



Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

# Annual Report 2023 - 2024





## 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 2023 to 30 June 2024

## 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, Chairperson  
Narissa Niesler, Secretary (until Apr 2024)  
Matt Stone Finance Chair (Secretary from Apr to Jun 2024)

Jim Haywood  
Cinnamon Morrissey (until Apr 2024)  
Natalie Palelei  
Karin Swift

### **Stewardship Group**

Leanne Burke  
Lyn Farrell  
Hazel Lloyd  
Bobby Noone  
Pam Spelling  
Tony Swords

### **Staff**

CEO, Margaret Rodgers

#### **Facilitators**

Sonia Adolphs (until Dec 2024)  
Gina Barwell  
Lindie Brengman  
Lisa Bridle (until Jul 2024)  
Sonja Elliott  
Meegan Hardaker  
Diana Kerr  
Chelsea Nickels  
Catherine Laherty  
Danielle Mason  
Kyla Ranger  
Ainsley Robertson  
Jo Walters (until Apr 2024)

#### **Administration**

Kim Jensen (Office Manager)  
Kathleen Fleming  
Tracey Foley  
Jessica Rodgers  
Emily Thompson  
Kerrie White (until Jan 2024)

#### **Finance**

Bill Kyle (until Aug 2024)  
Trudy Ganderton  
Jen Upton

### **Presenters**

John Armstrong  
Ann Greer  
Rodney Mills  
Jenny Smith  
Joyce-Lyn Smith  
Milton Tyree

### **Casuals & Contractors**

Sharon Bourke  
Sue Duncan-Kemp  
Shalee Gregson-Quinn  
Diana Kerr  
Bronwyn Moloney  
Trish Murdoch

# Director's Report

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## Introduction

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today. I pay my respects to both the Jagera people and the Toorbul people and their Elders, past, present and emerging. They hold the hopes, dreams, traditions and culture of Aboriginal Australia. On behalf of CRU, I welcome you all here today, whether in person at the CRU office or on-line. I will speak very generally about the highs and lows of the year and leave Marg to speak in more detail about the work of CRU.

I'm unsure whether our membership, allies and friends of CRU are aware that during 2022 CRU developed a Vision for 2032, aimed at guiding CRU through the coming decade. This was an incredibly brave thing to do considering the external challenges that confront CRU and the many organisations like CRU in a complex environment. The 2023-2024 Strategic Plan builds on this Vision, setting in place the steps needed to start CRU on the path to achieving the 2032 Vision. Encapsulated in this Vision is CRU'S Vision for Society and CRU's Organisational Vision.

CRU's Vision for Society is 'People with disability are valued and living full and meaningful lives. CRU'S Organisational Vision is for 'a vibrant change movement that ignites, challenges and equips people to embrace ideas and take action to build inclusive communities. CRU's values of inclusion, diversity, relationships, courage, creativity, wisdom and choice remain at the heart of the day-to-day work and the work of the Board of Directors. I believe that it is the Vision and Values that keep CRU grounded in their work with people with disability and their families and decisions at board level. Strategic Planning for this current year was put on hold as it was difficult to plan for the year ahead when CRU was left waiting not knowing what the outcomes were on various funding submissions. This was very stressful for Board of Directors, CEO and I'm sure for various staff members. CRU has a good appetite for risk management and remained operating whilst at the same time being aware of other organizations making the decision to close shop and cease operating.

Strategic planning will now take place early 2025 with Jon Eastgate as facilitator. Jon has travelled the journey with CRU for several years now and has a skill of challenging us to reflect on the year past, identify gaps, and set goals for the coming year both in our core work with people with disability and their families, and at board level. This at times stretches us in our thinking and encourages us to be creative when setting priorities.

CRU has faced some challenges during this last year and at times there were some intense conversations particularly about financial matters. No organisation is immune to such challenges. It is through these that learnings occur about what can be improved. As James Joyce says, 'Mistakes are the portal of discovery'.

After many discussions at board level, the Board of Directors instructed Marg to send an email to CRU members, allies and friends of CRU informing them of the fragility of CRU's funding. The response from this email was very heartening – donations in various forms were received and words of encouragement were greatly appreciated. This demonstrated to CRU the place that we have in the hearts of many people locally, state, nationally and internationally and the positive impact that CRU has at many levels. Thank you once again for the responses that CRU received.

During the last year CRU has expanded its funding sources and with this has come more complexities in dealing with funders. No longer do we have a set amount for the 12 months from one government department, whether from state or federal. It now comes from various sources at federal, state, and fee for service work – all of which have different demands with funding timelines, and acquittal processes and dates.

