



The Futures Workshop Report  
Futures of disability and communities  
Creating alternative and preferred  
futures with the six pillars approach

Willow Pryor (Futures Consultant)  
**Facilitating Futures**



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## FOREWORD

The disability and broader community service sector is faced with momentous change as they engage in preparations regarding systemic, cultural and practice shifts in response to a range of key reforms. The implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across Australia is considered the most substantial social reform in the history of disability and presents the disability sector and broader community with a scale of change not seen before. In anticipation of the work required, National Disability Services (NDS) Queensland invited key disability and community sector stakeholders to engage in a strategic foresight process that would support learning and practice in mapping, imagining and beginning to create alternative and preferred futures.

Participants came together from across the disability and broader community service sector in a two and a half day Futures Workshop led by Professor Sohail Inayatullah in February 2014 to deepen their understanding of futures thinking and strategic foresight praxis. Using the six pillars futures approach to futures thinking participants were led through a series of practical foresight exercises and methods. An anticipatory action learning approach was foundational in this workshop for the participants to explore critical futures questions such as those presented by Professor Inayatullah in the invitation to the workshop.

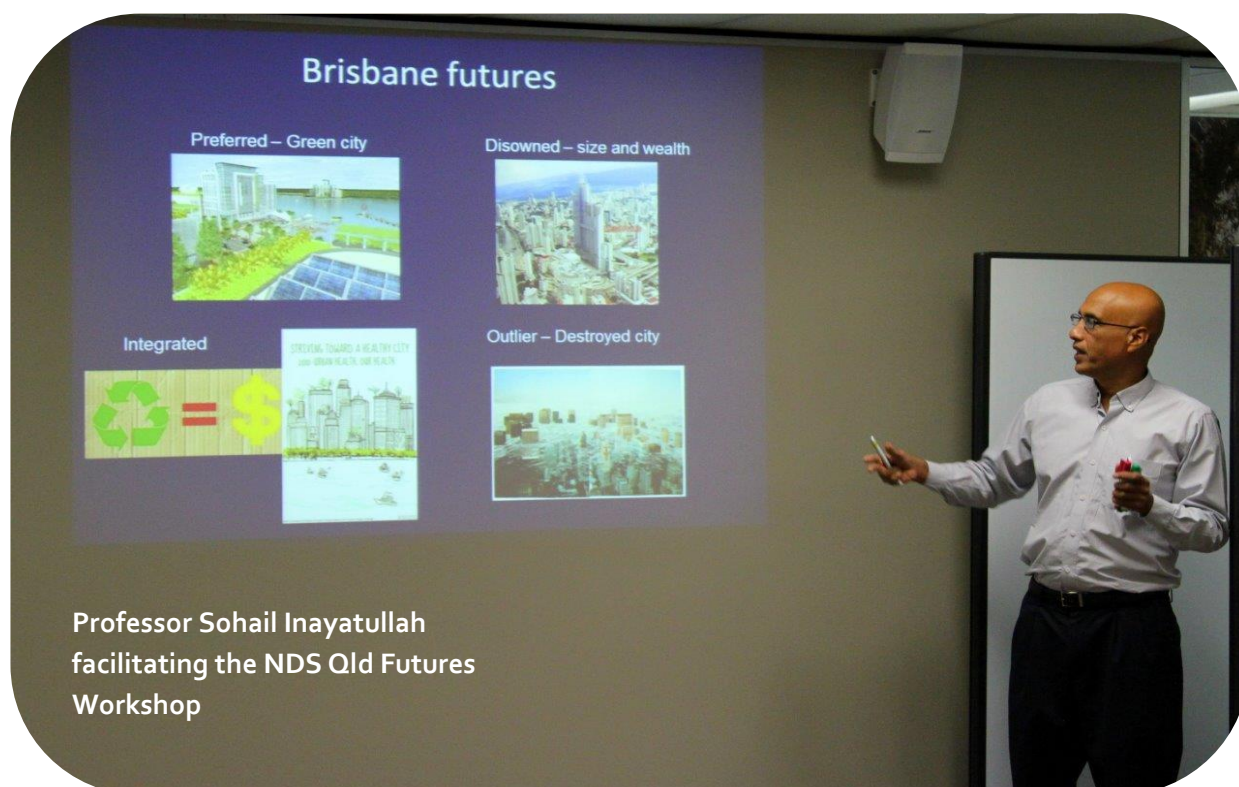
*What are the futures of disability? How are communities transforming? How will the waves of change (peer-to-peer governance; rise of Chindia; the transparent brain; the repricing of nature; healthy cities; ageing of society; and, the rise of cultural creatives, among other trends and emerging issues) impact your organization? What are the alternative futures of your community? What is your personal vision of the future?*

This report is based on the two and a half days of deliberation by participants throughout the workshop. It captures key insights from the participants and importantly reflects their generosity and willingness to engage wholeheartedly in the processes and share their learning, practice and insights. I would like to acknowledge Jane Geltch, State Manager, NDS Qld for commissioning the preparation of this report; Steve Gould, from Steve Gould Futures and Lisa Fraser, Project Manager, *Sector Readiness and Workforce Capacity Initiative*, NDS Qld, for their contributions to this report; and finally, I would like to acknowledge Professor Sohail Inayatullah for his extensive scholarship and leadership in the futures thinking field of inquiry and practice.

