

Disability Done Different: Episode 28

David Militz on...the politics of Caring

Podcast transcript

Audio Length: 39:53

Hosts: Roland & Evie Naufal

Guest: David Militz

Start of Audio

Maia Thomas

DSC is a team of 33 people across Australia, all working together to bring specialised training and consulting expertise to providers in the disability sector.

Evie Naufal

All right, here's what's going to happen now.

Roland Naufal

Hello and welcome to our podcast.

Evie Naufal

We are DSC. Your turn, you're the boss.

Evie & Roland Naufal

Disability Done Different

Evie Naufal

Candid Conversations. Hope you are ready because we're starting.

Roland Naufal

Welcome to Disability Done Different Candid Conversations 2021. Welcome, Maia.

Maia Thomas

Thank you.

Evie Naufal

That's Maia Thomas our podcast producer, very shyly greeting and I'm Evie Naufal the co-host of Disability Done Different Candid Conversations.

Roland Naufal

We've got a big year.

Evie Naufal

Yeah. Before we get into the interview today, we're going to have a chat about what we've got planned for this year. It's something a little bit different. So we're heading into season three of Disability Done Different Candid Conversations, and in addition to the format of long interviews that you know and love by now, we've got a few more things up our sleeve this year.

Roland Naufal

And we've got some great interviews. Just before we move off Candid Conversations, we've got some really good ideas about people we're going to bring to you, but Evie also wants us to talk about BCI, BCI Business Case Investigations. Maia how many of those have we got ready to go?

Maia Thomas

We've got three in the can.

Roland Naufal

Three Episodes ready to go which is where we look at the potential future of the disability sector. Organisations that seem to be charting a new path and Sally Coddington and I interview them with a cheesy sort of private eye format seeing if it's possible for them to make money, and the business cases we're investigating can they make money doing really positive things and setting new directions in the disability sector. So three episodes of that ready to go with myself and Sally Coddington

Evie Naufal

Sally Coddington who's making her big break into podcasting this year. Not only with BCI, but also [inaudible 00:01:45] Love At at Maia. Tell us a bit about that.

Maia Thomas

Yeah, so Love At, love at the front line is Sally's passion project for this year. She's already spoken to many people around the issue of bringing love to frontline work and what that means and the definition of that. So it's going to be pretty darn good I think. We've spoken to so many interesting people so yeah, we're excited to get that one out this year.

Roland Naufal

And that's been under development since towards the end of the Vietnam War hasn't it?

Evie Naufal

Okay.

Maia Thomas

It's a slow burner.

Evie Naufal

It's not about the speed it's about the quality.

Maia Thomas

Exactly.

Evie Naufal

If you're subscribed to the podcast in a podcast app or on our website, then you'll already be ready to hear about these. So we're expecting those to come out in the next few months. So you'll get a bit of variety, it won't just be me and dad having these long chats. Although don't worry, there'll be plenty of that. There'll be some business case investigations episodes spliced in there as well as some Love At plus.

Roland Naufal

Evie's secret project.

Evie Naufal

Evie's secret project which is not that secret since you gave the secret away last year, but alas.

Roland Naufal

But today we're talking to David Militz, CEO of Carers South Australia, an all-round good guy. I listened to the conversation today and David helps me meet my ambition of having a conversation with someone that I really want to have a conversation with. You know I think I'd like to be friends with David. Okay, I am friends with David, but he's a good guy. He's authentic. He talks about the problems of working in the carer's organisations and really good insights into the NDIS and some really good insights into the problematic nature of Carer politics.

Evie Naufal

And we recorded this episode towards the end of last year. It was I think in the week that we were coming out of lockdown in Melbourne.

Roland Naufal

So?

Evie Naufal

So that's just some context, dad.

Roland Naufal

Thanks.

Evie Naufal

Okay. So let's get into it.

Roland Naufal

Welcome to Disability Done Different Candid Conversations. Hi Evie.

Evie Naufal

Hi dad. We're in the same room again.

Roland Naufal

Yeah. It's been a while and welcome David Militz, CEO of Carers South Australia.

David Militz

Thanks for having me Roland and Evie. It's great to be on your podcast.

Roland Naufal

We've got very fond memories of you for some reason David. We met back in 2015 and Evie had only just started, I think pretty much in those days as well and we came over to South Australia to, I don't even remember what we were doing? Do you have any memories David?

