



Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

Annual Report

2020 - 2021



Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

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 2020 to 30 June 2021



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.

Governance and Management of CRU

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

July to October

Fletcher Tame, Chair
Josey McMahon, Secretary
Narissa Niesler
Luke O'Sullivan
Gerhard Tromp
Sherryn West

October to June

Josey McMahon, Chair
Gerhard Tromp, Secretary
Laura Listopad
Narissa Niesler
Natalie Palelei
Sherryn West

Stewardship Group

Leanne Burke
Lyn Farrell
Bobby Noone
Pam Spelling
Tony Swords
Richard Warner

Staff

CEO, Margaret Rodgers
Senior Consultant, Lisa Bridle

Consultants

Gina Barwell-Pickup
Lindie Brengman-Harvey
Kelly Harrison
Diana Kerr
Catherine Laherty
Danielle Mason
Jen Mouritz
Ainsley Robertson
Hugh Rose-Miller
Jo Walters

Consultants (casual)

Sharon Bourke
Trish Feheely
Trish Murdoch
Tracy Pate
Suellen Welch

Administration & Finance

Office Manager, Kim Jensen
Sonia Brown-Diaz
Edde Rose Fenson
Kathleen Fleming
Janene Parsons
Kerrie White

Contractors

Bronwyn Moloney
Bridget Patchell
Bridget Wickert

Guest Presenters

Catherine Allen
Ann Greer
Sharon Hammer
Michael Kendrick
Lisa Ladson
Kate McGinnity
Rodney Mills
Anna Nikolay
Jane Sherwin
Marita Walker
Jeremy Ward

Director's Report

As Chairperson of the board, I would like to welcome each one of you whether you are here at CRU's office or attending over zoom.

I have been a long-term supporter of CRU since I first met staff and members back in the very early 1990s in Townsville. There was something about CRU's values that resonated with me, which had not been my experience over the years as someone with disability and having a family member with disability. It has been the support that I have received from CRU that has kept me strong in my belief that my family member could live a valued life in the community. As well, through the support of CRU I have also been able to remain resilient in the work I do daily with people with disability and their families. We need to continually push back on a system that is not conducive to people with disability having full and meaningful lives.

We are still at a time in which there are many opportunities and challenges for people with disability. Whilst the full implementation of the NDIS has been operationalised nationally for more than a couple of years, already we are witnessing more than ever people with disability receiving plans that do not meet their needs as processes within the NDIA have become more bureaucratic. The words 'aspiration and innovation' appears to have already slipped out of their vocabulary.

This last year saw CRU in the 2nd year of its strategic plan 2020 – 2022. The Directors and CEO agreed that we wanted CRU to be thriving, delivering, and learning as an organisation whilst remaining true to the values, mission and vision. CRU's mission is to inspire, challenge and equip people to embrace ideas, to take action, and to build a movement for change. Our vision for people with disability is to have full and meaningful lives. We need to remind ourselves that the NDIS is only the scheme to provide funding for people's packages and it is up to people with disability, their families and supporters to envision, enable and enrich the lives of people with disability so that they can live full and inclusive lives. The board of directors met in February to set the Operational Plan for 2021 and to ensure it was aligned with the Strategic Plan.

Within the mix of thriving, delivering, and learning there are both challenges and opportunities for CRU. Whilst CRU wants to be a thriving organisation, we are continually mindful that all the work done by CRU needs to be within its vision and values. To this end you will not see CRU apply for funding nor undertake work that would go against its mission, vision and values. CRU as an organisation is also committed to learning and finding new ways, ideas, and opportunities to build the capacity of people with disability and their families. However, to do this CRU is also mindful that it needs to build the capacity of the board, CEO and the team of consultants who deliver the work.

Professional development is highly valued by CRU. The board of directors are members of Boardwise and are given the opportunity to participate in webinars on topics pertinent to their responsibilities as directors. This year the board of directors participated in a zoom training led by Sherryn to ensure that they have a good understanding of their financial responsibility.

The Stewardship Group continued to offer support and guidance to the board of directors and to the CEO. The Stewardship Group met 4 times – face to face and via zoom. It has been very beneficial to have a group of people with experience, wisdom, knowledge and aligned values and beliefs to assist us with the deeper questions around the work and sustainability of CRU. It has allowed Marg and the board of directors to bring bigger issues of concern to the table for an open and honest conversation and to receive guidance. We appreciate your time and effort in making yourselves available to us. On behalf of the board of directors and Marg I want to say ‘thank you’.

