Blue Skies Scenario

A community response to the call for an alternate future for people with disability, their families and supporters

A vision for an inclusive community

Thank you

Although this journey has just begun, we acknowledge the Blue Skies Scenario Building Team for their generous gifts of time, knowledge and experience.

Introduction

At present:
- there are many Queenslanders with disability who don't get the support they need to live decent lives in the communities of their choice; and
- there is a high level of reliance on a funding and service delivery system that is predominately crisis driven.

The potential population of people with disability requiring services is projected to increase markedly in the next ten years.   Our disability service system is not well placed to respond to current levels of need, much less projected levels of need, under the current arrangements.

The solution required is much broader than how government chooses to respond to disability as a resourcing issue. The solution at this point is likely to lie in how community chooses to respond to disability as a social issue. It will require change borne of an expansive vision for an inclusive community — changes driven and owned by people with disability, their families, carers, service providers, public servants and the broader community.

A number of members of the disability sector who have been working together — people with disability, family members, advocates, public servants, service providers, peak bodies, academics and other committed individuals — met for three days to undertake the Blue Skies Scenario Building Activity.

This is version 1 of the *Blue Skies Scenario*. Version 2 will be made available in October.

Purpose

The purpose of the Blue Skies exercise was to establish a vision for an alternate future for people with disability, their families and supporters, for consideration by the broader disability sector and community. The scenario includes a range of strategies for achieving the vision, and clear expectations for participants in the vision — people with disability, their families, service providers, all levels of government and the broader communities.

The Process

The scenario team came together for three days in early June, 2009, each with a shared commitment and sense of responsibility for creating a community and service delivery system that is responsive to the needs of all people with disability in Queensland. During the workshop, the team developed three scenarios:

1. Audacious Entitlement, which emphasised entitlement, citizenship and a total rethink in urban design;
2. Connect M.E. (Myself and Everyone) which focused on the central role of family, friends and a home in achieving quality of life; and
3. Beyond the Bridge, with its underpinning reliance on strengths based community development as a path to full participation for people with disability.

The values and assumptions developed by each scenario group had such a consistent thread throughout each of the three scenarios that there was little to gain by keeping them separate.

While every effort has been made to capture the essence of all three scenarios, the unfolding story is told as one.

The scenario team has produced a powerful vision for a different future for stakeholders to engage with to:

- explore the impact of the scenario;
- refine the scenario; and
- ultimately use as a driver for change.

While there was no attempt to establish consensus, this story represents the collective wisdom of the Blue Skies Scenario Building team.

"*Futures are never given. They are created.*"
- Dinokeng Scenario Group, South Africa, 2009

The Blue Skies Scenario

In 2019, the community is strong and vibrant and embraces diversity. While the work of growing community will never be complete, wherever a person with a disability lives, whatever their choice of lifestyle, their experience is one of rich inclusion and sense of belonging.

Central to a better life for people with disability is acknowledgement of their inherent rights as citizens, with an emphasis on having a secure home and enduring relationships, with service, family and community working well together to provide supports as and when required, in the community of choice. The shift is evident as early as when a child with disability enters the child care system then school. They are welcomed into the facility of the family's choice, and have full access to the standard curriculum with supports as required. There is a marked increase in the diversity, inclusiveness and uniqueness of lifestyles for people with disability.

What were the drivers for change in 2009?

In 2009, the most powerful driver for change was the shared commitment by all parties, including state and local government, to adopt a strengths based framework for enhancing sector/community partnerships. The focus shifted sharply over a 5 year period from crisis based investment to proactive, early intervention and capacity strengthening responses to meeting needs.

The role of government changed with the Commonwealth taking on full responsibility for funding individual support needs through a nationally consistent assessment process. Meanwhile, the State Government focused on:
- service development;
- accountability; and
- building capacity in individuals and families to make better use of resources and drive their own future.

By 2012 both levels of government declared an intention to move away from infrastructure capital investment to community and social capital investment. A key role of the State Government was the establishment of a strong network of Community Navigators* (Local Area Coordinators). The Community Navigators provided timely access to local information and referral to generic and specialised services if required, but their primary focus was on building a network of enduring, lifelong, freely given relationships around the person.

