



Expanding Ideas; Creating Change

The mission of Community Resource Unit (CRU) is to work for full and meaningful lives for people living with disability.

To do this we work with people living with disability, their families, allies in human services and the community to build a movement for change.

Why family voice is important

- **Positive change** is often led by people with disability and their family members.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



Goalcast



Why family voice is important

- **‘Natural Authority of Families’** - Family members love their child/sibling/grandchild/cousin... deeply and know their history better than anyone.



“Families have authority (normally) arising from knowing their family member the most fully and over the longest period of time. In this way they have the authority that arises from long term observation, insight and personal relationship.”

Michael Kendrick –
‘The Natural Authority of Families’



Why family voice is important

“Families are often best positioned to see how everything, in its entirety, adds up in a person’s life.”

Michael Kendrick – ‘The Natural Authority of Families’



Benefits of including family voice in co-design

- Family members are often a buffer for the negatives for loved one with disability.



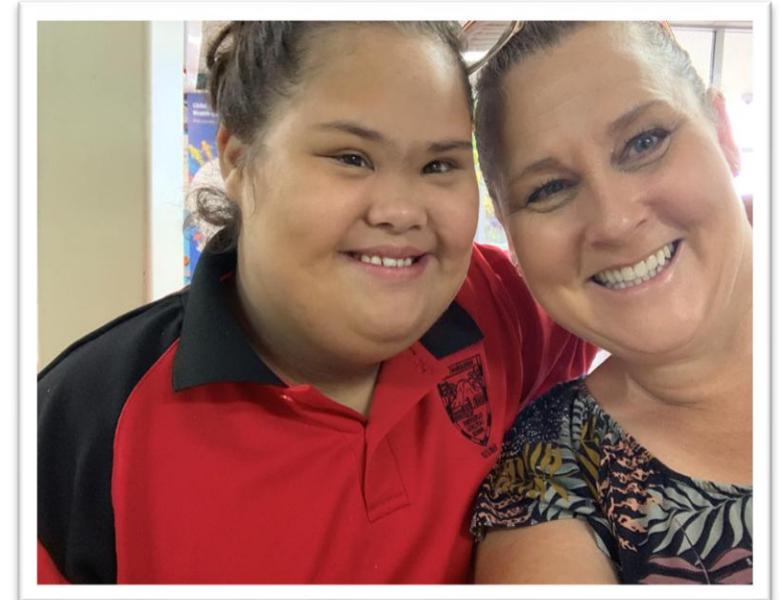
MIND THE GAP

- Without the voice of family members there will most likely be gaps.



Benefits of including family voice in co-design

- Sometimes seen as one or the other – person with disability OR Family member.
- Many benefits of having both – families with and in support of person with disability.
- Family members can account for vulnerabilities of people.
- Family members can ensure that it isn't just the most capable voices in a room.



Benefits of including family voice in co-design

- Family members have been there for the long haul.
- They have witnessed the impact of what has made a difference over time and over the life cycle. They know the measures of success.
- They have an understanding of the entire 'ecosystem' and can see the pattern of barriers across systems and services.



Benefits of including family voice in co-design

- For people with disability to thrive they need a family that is also doing well.
- Family members are deeply aware of how systemic barriers also impact other members of the family.
- They can identify the supports that help the whole family.



Challenges and tensions of co-design as a family member

- Being a true voice – Parent voice is not the same as the person with disability's voice.
- Uncertainty as to whether they are overstepping or making decisions on their behalf (not with the person with disability at the centre).



Challenges and tensions of co-design as a family member

- Pattern of 'knowing best' – need to make space for family member with disability to grow into skills and confidence.
- Can be overprotective due to past setbacks. Need to weigh up the cost of advocacy vs building resilience.



Challenges and tensions of co-design as a family member

- All experiences are different; every family is different.
- If families aren't well connected with others, they may over-generalise about the "family experience".



Ways to address challenges and tensions

- Being connected with a range of families and people with disability helps with raising awareness of the limits of their own experience and contributions.
- Increasing awareness of ways to achieve power with their family member and to support their growing voice and decision making.
- Being highly conscious of conflicts of interest of their needs and priorities and those of their family member.



Helpful to remember when inviting family members to participate in co-design

- Need to be mindful of multiple pressures (work, caring roles, financial pressures etc...).
- Many families have multiple disabled members.
- May be wary of contributing due to past experiences.



& please remember...

- Involve families particularly when the issues relate to early childhood and school years.
- Not involving family members risks diminishing the voices and perspectives of people with intellectual and communication disabilities.
- Early involvement builds confidence and skills for future contribution.



Community Resource Unit (CRU)

CRU regularly travels across the state providing -

Workshops (face to face and online), Training, Consultations, Peer Network Development and Resources

On Topics including:

- Belonging in Community
- Advocacy Skills
- Meaningful paid employment
- Living in your own home
- Using support well
- Sensory and Movement Differences
- Succession planning
- Support worker training

2026 Projects:

- Inclusive Education
- Finding and Keeping a Job
- Inclusive Councils,
Inclusive Communities

Find many resources on

CRU's websites:

cru.org.au

thegoodlife.cru.org.au

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