Once upon a time, an organisation knew the amount they were likely to receive (after negotiating with a resource officer who they may have built a good relationship with, and who was aware of the work of the organisation), and therefore could plan well for the expenditure. As well, if an organisation was unsuccessful with a funding submission, feedback on the submission could be sought and then the organisation would become aware of what else was required in the submission if there was another round.

The frustration now is that at federal level no feedback is provided. Decisions about who receives funding appears to be made in a content fee way where little is known of the work of the organisation. As well, at the federal level the bureaucrats would prefer to work with larger organisations who can scale up outcomes whether meeting societal needs or not. I will leave the detail of the funding streams to be reported on in the financial report.

Thanks to the many people (members, allies and friends of CRU) who responded to our call to action in May to write to their federal members and Minister for NDIS, Bill Shorten and Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth when CRU and all the other NACBO organisations were unsuccessful with a particular funding submission. This was a funding round that CRU and other NACBO organisations had expected to receive and one that we were reliant on for the following three years. At that time, I happened to be at the Imagine More Conference in Canberra when this call went out by NACBO as none of them had received funding. This was extremely distressing for all the organisations and their constituents. The agenda of the conference was put on hold for a short while, whilst the conference delegates took action immediately and sent emails to their federal member, as well as Bill Shorten and Amanda Rishworth. Urgent action needed to be taken. As well, during the coming week we sent several letters to various federal members and Bill Shorten around the plight of funding for CRU and other NACBO organisations as did 100's of others. These efforts did not go unnoticed, and after further negotiations funding was eventually received by CRU and other NACBO organisations.

This demonstrated the importance of being a member of NACBO and being connected to our membership, allies and like-minded people and the important part that positive relationships play in a time of need.

The Board of Directors continued to have monthly board meetings and continued the practice of having on-line monthly meetings apart from the one meeting a quarter face to face. On-line board meetings has provided the opportunity of attracting people from the regions as opposed to having just Brisbane based board directors. The Board of Directors included Narissa Niesler, Cinnamon Morrisey, Natalie Palelei, Matt Stone, Karin Swift and Jim Hayward and Josey McMahon. Narissa and Cinnamon resigned earlier in the year. Matt took on the responsibility of chairing the Finance and Business Development Sub-committee. Matt then being up for a challenge took on the Secretary responsibilities when Narissa resigned. He's had a very full plate, and I appreciate the challenge and extra responsibility that having these dual roles has placed on you Matt. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have served on the Board during the past year. Your support to CRU is greatly appreciated.

Apart from the board meetings each Board Director is also on a sub-committee. The Board continued with the Finance and Business Development Sub-committee and the Quality and Risk Sub-committee. Both these sub-committees play an important role in the work of CRU and how it conducts its business. The sub-committees provide an opportunity for board and staff members to work together. I am continually impressed with the wisdom, skills, knowledge and expertise that people bring to these meetings.

The Stewardship Group continued to provide the much-needed wisdom and guidance to the CEO and Board of Directors during such times of complexities and turbulence. This group met twice during the reporting period. I would like to thank Leanne Burke, Tony Swords, Lyn Farrell, Bobbie Noone, Hazel Lloyd and Pam Spelling for your contribution to CRU. We appreciate your wisdom and considered conversation when we meet. You have lived experience of disability whether as a person with disability or family member and all of you have worked in a sector that often limits the lives of people with disability. You have a sound understanding and appreciation of the difficulties and challenges facing people with disability in their attempts to live meaningful, fulfilling, inclusive and rich lives. Despite the challenges facing CRU during the past year there have been many highlights which Marg will report on. One of these though I would like to mention. A highlight for CRU was the launch of the booklet Think Again. It was a pleasure and a very humbling experience for me to be asked to launch this booklet. Many of the stories I was quite familiar with as they were told by people who were work colleagues and people who I have learnt so much from. There was such a buzz and excitement in the room. Occasions like this help remind us how important the work of CRU is and the difference that is made in the lives of people with disability when they have workers/supporters who have an intentionality about their work. I look forward to more of those wonderful occasion.

In closing, thank you to Marg and the staff team. You are a committed group of people who work tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of people with disability and their families. I know this is not just about getting a pay packet at the end of the fortnight. The Board of Directors are proud of the work that you do. This year I have had the opportunity of participating in workshops with some of you and it has been a privilege to be with you either as presenters or participants in the workshops. Finally, but not least thank you to the members and allies who support CRU. The Board of Directors appreciate your support and the time and contributions that you provide to CRU. Thank you for your time today as I know that you are all very busy people. I look forward to seeing you at a CRU event sometime in the future and don't forget the difference that you make. You are all appreciated. Thank you.

