

# Reframing *Disability*

## Annual Report 2020 - 2021



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# When families thrive, *children thrive*

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**We not only dream of a world of respect, acceptance, and empowerment for all children and their families. We're creating it.**

Reframing Disability is a family-led, not-for-profit organisation that supports parents and caregivers raising children with disability, developmental delays or medical needs.

Our team is across best practice, evidence-based approaches to supporting children and their families. But we also draw upon our lived experiences as parents and caregivers of children with disability, providing that extra level of expertise and support to others on a similar journey.



Through education, information and guidance from a community of people who've been there, we empower families to build the skills, confidence and knowledge that will see their child and family thrive.

Our free workshops and programs, evidence-based resources and uplifting community spaces help parents and caregivers navigate the everyday realities raising a child with disability. But perhaps more importantly, they help them see a future of full possibility for their child. And themselves.

## *Our vision*

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A world built on respect, acceptance, and empowerment for children with disability, their caregivers and families.

## *Our mission*

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Empower families to empower children to become leaders of their own lives.

**Every family journey is unique and full of beautiful unknowns. And no journey needs to be travelled alone.**

## Peer-led

Where the leadership team and key stakeholders are also caregivers of children with disability, developmental delay or medical need.

## Strengths based

An approach that shifts the focus away from deficits to a space where an individual is seen for what they can do.

## Family leadership

Where every family member can build positive relationships and use their strength, resilience and agency to create the kind of life they want to live.

## Positive psychology

A scientific study of what makes life worth living. Focuses on those thoughts, feelings and behaviours that promote strength and wellbeing.

## Citizenship

Where each person is respected, and their differences are recognised as different, not less than.

## Rights-based

Protecting the rights and dignity of people. Where we all take every possible action so that children with disabilities can enjoy all human rights and freedoms equally.

## Family-centred

An understanding that parents know their children best. This approach fosters an equal partnership between professionals and family members, where caregivers can make decisions and build their capacity.

## Social Model of Disability

Where disability is framed as the result of an environment filled with physical, attitudinal and social barriers, rather than a failure on an individual's part.



# A message from the Chair

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2020-21 saw Reframing Disability enter its second year as an organisation – and navigate an unprecedented 12 months of firsts for both the RD team and the world.

Despite all the challenges that the covid-19 pandemic has thrown at us, our second year has been one of exciting growth, putting plans into action, fostering partnerships and expanding in many different directions.

As a community made by caregivers, for caregivers, Reframing Disability fills an important gap in the current disability landscape. Our workshops, information resources, community, and direct peer-to-peer support programs are provided in a wide variety of formats to help families to navigate their new and unexpected path.



Be it through our practical and interactive workshops, our webinars and panel discussions, our peer group or our parent-led Peer Connect Program, we deliver clear and consistent messages of hope, belonging and self-management to families at all stages, fostering a mindset of possibility and purpose.

The need for a safe, socially distanced connection brought enormous opportunity in the digital space, which Reframing Disability was well placed to respond to – a demonstration of how nimble and responsive we can be as a young, contemporary organisation.

But perhaps most importantly, we have become a much-needed conduit between families living the day-to-day realities of raising children with disability and the disability sector as a whole. As a dynamic organisation – knowing what parents and caregivers want and need – we are in a unique position to articulate personal experience and lived realities to the broader disability sector, ensuring change at the institutional level that will best meet the needs of children with disability.

Thank you to our dedicated Board of Directors who volunteer their valuable time and contribute so much to ensure the good governance of Reframing Disability. During this period, we farewellled Clayton Buffoni; we thank him for his contribution as a board director. We welcomed Joanne Jakovich and Debra Jefferis as directors and Nerida Bodycote as director and treasurer.

Thanks too to our talented and passionate staff – with so many challenges this year (and many raising young children with disability themselves), your contributions have been nothing short of exceptional.

My heartfelt thanks to all the parents, families and caregivers who have connected with us – it's your incredible journeys that we seek to lift and celebrate through the ever-expanding RD community. Finally, a special thanks to our founding CEO Stacey Touma, who continues to go above and beyond to make our vision a reality.