***Willow Pryor***  
***Facilitating Futures***

***Report Author, August 2014***

[willow@facilitatingfutures.com](mailto:willow@facilitatingfutures.com)  
[www.facilitatingfutures.com](http://www.facilitatingfutures.com)



Professor Sohail Inayatullah  
facilitating the NDS Old Futures  
Workshop

## → EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are many concerns, opportunities and hopes for alternative futures for the disability sector as a result of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reform agenda. Such reform will directly and indirectly affect the myriad persons with disabilities, their families, and key government, non-government and private enterprise stakeholders. Never before has there been such an opportunity for so many persons with disabilities and/or their families to skilfully exercise their agency over the decisions which will affect their own short and long term futures. Developing capability in futures thinking contributes greatly to a sense of agency to influence the decisions about our own future.

The NDIS reform will shift service delivery from a welfare model to market model with this change design seeking outcomes which empower the end users, or persons with disabilities. However, such reform does not come without a number of inherent risks and uncertainty for both persons with disabilities and/or their families, disability service providers and bureaucracies. Futures thinking can greatly contribute to providing the knowledge and skill of how to navigate both risks and uncertainty while at the same time – creating greater ownership, alignment and actions associated with the ‘why, what and how’ of creating meaningful and preferred futures.

This report provides an outline on the concepts behind futures thinking and discusses a range of strategic foresight methods developed by Professor Sohail Inayatullah and other theorists and practitioners in the futures thinking field. The report discusses and presents the findings from the Futures Workshop, Creating Alternative and Preferred Futures, hosted by the National Disability

Services (NDS) Queensland in February 2014. Participants of this workshop included stakeholders from a range of disability service providers, parents of and family members of people with disability; peak bodies, sector consultants and other interested parties. The intention of the workshop was to provide an educational experience in learning futures thinking concepts and methods and to situate applied futures thinking within a meaningful context to participants. As such participants were invited to identify their own topics to investigate through the use of futures concepts and methods to support the connection between learning and futures applications. The topics selected by the groups were:

**The futures of community 2025**

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**The futures of the workforce 2025**

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**The futures of the NDIS in 2025**

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**The futures of disability in 2035**

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NDS Qld hopes that the workshop provided a firm foundation from which participants are encouraged to further explore the opportunities and potentiality available from developing their own agency in strategic foresight and futures thinking competencies.







## INTRODUCTION

One way of viewing the future of the disability sector is seeing this future as uncertain. However, it can be considered that a perspective that sees the future as uncertain, assumes that there is only one future. Futures thinking challenges this assumption of a singular future and invites us to consider that the future is an open space with many alternatives. The disability sector faces many questions and decisions about how to become agile and ready to respond to change. The NDIS reform provides an invitation to the disability sector to consider how can the sector not only respond to external drivers of change but also how individuals and organisations can get ahead of the change game itself.

Futures thinking explicitly asks us to investigate the ideas and images we hold of 'the future' which are framed within our present way of thinking and knowing. Predominantly such ideas and images are underpinned by a set of assumptions or paradigms. These paradigms more often than not, tend to go unchallenged and most importantly such paradigms usually come from an historical narrative. Left unexamined there is a risk that our assumptions, solutions or images for the future can be mere representations of the past extrapolated into the future.

We can however explore and critique our assumptions and allow in new or different images and ideas about the future, or other ways of knowing the future. Equally, we can engage in processes to build capacity to see new possibilities and position ourselves to be able to create alternatives or preferred futures. Through strategic foresight methods there is an opportunity to deploy a broader critique and analysis of the choices we are making about our future through reshaping the ideas and images we hold about 'the future'.

It was this understanding and the context of significant reforms faced by the disability and broader community sector that led NDS Qld to offer a workshop to develop capability in futures thinking. The success of this workshop was largely due to a high level of participation from the 25 participants. The participants included: disability service providers; family members of people with disability; consultants in the community services sector; representatives of the Health and Community Services Workforce Council, the Queensland Council of Social Services and NDS Qld; and several foresight facilitators.





## METHODOLOGY: FUTURES THINKING WITH THE SIX PILLARS APPROACH

Futures thinking: The six pillars approach involves the use of a range of strategic foresight methods that facilitate the investigation into the ideas and images participants hold about the future of a given context. The process of facilitating participants through the strategic foresight methods provided the participants with a logical framework and process they could use to freely explore their foundational futures questions and investigate and interrogate their findings as a means to seeking alternative futures for their chosen context. The six pillars approach involves mapping, anticipating, and timing, deepening, creating alternatives and transforming the future. This framework can be seen below in Figure 1 (over) and demonstrates the range of strategic foresight methods which are deployed through each of the pillars.