The work to develop an RTO alongside Staffing Options as our partner continued as an alternative source of diversifying our funding. The board of directors decided not to purchase an existing RTO but rather to develop one in conjunction with Staffing Options. The work to develop it has been slow and tedious as there are regulations and auditing processes that need to be adhered to. However, we believe that the result will be worthwhile as it will provide us the opportunity to provide valued based training to those seeking employment within the disability sector. It will also provide an opportunity to influence those seeking to work alongside people with disability and their families about what constitutes good, fulfilling, and inclusive lives.

Considerable time has been spent in reviewing job descriptions. The board was responsible for reviewing the CEO’s job description. As the work of the CEO has become much more complex in the recent years, the CEO’s job description needed to be reviewed to reflect the complexities of this. CRU has become a company. Funding has diversified with 4 ILC grants from DSS, grants from Education Qld and DESBT and the fee for service work continues to grow. There has been an increase in the number of consultants – some working full time, others working part time. CRU has consultants who have been here for a long period of time whilst others are very new and need to learn the way of working within the CRU environment. Workplace legalities are forever changing. Throw all of this into the mix and with COVID – 19 lock downs at such short notice, it is easy to understand how the work of the CEO has become much more complex than in the days when CRU was first born. Marg as CEO does an amazing job at balancing all of this and to you on behalf of the board, staff and members I want to say ‘thank you’.

CRU continues to be a member of NACBO (National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations). I have had the privilege of representing the board at NACBO meetings and feel very proud of the contribution that Marg makes to this group. Face to face meetings have not occurred since February 2020 due to COVID-19, however the group have met over zoom.

CRU is very fortunate in having Marg Rodgers at its helm to work alongside the board of directors. Marg is someone with integrity, insight, strong leadership qualities and committed to the values and vision of CRU. This is also complemented by the team of consultants and administrative staff who also bring skills, knowledge and experience to CRU. They are a committed team who are professional in the way they conduct themselves yet at the same time are warm and welcoming. I am continually impressed and proud of the team CRU has. To Marg and team, I say ‘thank you’ for all your hard work and the contribution you make to progress the work towards people with disability having full, meaningful, and inclusive lives.

As well as the work directly involved with being directors on the board, some directors held extra positions on sub-committees, focus groups, NACBO, etc. Two board members held positions on the Risk Sub-committee assisting CEO and other staff responsible for ensuring that CRU remained compliant with ISO regulations. We welcomed two new board members – Natalie and Laura.

This year the board of directors decided to have monthly meetings. During the year 13 board meetings were held – most were held over Zoom, and it was agreed that we would meet face to face on a quarterly basis. However, COVID - 19 prevented this and we met only twice in person. Given that two board members do not live in Brisbane being able to meet over Zoom was advantageous for them. Prior to each board meeting a reflection is led by one of the directors. I believe that this small act keeps us grounded and reminds us of the important work of CRU.

Sherryn will deliver the financial report whilst Marg will provide an overview of the day-to-day work of CRU. However, before closing I would like to thank the other directors of CRU for their hard work and the contribution that they have made to CRU during the last 12 months – thanks to Sherryn who assisted with financials, Gerhard who took on the role of Secretary, Laura who did a great job of timekeeper at meetings and to Natalie and Narissa. You have been an awesome team to work with.

Again, many thanks to you, the members, for your support to CRU. It is greatly appreciated.

Josey McMahon
Chairperson 2020 - 2021

Finance Report

CRU continued on its delivery of the strategic goals - thriving, delivering and learning amidst the restrictions and lockdowns that we have come to recognise as part of our operations over the last couple of years. The financial statements represent the year and correspond to the story contained in the CEO's report for the year ended 30th June, 2021.

Revenue received in the financial year was predominately from a mixture of various Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grants and a grant from the Department of Education. Workshop and Fee for Service income streams performed well considering the COVID-19 restrictions throughout the year.

Expenditure for the financial year was as projected. Portable Long Service Leave for Community Services was introduced in January 2021 and CRU has and will continue to meet its obligations for employees. During the financial year there were also some planned one-off expenditures on the extension of the office space. The directors would like to acknowledge the financial support received from Hudpac Corporation Pty Ltd.

As disclosed in previous years CRU has drawn on the retained funds to assist in implementing its strategies and this year continued its commitment to those. The investment in Crucial Training Options Pty Ltd is shown in the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss. Work continues on the process to be registered as a training organisation (RTO).

