CHATS WITH
PEOPLE WHO USE SRV

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AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL ROLE VALORISATION ASSOCIATION

MICHELLE O'FLYNN SEPTEMBER 2025

Michelle is a parent, advocate, and grumpy retiree who still rails against injustice and discrimination. She lives on Macleay Island in Southern Moreton Bay.

GREG: Michelle, can you say a little about how you became interested in SRV?

MICHELLE: My exposure and learnings began as a member of a systems advocacy group which was then called Queensland Parents of People with Disability (QPPD), and my steep learning both in that organisation and with Community Resource Unit (CRU) and Jane Sherwin.

I am an aging parent of a youngish woman with intellectual impairment, an advocate, activist, and ally. I have used SRV in all capacities, but in my former role as Director of Queensland Advocacy Inc. (QAI), and due to the legacy of the first Director, Jeremy Ward, SRV was mandatory training for all advocates and lawyers.

GREG: Have you met Professor Wolfensberger?

MICHELLE: Yes Greg, I have. After a battle with Education Queensland (EQ), I had the terrific opportunity to participate in a 7-day social advocacies event with Wolf Wolfensberger himself. I had been on the frontline with EQ, and vehemently believe that if we are to avoid the worst experiences that can be thrust upon people with disability, then we must do our utmost at the very first instance of those threats – which happens to be at schools.

GREG: Michelle, you've explained about coming to SRV through QPPD, CRU, and QAI. However I'd really appreciate hearing a little of the place SRV has in your family life. How do you go about using SRV?

MICHELLE: As the nominee for my daughter, Lindsey, I've developed a professional and structured model of support that instils the vision and values our family holds for her. I have engaged a team leader and an admin staff member to help with a succession plan for myself, and to take this model forward.

It is essential that all of Lindsey's supporters hold the same vision and values as the family and are enabled to implement this with forethought and self-awareness.

The induction and training that is mandatory for supporters is deeply rooted in SRV principles. Further professional development that we provide is sourced from the civil society networks. As supporters progress in their knowledge and understanding, SRV is offered as a course for them to undertake.

GREG: What are the challenges in hanging in there with SRV Michelle?

MICHELLE: Post NDIS rollout has seen a workforce that has become fairly transient, driven by the 'market' mindset. Therefore, it

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often takes quite a while to find supporters who stay in the team and avail themselves of these opportunities. However, Lindsey has one long term highly valued and trusted supporter who is part of the inner circle in Lindsey's life. Some of her former supporters remain in her life as a friend, because they have come to know her well and see her effervescence and gifts.

When I first undertook SRV education, the examples given that exemplify devaluation and degradation of vulnerable people were stark and at that time (to a youngish mother) quite shocking. Now a few decades later, the messages and examples are more subtle but no less devaluing. One might think that some of the treatment of devalued people is unconscious. However, the status of people with disability and others who are treated differently (and less than other citizens) is mostly quite concerted and intentional. This is often because of a perception that it costs too much money to elevate people with disability to equitable status in areas of education, employment, representation.

GREG: Michelle, can you say a little more about SRV's importance in your life?

MICHELLE: Greg, the SRV lens is now quite integral in my life, and it has been shared with many others, at times with clear intent on my part, just as part of who I am and what my beliefs are. This is now a part of how my partner views the world particularly with his aging father who elected to move into aged care (against our advice!)

GREG: And for those new to SRV, what would you recommend?

MICHELLE: Well, first of all, do the theory workshop – having others walking you through the theory is okay to a point but you need the full picture. I recommend to anyone who is new to SRV to start with the series, 'Chats with People', read 'SRV Matters' and discuss it with people who have adopted SRV into their lives. One of the most important ways to understand how to use SRV is to ask yourself, 'does this make sense if it were me/my loved ones'; and 'does it have purpose and meaning and bring value to you/the person's life?'.

GREG: I appreciate your keenness to do this for the SRV Community Michelle, thank you.