

Working relationships between people with intellectual disability and support workers: What role does policy play?

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Background

- The way that relationships between people with intellectual disability and their support workers are positioned in policy is a knowledge gap.
- This relationship is increasingly important in NDIS and other policy contexts.
- This policy review comprised the first phase of ARC Linkage *Relationships and Recognition* project



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Focus of the review

- The extent to which current disability policy acknowledges, promotes or diminishes the role of relationships between people with intellectual disability and workers
- Using Honneth's recognition theory to examine:
 - whether and how relationships between people with disabilities and their support workers are articulated in policy; and
 - to find out to what extent institutionally or normatively mediated recognition is present or absent.

Process

- 3 stage process:
 - categorization of policies, textual analysis and content analysis.
- 4 policy levels involved:
 - international, federal, state and local (the latter linked to two case study organizations).

Findings

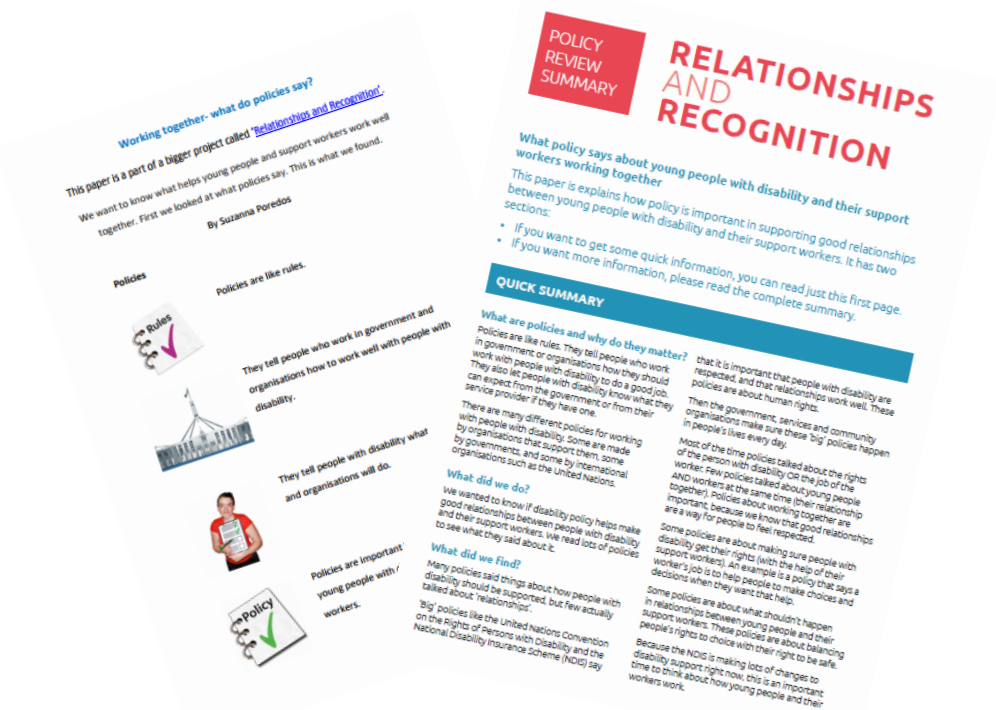
- The policies do not usually talk about the relationship as a mutual partnership.
- Policies focus mostly on the rights of people with disability and the responsibilities of support workers:
 - International and national policies are more likely to focus on the rights & position of the person with disability and respect from workers.
 - State and organisational policies reference these international and national policy aspirations, but also tend to discuss what is or is not possible to protect against risk of harm.
- The tensions between choice and safety in policy create potential struggles for recognition – something that policy cannot solve but organisations need to manage.

What does this mean for our research, and others?

- The absence of policy laying the groundwork for relationships is an important gap in understanding how people with disability and workers can be cared about, valued and respected in their work together.
- While this relationship is often positioned as an opportunity for expression of rights, current policy also highlights struggles over recognition.
- A need to ensure that policy is not too complicated with lots of social and political demands but instead lays groundwork for how human rights, freedom, identity and justice can be realised together.

What next?

- Policy paper
 - Summary
 - Plain English
 - Journal article
- Policy seminar



Informing the rest of our project

- Phase 2 : photo research with young people with disability and their support workers to understand their working relationships together



- Phase 3: surveys with young people and support workers to confirm and extend



For more information:

- Our project website: www.rcypd.edu.au/projects/r/
 - Policy review, summary, easy read material
 - Relationships and Recognition photo research book

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