

Disability Done Different: Episode 32

A leap of faith and a loss of control with Richard Orr

Podcast transcript

Hosts: Roland Naufal & Sally Coddington

Guest: Richard Orr

Start of Audio

Roland Naufal

Welcome to Disability Done Different and this time it's different. I'm Roland Naufal and my co-host for this special series of three episodes is Sally Coddington. We've got a cheesy sort of film, private investigator type theme going, and we're doing Business Case Investigations. We're looking at services and particularly people that are thinking differently, that are taking the sector in places that are interesting, that are profitable hence the Business Case Investigation piece, and that we think you'll find highly enlightening. Enjoy.

Female Voice

Business Case Investigations brought to you by DSC.

Episode two - A Leap of Faith and a Loss of Control. This week's BCI brief could be seen as diving into the deep end and Roland and Sally you might find yourselves swimming around till your fingers get all pruny, but here goes. Your case if you choose to open it is to interview Richard Orr from Inclusion WA to investigate, is it possible to run a successful NDIS business where everything is built on trust? Do you accept this assignment?

Roland Naufal

Absolutely. This is one case I'd love to crack.

Sally Coddington

Yeah, let's do it.

Sally Coddington

So tell us about your journey so far Richard, what brings you to Osborne Park?

Richard Orr

So I'm originally from Scotland, the Northeast of Scotland, Aberdeenshire, and I was lucky enough to meet my now wife in Edinburgh when she was living over there. She's a Western Australian girl and she brought me back to Perth as a souvenir. So here I am working for Inclusion WA an Australia Inclusion Group and I've been involved with this organisation almost the whole time I've lived in Australia since 2009.

Sally Coddington

But you started life as a support worker did you not?

Richard Orr

Yeah. So I actually worked for an organisation called Enable Scotland on a part-time basis while I was studying for my master's in Glasgow and yeah, at the time it was a nice job to do while I was studying. My path was slightly different at the time. I had my eyes on more of a, kind of a corporate kind of lifestyle and I was doing the work because I was introduced to it from a friend of mine who was actually getting support from an organisation, and he himself had an intellectual disability. And I ended up working with a number of men who'd previously been living in some of the large institutions on the outskirts of Glasgow and built some pretty good working relationships with those men and it taught me a thing or two about good support or how I felt I could do good support differently.

Roland Naufal

Are you a Glaswegian?

Richard Orr

No, no. I'm from the Northeast, so Aberdeenshire and I spent my twenties in Edinburgh so I have a more of a soft accent. So I'm relatively easy to understand I've been told.

Sally Coddington

You are, it's true.

Roland Naufal

Can you tell us a bit about Inclusion WA and is it similar to the other Inclusions from other States?

Richard Orr

No. So, I'm not sure which other organisations you'd be referring to, but Inclusion WA was originally founded in the late eighties under an organisation called Recreation Network. It was initially a pilot project. At that time people with disability were often getting support and services in large kind of group homes or institutions. And a lot of the kind of day activities were more run in day centres. Recreation Network was founded by a number of passionate people and family members who really wanted to see opportunities for young folks and you know, getting involved in recreational community activities just like the rest of us would, so more connecting with mainstream rather than disability specific groups.

Roland Naufal

And I've got to ask you the obvious question and I'm pretty sure you won't like it, but does that mean that if you're working on inclusion, you're working with people with less severe disabilities?

Richard Orr

No, that's a common misconception, so I think it's a really great question. In this organisation we believe inclusion is for everyone, that everyone can find a valued role.

Roland Naufal

Would you like to tell me about two anecdotes of people with high and complex needs that you've done successful work with while 98% of the people you work with have mild ID.

Richard Orr

I think that a person's disability is a factor, but probably their life circumstances or the amount of family support or lack of support are probably just as challenging when you're talking about barriers to

connecting with community. So whether somebody has more of a profound physical disability or not that wouldn't have any bearing on whether we would choose to work with them or not.

Roland Naufal

So that consultation of factors that, and you're talking about the social model where people are more disabled by their circumstances, which is just so freaking obvious. The independent assessments which we're just starting to see driven into NDIS policymaking won't really be able to take that into account. Is that something you're on top of yet Richard, have you had a chance to have a look at the concept of independent assessments and what it would mean for your sort of work?

Richard Orr

To be honest I often feel a little bit out of the loop around all things NDIS and national policy. I find it's tricky to keep up as somebody who's responsible for having an oversight of operations of an organisation like ours.