The net result of this and activities for the year is presented as a surplus in the financial statements for the year ended 30th June, 2021 of \$23,970 in comparison to \$9,931 in the previous year.

I thank the directors, stewardship group and staff for the ongoing conversations, planning and decisions that brings us to where we are now and the future gazing to ensure CRU's sustainability.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge Margaret for her leadership and all the staff for their commitment, resilience and flexibility in continuing to deliver on the work of CRU. I acknowledge the flexibility of funders enabling the negotiation of deliverables as a consequence of the lock down and restrictions.

It has again been a very different year from those previously but as CRU has itself shown its resilience, I am confident that it will continue to do so.

I also thank Sue Bradnock of Total Audit Services for the audited financial statements.

Sherryn West
Director 2020 – 2021

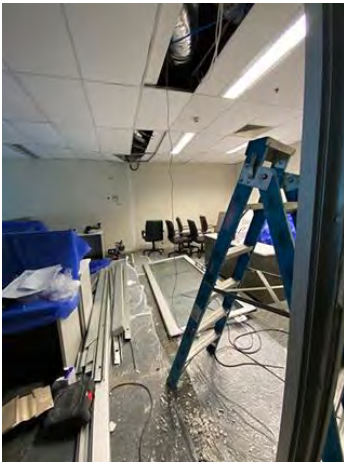
COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT LTD
STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS
YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
INCOME			
Revenue	2	1,585,156	1,382,034
TOTAL INCOME	1(f)	<u>1,585,156</u>	<u>1,382,034</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Cost of Sales	4	160,183	170,733
GROSS PROFIT		<u>1,424,973</u>	<u>1,211,301</u>
Administration Costs	3	87,137	107,551
Amortisation Expense		122,220	-
Depreciation		12,545	12,357
Employee Benefits Expenses		1,119,102	970,676
Motor Vehicle Expense		1,174	1,358
Interest Expense		4,825	439
Other Expenses		5,803	8,323
Occupancy Expenses		17,853	100,666
Share in profit or loss - Crucial Training Options Pty Ltd		30,344	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		<u>1,401,003</u>	<u>1,093,819</u>
SURPLUS BEFORE INCOME TAX		23,970	9,931
Income tax expense	1(b)	-	-
SURPLUS AFTER INCOME TAX		<u>23,970</u>	<u>9,931</u>

COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT LTD
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 30 JUNE 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash Assets	5	1,942,000	1,572,321
Trade Debtors		63,987	87,824
Inventory		16,630	18,151
Other assets		13,277	7,958
Investment - Crucial Training Options		54,657	-
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		2,090,550	1,686,255
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Plant and equipment	6	28,330	11,494
Right of Use Assets	6	244,503	366,723
Leasehold Improvement		28,150	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		300,983	378,217
TOTAL ASSETS		2,391,533	2,064,472
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	7	1,424,997	1,011,679
Provisions	8	165,765	165,008
Lease Liability	9	127,312	126,920
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,718,074	1,303,607
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Provisions	8	22,933	16,033
Lease Liability	9	128,754	247,030
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		151,687	263,063
TOTAL LIABILITIES		1,869,761	1,566,670
NET ASSETS		521,772	497,802
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Accumulated surplus brought forward		254,934	257,378
Capital Reserve		236,029	236,029
Reserves		6,839	6,839
Adjustment (lease security deposit)		-	(12,375)
Surplus/(Loss) for the year		23,970	9,931
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS		521,772	497,802

Happenings at CRU



Our physical space transformed, as did the CRU Team; renovations changing office space into training rooms and training rooms into work spaces.



Ann & Chris Parson with Marg Rodgers at CRU



April is a big birthday month at CRU



And we all got used to wearing face masks

It was a year for farewelling and welcoming staff...



...and keeping our spirits high.



Connecting with Others



Families for Inclusive Education
Peer Support Gathering, April
2021. Brisbane



The ILC Team
planning their
road Trip out to
South West QLD,
including
Cunnumulla

Families for Inclusive Education Yarning
Circles in Mackay, sharing inclusive
education thinking with Indigenous
Families



Discussion with TAFE and CSIA



The CRU Board and CEO

CEO Report

I often start this report with a quote. This year however, I want to start the 2020-2021 Annual Report with a reminder, from our own website, that *Community Resource Unit exists to create and promote positive change so that people living with disability can belong to and actively contribute to social and economic life. Together with people living with disability, their families, allies in the human services sector and the community we build a movement for change.*

CRU engages with people on questions of values and vision; we provide inspiration and analysis and assist people to shape and deliver helpful, relevant, and responsive human services and support arrangements. CRU provides a place for people to collaborate, challenge and inspire each other and we welcome all people who share our aims to link with us either formally or informally.