**Josey McMahon**

Chairperson 2023 – 2024

## 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 2024.

Similar to previous years, in this financial year our revenue was predominately received from various Federal Government Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grants, and a grant from the Queensland Government Department of Education. The total income for the year being \$2,298,996 was an increase on the previous year's income of \$1,949,105.

Our two largest grants came to an end on 30 June 2024. These projects were completed meeting all deliverables with full funding recognised. Over the past four years, this funding has totalled \$2.88m for our Individual Capacity Building project and \$1.3m for our work as part of a larger School to Work consortium.

Grants and income were also sought from other sources. CRU continues to generate income from consulting and other activities which we call fee-for-service (FFS) income. We have targeted and sharpened our focus on our FFS work following an internal review, with the aim of eventually decreasing our reliance on grant funding. Our investment in our joint venture company, Crucial Training Options or CTO, has resulted in a share of losses to date and is now fully written down. We continue to work towards achieving the potential for future profit sharing and increased value in this investment.

Unsolicited bids were also submitted throughout the year. We successfully gained a Queensland government grant for developing a Training for co-designers project and submitted other bids on Family Leadership and Foundational Supports.

Earlier this year our membership and wider mailing list were made aware that CRU was unsuccessful in a federal government grant ground announced on 23/05/24. Following a successful grassroots campaign CRU was offered 1-year ad-hoc funding on 03/06/24. Donations were also received at this time, and we are extremely grateful for this financial support. Other in-kind support was also graciously received. With limited and somewhat insecure funding, we have taken a conservative approach to budgeting for the current 2024-25 financial year.

During the 2023-24 financial year, the finance team worked on refining the Chart of Accounts, reducing the number of job codes, and improving efficiency via the use of updated templates and systems. This work is providing the Board with better data and reports.

In March 2024 we began to reduce costs. The CRU car was sold, and the carpark lease was not renewed. Our already lean operational expenses were reviewed and trimmed where possible. Staff vacancies were left unfilled, and some staff voluntarily reduced working hours. From 1 July 2024, the CRU office moved to operating on a 4-day week basis. This reduction in hours has had a financial impact on the staff at CRU. The board is humbled by their willingness to accept and work with this significant change.



The net result of our activities for the year is presented as a surplus in the financial statements for the year ended 30th June, 2024 of \$63,231, in comparison to a deficit of \$(69,144) in the previous year. This surplus results in an increase to overall equity to \$399,815 from \$336,585 in FY2023.

I took on the role of Chair of the Finance & Business Development Subcommittee when Sherryn West left the CRU board after 11 years. They were big shoes to fill, and I am extremely grateful for the support I have received from Trudy Ganderton, Finance Officer, Marg Rodgers, CEO, Raj Gohain, Financial Advisor, and members of the Finance & Business Development sub-committee. Thanks also to the other finance staff at CRU: Bill Kyle (until August 2023) and Jen Upton.

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

**Matt Stone**

Chair, Finance & Business Development Sub-committee 2023 – 2024

P&L Statement

**COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT LTD  
STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS  
YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>INCOME</b>			
Revenue	2	2,298,996	1,949,105
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	1(f)	<u>2,298,996</u>	<u>1,949,105</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Cost of Sales	5	5,362	8,453
<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>		<u>2,293,635</u>	<u>1,940,652</u>
Administration Costs	4	134,383	127,851
Amortisation Expense		130,656	129,614
Bad Debts		1,155	-
Deliverables		223,900	201,517
Depreciation		14,734	21,489
Employee Benefits Expenses		1,638,162	1,433,474
Motor Vehicle Expense		1,885	1,640
Interest Expense		7,809	4,373
Other Expenses		39,063	38,008
Occupancy Expenses		11,693	10,321
Share in loss in Crucial Training Options Pty Ltd		26,964	41,510
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<u>2,230,404</u>	<u>2,009,797</u>
<b>SURPLUS BEFORE INCOME TAX</b>		63,231	(69,144)
Income tax expense	1(b)	-	-
<b>SURPLUS AFTER INCOME TAX</b>		<u>63,231</u>	<u>(69,144)</u>

## Financial Position Statement

**COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT LTD  
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
AS AT 30 JUNE 2024**

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash Assets	6	643,788	1,434,076
Trade Debtors		83,614	166,598
Inventory		8,403	9,497
Other assets		13,470	6,523
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>749,275</b>	<b>1,616,695</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Investment - Crucial Training Options	7	-	1,964
Plant and equipment	8	7,296	20,308
Right of Use Assets	8	120,133	255,342
Leasehold Improvement	8	-	5,238
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>127,429</b>	<b>282,852</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>876,704</b>	<b>1,899,547</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade and other payables	9	170,296	1,096,785
Provisions	10	187,653	190,967
Lease Liability	11	118,939	132,197
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>476,888</b>	<b>1,419,948</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Provisions	10	-	20,154
Lease Liability	11	-	122,859
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>143,013</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>476,888</b>	<b>1,562,962</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>399,816</b>	<b>336,585</b>
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>			
Accumulated surplus brought forward		96,824	165,968
Capital Reserve		236,029	236,029
Reserves		3,733	3,733
Surplus/(Loss) for the year		63,231	(69,144)
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>		<b>399,816</b>	<b>336,585</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