Roland Naufal

Let me give you the concept. Do you think it would be possible to take any of the people you work with and two hours with the world's biggest expert in whatever, and really understand their life circumstances and give the agency an independent assessment of what their needs are?

Richard Orr

Of course not. I mean, I think the agency has a really difficult job to do around creating funding plans for people and making decisions around how they can best use their resources by the time those funding plans come to us. We start again from scratch when it comes to the planning of our support, so in somebodies life how often we can't influence what resources are assigned to that participant and that's the right thing, where you, you know, which that as a service provider that's not something necessarily we should get involved in influencing. But when someone comes to us, usually they already have some NDIS funding, our role is to try and look at those resources available and think about how can we be as useful as possible in somebody's life.

Roland Naufal

It sounds like, and Sally I'd really love you to jump in here, you look at what they've got and then part of your job becomes reconfiguring what they've got?

Richard Orr

Yeah. Yeah, I think so, the plan, I often talk to my colleagues about how the NDIS' plan is a funding plan. It's a funding allocation, and it's not somebody's actual person centred plan, and sometimes that can get us into a bit of trouble with planners or guardians. Because if you think about what the principles of the NDIS are and even the national standards around individual outcomes, as soon as a participant, a person with a disability comes to this organisation, we are duty bound, and we say yes to providing a service. We're duty bound to do whatever it takes to be as useful as possible, and that involves meeting each person exactly where they are at that moment in time and planning our supports accordingly.

And I guess that's one of the things I wanted to chat to you guys today about, is how to try and run an organisation that is both flexible and responsive to the needs of every person that you work alongside, rather than running an organisation in a way that restricts the potential of its staff in their ability to be useful. Because I see this is one of the big things that's wrong with the disability sector, is that staff are often inhibited in their potential to think deeply about how they can be useful in this one person's life.

Sally Coddington

So I was really interested when we spoke with Kate at our last visit. She was talking about the prioritising the needs of the individual person over the needs of the NDIA, and I found that really, it's so obvious, right, but often when you look at the way so many other providers operate, they really find that they are, they're making themselves accountable to the NDIA first and to the [inaudible 00:09:17] second. And I really liked that that's a different perspective that you and Kate or Avivo and Inclusion WA bring to your work in that you really see the NDIA as the funding source and you're accountable only to the person.

Richard Orr

Absolutely. And I've worked within local government in Scotland and state government here in Western Australia for a short period of time, and what I've understood is that the people who work within government know that they're limited in and they're kind of confined in a way and how they can influence an outcome. And service providers are the ones who can really have much more of a frontline impact on the outcome, you know the circumstances, you know, someone is being supported in and what is the effect of those supports, positive or negative.

Roland Naufal

I was just going to jump in with, Sal do you remember your Richard Branson quote, you brought quite a few years ago into the organisation about working with staff?

Sally Coddington

Oh, the one about take care of your staff and they'll take care of ...?

Richard Orr

Yeah perfect. I read his book as a young guy studying business and marketing.

Roland Naufal

So can you talk to us about that? One of the things we talked to Kate at Avivo about is congruence, that you can't expect staff to put people first if staff aren't treated with a great deal of respect and autonomy or language, you know, can you help us with?

Richard Orr

Yeah, absolutely. So if you're running a disability mental health service provider, you have to understand that your frontline staff are the most important people in your organisation. This is not rocket science. This is pretty much a basic business theory from the eighties around customer service, right? So if you're running a cafe or a plumbing service, you work hard to empower your frontline staff so that they're confident and capable to respond to the needs of their clients, and that is what disability support needs to do as well.

And what we tend to do, is we tend to disempower our staff, by imposing things like an NDIS funding plan or a centralised rostering system which inhibits the potential of staff, your frontline staff to be useful. And so our whole organisation, the culture of this organisation called Inclusion WA is that the frontline staff are our most important asset, our most important marketing tool and our ability to recruit, induct and then nurture that talent over time has been one of our huge keys to success. And I'm really proud to say that almost every single person who now works for Inclusion WA is a former mentor or support person. So even the general manager, Jess Kain is an ex-mentor or support person and they all have that lived experience of, you know, trying to do whatever it takes to be useful and being flexible, being flexible and responsive and creative. And I think it's something that's missing in the NDIS conversation around what it means to be a really skilled support worker.