That is why we exist and has been for a very long time. So while this report will outline many shifts and very real challenges to the context in which we exist now, and it will outline our progress in attempting to transition to a more secure footing, I believe that the fundamental purpose and strategies of CRU have not changed and in fact have been strengthened. We have been challenged to think deeply about what matters, to articulate that in many new ways, to find new ways to connect with people with disabilities and their families and to form new partnerships to make this transition.

CRU has three strategic goals – **thriving, delivering, and learning** - and this report will reflect our progress in meeting them during the year.

CRU started the 2020-2021 year with staff still working from home across Brisbane due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We returned to the office in mid-July keen to make a start on the new work we had committed to; to work together to collaborate across all the different funding streams; and to identify the pieces that were now unfunded but still important and explore creative options to keep them. We really want to ensure that the changes in where our funding comes from don't impact on the response that people get when they connect with us by phone, email, website or at a CRU event.

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

During this year, the change to how we work behind the scenes is significant and has consumed a lot of time and energy. We are prepared to do what it takes so that people with disabilities and families can continue to access as easily as

possible the information, encouragement, hope and inspiration that they look to CRU for.

Apart from monthly Board meetings, the **Directors of CRU** are actively engaged in additional sub-committee work, National Alliance meetings, stewardship group meetings, and planning. Their involvement has been invaluable to CRU and to me as CEO through the year and I want to thank each of these hard working Directors for their contribution.

The **Stewardship** group met four times in the year in July, November, February, and June. Three of the meetings were on Zoom and just one face to face. This group, Leanne, Lyn, Tony, Bobby, Pam and Richard bring great ideas and suggestions and provide ongoing support as a sounding board to the Directors and myself.

During the year the **staff team** welcomed Kelly, Diana, Gina, Jo and Edde Rose to join Lisa, Lindie, Hugh, Catherine, Jen, Kim, Janene, Kerrie, Kath, Danielle, Ainsley, Tracy and Sonia. In April 2021, Jo transitioned from being a casual with CRU to a part time staff member based in the office, and in June 2021 we farewellled Jen Mouritz after six years at CRU.

CRU's staffing model has changed in recent years to meet the new style of working and this year Sharon, Tracey, Jo, Trish, Trish and Suellen were engaged on a casual basis. They were involved in the delivery of CRU workshops and took on occasional pieces of work. They are a valuable extension to the team that are based in the office at South Brisbane. We also engaged a number of presenters, both local and international, to deliver their workshops for and with CRU.

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, that know us well and that we can call on for help and I want to acknowledge the contribution they each make to CRU's work. Some of these people have worked with CRU for many years. This year I want to thank Paul Hebinger, Pauline Heaney, Jon Eastgate, Mark O'Reilly, Cinta Graves, Paul Paxton Hall, Sue Bradnock, Sally Tansley and Brendon Donohue who have worked closely with us to promote, develop and safeguard CRU in a whole variety of ways.

There are countless other **supporters** who share their stories and experience on behalf of CRU, respond to our requests to support others and promote our work. They are a critical part of what makes CRU work. I wish to extend a huge **thank you** to the many, many people who have connected, encouraged and supported us this year.

Partnerships

The National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (**NACBO**) has been operating for six years. Membership of this group has strengthened our work significantly. Three of the ILC bids are with members of this consortia. The alliance has continued to meet using Zoom. We currently collaborate on funded projects and we have continued our shared work on measuring the outcomes of capacity building over time. Josey and I represent CRU at alliance meetings.

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 is another group that has persevered in spite of COVID and hosted national online gatherings in place of face to face during the year. In late June 2020 CRU supported Dan Read and Linc Phelps from Gympie to be keynote presenters at a national online gathering.

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, recommendations and roundtables. Lisa represents CRU on that group and also represented CRU at the 2nd National roundtable on Inclusive Education which was a national meeting of advocacy groups, unions and education departments.