# CEO Report

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We believe that our mission to inspire, challenge and equip people to embrace ideas, to take action and build a movement for change so that people with disabilities will have full and meaningful lives has been more important than ever in the chaotic climate of 2023-2024.

The release of the reports by the Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and exploitation and the NDIS Review in late 2023 have both had an impact on the people we work with. Disappointment about the limited take up of some recommendations and confusion and uncertainty about what comes next are not conducive to people with disabilities and their families having the confidence to make plans and take their place in community.

At an organisational level, CRU has also navigated a year of disappointment, confusion and uncertainty. As members you will be aware that CRU has been very vulnerable during the year 2023-2024.

I want to start this report by outlining a number of key points during the year that contributed to the uncertainty and then report on the work that CRU achieved during this year.

- In the previous financial year, CRU had a lot of disruption in the finance area. Complex changes to funding agreements followed by many months without clarity or sign off coincided with change and flux in finance personnel in the CRU team. It's important to note that this part of CRU along with all back of house functions is not adequately funded. In this disruptive time, it was hard to get clarity about our financial position until early 2024 when it became clearer that our level of spending was exceeding our income. A number of steps were taken to both reduce spending and increase our income and we have managed to finish this year with a small surplus.
- The other key feature is the impact of delayed decisions about funding applications. While this is true of many funding bodies, most of CRU's funding comes from the Department of Social Services and in 2024 the two rounds, in which CRU had a total of 4 applications, were both more than 2 months late. During this waiting period, which was already close to the end of both the financial year and staff contracts, we developed many contingency plans and raised our concerns with politicians and senior bureaucrats.
- We were successful with one of the four applications which was for new regional work. While welcome this does not cover the core work of CRU.
- If CRU was the only unsuccessful organization our analysis and response would have been different, but many established organisations were unsuccessful in this funding round.
- Of the 6 partners in the National Alliance, only one received one grant. As an alliance we each asked our supporters to write to Ministers Shorten and Rishworth expressing their concern. We don't know how many letters they received but it was a lot and within 2 days the Minister was in contact and offered to meet. We know that we also had supporters in key positions who lobbied for us and we are grateful for their faith in us. As a result of that meeting, we were granted a one-year ad-hoc continuation of our capacity building grants. Knowing how quickly a year goes, we requested a meeting

with the Minister to discuss not being in the same position in a year's time. That meeting has not occurred, partly because another funding round was opened in July with no outcome to date.

- It took some months to negotiate the amount and get sign off and so the uncertainty of budgeting and our staffing models continued into the new year. In early June, the School to Work and My Home: My Way projects were also extended for one year which was welcome news.
- For CRU the amount of funding for the 2024 and 2025 years is not as much the problem as the uncertainty, the short and unpredictable timelines and the lack of flexibility in how we use the funding we do receive.

I want to acknowledge the commitment and generosity of the staff during those months. Some staff have spent most of 2024 working reduced hours and therefore on reduced income. There is an impact on the current staff as colleagues resign and our ability to recruit is constrained by uncertainty and very short timelines. People have risen to the challenge of filling gaps in projects even when that is not very comfortable. It is not easy to live with uncertainty and especially within a cost-of-living crisis and I want to thank each of them on behalf of the organisation.

While our resilience has been tested it has also been strengthened by the people who stepped up to support us – writing letters, advocating, making donations of money and in-kind and sending messages of support and encouragement. We are strengthened too by our 35-year history which was duly celebrated during the year; the people that we meet, the change we see and the incredible privilege of being part of making inclusion real and that's what I want to address now.

This report will cover the five goals set by the Board of Directors in late 2022.

## **1. Improve CRU's sustainability through increased funding from a wider variety of sources**

### **Government funding**

Across the year, CRU was engaged in five Information Linkages and Capacity Building funding grants (ILC) two 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 in 2023-2024 were as follows:

1. Information provision, "My Home: My Way" as part of a consortia. This work began in November 2019 and continued some limited activity til June 2024.
2. My home: My Way Making Individualised Living Options real – also as part of a consortia finished in June 2024.
3. Individual capacity building work. This work began in April 2020 and concluded in June 2024. This is specific to CRU, relatively flexible and covered 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 finished in June 2024.
5. Inclusive Education – a 2-year contract with Department of Education Qld, from January 2023.
6. Co-Design –3-month pilot project with Department of Child Safety, Disability, Seniors and Carers from April - June 2024

7. Social and community participation – Inclusive Councils: Inclusive Communities. The work started in May 2024 and will continue til June 2026.