Sally Coddington

Yeah. Well, I'm interested to know how you've operationalised that autonomy, listen to all my...

Richard Orr

Your buzzwords. I'm going to scream Bingo at any moment.

Sally Coddington

It's horrible isn't it. How do you make it work?

Richard Orr

How do you make it work? Okay. So early on being a student of things like O'Brien's Five Service Accomplishments and social role valorisation and [inaudible 00:13:07] writings around normalisation. But I never saw any answers around how we could organise our organisations to work like that. How could you work alongside people to create belonging to community, and there was no answer. So I struggled, you know, initially to come up with ideas around how to structure ourselves as human capital just around the person, but I looked to the disability sector because obviously there was some things we were doing wrong.

So I read when I first arrived in Australia, I read the Shut Out Report in 2009, that's had a huge influence on myself and Paul Fleay, our CEO, and a number of others within the organisation. And off the back of the Shut Out Report and the Productivity Commission Report, I think the next year or so, we decided to change our name to Inclusion WA to make the organisation solely about social inclusion. There was something happening to people within typical disability services where their lives were being shut out of the real world and we thought we could do better for people. And then we've had NDIS to kind of contend with, so we knew that the sector was changing and we needed to change because we were pretty much 95% block grant funded through the State government.

So in the past the state government through their grant system defined who you were, who you worked with and what type of programs we ran, and what was needed was a total rethink of our organisation and our culture. So we went through this cultural transformation, moving away from prescriptive programs and more to responsive services that were all designed around each individual that we worked alongside. But still I was kind of light on answers around how to structure the organisation and more of, what I termed at the time an empowering service architecture. And so, you know, working with my colleagues who most of them are all still here we came up with a different way of organising ourselves by decentralizing our decision-making, by throwing away our rosters, literally set fire to a roster, in a safe environment of course. Decentralising decision-making included things like dissolving our HR function, delegating that responsibility for recruitment to other staff who lo and behold actually knew the individual that they were supporting. And rostering the way that it was running before was essentially this kind of cascading effect of disempowerment where our frontline staff felt restricted and limited in the way they could respond to the needs of the client, the person they're supporting, and so we really had to rethink our organisation from the ground up.

For me personally, I didn't look to disability and mental health service industry for inspiration, I looked to other types of businesses. I borrowed examples from other types of work, whether that was creative industries, like, you know, IT application development type firms or other organisations who had really good records of good customer service, and the common theme was always empowering your front line. So I didn't see the disability sector as being any different. And we together as a team, it hasn't just been me, there's been lots of people involved in this whole journey. We've collectively rethought how a disability service organisation should be structured.

Roland Naufal

Can you give us just a quick overview of what the structure actually is?

Richard Orr

Sure. So rather than running programs, we have more geographical hubs, we call them service hubs, and they're obviously geographical in nature. So at the moment to give you an example, we have four Inclusion WA service hubs within Perth Metro area, and covering specific parts of metro base. And within those hubs we also have our small neighbourhood teams, and those neighbourhood teams are made up of what we call mentors. So we don't use the term support workers within this organisation because we feel it comes with some historical baggage. So mentors imply something a little bit, and perhaps it's not a perfect job title, but implies something a bit more constructive and useful and focus more on personal development, and so mentors is the title for our frontline staff.

So these days Inclusion WA will do all sorts of work from helping people find a job, to get connected with their local sporting club. The work that I'm probably most proud of is helping them navigate some kind of life crisis or real change in their life.

Sally Coddington

And what kind of responsibility do you have those neighbourhood teams taking on, I mean, in addition to their day to day mentoring work?

Richard Orr

Yeah. So where the neighbourhood teams is, it's still something that we're kind of learning about. So where the mentors are actually meeting is to provide each other with support, problem solving, troubleshooting, is to try and reduce the single point of failure that those staff might have on their line managers, and to empower them to take a bit more control and helping debrief. I think one of the things that's lost in the NDIS conversation around, well, you know, you don't get great outcomes unless you've got great staff plus great support. This is the magic formula, right. So great staff plus great support equals great outcomes. So your ability to attract and retain the best people with emotionally and intellectually intelligent and creative types of people and you know if you get that right and then put those people together and help them support each other, then we start to really see the kind of social capital kind of grow within the organisation.