The strategies employed by the State Government also included awareness raising education programs, such as:
- kids teaching kids in every Queensland school;
- mentoring programs and skill and experience building programs for people with disability and families at key life stages;
- host family and shared care arrangements; and family collectives.

These strategies were developed in direct response to the expressed needs of community, individuals with a disability and families with close attention paid to content and choice of provider to ensure coherence. These strategies were implemented as a function of specialist non government organisations.

By the end of 2010, state and local governments were, together, actively driving strategies to build a safe, capable, responsive community that acknowledged that there is a place for all, and a role for all citizens in the building of their community. These strategies included the establishment of a network of Community Builders* (community development workers) located across every region of the state. The role of these skilled, committed people was to work closely with the Community Navigators, individuals with disability and the community to:
- educate;
- remove the structural, policy and attitudinal barriers to full inclusion; and
- to ensure all people have the means and opportunity to make contribution as members of their community.

Local councils aligned on development application processes and started working closely with developers and community groups, insisting on all new developments (in particular, housing) being based on the principles of universal design[1]. By mid 2010, a strong shift was noted in urban design with a range of spaces and places being established specifically to provide opportunities for people with disability to participate safely and generously in wider community life.

Of particular note, were the frequency and quality of partnerships between state and local government, people with disability, families and housing groups. These partnerships were critical to ensure a range of inclusive and sustainable housing alternatives (and the support where required) for people with disability, as they moved into adulthood — or in the case of acquired impairment — returned to living independently.

All levels of government were making sure their own business practices (such as procurement practice and public service accommodation/travel policies) become disability friendly.

At a service provider level, services willing to work in new ways were able to position themselves for sustainability through capacity funding (for infrastructure) and were able to offer a broad range of person-centred service responses. By 2012 organisations had adapted readily to expectations that new services would be built around need rather than program eligibility, and had developed 5 year transition plans to ensure person-centred responses for existing clients.

Footnote 1:
Changes to the *Building Code* through the *Access to Premises Standard* will cover most new and extensively modified public buildings — the real gap now is with Class 1 and 2 buildings (single dwelling houses and flats).

At the same time, the range of options for funding these service responses broadened to include (but not be limited to) direct payment, individual funding, recurrent and life-stage based funding arrangements.

The role of the person with disability was clear

It was that people with disability:
- identify their own vision for a good life, their needs and preferences wherever possible;
- participate actively in the life of community to their full potential (in whatever sense community has meaning for them); and
- inform and support continuous improvement in service delivery at a local level.

The role of a faithful family and enduring friends was clear

It was that a faithful family and enduring friends:
- have a natural authority in the life of the person with disability;
- assist the person with disability to envision, plan and build a decent life;
- preserve their ordinary roles and relationships as family or enduring friends; and
- are a consistent, enduring link between the person, the community and support system.

The role of Community was clear

It was that community:
- acknowledges, embraces, promotes, establishes, maintains, and develops further and rewards the gifts, talents and contributions of all of its citizens;
- works in partnership with 'significant others' in the addressing of barriers that restrict valued community participation for all; and
- values the opportunity to both individually and collectively act, so as to ensure that the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* is evident within the daily life circumstances of individuals with a disability within community.
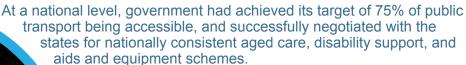
The role of services was clear

By the end of 2010, the disability service system was responding, person by person, within a universal set of principles including:
- consistency of application and funding response;
- entitlement and certainty for people using services;
- building capacity, competency and interdependent community relationships *in place*;
- helping build a thriving, supportive network of family, friends and community from the outset;
- respect for the natural authority and roles of family and enduring friendships in any service response;
- design of service response (generic and/or specialised) to meet individual need; and
- a focus on the least restrictive alternative and review of outcomes.