While this reflects an increased range of revenue streams compared to previous years, we would like to increase this further.

## **2. Expand CRU's Fee for Service work to generate a stable independent income for CRU while building momentum towards our Vision**

In a bid to help CRU transition to a more secure financial footing we continue to 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.

Based on the same values and priorities of CRU this work complements what CRU offers and is described later.

We engaged Angela Jones to review the Fee for Service arm of CRU during 2023. Her report in October recommended a narrowing of options to concentrate on the RTO, expanding our support worker training and targeted training and consultancy.

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. 2023-2024 was the second year of our subscription program. Themes addressed were Change, Social Role Valorisation, Advocacy and leadership. In response to feedback, this was delivered predominantly online and self-paced however engagement has not been as strong as we had expected, and we decided not to continue past June 2024.

This year, Crucial Training Options (CTO), the RTO developed in partnership with Staffing Options continued to offer First Aid and CPR and begin to deliver the Certificate III in Individualised Support (Disability) in September 2023. Operating on a fee for service basis and starting with just 3 students CTO has offered a high-quality course with experienced trainers drawn from CRU and Staffing Options. In December 2023 we were very excited when we passed a critical audit and achieved registration for 7 years. This should have made us eligible to apply for Queensland government subsidy but unfortunately that funding gateway was closed with no clarity about if or when it might reopen. The period January to June has seen the steady continuation of the Certificate III and the wonderful progress of our students. It has also been a busy time trying to navigate and establish ourselves in a new sector involving lobbying, meetings and many conversations. We sought advice and decided to put the re-writing of the Diploma in Community Services on hold and to put our limited time and energy into offering skillsets. Lisa Heyson worked with us til April 2024 and played an important role during this establishment phase. We have not filled that position. I want to acknowledge Carol Brosi from Staffing Options who has been a wonderful partner in this work. I also want to thank Danielle Mason and Allie Blair for their initiative and commitment across the year. CTO would not be where it is without this small team.

## **3. Expand CRU's reach, visibility, and influence**

The CRU team are involved in a number of ongoing partnerships:

The National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) has been operating for nine years. As previously mentioned, its importance was highlighted this year when a joint campaign, in response to an unsuccessful funding outcome, assisted us to quickly gather letters of support from across Australia and secure a meeting with Minister Shorten.

The group met face to face in August 2023 and October 2023 with regular meetings online.

The NACBO Evaluation report of our shared work on measuring the outcomes of capacity building nationally over time was released in August 2023. We engaged the Social Policy Research Centre over 2 years to assist with this and it is very beneficial to now have evidence that shows our impact. We are very grateful to the many people who shared their stories and insights with the researchers during that process.

CRU has been a long-term member of the International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL) which has changed its name to Global leadership Exchange. I am a member of the Australian Reference group. I was unable to attend events in 2024 due to insecure funding.

This was the final year of the Anne Cross Leadership Initiative. After planning with Anne and Uniting Care in July 2023 we used the funding to host a visit by Milton Tyree from Kentucky to deliver a 3-day event for families in March 2024, entitled Principles of Teaching for Employment and Everyday Life. This was an opportunity for families and support workers to learn together and 17 people attended.

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 especially following the release of the report from the Disability Royal Commission. Ainsley represented CRU on that group during the year.

CRU has continued to support and promote Social Role Valorisation as a foundational framework. We offered 2-day training for people with disabilities and their families this year; supported two staff members who are interested in becoming SRV trainers and provided some practical support to the local group Values in Action. We meet annually with the Australian SRV Association.

As a small organization we are always concerned about how visible we are.

Through the year, an internal working group has focused on improving our communications with those currently engaged, increasing our reach and improving our processes. We held stalls at the Aspley Special School expo and provided resources for the Isolated Children's and Parents conference.

This year we had a steady increase in Facebook followers to 4800 and also increased our use of Instagram and Linked In. Email remains our strongest medium with over 7000 individuals and 750 organisations receiving emails from CRU.

### **We participated in the following consultations or meetings:**

- SEQ customised employment conversation with Staff Connections, Better Together and Equity Works.
- Brisbane North PHN Palliative Care working group and launch on 28/02
- Education Qld – consultation on draft legislation and new Act; 3 meetings of Minister's Roundtable on Discipline and Behaviour.
- Carers Qld School to Adult Life community of practice
- Amparo Networking morning tea
- Consulted by Grattan Institute researchers on topic of Home including hosting researcher at the Seeding the Future event in November.
- NDIS review – attended meetings in Brisbane, Melbourne and online on capacity building and the needs of young families. Since March 2024 CRU has attended five roundtables on foundational supports.