So the neighbourhood teams, it's something that we're still I guess, wondering what those teams could be responsible for in the future, but we're trying not to overburden them with administrative responsibilities. Because with NDIS as you know comes a fair bit of administration around the financial side of things, but the actual service managers for the geographical hubs, they're the ones who are ultimately responsible for recruitment within their geographical area. They're the ones who are also knowledgeable around their own financial sustainability. And so they're taking responsibility for their own reality so you almost end up with these multiple nodes within an organisation, all kind of self-governing their own reality and having a good understanding of what they can control, versus some of the things that they, I guess can't, they're outside of our control, NDIS funding process as an example.

Roland Naufal

You said something ages ago I just wanted to pick up on, and all of this is so interesting. You still have, it sounds like you still have a semi hierarchy in the decentralised models with service managers. And I'm sure you'll talk in a moment about the different role those service managers have, but you said you burnt the rosters, and that says a couple of things that I want to ask you about. Often the roster becomes just such an impediment to doing things well, but the other thing is burning it, that's a real clear ceremonial, we're making a change here action, isn't it, it wasn't just fun burning it, you knew what you were doing when you burned it didn't you?

Sally Coddington

Unless he smoked it?

Richard Orr

I think at the time a number of colleagues suggested things or tried to push gently in a certain direction, but when you're dealing with culture change, there's a tipping point really. And what it takes is you know somewhat of a push to get things moving in the right kind of direction. I think culture change it's hard within an existing organisation. For me personally, I would be honest and I would say it'd be easier for me to set up more of an individualised provider from scratch rather than go through that process of culture change again. Maybe I would have energy for doing that once more in my working life, because I'm not that old yet, but it certainly is hard work, and I sympathise with organisations who have more of that top down hierarchy.

Roland, I would say that, you know, if we have a hierarchy still, it's an inverted one so everything's about supporting the next layer up. So as a senior manager within this now group of organisations, my job is that is more of coaching and mentoring support, rather than telling people what to do. And so the leadership style that works well within this organisation is more around corralling the troops and just clarifying their future direction rather than necessarily telling people what to do. Because there's an intrinsic motivation that comes from, you except a job day one at Inclusion WA and your cup is full of motivation, you're a hundred percent motivated and what we want to try and do is keep the motivation up at a hundred percent. What organisations, all of us or anyone who runs an organisation can recognise is we tend to put things in staff's way that chip away at that motivation over time. And so we're trying desperately to not do that and keep people motivated all the way through their Inclusion WA journey.

Roland Naufal

You're talking about culture change and it's so fascinating and then how difficult it is to do it in an existing organisations. We're talking about burning the roster as part of a journey and a symbolisation of culture change. I just want to push you a bit harder on, a lot of the people listening to this bus tour and doing the bus tour with us are from those older organisations and staff didn't sign up for this, staff didn't sign up for the sort of work. They didn't even sign up for the NDIS, they signed up to do a particular job which doesn't exist anymore. Is it actually possible to convert a group of people that don't want to come on the journey? Do you have to lose people along the way? And if you do, how difficult is that?

Richard Orr

Yeah, I think that's a really great question and I think probably those people that won't come on the journey with you, there's no doubt about that. I've read about organisations that are really resistant to the NDIS or the idea of individualised funding, and they want it to go a different way. There's plenty of organisations who've got out of disability altogether and focused on other things like aged care because they saw that was perhaps an easier path for them, but I think that one of those core things, one of my friends, Heather Simmons, who you may have heard of, one of the things that Heather Simmons talks about, she's a great person when it comes to training around person centered approaches, and she'll say, you got to know what you're standing on, that you're trying to lift. Okay. And so what she means by that is what are your values? What are your core guiding principles? What are the big ideas that are almost like a lighthouse for your organisation to help you guide yourself through stormy seas? If you don't have that real common ground and that you've agreed these are your guiding principles and great ideas you're going to follow, then you won't be able to change the culture of any organisation.

Roland Naufal

But that is the analogy I suspect we've read some of the same books, or maybe I read the books a couple of generations before you did, but Ricardo Semmlers Maverick, have you read that?

Richard Orr

No, I haven't.

Roland Naufal

It's all based on trust. So he runs this organisation in Brazil where he just trusts people to do the right stuff.

Richard Orr

Yeah great, yeah I love it.

Roland Naufal

Trust is something that's really important. It has to be really important in what you do?