David Militz

Yeah, look, you've been doing some work around or DSC had been working around in some of the states in Australia. We'd been watching from afar and we actually did a, we were doing an event where we wanted to pull apart the NDIS for carers, and just start to understand what it meant for unpaid family carers, but also for us as an organisation in SA. And I remember we invited you to come over and be our keynote speaker, and from that we had a really, really good connection for the next couple of years where we tried to, you know, we helped you come to SA and you helped us by giving us lots of knowledge. So it was, yeah, it was a really good time.

Roland Naufal

We had a lot of time for you particularly David, you really stood out in the networks we were working in. And at that stage you were managing community services for Carers South Australia and we knew you were going on to greater things. I think at one stage we tried to get you to work for us?

David Militz

I do remember that conversation.

Roland Naufal

Yep. But you ended up being CEO of Carers South Australia, which has been great for them. The question I wanted to ask amongst other questions in that is when, back in 2015, we were talking about the NDIS. We had to say to people, well, you know, they don't really give a toss about you carers because the scheme is for participants. And the best example of that was we don't do respite, which is what the NDIA stupidly announced in its early days, because respite is for carers and our scheme is for participants. And thankfully, over the intervening five years, the agencies got a lot smarter and realised that carers and participants are very intertwined, their interests are very intertwined, and so are the interest of the scheme. But have you seen a significant shift in carers getting more of a focus from the scheme or are they still pretty much the outsiders, bolt-ons, poor second cousin?

David Militz

We have seen a slight shift. Look it's not, it hasn't been seismic and I don't think it still pulls out those initial statements that came early on when the scheme was being introduced. That, you know, this is going to change the world for unpaid carers and they're going to be able to go back to work and they're going to have heaps more time and there's going to be a lot less stress. I think there's, that hasn't, I don't think that's eventuated anywhere near like they thought it was going to. Look there are, we definitely have small pockets of carers telling us that that's the case and that it's been fantastic for them, but there's still, I think there's still a long way to go.

We've actually just spoken across the country, and Carers New South Wales led the work on behalf of the national network of care associations. We interviewed or surveyed, sorry, I think it's just over 7,700 carers across the country and of that in SA we had, well the exact number is 2,255 carers in SA answered a whole heap of questions. But there was some really interesting stuff that came out around the NDIS, that quite good that, you know, almost half the carers that we surveyed in South Australia saying the scheme meets the person they're caring for, the person with the disability. It meets their needs, which is great, but worryingly that's still only 50% or 51%. So it's still, it's good, but it's not great.

When we start talking about other carers, asked about their needs and consulted in the process, nearly 50% are saying no. When we're starting to talk about, does it, you know, does it, and it should, look we've got to be open about it, the scheme isn't for carers so it shouldn't meet the carer's needs, but they're a big part of what's happening. But over nearly 44% of carers are saying that the scheme didn't meet their needs, and knowing carers that's generally what that means is, is that meeting the person I'm caring for needs because carers don't often think about themselves.

So look there's been movement and some positive movement, but I reckon there's still a long way to go, and carers are saying, nearly 50% of carers are saying it's not easy to organize and manage or get through into the scheme. So some movement, Roland, but yeah, I still think there's a long way to go.

Evie Naufal

I want to jump in on that figure of 50% of people saying that the NDIS is not meeting their needs, that's substantially lower than the satisfaction figures that would be coming out in a publication from the NDIS. I'm not sure exactly what my question is, and without wanting you to speculate on the merit of the data that the NDIS presents, but why do you think there's such a massive discrepancy? You haven't got a small sample size, nearly 3000 people saying the NDIS is not meeting the needs of the participant they support. Is it a difference of perspective, a difference of sample size. What do you reckon?

David Militz

Oh, look, I think the info, where I've seen it anyway, and this was some time ago so it may have changed, but I think the data that comes from the agencies is data that comes really early on in people's engagement. So we see the same with the Carer Gateway, which I'm sure we'll talk about later, but you know, that's high, like it's in the 90% and that might be after you've had your first conversation. So I suspect that that happens really early, that satisfaction rating is taken and look my assumption is that the carers we're talking to have been surveyed have been managing what some people call it, but this beast for a lot longer than just the first initial couple of meetings. So that's where I'd imagine the difference is.