The role of government was clear

Government across all jurisdictions had:
- worked diligently to understand and ensure that the United Nation's *Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities* was reflected in their policy and practice;
- ensured the service delivery system is driven by social policy predicated on disability as a social construct rather than personal tragedy;
- policy that assumes universal entitlement to adequate support to live a decent life; and
- put in place a national disability insurance scheme, similar to the Medicare levy.

At a national level, government had achieved its target of 75% of public transport being accessible, and successfully negotiated with the states for nationally consistent aged care, disability support, and aids and equipment schemes.

The Queensland Government had shown strong leadership in the *National Disability Agreement* (NDA) negotiations of 2012, paving the way for a new, more equitable system of need identification and allocation of funding.

In 2019, funding of disability support has two key elements:
1. the *individual funding allocation* determined through the national assessment process (based on need rather than impairment), with state and commonwealth jurisdictions working well together to coordinate housing and disability service provision.
2. the *service capacity funding* (based on demonstration of outcomes-based quality certification) and support provided by the state.

While funding is predominately driven by individual needs, due regard is given to the individuals' gifts, talents and potential contributions to the community in which they live. The individual is assisted with information, vision building, planning and navigation through the system by the Community Navigator in their community, and opportunities for contribution identified and facilitated.

Service and community capacity building is provided by the Community Builder.

Accountability

By mid 2010, the Queensland Government had pulled back on the burdensome, compliance based quality systems and negotiated successfully with community based organisations and service users for a purely developmental system, using the more generic health and wellbeing indicators alongside the disability service standards and human rights indicators.

How did this transformation occur?

By the end of 2009, Queensland's Minister for Disability Services has submitted a 10 year plan to Cabinet that had wide support from a broad range of stakeholders, including:
• people with disability;
• family and carers;
• service providers;
• advocates;
• government;
• educationalists;
• business people; and
• other interested Queenslanders.

The 10 year plan was well supported by Cabinet and paved the way for the *Inclusion Bill* of 2010.

The broad objectives of the *Bill* were:
- enactment of UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*;
- strong individual, family and community capacity;
- inclusive communities – spaces and places, that are physically and socially accessible;
- a government investment strategy that supports strengths based rather than deficit or crisis based responses to need;
- a service system predicated on building supports around the individual and family as its first priority;
- government policy that ensures seamless access, not only to personal support but support to access, participate and gain strong outcomes from health, education (including VET and University education) and employment; and
- acknowledgment of the inherent vulnerability of people with a disability and the need for independent systemic and individual advocacy.

A *Diversity Charter* was also developed as a result of the consultation that informed the Minister's 10 year plan, and provided the litmus test or basis for evaluating all new and existing policy and practice initiatives. The *Diversity Charter* was a rallying point and important symbol of change for the sector between 2009 and 2014.

A range of strategies were put in place to implement the charter which included but were not limited to:
- a review of existing Commonwealth, State and Local government policy and practice as a starting point for realignment of funding policy and programs, with the *Diversity Charter*;
- incentives (financial and flexibility) for funded services to engage with their stakeholders and make the transition required of the 10 year plan;
- establishment of local planning, resource allocation and community engagement mechanisms to ensure responsiveness at a community level;
- funding of research (sourced from specific research funding programs rather than from disability budget) to establish evidence based policy and practice; and
- a well-resourced community engagement strategy to enhance visibility and increase the community of concern.

Where to from here (2009)?

For Queenslanders to live this scenario, the quality of leadership and engagement from both government and community sectors is critical. The community sector has committed to comprehensive engagement of both the disability sector and the broader community, including government, to gain a better understanding of what an inclusive community means for people.

Moving from scenario to reality will require, among other things:
- An acknowledgement that step-by-step change is required.
- Transparency and a willingness to scrutinise current policy, practice, and reforms underway.
- Acknowledgement of the need to ensure that available funding is distributed fairly with as many people as possible accessing services.
- Acknowledgement that existing funding is insufficient to respond to all people who require support through specialised services.
- Acknowledgement that diversity includes older people and cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Willingness to explore new ways of working.
- Willingness to allow evidence and the needs of people with disability inform policy & practice.
- Willingness to align government investment with the vision.
- Commitment to the developmental work and capacity building required by all parties, including government, non-government service providers, individuals with disability, families/carers, and the community needed to effect the shift in culture, policy and practice to make the vision a reality.