The Anne Cross Leadership Initiative, established in 2017 to honour Anne's contribution is a partnership between Uniting Care and CRU. This initiative aims to contribute to the development of strong, principled leadership amongst people with disability and families throughout Queensland in order to contribute to better lives for people with disability.

CRU was invited to the Decision Making Possibilities national advisory group convened by Western Australia's Individualised Services (WAIS) to support their current project on Supported Decision Making which they run in partnership with Mamre. I represent CRU in that forum.

With the assistance of CSIA we secured funding from DESBT, under the NDIS Training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS) program to explore vocational placements in the homes of people with disability. This project is aligned with a project on increasing the quality and quantity of placements more broadly, being conducted by TAFE Qld. Danielle and I have joined the TAFE steering group. We want to acknowledge the assistance of CSIA, the others from this industry and the focus group of self managers for their contribution to this project.

Since its inception CRU has valued and promoted Social Role Valorisation as a foundational framework. Typically, we run the 2 day course, Towards a Better Life for people with disabilities and their families regularly, we provide meeting

space, access to our mailing list and other practical support to the local group known as VIAA. We worked with SUFY and advocacy groups to support a 2 day course in April this year. The national body, ASRVA raised concerns about the future of SRV training in Australia this year and CRU participated in a number of conversations about this threat. As a result of our increased awareness we will provide additional support to two CRU staff members who are interested in becoming SRV trainers.

Government funding

CRU was successful in securing Information Linkages and Capacity Building funding (ILC) one individually and three as part of consortia. These federally funded grants were negotiated with the NDIA but were all transitioned to the Department of Social Services in October 2020. There are 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 for 3 years.
2. My home: My Way Making Individualised Living Options real – also as part of a consortia. The start of this project was delayed due to lack of guidelines. We commenced in April 2021 and it will continue until early 2023.
3. Individual capacity building work. This work began in April 2020 for 3 years. This is specific to CRU, relatively flexible and will cover 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. The start of this work was delayed until 1st July 2020 and will continue for approx. 3 years.
5. The contract with Department of Education was continued through the year and was again extended in mid-2021 for the 2021-2022 year.
6. We secured an 8 month project (Feb- Oct 2021) with Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to investigate the option of vocational placements in the homes of people with disability.

It is worth noting that all of this funding is for building the capacity of people with disabilities and their families. 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 welcome to attend some of the events offered to families. CRU has a long and proud history of being a place where people with disability, family members and allies both paid and unpaid can come together. CRU will continue to look for ways to resource people who work in the sector as we value the contribution they can make to the lives of people with disability.

The shift in income streams and reporting requirements, introduction of portable long service leave, the rapid move to online delivery and the growth in the CRU

team require additional attention to the office systems. We have done extensive work to rebuild our mailing list following all the changes with NDIS, develop a new data base and refine our shared network. We also needed to update our website accessibility and this year moved to the more accessible Humanitix ticketing system. The difficult part of all of this work behind the scenes is that it is not adequately funded in the new model and during the coming years we have a lot to do to ensure that we have the resources for the positions that provide the essential backbone to our work.

As a small organization we are always concerned about how visible we are. This year we had a steady increase in Facebook followers to 2700; our mailing list sits at 5500. Following consultation with the indigenous community, we also began work on the incorporation of artwork and messaging that will be more welcoming to first nation's peoples.

Income generation

An external review of the Fee for Service initiative in May 2020 gave very useful feedback and recommendations for growth in this area. We recruited a new consultant Kelly Harrison in August and she has worked with Danielle to develop this arm of CRU post the evaluation. There has been extensive rethinking of how we describe this work, significant change to the website, preparation for online video sales, exploration of a subscription service and the development of systems to make this flow as smoothly as possible.

With a view to diversifying our funding base, we accepted other pieces of work that fell within the mission of CRU. We took on a **broad range** of projects and initiatives. In addition to work with individuals, families and disability organisations we also undertook the NTSSS project funded by DESBT; running focus groups for both the National Disability Research project on an Australian research agenda and Social Deck on the Disability Standards for Education. We trained staff from an Outside School Hours Care centre. We developed workshops for families from CALD backgrounds. We provided planning and network facilitation to the Decision Making Possibilities project which is a current project on supported decision making run by Mamre and Western Australia's Individualised Services (WAIS). We were successful in a tender to the Logan City Council for the delivery of mandatory disability awareness training. Negotiations and preparation started this year with a view to beginning delivery next financial year.