- CLP, South Australia on the Neighbourhood Circles project
- Conversation with IAC Home and Living Reference group members

### **We gave presentations to:**

- Young families in Carers Week, Townsville
- The ASRVA mini gathering.
- Springwood State school parent group
- Isolated Children's Parents Association Qld conference
- Redlands Disability Network
- Carers Qld School to Adult life community of practice
- Down Syndrome Qld – Intellectual disability and the workforce

### **Evaluating our Work**

In addition to event feedback forms, CRU has sought feedback in other ways:

- 99 Consulting has been engaged by the School to Work consortia to evaluate the initiative. The feedback in 2023 was positive and after 3 years was showing the benefit of the strategy as more respondents either had work or had made positive steps towards getting work.
- The NACBO evaluation as previously mentioned
- The ILO project undertook a peer evaluation process with consortia partners interviewing families from other jurisdictions. Our thanks to the 3 families connected to CRU who agreed to be interviewed.
- We have maintained our accreditation under ISO 2015.
- The number of respondents to the CRU 2023 Biennial Survey was lower than usual but the feedback was positive and useful. Most people want CRU to provide both face to face and online events. They found resources available via websites, videos and podcasts useful. Relevant content delivered with a mix of stories, practical information and analysis rated highly

We thank you for taking the time to fill out surveys and those who agreed to be interviewed. All of our surveys both through CRU and NACBO have had lower response rates lately, probably due to a general feedback fatigue, and during 2025 we will look for other ways to get the feedback we need.

## **4. Deliver a high-quality program of projects and events which further CRU's vision**

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

#### ***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 development and provision of resources to build the capacity of families to advocate for, nurture, and sustain their child's successful participation in inclusive education. Resources developed this year included a short video on student voice; videos on Inclusive Education translated into 3 languages; a fact sheet for the early years and an online book featuring local examples of curriculum inclusion in practice. We also delivered 8 regional workshops to school personnel. I want to thank the facilitators Lindie, Ainsley and Chelsea who were supported by Jess and Kyla. The team worked hard to invest in family leadership through the peer support training in



Brisbane in May 2024; 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. Along with webinars and workshops to resource students and their families, we have also offered a number of peer working groups to help families bring their ideas to reality. A two-part session on Microenterprise by Helen Neale from SA was well received. It has been recorded and shared again. Milton Tyree presented a large 1-day event in March on the topic of customised employment. We met with interstate consortia partners, Resourcing Inclusive Communities NSW and Imagine More ACT in Sydney twice during the year to share ideas and resources. I want to thank Gina Barwell and Sonja Elliott for their work on this project.

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

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

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

As a consortia member, we developed a new video for the My Home: My Way website called 'My Way Back Home'. Jo and Kyla took the lead on this work. Our heartfelt thanks to Aaron Parsons and his parents Chris and Ann for allowing us to tell this story. Thanks also to Aarons friends and supporters who were part of the project. This video has already been shared widely to help create change for other people considered difficult to serve.

I thank Danielle for her lead on the ILO work for CRU, offering small sessions and individual conversations to families and their supporters to assist them to understand and assess the benefits and limits of this funding type. These My Home: My Way workshops in Brisbane and online were integrated into this work.

### ***Shaping Great lives***

To assist people to shape great lives we offered workshops on Social Role Valorisation, advocacy skills; understanding intellectual disability; responding well to challenging behaviour, sensory and movement difference, connecting to community; succession, facilitation, co-design training and planning for the future. These skills and frameworks are critical to ensure people are safely and deeply embedded in community.

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 as the majority of this work was funded through the capacity building project. Through the year, she was supported by the talented team of Diana, Jo, Sonia, Sonja, Tracey and Shalee.

We also took on a broad range of projects and initiatives during the year on a fee for service basis. Some involved ongoing mentoring or training and others one off training or consulting. I thank Danielle and Meegan for their flexibility as this work has shifted through the year.

We continued work with Logan City Council and offered 5 workshops to council staff during the year. This work, which is evaluated by the Council has been very well received and I thank Sue Duncan-Kemp for her presentation of the workshops and the guest speakers who joined her. The success of this work led us to apply for funding to offer similar strategies to Councils in central and western Queensland.

The Getting to the Heart of What Matters workshop was offered by CRU four times, including online with 58 support workers attending. Two people also engaged CRU to train their support staff giving another 19 staff access to this training.