**Kate McNamara**  
*Chairperson*

I'm delighted to present Reframing Disability's second ever Annual Report and share with you our stories of growth and impact from the past 12 months.

With passion, innovation, and plenty of hard work, we've seen so many of the ideas seeded in our first year come to life in our second. We've made tangible gains in our mission to help caregivers of children with disability, delay or medical needs build the knowledge, capacity and confidence that will see their families thrive. And I'm so honoured to be part of the journey.

Reframing Disability is a family-led, capacity-building organisation. Drawing from our lived experiences of raising children with disability, we can offer a unique and much-needed kind of support to families that complements and enhances the support they receive through allied health professionals, medical practitioners and educators.

It has been so heartening to have our vision embraced by a host of new partners over the past year. These partners have included early childhood intervention organisations, medical professionals, community organisations and allied health practitioners right across NSW. We are delighted for these opportunities to collaborate and grateful for the support, advice and referrals.

Our partnership with MyTime saw the launch of an ongoing online peer group and virtual community forum. We also partnered with Monash University to host 20 Healthy Mothers Healthy Families sessions, an evidence-based health empowerment program for mothers and female caregivers raising children with disability.

There's certainly been no shortage of challenges in 2020-21, and I'm so proud of how responsive and selfless the RD team has been in supporting families during the covid-19 pandemic. Even prior to covid, we operated a virtual business model, which meant we already had many of the systems in place to support the digital delivery of our webinars, panel discussions, workshops and community groups.

Excitingly, we were awarded an Informational Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant from the Department of Social Services, allowing us to scale up our programs and supports to families across New South Wales, and a sensational rebrand and new website have further grown our reach and engagement across our expanding digital platforms.

With NDIA funding locked in until June 2022, we look forward to further building our capacity as an organisation, expanding our programs and resources and helping more families find the tools they need to parent from a place of strength and confidence. Key points of future focus will be on building the leadership of families to directly support other families, growing our Peer Connect program, as well as supporting parents and caregivers in regional communities and from diverse backgrounds.

Reframing Disability is guided by a dedicated board of Directors, driven by their lived experience of disability and united by their commitment to children and families. An enormous thank you to the Board – and special thanks to our Chair Kate McNamara – for her unwavering support and guidance.

And of course, we simply couldn't do what we do without our passionate team, who this year have juggled home learning alongside their work. Our results are a testament to your ongoing passion and commitment, and I extend my personal thanks to each and every one of you.

**We hope this Annual Report inspires you to share our work and to become advocates for our mission – to empower all families and children to discover a future full of possibility.**



Stacey Touma  
CEO

Reframing Disability is guided by a dedicated and skilled board of directors, united by their commitment to children and families. Our board members have lived experience of disability.



**Kate McNamara**  
*Director/Chair*



**Nerida Bodycote**  
*Director/Treasurer*



**Debra Jefferis**  
*Director*



**Glenn Redmayne**  
*Director*



**Joanne Jakovich**  
*Director*



**Josh Williamson**  
*Director*



**Justine Flynn**  
*Director*



## Support

Our Peer Connect program unites caregivers starting out on their journey with those further along the way. Our trained and knowledgeable Peer Support Specialists each have personal experiences raising children with disability or medical needs, and can help families discover a future full of possibilities for their child and family..

- Peer Connect program



## Education

Our programs, workshops and webinars are based on best practice approaches to supporting children with disability. We cover everything from navigating important milestones, the ins and outs of the school, healthcare and support systems, plus stacks of other topics identified by our families.

- Webinars & panel discussions
- Healthy Mothers Healthy Families program
- Interactive and practical workshops
- Family Conference



## Connection

Linking up with like-minded parents and caregivers changes everything. We provide opportunities for families to come together to share, laugh and learn. It's a safe, inclusive space that can help to navigate everyday life, and the big picture.

