

# Community Living Association

“An Emerging Practice Alongside  
Parents with Intellectual Disability”

ASID conference November, 2023

Crystal, parent expert, and Renee, CLA social worker, will share a social work practice that has emerged in collaboration with parents with intellectual disability to assist parents to address barriers and achieve their parenting goals.



Crystal  
Richardson

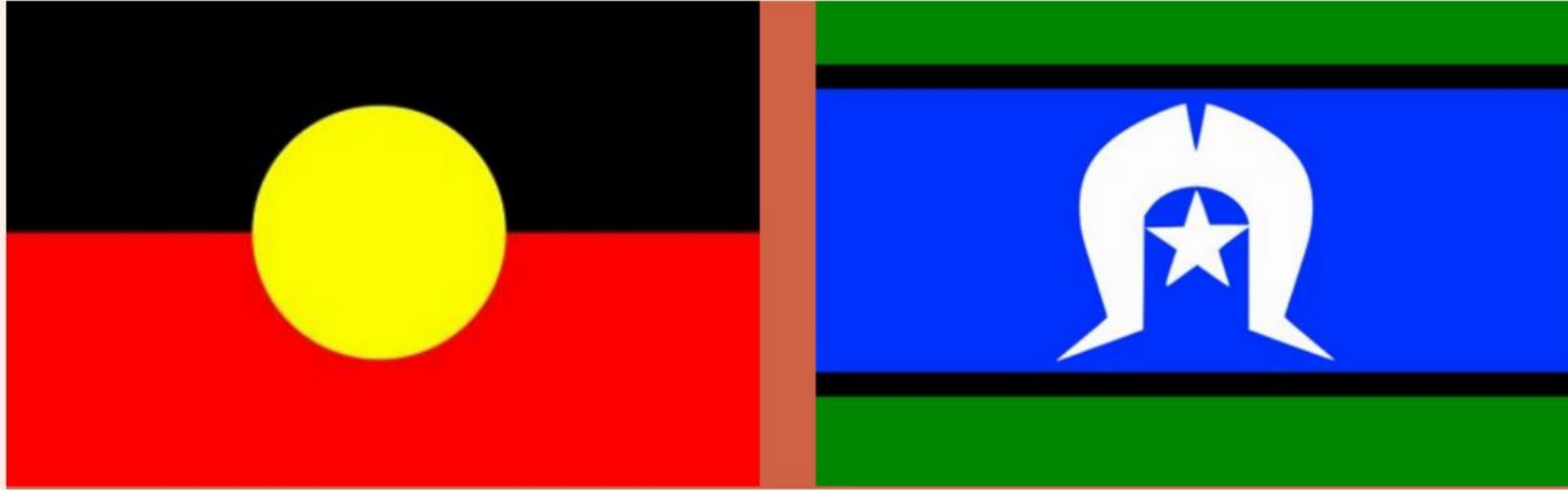


Renee  
Mills



**COMMUNITY**  
LIVING ASSOCIATION

# Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Traditional custodians of the Land on which we meet today, the Wurrundjeri Peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge any First Nations People in the room with us today. We further acknowledge the overrepresentation of First Nations families within child protection systems across this Nation and commit to working alongside community.

# How we got here...



- CLA works alongside people with intellectual and cognitive disability
- The ARROS team supports young people with intellectual disability transitioning from care who are experiencing or risk homelessness
- Many of the young people we connected with became parents during or soon after, their transition from care. Parents told us that being a mum or dad was their most important role in life, but often Child Safety got involved.
- We developed a parenting specific program to ensure mums and dads with ID got the support they needed, as they often found mainstream supports inaccessible.



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# What we do...

1

The type of support

Individual

Group  
work

Project

2

The process of reflecting on  
our work together



- We work alongside people offering collaborative, person centred individual, group and project responses.
- The focused parenting work has grown through our connection with parents and has evolved since the introduction of NDIS.
- The perspectives, experiences and knowledge of parents is centred in the work. Throughout 2023 we engaged in consultation with parents and social work staff to reflect on the practice it takes to best support parents.
- This reflection occurs within the context of parents struggling to access or receive appropriate responses from mainstream services and being unable to access parenting specific support through NDIS.

Tinker is a mum with intellectual disability.