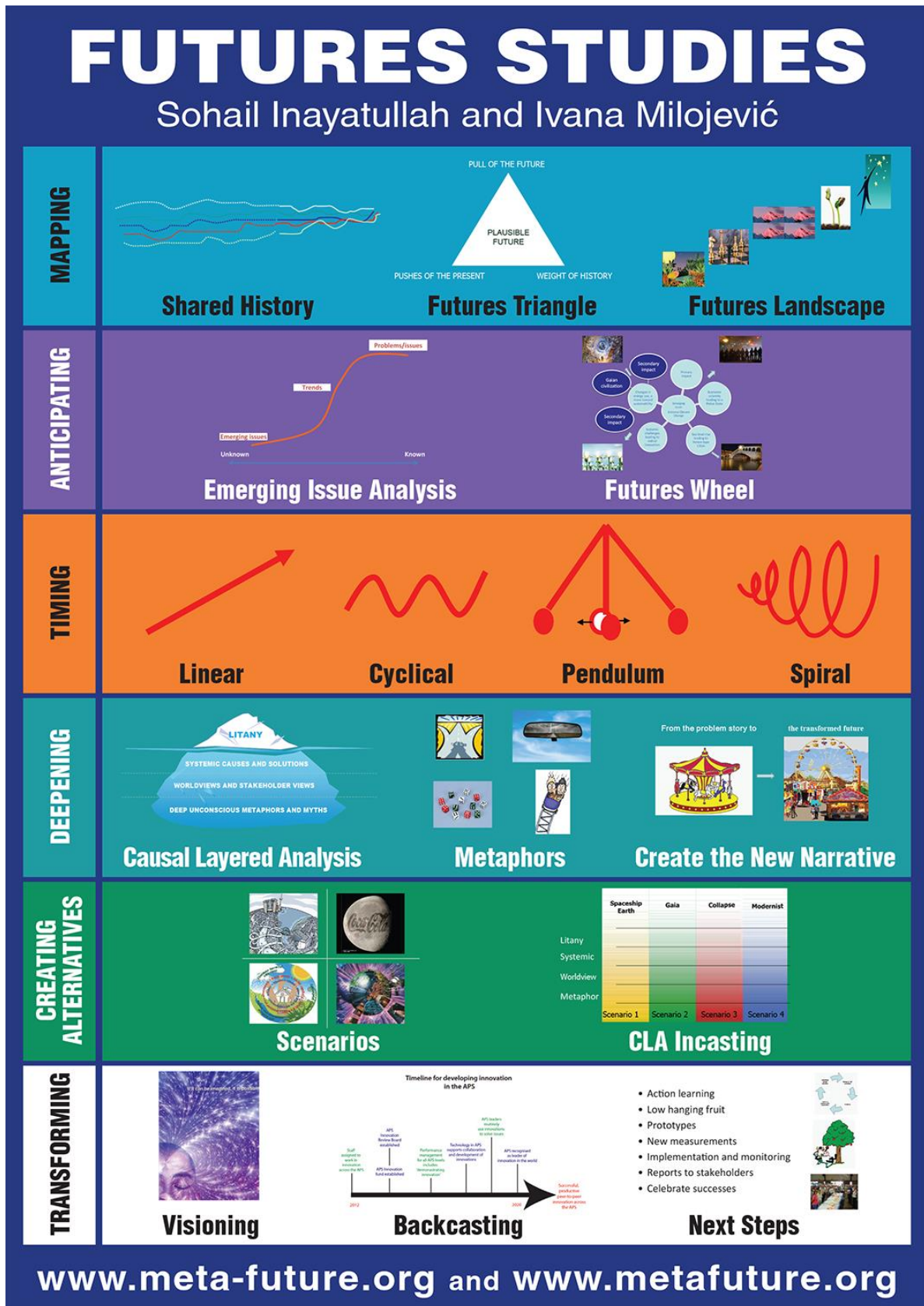
The six pillars framework and process enables participants to explore a selected context by providing a structured way to map the context; anticipating the probable future of the context; timing the future to understand the patterns of change in the context; deepening the future of the context by including multiple ways of knowing the same context (e.g. via gender, ethnicity, culture, paradigms etc.); creating alternatives to the present through the development of scenarios for the context; and transforming the present through creating a vision and back casting on the context. Each pillar contains a number of strategic foresight methods as can be seen in Figure 1 (over). During the workshop, participants were given the opportunity to learn and apply a range of selected strategic foresight methods including:

- The futures triangle
- Emerging issues analysis
- Causal layered analysis
- Scenario planning
- Visioning
- Back casting

The practical application of the strategic foresight methods and the creation of new visions and pathways for each group's thematic contexts were important aspects of this workshop. It is also vital to note that the underlying process was also an integral aspect of what the participants took away from the experience.



Figure 1: Futures thinking: the six pillars approach



## Participants' overall key personal insights from the futures discussion

The participants were initially divided into five working groups that merged into four on the morning of the second day. Together, the groups questioned possible futures using foresight tools such as the futures triangle, scenario planning, causal layered analysis and back casting. The next section of this report contains an outline of these processes and the resulting new visions from the four working groups.

By questioning assumptions and ideas about probable, preferable and possible futures participants were able to reach a common understanding of the issues at hand from multi-stakeholder perspectives. This anticipatory questioning process generated many key insights and some of these are noted below.

**“My assumptions shape the future”**

**“Futures thinking starts with self”**

**“Our greatest strengths are also our greatest weaknesses – it just depends on how we frame them”**

**“Everything is up for grabs”**

**“We need to dance with the resistance”**

**“The future is changing, even as we sit here in this room”**

**“As we shift internally the external also shifts”**

**“It is important to continue these ‘futures’ conversations with various stakeholders”**

This questioning of assumptions opened the door to a number of previously unexplored scenarios. Scenario work has the potential to increase organisations' agility and their readiness to respond to challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The NDIS reform is considered as a positive move forward, an opportunity that participants want to harness effectively.



