

From the President

I can't believe I am writing a small piece to be included in CRUCial Times! It's actually taken a bit of courage to feel up to the task. My difficulty in starting was mostly because CRUCial Times has played such an important part in my development and formation over the years and partly because past President, Mike Duggan, made his contributions such an art form. As a young support worker reading CRUCial Times, I found it inspiring and challenging. It helped shaped my attitudes about disability and introduced me to concepts and approaches not always visible in workplaces. I would read it cover to cover and then read it again. I have held on to several editions and still pull them out from time to time to copy an article for a parent or colleague, or to share at a staff meeting. So, with such high regard for this publication, when asked to prepare something for this edition, my reaction went something like this: First...FEAR! I can't! I just can't do that!!! Then ... DOUBT. What could I possibly write that anybody would want to read and even if I do write something it probably won't be very interesting? And finally ... COURAGE. I will do this. I will have a go. I will be brave.

When I think of courage, the image that comes to my mind is that of the student in Tiananmen Square, clutching his shopping bags, staring down a military tank. A person brave and courageous enough to stop a tank! WOW! When I first saw this image in the newspaper I was moved by the person's obvious conviction in their struggle for democracy. I could barely imagine what it would take to stand up for what you believe in like that. We may never find ourselves in such a situation here in Australia, but I know there are, and have been, many leaders in the struggle to bring about real change in the lives of people with a disability who have had to stare down tanks: the nay-sayers, the people who think it can't be done, the people who think you're crazy for wanting an ordinary life – a good life. Their courage is encouragement to me that real change is possible.

I'd like to finish by sharing a lyric from the Audrey's song *Small Things* that also speaks of courage: "*The only way to find your feet is just to stand your ground*". I'm finding my feet as a chairperson but I have appreciated the opportunity to contribute to CRU and its role of pursuing positive change in the lives of people with disability. The nature of our efforts may not immediately conjure up an image of staring down tanks but we do try to stand our ground in pursuit of good lives for people with disability and to help others to do this too.

I look forward to meeting and speaking with you in coming months.

Matt Stone

President