She was created by the mother's who come to the Mum's morning tea group at CLA.

She was created so we can share the many common experiences of parents with intellectual disability. The challenges the strengths, what works and the successes!

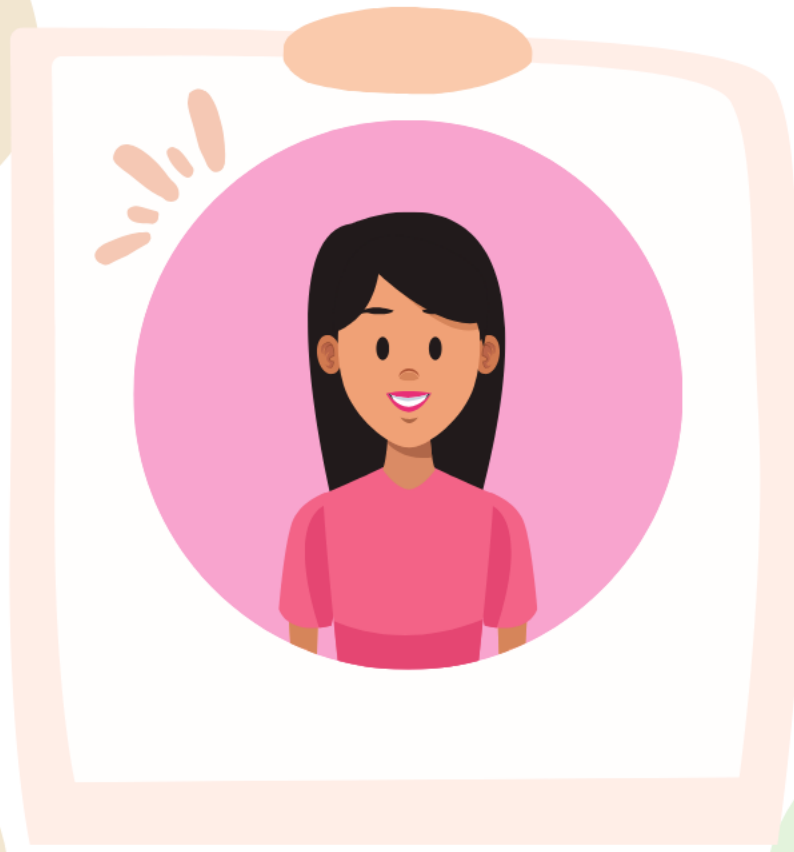
Every parent's journey is unique, but everyone agreed they all understood Tinker as a mum with similar experiences to their own.

Tinker will help us understand parent's experiences and what we have learnt about what works well.



Introducing "Tinker"

# Tinker's Experiences



Being in care

Early home leaving and housing issues

Unsafe friends

Domestic violence

Legal and court systems

Child removal

It can be hard to speak up

Understanding can be hard!

