

From the president

I am excited to be writing for CRUcial Times in what will be CRU's 25th Anniversary year. Planning for this celebratory milestone is underway and we ask that you save the date: 13 September 2013. I am from the Gold Coast and I am also excited to see other people from around the Gold Coast represented in this edition.

Expectations, whether they are conscious or otherwise, set the boundaries for what is considered possible and what is considered "unrealistic" or "unachievable".

I have had my own expectations of what is possible in the lives of people with disability constantly challenged, especially by parents who, quite naturally, want their daughter or son to do well and live a good life. It is often a parent who has come to a planning meeting with the best idea and challenged all present to 'step up' and do their bit to make it happen.

One of CRU's aims is *to challenge ideas and practices that limit the lives of people with disabilities*. Holding or having low expectations of people with a disability sits near the top of the list of limiting practices. The work of CRU challenges this limiting practice through providing information and ideas to inspire and encourage. Recent workshops such as "Dilemmas in Supporting Choice" and "Thinking Differently to Shape a Life with Purpose and Relationships" are one way CRU challenges such practices and this edition of CRUcial Times is further input.

Displayed on the wall where I work is a quote from Lemay on Wolfensberger from 1972:

The developmental potential of individual human beings is very difficult to assess. A person's developmental potential is only realisable in circumstances where life conditions and experiences are optimised.

Reflecting on the quote reminds me that it takes more than simply acknowledging that we rarely know what people are capable of until they are given the opportunity to try. Their life conditions and experiences also need to be optimised! We don't want to set things up to fail. If we hold high expectations it means we have room to move. I don't mean we lower our expectations if things don't work out, but rather that we can adjust the conditions to better suit the person. We adapt, we support, we encourage, we connect, we teach, we add, we take away. We work towards getting it just right.

Some years ago I heard a story from a colleague about a co-worker in her previous employment at a school who told her not to worry about a particular young woman because "she's only going to go to programs anyway". Thank goodness that young woman and her mum rejected such low expectations and started a better conversation about her gifts, strengths, interests, abilities and resources.

In preparing my contribution to this issue, the staff at CRU expect I will send in something they can work with, but they don't take it and say, thanks Matt and then rewrite it behind my back. They work with me, encourage me and try to hone in on what it is I am really trying to say. They optimise conditions by providing ample time to prepare, setting a theme to get ideas going, they share what others are writing to give further support and encouragement. So, if my contribution doesn't quite meet your expectations as the reader... please keep your expectations high –there is a bunch of us trying to get it just right.

Cheers,

Matt Stone

President of Community Resource Unit