How can you get involved?

We would like to hear your vision for an alternative future for people with disability, their families and supporters. Please refer to page 14 of this document to share your vision or visit www.blue-skies.info

Glossary*

Asset Based Community Development
Asset based community development is a powerful approach focused on discovering and mobilising the resources that are already present in a community. It provides a way for citizens to find and mobilise what they have in order to build a stronger community (Green, Moore, & O'Brien, 2006).

Capacity building
Capacity building at an individual or family level is about strengthening competence and ability to be self determining, given adequate support.

Capacity building at a service provider level is about strengthening engagement, creativity and responsiveness, ensuring that the needs of the individual remain at the forefront of service provision without loss of service viability.

Capacity building at a community level is about strengthening the awareness, competence and confidence for community to embrace diversity. Efforts are aimed at providing opportunities for people with disability to contribute to the life of the community as well as being recipients of support.

Citizen
...has a valued place in community. He or she has rights and responsibilities and every citizen is vital to the structure of a vibrant community.

Community
...is the place and space mutually shared by all members of society.

Community Builder
Primary role is building capacity and willingness for community to respond to people with disability as citizens.

To activate and support the emergence of existing goodwill within the community. To provide the opportunity for mutual exchange of contribution between people with disability and their fellow members of the community.

The community builder ensures a close match between the rhetoric of community inclusion and the everyday reality of living with disability.

Community Navigator
Strong relationship with both community and people with disability and their family. They are the first point of contact whether a person is born with a disability or acquires it later in life. They provide information and build skill and confidence to plan for the present and the future. Where necessary the community navigator makes referral to services – generic or specialised, based on a best fit approach.

Entitlement
Entitlement is a guarantee of access to benefits because of rights, or by agreement through law. It also refers to a generally held belief by society that one is deserving of some particular reward or benefit.

In the case of people with disabilities, entitlement implies that the support offered is sufficient to ensure that he or she can be an equal, active member of society.

Funding
...is the level of hands-on support provided to the individual by the government to pay for specialist care e.g. personal care, community access.

Inclusion
...implies that there are no structures, systems or rules to prevent any citizen from accessing the community – its people and spaces - or what it offers.

Equity (no specific reference in text)
...means that all citizens with a disability are acknowledged to have differing needs of support and this is reflected in the varying levels of funding that are provided and in the fact that citizens are supported at the level they need.

Invitation to give feedback

Question 1:
What would it take to create an inclusive community? *What is your vision?*

_____

_____

_____

Question 2:
Please describe the elements of your vision for an inclusive community that are already occurring.

_____

_____

_____

Question 3:
What action would you be willing to take to progress this vision?

_____

_____

_____

Please feel free to add any additional information
(examples might include, more pages, a video, a drawing or a personal story)

Your name: _____

Your phone: _____

Your email: _____

Are you:
a person with disability? ☐   a worker in the   ☐
                                   disability sector?

a family member of
someone with a disability? ☐   other (please specify)? _____

Call for Champions!

As the *Blue Skies Scenario* is considered and refined throughout the consultation process, it will be important to build the momentum needed to make the Blue Skies Scenario a reality.

If you would like to help spread the word that the Blue Skies Consultation is taking place and that you believe the *Blue Skies Scenario* is worth consideration, please lend your support as a *Blue Skies Champion in Principle*.

To become a Blue Skies Champion in Principle, simply send us:
1.   Your name;
2.   A passport size photo; and
3.   A positive message about Blue Skies.

From there, your name, photo and message will appear on the Blue Skies website (www.blue-skies.info).

Yes, I would like to become a Blue Skies Champion in Principle — please add my details to the Blue Skies website.

My name is: _____

_____

My photo is attached.

My positive message about Blue Skies is:

_____

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_____

_____

*Please **email** your feedback to:*   contactblueskies@gmail.com
or
*Please **fax** return your feedback to:* (07) 3357 4288
or
*Please **mail** your feedback to:*   Blue Skies
PO Box 3344
Newmarket Q 4051

14

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