Richard Orr

We talked about trust a lot, and so my colleagues will be bored of hearing me talk about this stuff. So let's talk about it in the context of great support work. Everything starts from a position of trust Roland. If I'm supporting you in your daily needs and helping you get a job or get connected with community, I cannot be useful in your life if you and I don't have a founding relationship of trust. You know if you can't be honest with me around how you see the world or how you like your life to look, if we don't have that founding relationship of trust, and so everything starts with trust.

When we employ new staff into this organisation, we start from a position of trust, not mistrust. So the typical top down hierarchy headquarters centralised control organisation would often inadvertently without doing it deliberately they would start from a position of mistrust and people having to earn trust over time. I think that's the wrong way of looking at your frontline staff, and so we look at things really differently. But then we'll implement some safeguards around what we'll call triangulation of supports to make sure that the people we support always have someone to come to if they're concerned about something.

Roland Naufal

Sal, you're big on trust too aren't you?

Sally Coddington

I am. I am very big on trust. And I had an interesting conversation with Aviva who just did a PhD on the things that people look for in support providers. And we had a great conversation around trust and the fact that at some point a person needs to make a leap of faith. You know, I actually don't know you well enough to have had the history to have developed trust, I have to take a leap of faith and I think sometimes we really underestimate the level of trust that people put in us.

Richard Orr

I think from a senior management perspective, this leap of faith thing is really core, you know. Darren Ginnelly at My Place talked to me about this really early on in my journey with Inclusion WA. He talked about his own experience with My Place, and he talked about a leap of faith and a loss of control. So Inclusion WA does not define you know, even the name can be misleading. Every person that we support, their services are totally different. Every member of staff that we support, I don't even know half the time you know, what those staff would consider their job to be because it's not my place as a senior manager to define that for them.

And I think, you know, some people will look at that approach to management and suggest that that's complete madness, to not know what your organisation does exactly, because it does sound a bit weird, but I think it's brilliant because if we support, you know, I think Inclusion WA these days support around 300 people, I can't know those people intimately enough to understand what's our role in their life. And every single person we support their needs are different almost on a daily basis. So rethinking support was always this thought around from my perspective, a leap of faith and loss of

control is the people that we work alongside, both participants, people with disability and our staff, frontline staff, they define our organisation, not me.

Roland Naufal

But that has to take you down the path of the Quality and Safeguards Commission. Sorry to do this to Richard, but you're having that, they promised us so much. I wrote an article a couple of years ago called Consistent Ways of Producing Crap, and my concerns about where the Quality and Safeguards Commission might go. It's not cutting back red tape, its increasing compliance, it's got a royal commission barking at its heels. If you are someone who believes in trust, you are someone who believes in taking a leap of faith and supporting workers to have more autonomy, how the freak do you deal with all the layers of compliance that are being put upon you that really limit a lot of that sort of stuff, we're going in the wrong way.

Richard Orr

No, its good timing with the NDIS commission coming into fruition in WA on the 1st of December.

Roland Naufal

You got the right commissioner with Sam Jenkinson at least, but yeah keep on going.

Richard Orr

Yeah well did you know that she used to work here?

Roland Naufal

Yeah.

Richard Orr

So she's one of the.

Sally Coddington

Got the inside scoop, nice.

Richard Orr

Yeah, so big fan of Sam's. So how to answer that question? If I ran six people group homes, I'd be really nervous about the NDIS commission. If I ran large scale ADs, is that what they're called, because we call them something different, and probably not so complimentary? Big institutionalise approaches to providing services, if they were deemed by the NDIS commission as safe and compliant, then I don't want to just be safe and compliant. I want to run services that not just me, but all my colleagues actually believe in. So one of the foundations of any service provider is, only run services that you actually believe are useful to people, don't run services that you think are going to put people at risk or potentially in harm's way. So just refuse to run those services. I'd rather not do this work than be responsible for services that I didn't believe were actually going to add value and be useful in people's life.

Roland Naufal

But is compliance getting in your way?

Richard Orr

I'll tell you that next, make this appointment this time next year and I'll be able to answer that question more fully. What'll come up is we'll get audited within the first 12 months and they'll point out things that they're not happy with or systems that they feel strongly that we should go out and purchase and we'll have a conversation about that, and we'll see where we end up. I'm sure some of their feedback will be really useful and constructive to us, but some of it, maybe we'll debate and discuss.