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. This work, by Danielle and myself is progressing slowly and will be trialled in late 2024.

### ***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 delivered two workshops on this topic, on four occasions, 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. During the year we took proposals on funding for family leadership development nationally by NACBO to the NDIA and DSS.

We keep leadership development on the agenda through ensuring that there are opportunities for deeper challenge, conversation and learning alongside our more introductory events.

During the 2023- 2024 year however, CRU could offer a greater number of deeper, multi-day events than had been possible for quite a few years. These included the Facilitation course, Principles of Teaching for Employment and Everyday Life with Milton Tyree; Commitment, Leadership and Change to celebrate 35 years; two one-day conferences on employment in Townsville and Brisbane; Seeding the Future; Inclusive Education two-day peer gathering and the 2-day Towards a Better Life (SRV). The Customised employment working groups supported two small groups of families to learn together through monthly sessions.

There were opportunities for leaders to share their stories at our birthday celebrations, 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.

At the end of the year, we took on a 3-month pilot project on co-design with the Department of Child Safety, Disability, Seniors and Carers. The aim was to grow the number, range and expertise of co-designers in Queensland. We consulted with a range of people; designed a short course and trialled

it with 20 people in June. Thanks to Ainsley and Danielle for their work with me on this project and to the parents and people with disability who joined us for the trial.

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

Through our work we want to provide people with disability, their families and supporters with information, both through workshops and resources. We are keen to provide opportunities for people to deepen their learning through individual conversations and connecting and linking with each other. CRU can assist the development of people who go on to become leaders, resourcing others and creating change. This reflects the model designed, used and evaluated by NACBO.

### ***Events***

We delivered 97 events during the year with 1200 registrations. Please note this does not equate to 1200 individuals, as many people attend more than one event. Of these participants, 150 were people with disabilities; 706 were family members and 345 were workers.

Of these events, 31 were online either as webinars or more interactive online workshops or conversations and the remaining 66 were face to face.

36 of the face-to-face events were held in Brisbane and 30 in regional Queensland.

We were able to visit the major coastal cities at least once and this year CRU staff also visited regional centres including Longreach, Barcaldine, Quilpie, Charleville, Roma, Moranbah, Emerald, Clermont, Atherton, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Warwick and Gladstone.

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

This year CRU developed a video through the My Home: My Way project, the Think Again booklet as part of the New Ways project and 4 resources as part of the Inclusive Education work. Thanks to Kyla, Meegan and the inclusive education team for their work on these resources. We also extended our Videos on Demand (VOD) range with additional videos by Ann Greer. The demand for these has been steady since the launch in February 2024.

The two websites play a key role in our communications. [www.cru.org.au](http://www.cru.org.au) and [thegoodlife.cru.org.au](http://thegoodlife.cru.org.au) combined had approximately 6000 Page Views per month.

I thank Kyla 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 276 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 also offer it on a fee for service basis. Callers included teachers, professionals, workers and friends.

### ***Connecting and linking***

CRU played a role in bringing people together. Sometimes this was through 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. Apart from these semi-formal networks, CRU also continued to connect people in more individualized ways. CRU provided a small amount of support to two peer groups that are now independent, by providing facilitation support and auspicing a funding application.

### ***Reaching out***

Between 2020 and 2024 CRU convened a small steering group, known as the New Ways group, to focus on the needs of people most likely to miss out due to multiple life barriers. In its final year, the group made a submission to the NDIS Review in August 2023 and in April 2024 launched 'Think Again' a booklet to share stories and help raise awareness. This small but significant project wrapped up at the end of June 2024.

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 and developed videos on Inclusive Education in Vietnamese, Chinese and Arabic.

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 (regardless of how they are engaged by CRU); 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 2023/2024 year.

I do want to make mention here of Lisa Bridle who finished up with CRU early in the year, after 13 years as Senior Consultant. Lisa made a huge contribution to CRU and her commitment over so many years really helped to shape both CRU and the family movement. She has left a great legacy.

The administration and finance team are less visible but no less critical to the work of CRU. I want to thank Kim for her leadership of the Administration team and Em, Kath, Jess, Kerrie and Tracey for their flexibility and responsiveness. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Kerrie for her perseverance in developing our bespoke database. Trudy has had a very big first year in the finance area and I also want to thank her and Jen for their commitment and willingness to be flexible through very difficult times.

I have not tried to list in this report the many people who worked with us this year – these are the people who join our steering groups, share their stories and experience, respond to our requests to support others, to trial and co-design and who promote our work. They are a critical part of what makes CRU work, and I want to thank them for their important contribution.