Evie Naufal

It's a good point and there's something actually really interesting in that, which is that it might be really positive that the longer the people are in the scheme, the more dissatisfied they are. Because it could be partly pointing to the fact that people feel, I think they're raising their standards, that they feel more empowered to say when things are not okay. I mean it's obviously it's not great they're experiencing a bad thing, but you could look at that and say, well, it's good that people are recognizing that that's not meeting their needs.

Roland Naufal

But I've never really thought about it before, but it's saying the front end of the process tends to have a more positive response, which is not great for the independent assessment trials too, because they're claiming really high response rates too. I won't ask you to comment on that David, I know it's out of your bailiwick, but it's interesting in that independent assessment genre as well.

David Militz

No, I was just going to say the independent assessment stuff is, we've had no different the reaction from carers and everybody around the country. Really strong and visceral reaction to that which I think is they're actually going to make a move and pilot it in a few little places instead of doing what they initially thought. So you know so I get the sense they're listening a bit more at the agency, which is, you know, which can only be a good thing.

Roland Naufal

Yep.

Evie Naufal

I hope you're right.

Roland Naufal

Yeah. So David, I've been around long enough and old enough to have been around when the term carer was really starting to first be coined, which is like a long time ago and it's always struck me as a political construct. People don't think of themselves as carers. They think of themselves as a father, a daughter, a mother, a neighbour, that label doesn't, it's something that government puts on you when you get a carer's pension and you stick your hand up for carer support and carer this and carer that but in some ways it doesn't make sense. It's just a construct. Where do you sit on the word?

David Militz

Yeah, look, you're right. People don't think of themselves as carers. It's a really difficult concept for people to understand, especially if they're caring for a family member. So a husband or husband caring for their wife or vice versa, or you're caring for your child. So it is something that is, it's difficult to comprehend. It also creates a whole heap of other issues about, you know, we talk about unpaid, often talk about unpaid family carers because if you talk about a carer, people think the support worker or paid carer, so there is some complexity around it.

Listen I know that the movement in SA started in 1990, that grassroots movement to try and talk about carers and talk about the challenges they're facing. So look, it's got a, look I wasn't around when it was coined, but look the language, it does make it difficult for us because we've then got to differentiate between what a carer is and we spend a lot of time trying to do that. So listen, I don't have a better example of it.

Roland Naufal

Okay, I want to jump in David because my memories are flooding back now of when we did meet back in 2015. I think you were driving us around and I was sitting in the back of the car or someone was in the back of the car, but anyway, we were having this discussion and I was talking about my dad. And my dad was Lebanese and because he was Lebanese, he was part of the department of ethnic affairs when they were talking about stuff that was relevant to him, and it seemed to me that carers is much the same thing. You talk about carers of people with disability, young carers who are caring for their parents, older carers who are caring for younger people, carers who are caring for their partners, the stuff they've got in common is sweet FA a lot of the time isn't it?

David Militz

Look I think they do with regards to the situation, I think one of the things is that there's such a diversity of people that organisations like us try to support. The one thing that they, a couple of things that they have in common, so the relationships may not be but the impact of the role that they're playing. The impact of the carer on their relationships, whether that be family or outside and their social interaction and their wellbeing are the other big things, are the big connecting point between all of those. And we've been having this conversation recently about, you know, trying to nail down in business-speak what our segmentation of our customer base is and it's bloody difficult. So, yeah, so that connection between all those different people, you know, different lives and whether they be in Aboriginal communities or culturally diverse communities, is really about the stress and strain that the caring role has on them. And that's similar, even though the situations may be very different.

Evie Naufal

What you're talking about is making me think of some of the people I know who have young kids with disability and thinking about at what point in their child's life will they start to identify, you know, more primarily as a carer, as opposed to a mother. And that's making me wonder is do you ever hear from people with disability about how that feels to have their parent or sister start to identify more primarily as a carer?

David Militz

Yes. We do and there are plenty of people and it's not just in people with disability. We often, well I hear it across all like frail aged, people with mental illness, we hear that people hate the term carer, and as in the person who's being cared for. That concept of being cared for I think can be quite challenging, it can be quite, it can impact people pretty strongly. So we go so far as to some carers that we provide information to, you know, we've got pretty strict instructions that we don't put any labels on the, you know, we don't put any labels on envelopes. We don't send stuff to them at you know, which openly says that they are carer of the person they're caring for because if that person, the person being cared for opens that letter up and sees that, they'll go you're not caring for me, I don't need that.