Sally Coddington

I'm going to come back to if you don't mind Roland, I want to come back to that conversation around leap of faith and loss of control, but at a slightly broader level, I want to talk about that within the context of organisational redesign or change management. So what I find interesting about the story with Inclusion WA, and I think it's quite similar with Avivo, is you get a real sense that you started on the journey, but you didn't necessarily have it fully mapped out. And you've kind of taken this leap of faith that it will continue to evolve over time. And I think often what happens with CEOs is they're not ready to start a change management process until the project plan is there and the Gantt charts, and everything's kind of mapped out and specific, and I never get the sense of that with you and Kate. Can you talk a little bit about the leap of faith and the loss of control that you've taken on this journey to redesign the organisation?

Roland Naufal

And I just want to add one more bit to that question, which is to do what Sally is doing, describing what you've done means living with uncertainty and dealing with you know, a whole lot of emergent stuff, not knowing what's coming next?

Richard Orr

Yeah. I think that's life, there's things you can control and there's things you can't, so I guess just embracing the things that we can control. I mean how do you create an organisation that's more flexible and responsive and you're employing people that are more creative. Good organisations are continually committed to improvement, right, so they're not, people who I would admire in terms of leaders, I don't think they're ever going to be satisfied, you know, and that's where I guess I would come from. And that may be a little bit annoying for some of the people I work with on a daily basis never being satisfied, but I think we all accept that there's always ways in which we can improve, that feedback is built into the DNA of this organisation, whether it's staff appraisals or annual surveys, you know or just being open. I think being committed to continual improvement is much easier than being defensive and almost defeatist around being unwilling to accept that you can always be better.

Roland Naufal

It takes a level of self-confidence Richard to be able to deal with uncertainty, to not have a roadmap. And so part of what you're deflecting is a level of courage and self-confidence that you've put into the journey. So I'll answer that one for you like that, but I want to take it a bit further with the systems and structure stuff. Another book, Malcolm Gladwell's Tipping Point where he argues that organisations of more than 150, which includes everyone, they stopped being able to communicate at a personal level, and the people receiving services can talk to the people at the top of the services and everybody in between. It sounds like you're pretty modular, as much as possible you're trying to create organisations in modules and what makes, so yeah take it where you want to take it?

Richard Orr

Yeah. So it's that, I mean that's been great in terms of only recruiting for more senior positions internally. We never advertise, certainly not in my time, in the last say eight years, I guess, roughly, since we started the kind of cultural change. So the things we've always focused on recruiting from the front line so that's something I'm really very proud of.

Roland Naufal

You've got it, this idea of your organisation, I think you used some language earlier on that you're a bunch of organisations.

Richard Orr

So the modular nature of things, I think we want to be able to, we do have positions and we do have line managers, so it's not completely organic and totally free for all out of control. I think it's organised,

some colleagues might have described it in the past as being some more organised chaos and maybe we're not as good as other organisations at writing policies and some of those sorts of tasks, but I think the culture, is the focus on culture and always trying to create teams of support around people, that's what we're trying to do. One of my old friends once, she was studying, she was doing her teacher training in Scotland and she worked, two of her work placements, one was at a private school and you know lots of resources, the teachers were all wonderful, really clever, obviously, you know, well-paid. And she worked at another school, which was a more challenging demographic from one of the rougher kind of parts of Edinburgh, and she loved that workplace a lot more, and the reason for that was the culture of support and encouragement. Even though there were some very challenging things she had to deal with through the day, it was the support that she had around her that was the thing that really made the difference.

And so I think when we take that to one of the key ingredients for success, when it comes to running a disability service provider is around building networks of support around each other because we're dealing with some times really complex situations and this stuff is hard to know what to do and what's the ethical thing to do. And not doing that in isolation, I think is really important. And potentially that's one of the things we got wrong in the early days of some of our frontline staff, starting to feel more isolated as they moved out from being based in a physical office more in terms of working in community. So we're still looking for ways to do that better where staff internally feel included, that their different points of view are valued, and they'll always have someone to turn to when they need support.

So, a long time ago I felt that my job was all about focusing on the person with disability and their families and what they wanted to get out of their staff and their services. But now I realise a lot more that it's really 50/50 about supporting the person, the client, and a huge amount of effort goes into supporting our staff and talent management and their PD and offering them careers, a life which matters, where they feel like they're contributing something that's way bigger than themselves.

Sally Coddington

So what are the practical ways that you bring mentors together to be community?