## **5. Sustain a strong, clear, committed, and consistent team including staff, Board and membership.**

### **Training and Development**

Members of the team attended training and development through:

- Workshops in Brisbane with international presenters Shelley Moore Ross Greene and Milton Tyree. The team joined a webinar with Darcy Elks in May.
- CRU supported multiple team and Board members to attend the 2-day SRV gathering in Brisbane in February.
- I attended the TASH conference in Baltimore in early December 2023.

- Staff also attended sessions on psycho-social hazards in the workplace; changes to the Fair Work Act; First Aid and CPR and emergency training and evacuation and fire warden drill. Training on accessibility, Mailchimp, database, website, NFP financial literacy, worker screening was also prioritised.
- CRU attended webinars and workshops on the changes to the NDIS legislation; working with parents who have intellectual disability; UDL, the impact of storytelling, and roundtables on the implications of the DRC and NDIS review reports.
- CRU gathered all the casuals and contractors together three times this year for a day in the office. These days are an important time for sharing and learning and building relationships. I thank Jo Walters for facilitating those sessions for most of the year.

Throughout the year CRU has invested in the development of a leadership and management group as a safeguard for succession. Jon Eastgate worked with the CEO, senior staff and the Board to design a workable, affordable, consistent structure and assist with the resulting changes to position descriptions, delegations etc. Kim Jensen, Catherine Laherty, Danielle Mason and Lindie Brengman make up the group with each taking greater responsibility for managing an area of work in CRU. We are fortunate to have more leaders than positions and others took up roles of facilitating consultant days, joining the Quality and Risk subcommittee and representing CRU in stakeholder groups.

Jan Archer provided individual and collective training for members of the leadership group in October and November and assisted us with questions of purpose, vision and culture. Cross team training on the Award, Finance 101 has also been helpful.

### **The Board**

Apart from monthly Board meetings, the Directors of CRU are actively engaged in additional sub-committee work, stewardship group meetings, National Alliance meetings and planning. This is a very significant contribution of time and expertise that underpins CRU.

To increase the strategic financial oversight of the organisation the board engaged Raj Gohain as a strategic financial advisor. Raj continues to advise CRU on an as needs basis.

The Stewardship group met in November and May. This group, Leanne Burke, Lyn Farrell, Hazel Lloyd, Tony Swords, Bobby Noone and Pam Spelling bring great ideas and suggestions and provide ongoing support as a sounding board to the Directors and to me as CEO.

### **Staffing**

As a small organization, for many years we have relied on external contractors and professionals to assist CRU to function. Our model has been to have most of the team based in the CRU office and to have casual staff and contractors that we can call on to expand our work as needed. Until this year these casual staff were located in Southeast Qld and in driving distance of the CRU office. Shalee Gregson Quinn from Yeppoon joined our team early in the new year and has helped us understand what it takes to have staff based further afield. In uncertain times as it is difficult to recruit, this growing group of contractors and casual staff based outside the office becomes even more critical to the work of CRU. We are fortunate to have committed and reliable contacts that we trust to present CRU workshops and represent CRU, and I want to thank Bronwyn, Sue, Sharon, Trish, Diana and Shalee for their work across the whole of CRU.

Another group of important people present their own material for CRU, and many have been doing this for some time. Ann Greer, John Armstrong, Rod Mills, Joyce-Lyn Smith, Jenny Smith, Milton Tyree, and Jane Sherwin all presented workshops for us during the year.

Less visible are our contractors who develop and safeguard CRU behind the scenes and I want to thank Pauline Heaney, Jon Eastgate, Mark O'Reilly, Cinta Graves, Greg and the team at Greenfield IT, Elissa Farrow and Brendon Donohue.

I also want to acknowledge the generous donation of the Mamre Association who when they closed in November 2023 donated a lot of IT equipment to CRU. This has been a big help in reducing our costs in the current year.

## **Conclusion**

So, while I started this report with some of the organisational challenges that CRU is experiencing in a sector that is also very challenged, it would be a shame if the 2023-2024 year was only remembered for its difficulties. I am very proud of the depth and breadth of the work that the CRU team has done this year. I would like 2023-2024 to also be remembered as the year that CRU:

- held 8 longer, leadership events or courses to invest in the leadership development of 224 people with disability, their families and supporters around key topics of school, work, succession and home.
- measured the impact of capacity building with our partners in NACBO
- produced 5 resources that have been shared widely
- travelled to more regional towns than we had been able to in the past seven years (since the end of the NDIS Participant Readiness funding).
- tested our collective voice
- was overwhelmed by the support and good wishes of a large group of people who responded to our situation – emotionally, financially, as advocates and lobbyists and with donations in-kind and reminded us of why it is important that our work continues.



Margaret Rodgers  
Chief Executive Officer  
08/11/2024





*Expanding Ideas; Creating Change*

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