The futures of community 2025 (preferred futures)

The first group which focussed on the **futures of community 2025** chose to situate this investigation in the context of community services. This group saw a compelling future in which the outdated metaphor of the 'pendulum' – reactive and extreme – was replaced with the new metaphor of 'non-linear scales', leading to a future where the sector was balanced between the need to be reactive and proactive across a multi-stakeholder perspective. This metaphor of equilibrium allowed for envisaging a future in which individuals belong to an integrated community that shares the responsibility for ensuring opportunity and choice; a community which is focussed on a well-being future; and a community which is supportive and recognises the value of community services as leading to a greater society which can become inclusive and a provide opportunity for all. While shared accountability and responsibility are key aspects in this future, so is the need to create a space where multiple stakeholder voices can be heard. A key assumption that was unveiled in this group was that 'everyone wants community' and that everyone has a shared understanding of what community means.

This group took inclusion and multi-stakeholder voices to be integral to success for all. They argued that for better democratic governance within the community service sector by 2024, a new set of indicators would need to be developed focussing on social inclusion and well-being. These indices would measure how communities and the nation included the voices and perspectives of all citizens.

### Possible policies and strategies for consideration:

1. Change what we measure – new metrics need to be created if we are to measure a balanced community future scenario.
2. Open up the 're-imagining' of the future to all – go to the wider community and ask what they envision for the future and what the future of community looks like to them (similar to the activities of the Queensland Plan 2030)

### The future of the workforce 2025 (preferred futures)

This group began their discussions by identifying a number of key assumptions which provide the foundation to the disability sector workforce future preference. These key assumptions were:

1. That there will be a need for disability services in the future;
2. That the workforce will get bigger;
3. That the need for disability services will be continuous; and
4. That the definition of a "good life" i.e. work/life balance will remain the same.

On the assumption that a workforce will still exist, this group described their preferred future as one in which everyone in the workforce has the necessary skills, clarity and capabilities to perform their role productively as defined by the recipient of those services. The metaphor used here was the 'playground built of Lego', enabling multiple designs and co-creation. The workforce, the community, people with disability, family/carers, governments/policy-makers and interdisciplinary critics are all, in this future, involved in the design.



### Possible policies and strategies for consideration by the Workforce Council peak body:

1. Build a learning culture; encourage creative thinking; and include design champions in the workforce on futures thinking.
2. Develop a 'playground' prototype for alternative workforces.
3. Design processes to ensure interdisciplinary voices are always included i.e. built-in disruption.

### Futures of the NDIS 2025

The next group took a broader view: the **futures of disability and the NDIS in 2025**.

While the participants in this group started off as two separate groups– the **futures of disability 2025** and the **futures of the NDIS 2025** – by the end of the first day they had realised that their futures were intimately entwined. They both saw a future in which

disability is invisible, the words inclusion and integration are no longer necessary. All people with disability are seen as contributors in society with valid needs to be met. Technology and medical advances could also reduce the number of people who experience disability as early intervention increases over time. The arrival of the NDIS has seen the growth of a culture in which individual aspirations are encouraged and supported. Communication and relationships have emerged as the key measures of the success of the NDIS. All of these changes are within the context of a robust and sustainable system that addresses change and problems.

The Collapse Scenario (or disowned future): The disowned future (the future pushed away) is a future in which the NDIS itself is unseen; unmeasured and unfunded. While individualisation is a key aspect of this model, people continue to fall through the gaps. The idealistic model of the NDIS, administered by a super-department, doesn't necessarily offer the safeguards and quality of service needed by people who experience vulnerability. Isolation is on the increase and social capital is on the decrease.

### Possible policies and strategies for successful NDIS futures

1. Create a new metaphor for a new relationship with governments and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA); become partners in achieving success – the goal being to work together with get the NDIA to ensure the NDIS is delivered coherently.
2. Mobilise individuals and families to be champions of the full implementation of the NDIS, informing their networks of its importance and of the realities of their lives ("telling the story").
3. Support families in expecting more, doing more and being aware of any issues to do with changes to the NDIS.
4. Use the language of economic investment with governments when appropriate.
5. Celebrate successes ("champagne moments").





“The biggest shift lies in the fact that people are no longer seen as mere drains on resources rather resources are seen as **investments in people’s capabilities.**”



From invisible disabilities to “High-Viz-Div(ersity)”, group four stretched their vision of **the futures of disability in 2035** to a place where disability is not only valued but can give those with a disability high status. This group saw someone with Down syndrome finding the cure for dementia. The NDIS has matured into a sustainable, streamlined and flexible system in which health and well-being have a high value. People with disability are thriving in strong communities with high levels of collaboration and participation. Services are highly personalised and customised to suit the needs of end users. The biggest shift lies in the fact that people are no longer seen as mere drains on resources rather resources are seen as investments in people’s capabilities.

### **Possible Policies and strategies for consideration**

1. Find and encourage role models (“champions”) to share their stories.
2. Affirmative Action Policy – legal framework for inclusion.