Richard Orr

Yeah, it's a good question again. I think it's something that we're always learning and changing. The recent experience through COVID saw us all get really good really quickly at working virtually. So, via Zoom and Microsoft Teams, the way that our teams embraced that and cracked on and found ways to support each other was very impressive. I think that in the future there'll be, we'll just keep trying different things and we'll keep asking our colleagues for feedback. I think the geographical hubs lends itself really well. The modular kind of architecture that you refer to Roland, those, it's more important that those geographical hubs know each other than they would know say me as a senior manager or one of the other senior managers within the organisation, because they're the main people they're going to ask for support from, but I think we're going to keep trialling new initiatives.

Our general manager, Jess Kain is about to try like a mentor summit, like a support work summit internally and bringing in some great people to talk about, you know, big ideas and then creating conversations within the organisation. It used to be that we ran, you know, all of, the whole of organisation face to face in person sessions every year they were called Praxis, this is sort of mindful reflection, but as the organisation's grown, you know, we would employ more than 180 staff across the group now because we're a group structure, that becomes practically quite challenging. So we'll look at technology like how you, you know creating podcasts, recording videos, and some of those sorts of things, having Q and A's online and trying to answer colleagues questions. So in answer to your question, it's something that we'll continue to learn about and we'll get feedback from other

people internally around how they want to be communicated and engaged with, but we'll also seek inspiration from other organisations much larger than ours to see how they do that well.

Sally Coddington

Hmm. That's similar to that of Avivo's commitment to the citizenship for their team as well as their people they support?

Richard Orr

Yeah, I guess I haven't had a huge amount to do of late with Aviva. One of the things I've liked is they're, they more provide that kind of support in people's homes generally, but when they do that, they're thinking about the person's whole life, not just their accommodation service. And even terms like accommodation service or community support service, they're inhibiting people's potential to be useful. Now every one of us is one human being trying to help another human being, so when you take it down to that level, we want to encourage and motivate staff, not to inhibit their usefulness, put things in their way that stop them from being creative. You hear stories and you folks would have heard these stories as well, some organisations will employ great staff who want to think creative and they notice things that aren't okay about this person's life that they're supporting. Like this person's life could be so much better if we did A, B and C and in the wrong type of organisation those people they're labelled as troublemakers, and sometimes they have performance management sessions because they're what that organisation might call stirring the pot. And really they're the right sort of people who should be doing the job, they're thoughtful, they're creative, they're deeply invested in the person that they're supporting and they want to be useful, and yet they're told by the organisation, no, you can't do that, and if you continue thinking like that, we're probably going to fire you.

Roland Naufal

Richard, this has been sensational. You can always pick when there's a very strong congruence, that you're real, what you're doing, I've been around long enough and done enough of these bus tours to know when you've got a service that's really trying to do what the people are telling you they're trying to do. If when people are listening, if I'm a CEO of an organisation that's really struggling, there's a bunch out there and they're very threatened by the way funding's changing. And they get their board to agree to a fundamental cultural change and they like what you're doing, and you know, we listened to that Richard Orr guy, and we'd like to go on a bit of that journey. What three tips would you give that CEO trying to do fundamental culture change in a disability organisation. You can only give him three?

Richard Orr

Oh, geez that's an easy question Roland. So I know that, you know the first one that comes to mind, that's the easy one and then I'll probably start to struggle is more around setting those guiding principles. The big ideas that you subscribed to, the big value statements, the belief statements, some people would call them bumper stickers for your organisation. If you can get agreement around that, around how you want your organisation to look and feel in the future I think that that goes a long way to then trying to impart some kind of culture change. And just to quote Heather Simmons again, you got to know what you're standing on that you're trying to lift.

Roland Naufal

It's a great quote, I've never heard it, it's great.

Richard Orr

It's just to give you that solid base and that's got to be agreed by your board and your senior leadership team. I think the other thing is just get I think be willing to take that leap of faith and the loss of control. Ego is the enemy when it comes to leadership, you're a CEO or some kind of senior manager from another disability service provider. You have to understand that real leadership is

actually making other leaders, not being the biggest, loudest or gender sort of deepest voice in the room and recognising talent and investing in those people to take your organisation forward. And for me, probably the third thing, just because it's something that I'm really proud of with our own organisation is, accept that your frontline staff are the most important people in your organisation. They're your future leadership, they're your future CEOs and just throw all your support behind those people and you'll be amazed where you end up. That's three I think Roland?