People don't listen

Trauma, feeling sad and anxious

Workers in systems don't understand disability

# Tinker's Strengths



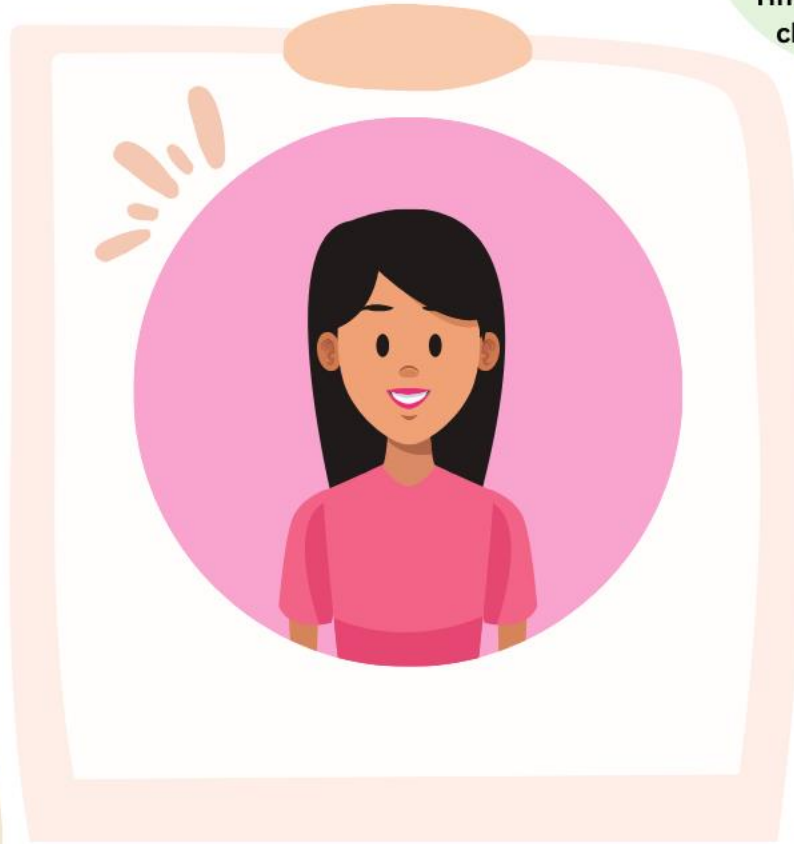
Staying strong for my kids



Commitment



Asking for help



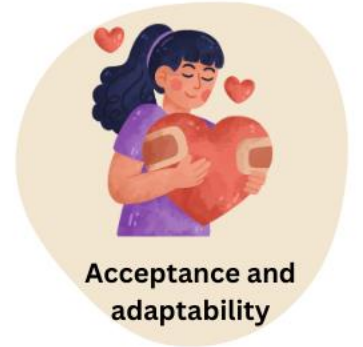
Tinker fights for her children's rights



Willing to try new things



Speaking up



Acceptance and adaptability



Coping strategies



# Tinker ..a mum that knows what works!



I get to lead the work!



A worker I can trust



A worker who listens & understands me



A worker to journey alongside me and my kids



Being inclusive of disability



Banding together to support each other



Finding ways to learn that work for me!



Learning parenting skills as my kids grow up



Helping with my trauma



Safely managing and sharing my emotions



Learning to speak up for myself and others



Help to navigate systems

# Tinker's achievements



Feeling proud



Feeling good



Systems are learning



Healthy support network



A peer network that helps each other



CALM

Managing emotions better



Healthy relationships



I am closer to my kids



My kids learn from me. Learning together and creating memories.



Better communication



Better relationship with foster carer



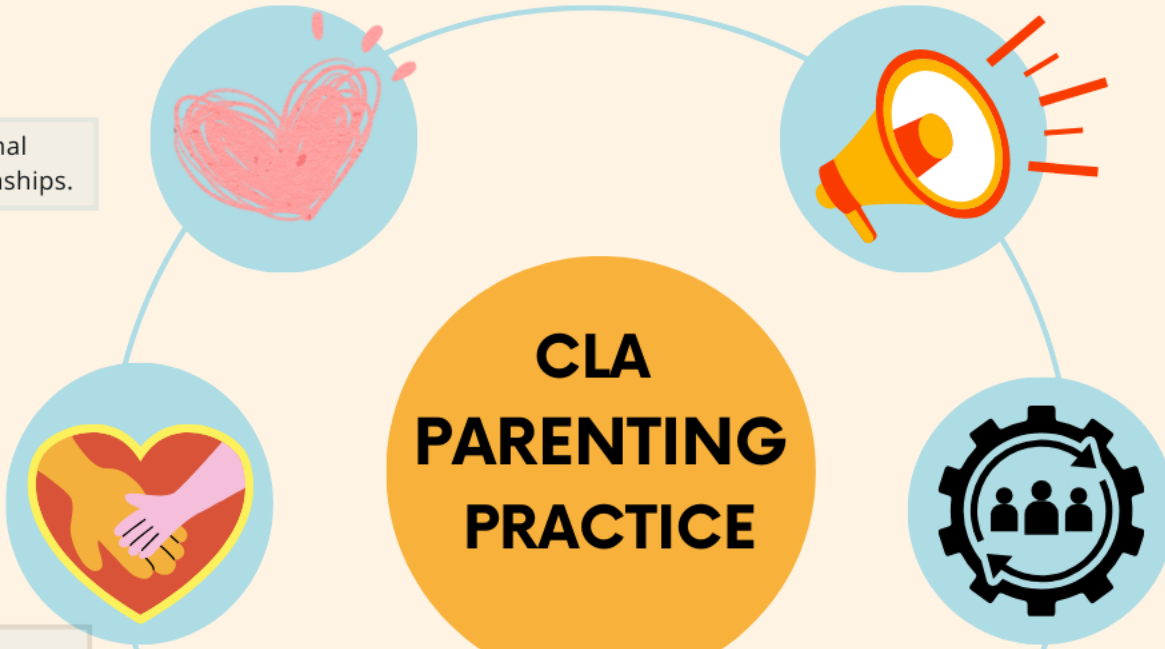
Better relationship with the Child Safety