A key insight for this group was the power of other ways of knowing. Through causal layered analysis (CLA) this group was able to exercise the progressive voice of the activist, thereby giving a voice to the often silent person with disability. Participants experienced the power of the process and saw this as an invaluable step towards the future.

## Anticipating the Future: Possible emerging issues regarding NDIS implementation

For these preferred visions to come to fruition, changes clearly have to occur. While many of the drivers are already there, moving the disability sector towards the desired visions mentioned in each of the groups, will require negotiation of tensions and factors working in opposition:

1. The NDIS is currently being trialled in all states of Australia except Queensland. The key question here is: Will the NDIS make it from trial sites to full nationwide implementation? Another scenario is that the shift to the market model creates a competitive environment of mergers and acquisitions and decrease choice in service options. Will the disability sector be able to support people with disabilities and their families in harnessing the emerging opportunities and becoming more empowered as a result?
2. An ageing population results in a higher percentage of people not participating in the workforce, leading to greater competition for resources, and potentially, to a normalisation of impairments because more people have visible disabilities.
3. A drive towards flatter, more collaborative peer-to-peer systems in which the capacity to share knowledge and to empower each other is growing and is being shown to improve well-being and productivity (see [www.patientslikeme.com](http://www.patientslikeme.com)).
4. Communication technologies support individuals, communities and organisations to make democratic decisions and to be more connected. As society changes so do its measurements. Will GNH (Gross National Happiness) be the new GDP?
5. From robotics to genomics. Life as we know it is changing, and fast. One scenario is that robots will assume the role of the traditional carer, if there continues to be a need for carers at all as early intervention reduces the number of people who experience disability.



## Key methodological insights on futures thinking & the six pillars approach

The workshops main focus was on learning how to develop skill in questioning the future in order to encourage organisational and individual transformation. One of the key insights from the workshop, which was reiterated by a number of participants in a number of different ways, was the importance of the process. Anticipatory action learning (AAL) is an approach that incorporates aspects of action learning research and futures thinking to offer a specific method of questioning the future for change purposes (Inayatullah, 2006). While action learning is reflexive as it incorporates questioning programmed knowledge and learning from action or doing, it is a present-based approach. AAL however is futures focussed and adds an anticipatory dimension to the action learning process. The anticipatory dimension encourages the official version of the future to be questioned in order to challenge assumptions and paradigms, see new possibilities and create alternative or preferred futures. Importantly, the anticipatory questioning process must not stop at this point and the new ideas created for the alternative futures must also become the subject of such questioning (Inayatullah, 2006).

In this way an anticipatory action learning approach is alert to worldview risk and seeks inclusion, participation and collaboration with others as essential mitigation against this risk.

It becomes clear that the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the processes is critical as their contributions offer much more information about the future – hence more anticipatory questioning of unchecked worldview assumptions. As Inayatullah articulates (2007:131), AAL encourages us to *"...question assumptions at every level; to anticipate by scanning the future using our many ways of knowing and finally it involves including others, thus participation and inclusion is critical, since non-inclusion of one of the variables can change the outcomes in unanticipated ways"*. NDS Qld acknowledges there were limitations in this workshop and in the resulting visions as not all relevant stakeholders were present at the workshop and as such not all voices and perspectives were included as part of the development of alternative or preferred scenarios.

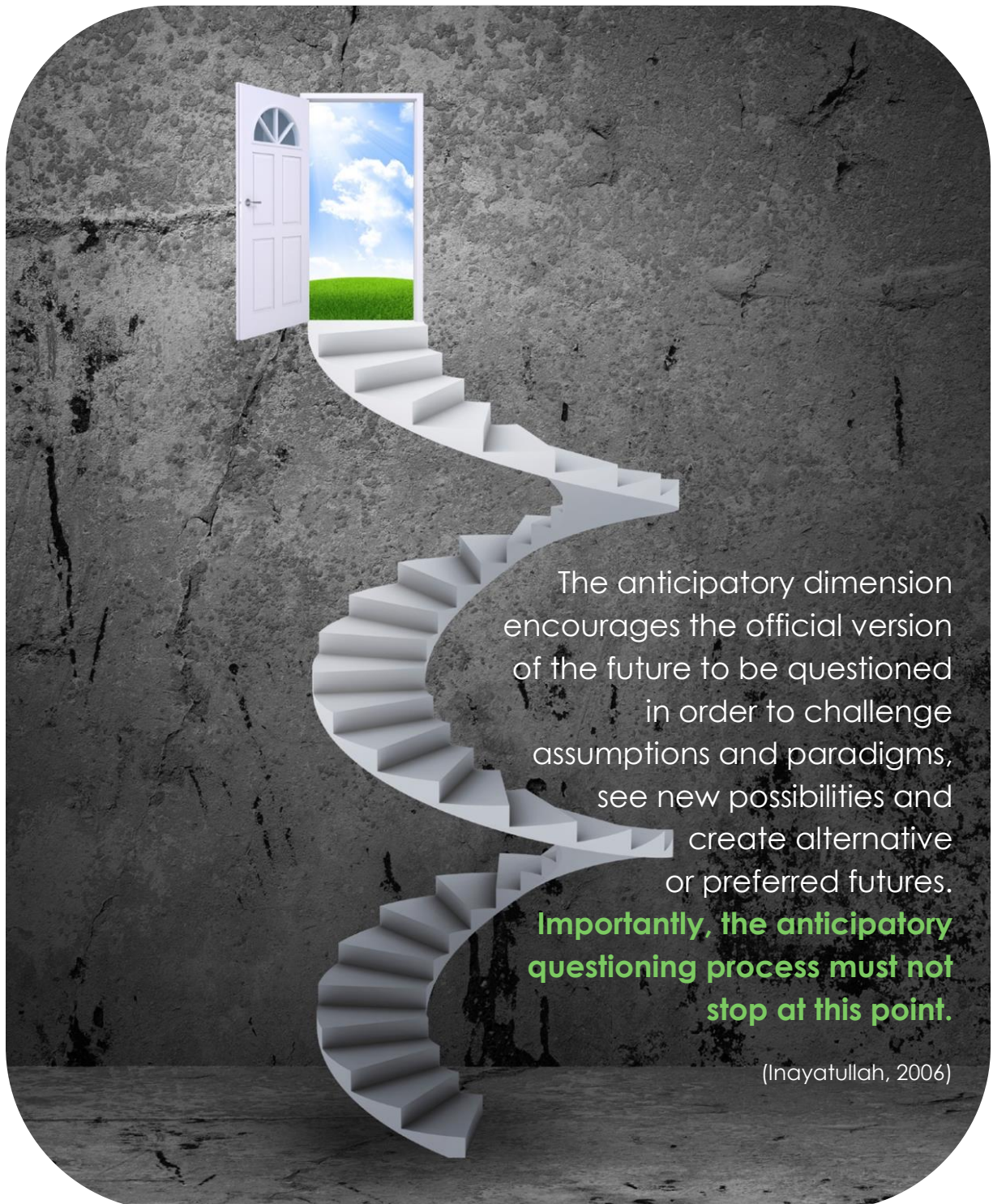
Some key methodological insights from participants included:

- There are multiple ways of knowing – by exploring multi-stakeholder perspectives through causal layered analysis these differing ways of knowing can be given a voice in the real (or physical) world.
- The weight of the past can easily become the weight of the future.
- Strategic foresight processes done in an anticipatory action learning environment have helped us to develop a common/shared understanding of the issues at hand and have helped us to think about things differently.
- Metaphors are contextual. They are woven into the fabric of the environment. If we are to create a new narrative/metaphor for the future of the disability sector it needs to be so compelling that everyone automatically “gets” it.



## What are the next steps that we could take given these results?

1. Use foresight tools and innovation with and for people with disability and their families
2. Use futures thinking and strategic foresight methods to support the implementation of the NDIS in the context of the broader community
3. Use strategic foresight and futures thinking to explore the question "What will the role of assistive technologies be in 2025?"





## DETAILED RESULTS FROM GROUP ACTIVITIES USING THE STRATEGIC FORESIGHT METHODS

The first pillar in the six pillars framework is that of mapping the future. The specific strategic foresight method used in mapping was 'the futures triangle'. The futures triangle maps the competing dynamics or dimensions between the past, present and future contexts. Mapping the present can be understood through the identification of the drivers (or pushes) of change. The pushes are quantitative in nature and are perceived as external variables exerting influence on creating the plausible future. The pulls of the future are those images and ideas the participants or stakeholders have about their particular context. Often these images are competing and each will have its own set of drivers and inhibitors. Finally the weights of the past are those structural barriers that prevent us achieving a particular pull of the future. Weights can be understood as being knowledge structures, historical narratives or stories of change that prevent us from moving forward or simply organisational structures and policies or procedures that limit.

Through the futures triangle we are able to map the plausible future for a given context thus, giving us an easy to interpret "history map" of a chosen context. The questions that can arise from a futures triangle analysis on the disability sector is what dimension of the futures triangle the disability sector will choose to focus on strategically: freeing up the weights of the past, encouraging and supporting the pushes of the present, or creating alternative pulls of the future.