This year the development of the RTO to be known as Crucial Training Options continued. This company was registered in April 2020 and a shareholder agreement between CRU and Staffing Options was finalized in May that year. Our thanks to Sally Tansley from RTO works for her assistance and advice on this big piece of work. In March 2021 we submitted an application for registration to Australian Skills Quality Authority. This was still pending at the

end of June. Despite the challenge of no clear starting date, we recruited for both a First Aid trainer and a Manager and Diana and Danielle have completed their Certificate IV in Training and Assessment . This initiative has required a large investment of money and time and we are very grateful to Carol Brosi from Staffing Options who has been a great partner in this work to date. I also want to thank Danielle Mason for her work with Carol and I to take this from an idea to a reality. (*almost*)

In July 2020 we took on a second tenancy on Level 2 at Peel Street and in January we vacated the office for 2 weeks to enable the renovations to happen. The result is that we have a larger, stand-alone training room with a private break out area and we have a smaller more comfortable meeting room and a dedicated zoom-room. We have also installed new tech equipment to assist with the remote involvement of people at CRU events. Crucial Training Options will rent the training room from CRU.

Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Through the year, the majority of our staff have spent the majority of their time based in the CRU office. When we do want or need to work from home now the systems are in place for that to happen more easily. The lockdowns in January, March and June and the justified concerns about face to face events of our constituents have, certainly had an impact on our planning, numbers attending and ability to deliver. Keeping up with the changing rules on social distancing, COVID plans, check in apps, masks etc is time consuming for an already under resourced admin team. All of this is inefficient and frustrating and I want to thank the team for their good natured determination to keep reshaping what we offer.

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

Our challenge during 2020 and 2021 has been to combine the work from all these various funding streams with the fee for service arm to serve people with disabilities and their families in a way that is comprehensive, coherent and useful. There is still a gap between what we think are important topics to focus on and what we have funding to deliver and so we do what we can to make progress with what we have. In some areas eg employment, while we are only funded to resource a specific age group we remain keenly interested in how everyone with disability can secure employment. With three projects operating within consortia arrangements, we are still learning how to do that effectively to get the most out of the shared wisdom and reach that that work brings.

What we focused on:

I want to describe here the areas of focus of the work of CRU, not the particular projects or funding streams that we have to support the work in those areas.

Inclusive Education: Our main strategy to further Inclusive Education is the **Families for Inclusive Education** project which involves the delivery of workshops across the state; peer network development; webinars and online resources to build the capacity of families to advocate for, nurture, and sustain their child's successful participation in inclusive education. Lisa leads this project and was joined by Lindie, Ainsley, Hugh and Sonia. The project was externally evaluated by Professor Suzanne Carrington of QUT this year. We were pleased with the numbers of parents attending and feedback reflected that families felt more informed and confident as a result of the project. It's very heartening to see a steadily growing group of informed, connected and passionate young families engaging with CRU and working not just for an inclusive education but a full and meaningful life in community now and in the future for their sons and daughters. In addition to the contracted work, we also meet with Department representatives quarterly on broader issues and Lisa presented to Department of Education staff in Toowoomba; Central Qld State Schools Principals conference and was involved in regional workshops on parent engagement. We completed the second year in June 2021 and have been funded for another year.

Finding a job: This year, the main way that we could resource people on finding employment was through the School to Work initiative which is a three year initiative conducted in association with Family Advocacy (NSW) and Imagine More (ACT) to support high school students with disability and their families to engage with employment. Primarily an information strategy to help students and their families build confidence and explore what work could look like for them we have resources to deliver webinars and workshops across the state. Jen Mouritz and Gina Barwell-Pickup worked closely with interstate consortia partners through the year to share ideas and resources, with just one face to face meeting in Canberra in February. My thanks to Jen and Gina for their work on setting up this project and working creatively to resource families.

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 real partnership as well. As a consortia member, we contributed to the development of a new website (not yet launched) and co-wrote a national workshop on moving into a home of your own that was delivered for the first time in June. The workshop was presented by Danielle and Jo at the convention centre in June and was well received. Our thanks to Marisha Targett and her sister Sherryn West for sharing their story. We also hosted two presentations by Marita Walker of the NDIA in May, on the topic of Individualised Living Options. (ILO) and a Crucial Conversation with members of the IYHG

who shared their experience of running a housing cooperative. 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. My thanks to Danielle, Hugh and Jo for collaborating on this work.