# Managing Emotions

Therapeutic interventions - trauma work, emotional regulation, identity, grief and loss, healthy relationships.

**"Having your kids removed is trauma. in itself, on top of all the other traumas. It's important to take time to self care."**

**"I used to yell abuse at the CSO because she would make me so angry. Now I can stay calm even when she is treating me unfairly. It's better for me and my kids."**



# Speaking Up

- Engaging in advocacy alongside parents
- Building capacity for self advocacy, peer advocacy and systems advocacy

**"They might have a degree, but unless you've walked in my shoes you don't understand."**

**"Knowing your rights and learning to speak up for yourself and your friends is important. It feels good to know people are listening and hopefully things change."**

**"By speaking up calmly, I am teaching my kids to speak up and use their voice and not be afraid."**

# Parenting

- Building parenting Capacity:
- Tailored education (knowledge/skills)
  - Circle of Security (attachment focus)
  - Practical support (e.g., modelling during contact)

**"Being a parent doesn't come with a manual. so give us time and we can show you we can actually parent."**

**"Take each day as it comes to learn new things as your kids grow up. Lots of us come from Child Safety so we don't have good role models. Learning to play is something I didn't get growing up."**

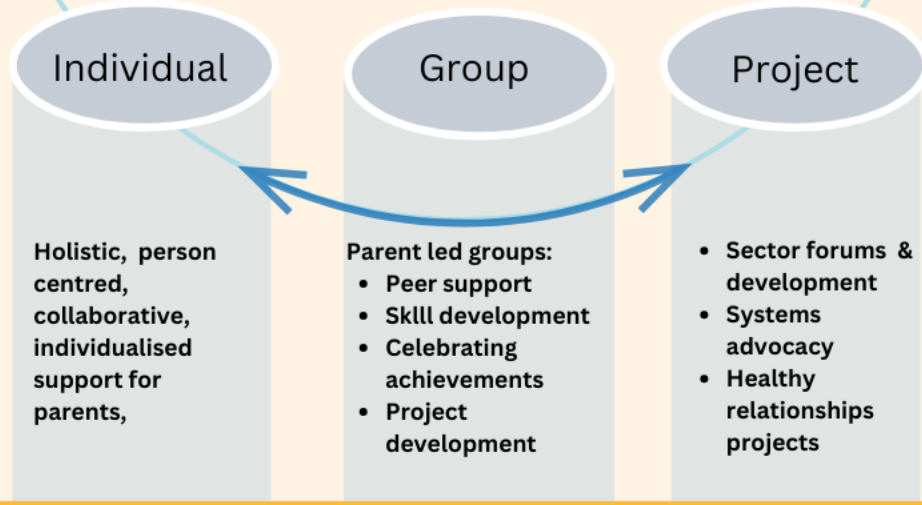
# Navigating systems

- Engaging in complex systems alongside parents:
- (e.g., legal systems, child protection, NDIS, health, housing and education)

**"Systems like Child safety judge us and don't recognise individual needs. Don't judge a book by its cover."**

**"As parents, we should have more access to the community and systems."**

**"They should have disability specific teams and more understanding of disability and mental health. You should be able to advocate for yourself without a worker."**



Holistic, person centred, collaborative, individualised support for parents,

- Parent led groups:
- Peer support
  - Skill development
  - Celebrating achievements
  - Project development

- Sector forums & development
- Systems advocacy
- Healthy relationships projects

- Parent centred-family focused
- Relational
- Holistic
- Deep listening
- Holding hope
- Centring lived experience
- Influencing systems
- Reflective practice
- Disability and trauma informed



Thank  
you!