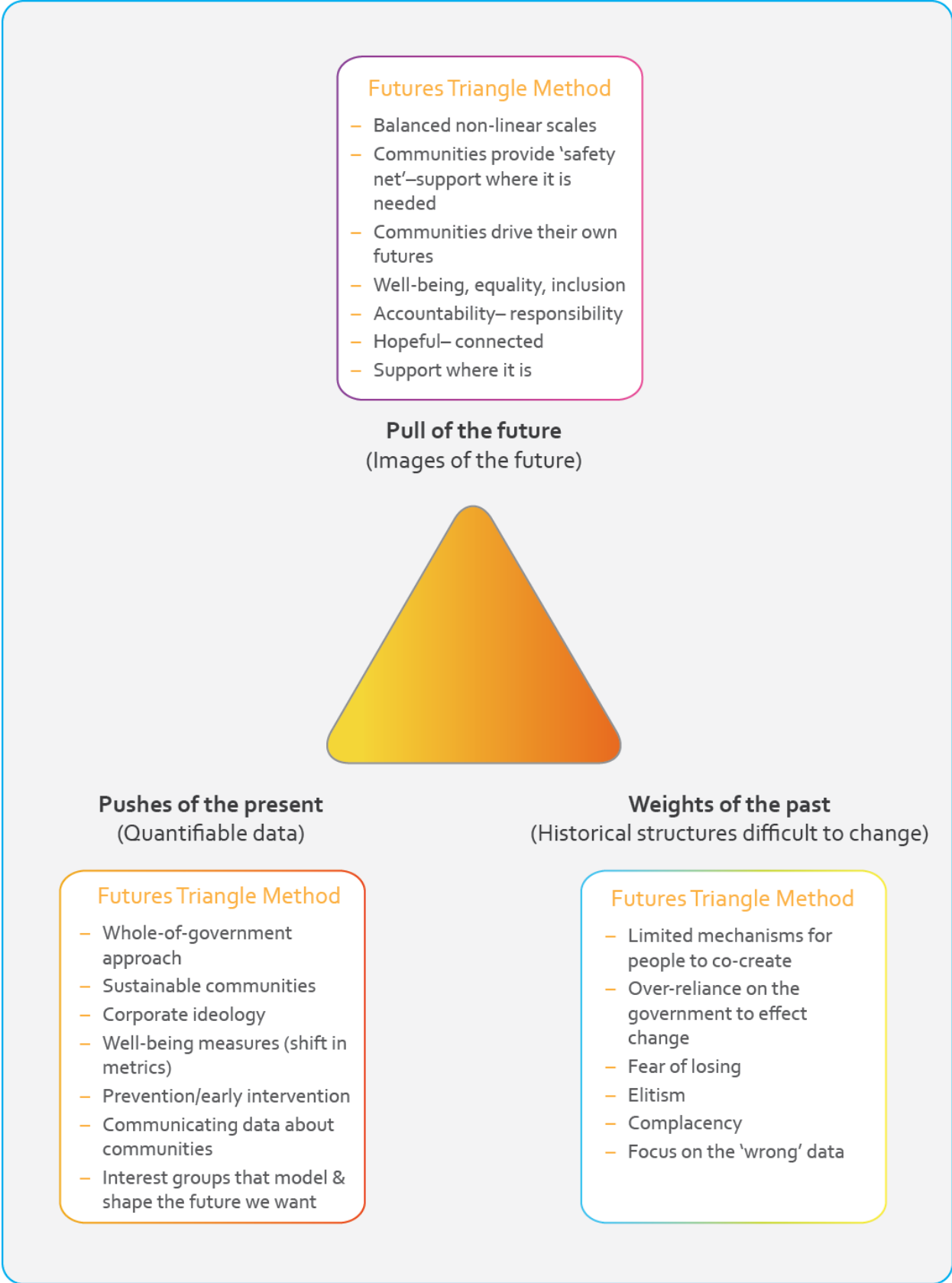
### Community Futures 2025

For the group focused on the **futures of community in 2025**, a compelling vision of a preferred future became the dominant pull image which suggested the idea of a balanced 'non-linear scales' community. The futures triangle further highlighted that there were a number of key pushes or drivers of change that are influencing the future of communities. The pushes of the present can be seen in Figure 2 (over), including the weights of the past that could dramatically influence the pull of the future for communities in 2025.