So there's some real challenges around that. And look, I don't have a background in the disability sector, but I know in particular early on the challenges around where carers were situated within the scheme or recognised in the scheme was a big factor of that. Lots of people involved in that we don't need carers, we don't recognise that that informal support that people talk about.

Roland Naufal

This may and we may choose to cut this bit out I suspect at the end, the next bit I'm about to talk about but, when I was involved in carer organisations a couple of decades ago, a lot of the response to them was free massages and free spa week. Spas and massages and pampering and all that sort of stuff and it seemed to me, you know, that's wonderful, that's an acknowledgement, that's really important, but fuck it misses the point. You want to respond to that or shall we just cut it out?

David Militz

No, no, look I'm happy to respond to that because I think it goes some way to talking about the government's response and restructuring of the support that carers get from federal funding. So there are things that happened in the past in federally funded and state-funded support services for carers that just don't exist anymore. And some of it is that you know, that's what government would call fluffy, you know, feel-good stuff. What they want to see is more evidence-based you know, positive things that are actually educating carers and making them move along in their journey of a caring role and equip them better to actually do what they do.

There are really two schools there, so that's really interesting. The really interesting thing coming from carers so that's the way the new model has gone, the Carer Gateway, carers think totally differently, it's fascinating to listen. Carers need, so the biggest thing carers talk to us about is getting a break, looking after themselves, which they don't do, feeding that relationship and being so, so that you know, whilst we talk about, you know pamper days, and they used to be fantastic. What that actually does is it re-energises carers and gives them a break and gets them to go back into, you know carers, we don't talk about like this a lot, but some carers talk about it as a battleground, like it's really challenging going back into my caring role. So getting a break and getting time to focus on me is just brilliant. I'm energized now and go back into my caring role and put my head down and bum up and get going.

Roland Naufal

Thanks for telling me to pull my head in on that one David, and I do. I hear what you're saying, and not but, and I agree, and I think what I was talking about was when that was all the offer was, the pampering, and now you're saying evidence-based plus?

David Militz

Yeah. And I think it's, what we're talking to government now and DSS about is you've now missed that stuff out and what you've got is, like it's a reasonable evidence-based model which is great. But you're missing some of the stuff which really gives some benefit which could compliment that really well and could make those other things actually have better impact.

Evie Naufal

My question is why doesn't the evidence support self-care?

David Militz

Oh, look one of the things that in the carer space, the data and evidence across that wellbeing space and about impact of services on wellbeing is pretty crap, across, even internationally. So when government build things, they like it to be evidenced-based and they like to have that there. There just wasn't the evidence. Plus if you're talking about something like a retreat, which is where carers either go on their own, or with a group of carers to do some psychoeducational stuff, government consider that a holiday. So it's not a holiday and we argued till the cows come home, until I'm blue in the face to say that it's not, but there's no evidence, no formal evidence sitting behind it to tell them it's not.

Roland Naufal

David I want to loop back to our earlier discussion when we were talking about carer as an identity. And for a lot of people, when someone has a significant issue that they're dealing with, that they're, I'm trying to avoid the word caring for, supporting the person in that carer role, and they get that carer label, their world can become pretty small. It's difficult to socialise, it's difficult to get out, it's difficult to be in a bigger world. That's what you've just been talking about. Sometimes when that carer role ends abruptly, the person dies and their whole world has become very small and their whole world has become identified with caring for that person, it can be very freaking difficult can't it?

David Militz

It's one of the biggest challenges I think, you know, everybody, well everybody in the sector, not everybody, understands the benefit and value of social connection. I mean, you guys have been, you know, managing through that in Victoria recently, like that special connection is just, you know, one of the biggest determinants for happiness and length of life, a whole range of evidence has been done around that. So when you say you know, carers are telling us, like in this latest survey, that impact on relationships like 90% are telling us it's a negative with family, friends, and partners. 90% of those cares are telling its negative for themselves.

