas; Creating Change*

**Community Resource Unit Ltd**

ABN 16 143 460 250 ACN: 617 860 009

Level 2/43 Peel Street  
PO Box 3722  
South Brisbane QLD 4101

p. 07 33844 2211  
e. [cru@cru.org.au](mailto:cru@cru.org.au)  
[www.cru.org.au](http://www.cru.org.au)