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, vulnerability and safeguarding, succession and planning for the future, responding well to challenging behavior, Social Role Valorisation, Belonging and the Circle of support strategy. We have tried to offer events that would appeal to people new to this sector and also 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. She is well supported by Diana and Jo.

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. We are particularly interested in the people who are most likely to miss out and conscious that new ways are needed, or perhaps a return to some old ways that have been discarded. As a starting point to this big challenge, the group plans to capture in a written document some of the lessons from the past that are in danger of being lost; gather people together to spread the questions and conversation further and use the information gathered to work for change. Bridget Patchell has begun work on the written document.

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 ran workshops that address the practical issues of implementing your plan, preparing for review, engaging staff and self-management, all with underlying messages of staying focused on the good life and that you don't have to do this alone. We also engaged Sharon Bourke to deliver the Seven Steps to self-direction workshop which is a helpful framework for the person, their family and team to work through together. We trust that the values based training for support workers offered by CRU also increases the chance that people and their families will get to use their support well.

Leadership Development: for the first time in many years, CRU has not had a dedicated position for leadership development. While this is a concern and something we are keen to address, in the meantime we keep leadership development on the agenda through various capacity building strategies. We offered the 2 day SRV course known as Towards a Better Life for people and their families again this year. The Families for Inclusive Education project convened a large 2 day gathering in April to resource families from across the state in inclusive education and importantly how to connect and support other families. There were opportunities for our leaders to share their stories through

webinars, workshops and videos. There were opportunities to contribute to thinking via focus groups on a number of topics. We explored with one group how vocational placement might be conducted in the homes of people with disability for the NTSSS and we circulated a survey and ran four focus groups as part of a national consortium of academic and NGO partners to develop a disability research agenda for Australia for the next 10 years. This work is led by researchers from the University of Sydney.

CRU would not operate as it does without the generosity of people with disabilities and family members who continue to share their wisdom, insights and experience with us and we thank them sincerely for being prepared to do this.

This year, the Anne Cross Leadership Initiative funded two webinars and two online Q&A sessions on the impact of sensory and movement difference with four presenters from the United States – Kate McGinnity, Anna Nikolay, Lisa Ladson and Sharon Hammer. We addressed this topic because there is inadequate understanding about learning and behavioural approaches that are collaborative and successful for some of our most complex learners. The webinars were well received and a good opening to the conversation but we intend to explore how we can continue this. There were 770 registrations for these events with 200 attending at the time of the webinar and 50 participants in the live Q&A sessions.

We are seeing great examples of people using their NDIS funding to individualise, deepen and enhance their learning. CRU conducted individual **consultations** for 22 people with disabilities and their families on a fee for service basis. This term covers a wide range of offerings with people engaging CRU to assist with planning, staff training, preparation for difficult conversations, or to facilitate Circles of Support. This is a combination of short term and long term engagements and though this year the majority of requests were for more than one session with a CRU consultant.

At a time when much of our work is defined by deliverables negotiated months if not years prior, the beauty of the fee for service arm of CRU is its flexibility. If there is something that people want that is not already on offer or offered through one of the government subsidized initiatives, then we can tailor something for a person or for a group of people. It is through this arm of CRU that we have continued to be able to offer support worker training both as an open event and on a fee for service basis for organisations. These requests are met by staff from across CRU, including our casual team, depending on the skills and experience required.

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.

Events

We delivered 93 events during the year with 2800 registrations. Please note this does not equate to 2800 individuals, as many people attend more than one event. A little over half of those registrations were parents and family members which is a reflection of the funding CRU now receives for the inclusive education project and the School to Work initiative which are large projects designed specifically for family members. People with disabilities were well represented at the other CRU events.

Of these events, 40 were online either as webinars or more interactive online workshops or conversations and the remaining 53 were face to face which is quite an achievement given the impact of the pandemic and regular lockdowns. 29 of the face to face events were held in Brisbane and 24 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 Mitchell, Roma, Cunnamulla, Quilpie and Charleville.

There were over 800 registrations by workers to CRU events. We extended the support worker training known as Getting to the Heart of What Matters to two days in September and during the year 80 people participated in 2 days of training. An additional 10 people completed one day.