There's very few people that are saying it's positive for them, and when that ends, so when your life becomes so narrow, you're spot on, when things end, how do you restart your life? And you know carers often give up work, do a range of things, it's a massive, massive thing to try and re-find, almost find yourself again you know. I guess you can equate it to lots of relationships, which are either damaging or you know in sense that are not healthy, when you get consumed by that and when it stops, it's hard to find yourself and I think carers, it's a really difficult thing for carers to do. Plus they're also going through grief and loss and all those sorts of things and then you've got to find yourself again and work out what to do, bloody hard.

Roland Naufal

And can we counterpoint that because we all work in fields with people that are undergoing some very, very significant challenges. And I found myself wondering how people cope, but I look around

and I see people coping, and it really strikes me too, the resilience of human beings. And given the field you're in and the people you're working with can you, and given, we're just coming out of COVID in Victoria, COVID lockdown in Victoria, can you talk to us about resilience and what you've learned?

David Militz

For some of the conversations I've had with people who are in caring roles to understand, or try and work out how they're still functioning and still going. I find it amazing that the resilience for those people, sometimes its love for the person that they're caring for that gets them through, but they sacrifice a hell of a lot, like ridiculous amounts that they sacrifice to do. And it blows me away about the level of challenge or difficulty that humans can face and still survive.

Roland Naufal

Yeah, it's phenomenal.

David Militz

Look, it's amazing. And carers you know they don't think about themselves so that's the last thing in their mind, so some people are born for it, like literally have, you know, I don't ever think about myself, I'm always everyone else first and those people are, you know, sometimes love caring. But you know, but there's plenty that find it a real struggle. So it's, yeah so resilience is amazing and considering the stats we see from what carers tell us the fact they're still going and still supporting community by what they do is amazing.

Evie Naufal

There've been a lot of changes haven't there David to the national approach to supporting carers since you took up the role only three or four years ago. Can you talk us through some of the big changes, I know you mentioned the Carer Gateway a second ago without getting into too much of the detail?

Roland Naufal

I just want to comment too because I remember talking to you just as you'd taken on the CEO role and it was like, holy shit, that's my language conversation where you were saying, this, whoa, you know, this stuff's about to happen. Tell us what happened?

David Militz

The biggest change I've been involved in, I was, you know, worked in the homelessness sector for 13 years and in youth and families and aged care a little bit, but this was massive, it turned the world on its head. So a four-year consultation co-designed process with government, which in itself was unbelievable, the fact that they took four years to do something, that just doesn't happen. So it was a good co-design process, but basically government, the premise is that, you know, carers would go to four, three, sometimes four organisations to get all of the services that they need, which is just damn difficult and too hard. So I and the sector were really supportive of one entry point. Of course, government called it a gateway, which, you know, everything's a gateway at the moment, but that's a different, that's a different point, there's a disability gateway coming.

It's still not out of being fad status, but they basically you know, governments won't say this, but at the backend, they were looking to save some costs, and to be honest, they went from 85 contracts or 86 contracts around the country down to 16, so it was massive. Our organisation, you know, livelihood was on the line, we're unfortunately a hundred percent government-funded so if we didn't get the grant, we would have been dead. So it was a big, it was a massive thing. So that's for us as an organisation, but it was massive for carers because they just happened to plan to launch it right on April 6th, which was right in the middle of the first wave of COVID so it was full on.

Evie Naufal

And how has it gone?

David Militz

Look, I think okay. And I say that with a bit of doubt in my voice because if you'd told me last year that we would have faced sort of as an organisation not existing we would have had to restructure and 60% of our staff turned over. We had basically a new organisation in January. We're ready to launch a new program in April, and then we had to send everyone home and lockdown and how would we still support carers in that environment. And that we still are supporting carers now and sometimes doing that really well and sometimes not doing that so well. If you'd told me we got to here, I would have just taken it, so we're going, okay.

I think what we're finding is this new model its brand new, it's changed a lot, carers are grieving like hell what they had before and what they don't have now. So we're getting that really loudly and clearly, and we're only six months into a model. Two of those months were transitioned period. So four months in a COVID environment, and we really truly don't know. It's a demand-driven model as well, so it's, you know, we've got a bucket of money and seven services and we can use that money how we like. So that's new for government and new for us. So we're still really early, early days, a lot of learning to go and a five-year contract I reckon by the fifth year, we might start getting a handle on it. So it's, yeah, it's been a difficult process, but a very interesting one.