- MyTime Online Peer Group
- Family Network Facebook Community Group
- Hospital Parents Peer Group



## Information

We offer practical tips, easy fact sheets, accessible info and evidence-based strategies to see families through the day-to-day realities of your child's disability, developmental delay or medical needs. Because when families have the right tools, they can build capacity and parent from a place of confidence and positivity.

- Tip sheets and resources from parents and professionals
- Stories from the disability community
- Stories from families



## Funding

In October 2020, Reframing Disability was awarded two-year funding from the Department of Social Services in the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grant round.

The project is titled: Family Leadership and Mentoring program and the aim of the funding is to empower families through resources, education and peer support.

## My Time partnership

Reframing Disability is proud to continue to partner with Tresillian to deliver MyTime.

MyTime is for parents and carers of children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition. It's a place for you to come together to share information and build a network.

Reframing Disability hosts a weekly online peer group and facilitates an online community groups hosted on Facebook.

## Healthy Mothers Healthy Families partnership

Reframing Disability is proud to partner with Monash University and A/Prof Helen Bourke-Taylor to deliver the Healthy Mothers Healthy Families (HMHF) program.

HMHF is an evidence-based health education and empowerment program for mothers and female caregivers raising a child with a disability.

The Department of Social Services has funded Reframing Disability and Monash University to deliver 20 online HMHF groups and train 5 facilitators.



## Training for MyTime facilitators

Reframing Disability is a virtual organisation and supports families through online delivery. Given this experience, the team was able to support the community when services moved online.

Reframing Disability developed training and delivered training to support MyTime facilitators across 3 states to transition their peer group to an online format.

## Family Conference

Reframing Disability partnered with Plumtree Children's Services and Now & Next to host the 2020 Family Conference.

Hosted online, the conference brings together families of children with disabilities and their allies. It aims to inspire, educate and empower families in building a good life and celebrate people with a disability who are making a difference in their community.

27

Blogs and resources published

13

workshops, webinars and conference delivered online

7

training sessions delivered to MyTime facilitators

32

People with lived experience as a parent or person with disability contributed to a blog post or at an event.

**358**

Families attended a webinar, online workshop, program or Conference.

**71**

MyTime facilitators from NSW, VIC & SA attended an online peer group facilitation training.

**35**

Family members supported in MyTime peer group.

**128**

Family members supported in MyTime Online Community Group.

**9,500**  
website  
views

**92,000**  
Facebook  
reach

**63,000**  
Instagram  
reach

**65%** Significantly improved

**35%** Improved

Motivation and confidence have improved as a result of Reframing Disability activities.

**57%** Significantly improved

**43%** Improved

Skills have improved as a result of Reframing Disability activities.

**100%**

would recommend Reframing Disability to other families.



"Fabulous facilitators and such a wonderful group - so supportive and some beautiful connections made. Thank you!"



"These workshops have changed my life in ways I never imagined possible. Thank you for having this course, two amazing presenters who gave me lots of little hints and encouragement in my journey."



"Thank you for continuing to produce fantastic resources and events for parents!"



"Thank you Reframing Disability. It is a breath of fresh air to find a community of parents that are positive and supportive. My whole perception has changed of what my daughters future will look like. "



"I just wanted to thank you for what you are doing. It was wonderful to come across a page that is so positive! I get so overwhelmed and depressed with so many groups but this one has really helped and encouraged me. Thank you."



"This is my protected timeslot. It is saved in my calendar and my partner knows that this is a non-negotiable for me. I have learnt so much from everyone in the group and I love being able to share and help other parents."



# Acknowledgements

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Thank you to the following organisations and our partners:

- Department of Social Services
- Tresillian - MyTime
- Monash University - Healthy Mothers Healthy Families (HMHF) program
- A/Prof Helen Bourke-Taylor, creator of the HMHF program

Thank you to the organisations, allied health practitioners and health professionals we have worked with for your support, advice and partnership.

Thank you to the families and people with disability who shared their lived experiences for families to learn from.

Thank you to the family leaders who co-designed with us and contributed to developing our programs and resources.

Thank you to the passionate and dedicated board of directors and team.



**Empower families *to empower children.***