Sally Coddington

Yeah, it's really good. So where's Inclusion WA going next, Richard?

Richard Orr

So onwards and upwards I think for Inclusion WA. The pace of our kind of evolution and growth has been pretty slow and steady and led by the great people that we employ. But we have plans to extend Inclusion WA's approach to individualised services, that's agency managed services into the eastern states. We have a number of colleagues who potentially will be relocating to Brisbane in a short period of time. We have also established the organisation under a group kind of structure, so that I'm now employed by the parent entity Australian Inclusion Group. Inclusion WA is kind of the founding organisation from which everything has come from that. Inclusion Solutions is an organisation that's focused on community development work all within the same idea of trying to create more welcoming communities that everyone regardless of their background or ability levels has a place to feel like they belong. And so Inclusion Solutions are doing some fantastic work in the community development space.

Also we recently established a new organisation called Plan Navigators and Plan Navigators is looking to help people who are funded through the NDIS take an increased level of control of their supports and services. And so that's through looking towards a real flexible implementations of plan management plans and also helping people take steps towards self-management and potentially employing their own support staff. So there's a lot going on and we'll always just keep learning and keep evolving the organisation. There's a fair bit of excitement within this group at the moment, and some fantastic colleagues just sharing some real inspirational leadership. And so I take the opportunity to thank all my colleagues for the great work they continue to do within the group.

Sally Coddington

Richard that was so fantastic. Thank you so much for giving us a look around today. We've really enjoyed the visit.

Roland Naufal

There's just so much meat in what you've said, so much to debrief on and learn from, so thank you so much for giving us your time so generously.

Richard Orr

Yeah, thanks for having me. There is so many, you know, great examples of great support happening all around Australia I'm sure and really appreciate the role that you guys play in helping us celebrate that work.

Roland Naufal

Good on you Richard.

Female Voice

Sally and Roland. Do we have a business case?

Roland Naufal

Absolutely.

Sally Coddington

Yeah, we totally do.

Roland Naufal

Sal one of the things I wanted to talk about is Richard talks quite a bit about social capital. I don't think we talk about financial capital at all, but he talks about creating a sense of belonging and community, about de-centralized decision-making, about ditching the rosters, no HR function, yay, and really function as an organisation that puts staff and puts participants and people first. Where do you reckon the financial underpinning sit with all of it?

Sally Coddington

Well I firmly believe that Richard and his team also have really strong commercial capabilities and we didn't talk about them, but knowing Richard and knowing his background, they absolutely bring that. I think that the discussions that we're having are not about replacing commercial capabilities with this social capital, but more of a yes and, so you have to be commercially capable, but what really elevates their business to the next level is that commitment to social capital.

Roland Naufal

When reviewing my case notes on this one and seeing if we did have a business case Sal, the more I review the stuff, the more I listened to what Richard said to us, I feel there's such detail and such, again you can't copy what he's doing, but prima facie they've got a case. They've grown from Western Australia into Queensland. They must be doing okay. They can't be going backwards in Western Australia to be growing into Queensland. So it's really quite exciting to see a model that, you know, that's unpacked things, that's begun again in a lot of ways that is doing though, it's a cliché, you know, the inverted pyramid where senior staff support frontline, but they're doing it, it's working and yes, definitely a business case.

Sally Coddington

I think what we need to keep in mind is that their growth strategy is also very different to how many other organisations are approaching growth, in that they're taking a minimally viable service approach to their expansion into Queensland. So they're starting with one person and if it doesn't work, then it's not the end of the world, so just kind of different as well.

Roland Naufal

So when we first started these investigations Sal, we didn't quite know where we'd land, but here we've landed with a really important business case that a lot of other organisations can learn from. It's just great.

Sally Coddington

Yeah, I love it. It's a whole nother way of business strategy, about defining that vision for what it is that you want to achieve and then putting the rest of it in faith and loss of control, going for it one step at a time.

Roland Naufal

And one of the things we do is talk about Richard Branson and you're a bit of a Branson fan. Do you remember the stuff we talked about with Branson?

Sally Coddington

Well, the thing that I love about Branson is his commitment to treating staff well, and then trusting them to take care of your clients, your customers, your participants, whatever it is you want to call them.

Roland Naufal

And that's one of the dominant themes of Business Case Investigations.