Roland Naufal

As you speak, you remind me of, we spoke briefly before about the small world that caring forces upon a person, and then COVID's very much a small world phenomenon. So can you talk a little bit about those two small worlds colliding?

David Militz

Yeah. The fascinating thing is we, the government reacted, both our State government in SA and the feds reacted pretty well with regards to giving us some flexibility, and so we did lots of phone calls to carers. In fact, I think we did over four and a half thousand phone calls during a period to check on people's wellbeing because we couldn't go face to face. Really interesting comments that came through were carers saying welcome to my world, I am isolated every day. My role and what I do keeps me at home. I don't get out much. I can't socialize. I've lost my connections. And they were looking around and hearing everyone else in the community complaining and you know, sometimes rightly, but then going look, now you have got a sense of what I do every day and it's not easy is it? So for me, that was one of the most fascinating comments that came back from carers. So it's fascinating, been really fascinating about what carers have said.

Evie Naufal

And it's been interesting to observe in Victoria the different community attitudes towards people with disability or households where there are people with increased vulnerability to COVID that in the early days, you know, everyone was like, how can I help, can I go do the supermarket shopping for you? And I remember listening to this podcast where a mother of a child with an immune disorder was saying, you know, it was really nice that everyone's reaching out, but she was kind of like, where the hell were you before? This has always been our life and always been our vulnerability. And it's been interesting over the last six months to slowly watch that goodwill kind of erode to get to the point where now you have people at the opposite side going this lockdown is ridiculous. Why should I have to continue to sacrifice for people who are vulnerable. And it's not a question, but it's just been really interesting to watch that slide happening.

David Militz

Oh, look, I think, and getting bigger than just what we're talking about, I think what you raise is I've been watching with fascination about people's, the split between what value we put on human life and those aged people who are frail or vulnerable, you know. Whether they be young or old, they're vulnerable, what value we put on those people, and when it starts to affect individuals, how quickly it becomes about me and not about the, you know the bigger, the greater good that's echoed in the economic versus health arguments. But really, really interesting to see that coming out. Yeah really interesting.

Roland Naufal

So, David, we've only got two more questions. One's a big picture NDIS and one's just a personal one.

David Militz

Yep.

Roland Naufal

What needs to improve for carers in the NDIS?

David Militz

I think, and I can probably equate this across government systems, so the State government, like health, mental health, aged care, and the lovely Department of Centrelink. A lot of which sits you know Department of Social Services and Department of Health federally. I think it's just a joining up of systems, and we're saying it's a bit, till I'm blue in the face, and they're listening actually, the DSS, in that those at a systemic level like a higher level, those systems need to be joined up. So identification of a carer within the NDIS, or with an aged care assessment or wherever it might be, there needs to be that joined up, oh we found you, have you heard about the supports you can get, it's really quite you know, I like to think of it as far more simplistic, you know, than just handing someone a flyer of information. It's like, oh, have you heard about these services? Because the majority of people won't have heard about what they can get support for as a, you know, as an unpaid family carer.

I think for me, that's the biggest thing is about that joining up and that connection of people through systems. And then the other one is just being listened to. So being given some recognition that, yes, we see you as well, we're here for. And be honest, we're here for the person with the ability as you should be because that's what the system's about, the schemes about. But we see you and we recognise you and in that sense, we're going to, you know, do you know about this, and these are some people who are focused just on you, not on the family. So I think that would be ideal. I think, you know, we've been pushing for that for a while and that'll continue to be more hobby horse I think for as long as I'm in the job I think.

Roland Naufal

So I was going to do one more reminiscence, which goes back to 2015, and this is more for Evie's sake, but you probably remember it too. But I remember talking to the audience now, we did a talk to whatever group of carers were in the audience and there was one woman that was slightly difficult. She was a carer that seemed to know a fair bit and she was asking a lot of difficult questions. Do you remember who it was, Evie?

Evie Naufal

No.

Roland Naufal

Santaya. We still have a close relationship with.

David Militz

Do you have a very close relationship?