Resource development and distribution

The Families for **Inclusive Education** team continued to provide families with many resources through the year. Many of these had been developed and printed or launched during lockdown the previous year. [See the resources page on the CRU website](#)

This year they also distributed eight newsletters which contain a lot of material and useful links to equip families. A new video “He’s confident, he’s happy, he’s part of the class – Building Relationships for successful inclusion” was completed in June. Our thanks to Nathan, his mother Sonia and the staff of Strathpine State School for their involvement in this video. This video shares one family’s vision, belief in their son and his potential, and an unwavering

conviction in his inclusion. It reveals how the school team – a skilled and committed classroom teacher, a creative and collaborative specialist educator, a dedicated school Principal and leader, and other key staff – worked together to figure things out. Most importantly this is the story of Nathan and his success as a valued, integral member of his year 4 class.

CRU continues to offer its own **publications** for sale and additional publications that may be of interest or difficult to obtain. This year, CRU sold a total of 152 books.

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 and thegoodlife.cru.org.au had 50,000 website hits across the two sites this year. I thank Hugh Rose-Miller 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 over 300 **requests for information** during the year via phone calls, emails and visits to the CRU office. A number of these requests were for papers, articles and written information. 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 10% 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.

There are 3 **peer support groups** operating on the topic of self-management. Catherine facilitated 20 peer network meetings through the year with 16 of those on zoom. CRU also fosters and resources a network of peer supporters for inclusive education. We have been really pleased to see **people connect with each other**, even through and despite so many things being on-line this year. Apart from these semi-formal networks, and in spite of COVID-19 restrictions, CRU also continued to connect people in more individualized ways.

Change and Strategy

It is part of CRU's mission to challenge what is not in the best interest of people with disability and each year we commit time and resources to trying to **influence systemic change**. This is a small but important part of CRU's work.

During the year, with a small amount of funding coordinated by DANA, we hosted a workshop on submitting positive examples of inclusion working well, to the **Disability Royal Commission** into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of people with disability. Late in the year, CRU began work with SUFY on a joint information session on making submissions to the commission, which was held in July.

CRU co-hosted an online session with QDN and ADA on the implications of national worker screening for self-managers.

Lisa presented at a side event to the United Nations 13th Session of the Conference of State parties to the CRPD on realising inclusive education in Australia. This event was cohosted by QAI and CYDA and proposed a roadmap on how to achieve inclusive education throughout the Australian system in line with the CRPD.

So 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 2020/2021 year.

I want to also make particular mention of and thank our Administration and Finance team – Kim Jensen, Kerrie White, Kath Fleming, Edde-Rose Fenson and Janene Parsons. This hard working team are very generous in the way they resource their colleagues and they too have had to change many systems and ways of working this year.

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

CRU has always sought feedback after events and in recent years we have distributed a more general survey every two years to check how we are going. However these surveys rarely get to the deeper questions of what difference our work makes in people's lives. People tell us that we have an impact but it is hard to prove or measure. As a member of the National Alliance we have commissioned an evaluation over the next two years to gauge the impact of capacity building over time by each of the six organisations. We will work with academics from Flinders University and the University of New South Wales.

During 2020-2021 CRU reviewed two projects - we engaged external reviewer Professor Suzanne Carrington to assist us to **measure the impact of our work** in the Families for Inclusive Education project and 99 Consulting has been engaged by the School to Work consortia to evaluate the initiative. A report on the first year has now been received.

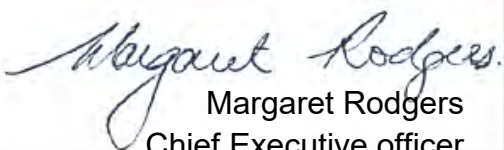
The feedback on both these initiatives was generally very **positive and affirming** of our direction with both reviews giving us food for thought on how we could improve. We thank people for taking the time to fill out surveys and those who agreed to be interviewed.

We have maintained our accreditation under ISO 2015, experiencing our first online audit in January 2021.

In the interests of extending our knowledge and understanding, CRU has continued to invest in the **development** of both Board Directors and staff during the year, despite the pandemic impact. The more significant investments in terms of time and resources include the director's subscription to online resources and the participation by six staff and one stewardship member in SRV training.

Conclusion

It has been a welcome change to write a positive and hopeful report with news of growth both in terms of the breadth and depth of the work of CRU. As CEO, it is a great relief that CRU is still operating and our doors are still open but that is not enough on its own, particularly in this climate. There are many organisations still operating that are now unrecognizable. I believe it is important to remember that holding to what we believe **and** keeping the doors open is our most significant achievement as an organization in recent years and will continue to be our greatest challenge moving forward.



Margaret Rodgers
Chief Executive officer
27th October 2021



Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

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