Roland Naufal

We started developing it from that moment so I'd forgotten about that, but I want to end on a personal question for you, David, which is, when we met you I was saying to Evie, I considered you as a policy [inaudible 00:34:23] I actually think it's a compliment, she thought it might be a bit of an insult. But you knew your stuff in the policy space, you were running the community services, difficult enough job, but in a sense, all care, no responsibility, you had a CEO above you.

David Militz

Yeah.

Roland Naufal

You've moved into the CEO role and I reckon CEOs of carer organisations are about the most difficult roles you can take, it's herding cats, the politics are all over the shop, you've gone through all kinds of change. At a personal level how does it feel making that transition to CEO of a tricky job?

David Militz

So if you forget all the usual stuff about being a CEO, and I reckon all CEOs are a bit crazy, and I notice that you, that some of the things that we talked about that CEOs of carer organisations are picking up on some stuff that we'd talked about previously, seem a little bit all over the shop. So if you forget that you're just dealing with boards and doing the governance stuff and doing that stuff, that's a whole bit in itself. I think carers of organisations, especially like us who's a boutique, I call ourselves a boutique organisation because we just support carers, that's just what we do. We're not like a massive organisation that does lots of other things, I think we're, I think because carers go across almost every single policy area within government and system that they run, or that is in community that we're all a bit, it's like split personalities. We need to know about mental health, aged care, disability, health and we need to be over, you know, one of the challenges of trying to be over all of that policy and what's happening. And I think at a national level, we're going to start, so thinking about a federated structure leading up into being members of Carers Australia, we're actually finally going to start to go, let's narrow our focus and think of some areas where we really want to have impact because otherwise you can literally drive yourself crazy.

Roland Naufal

Sorry but I just imagined I just had a real flash of you must be sitting on about 35 different committees, and when people talk about Zoom fatigue, you must feel like biting their heads off?

David Militz

Yeah look it's you do, so it's a bit of a catch 22, like it's, you know, we've got a carer recognition act in SA. It was put out in 2005. The recognition act was in and it says government should include carers in all decision-making, but we sort of have made a bit of a rod for our back because, you know, when you ask for that, you get invited to bloody everything. And then you've got to try and work out what's valuable and what's not and who do you send, so whilst it's a really good thing you know, that's the biggest challenge and I think that comes down to service provision as well. So forget about my role, about how our team on the ground support carers. No one carer is the same, like there's no customer or carer the same for us. So whilst you might care for someone with a disability that person is, you know you line up 10 people and there's hardly anybody the same even if they're caring for someone who's got the same disability, like the circumstances are so different. So it's very much a, you do become a bit of a split personality and become a generalist and I think that's part of the challenge.

Roland Naufal

But I bet you get to do tea and scones at the governor's residence, don't you?

David Militz

Yeah, we do. We do which is nice. So I get invites to just about everything which is good.

Roland Naufal

Sometimes.

David Militz

Yeah. Exactly.

Roland Naufal

David, we knew it was going to be fun to catch up with you again and it has been fun to catch up with you again.

Evie Naufal

Yeah great to chat.

Roland Naufal

Yeah, and really important issues you've raised about carers, even though we're all struggling with the word. I just, I will finish with somewhere where you started, which is God it's a branding and segmentation and organisational mission, vision issue when the word carer can't be put on an envelope that you're sending to the people that you work with?

David Militz

Yeah. Look, it's hard, but like, you know, every sector's got its challenges haven't they, and we do, but I've loved chatting to you. It's always good. I listen to your podcast regularly so its great stuff you're doing, and good to see you're still going strength to strength from where we were when we first met all those years ago, it's been great.

Roland Naufal

Yeah, we're your fans too so thank you, David.

David Militz

Thanks for having me. Appreciate it.

Roland Naufal

Cool.

Roland Naufal

That was fun Evie. It was nice to catch up with David.

Evie Naufal

Yeah, he's such a good guy.

Roland Naufal

I always knew it was going to work. He's super authentic, super clued in.

Evie Naufal

He's quite humble too isn't he? I was a bit nervous about this conversation to tell you the truth, because I was worried that a conversation that centres the needs of carers could very easily sideline people with disability or put them in a certain light and I thought he did a good job of.

Roland Naufal

There's a lot of hairy politics around it that's for sure.

Evie Naufal

Well, I thought he did a good job of representing the complexities of that type of dynamic.

Roland Naufal

Yeah. Good one. And you've been listening to.

Evie Naufal

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