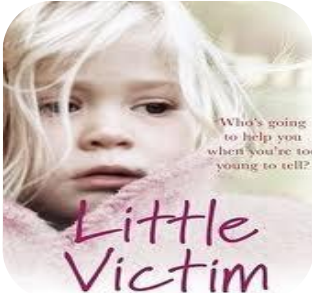



Figure 2: Community Futures 2025, Futures Triangle



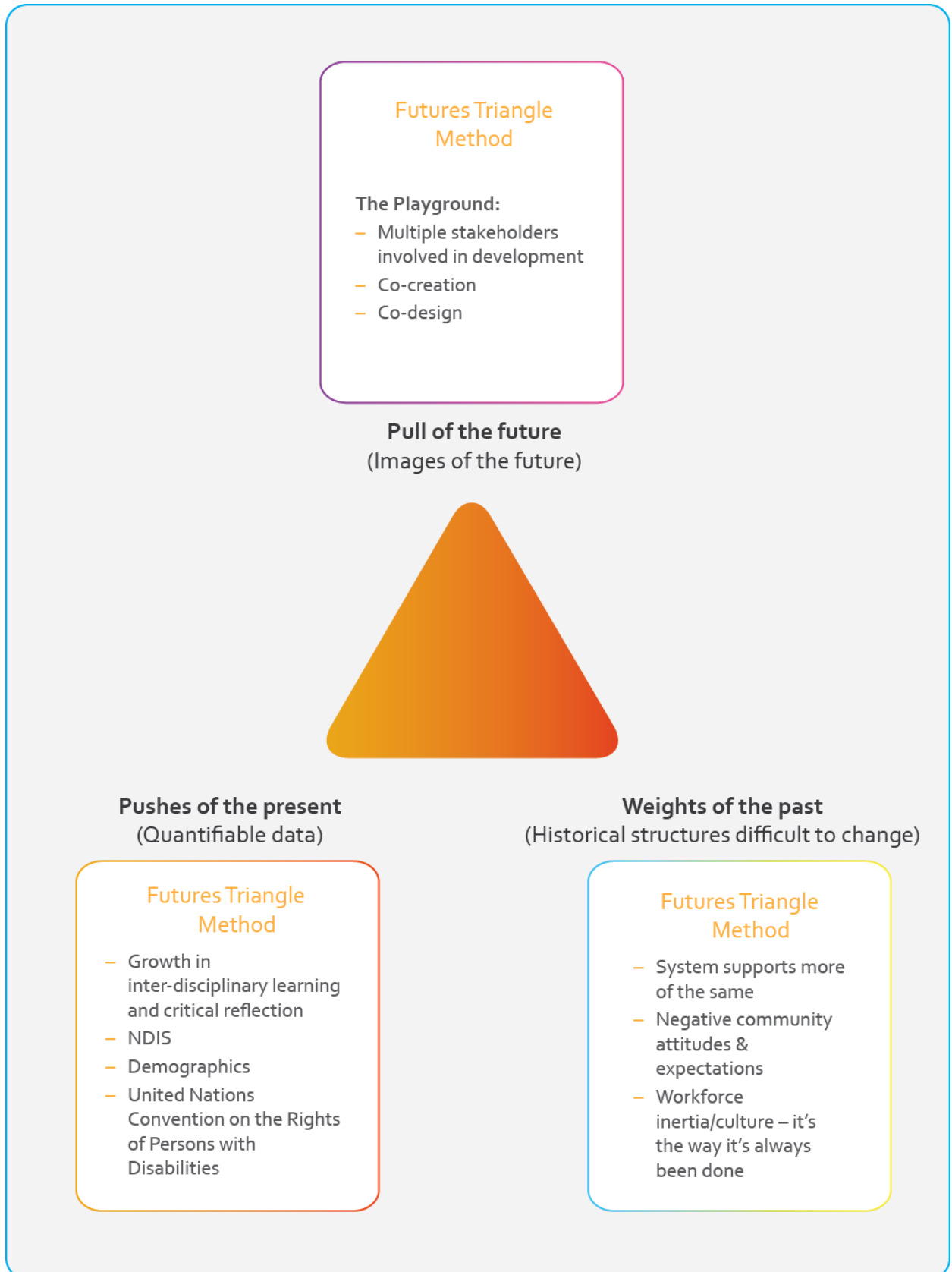
Following the futures triangle exercise, the group went onto unpack their preferred vision of the future. That is, the group questioned these three types of futures through four layers of analysis: litany, systemic social causes, worldview and metaphor/myth. When the current reality and preferred future was re-interpreted as a transformed future, the group recognised their ability to shift the change story underpinning this alternative future. The metaphor, or rather the change story for communities, had been transformed from being interpreted as currently behaving as a child to that of the logical transformational step of becoming the teenager community. The community needs to evolve in their maturation if they are to increase their level of agency of influencing what happens to the future of their communities: the young adult who has matured but still needs nurturing and guidance in order to become a responsible, self-sustaining adult. The causal layered analysis undertaken is depicted in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Causal layered analysis results**

	PREFERRED	CURRENT REALITY	TRANSFORMED
LITANY	"All people have a voice and are heard"	"Communities are not inclusive"	"Evidence that contributors are making a difference"
SYSTEMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Queensland Plan</li> <li>▪ Mechanisms for engagement</li> <li>▪ Share accountability</li> <li>▪ Legislated that outcomes from engagement put into policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Welfare Model</li> <li>▪ Community too dependent on the government</li> <li>▪ Not all people's interests are represented</li> <li>▪ The vulnerable don't have a voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NDIS</li> <li>▪ Communication channels feedback to participants about the changes that have occurred</li> <li>▪ New metrics to measure success</li> </ul>
WORLDVIEW	All contributors are equal, important and matter	Vulnerable people don't know what's good for them therefore they are not given a voice	Everyone needs to take responsibility and share accountability
MYTH-METAPHOR	Part of a bigger family 	A child who needs to be told what to do, what is good for them 	A mature but developing teenager who needs nurturing 



## Workforce Futures 2025

Figure 3: Workforce Futures 2025, Futures Triangle



Group two went onto deepen their understanding of alternative futures from many layered perspectives through the completion of a causal layered analysis (CLA) which can be seen in Table 2, below:

**Table 2: Causal layered analysis results**

	CURRENT REALITY	TRANSFORMED
LITANY	"Shit work that is poorly paid"	"Disability work is highly valued"
SYSTEMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welfare system</li> <li>Strong organisations and established structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market System: mobile, skilled, flexible workforce</li> <li>Collaborative structures</li> <li>Partnerships with organisations and clients</li> <li>New Measures</li> <li>Retention rates in the system</li> <li>Match between demand and supply</li> <li>Worker progression</li> </ul>
WORLDVIEW	It's broken and this is going to fix it.	Workers are partners in the system Power shared between client and workers
MYTH-METAPHOR	Light at the end of the tunnel	Healthy Eco-system
		

The CLA results on the future of the workforce in the disability sector suggested workforce being transformed through creating very different environmental conditions. Such environmental elements included the suggestion of workplaces where the worker is highly valued, power is shared and systemic changes facilitate greater collaboration and integration between client and worker. From the CLA results, four scenarios could be considered. These scenarios can be categorised as:

- **Preferred** – best case
- **Disowned** – futures that are uncomfortable
- **Integrated** – a scenarios that bring elements from other scenarios in this theme all together
- **Outlier** – unknown seeds of change that happen rapidly and most often through stealth yet have significant impact.

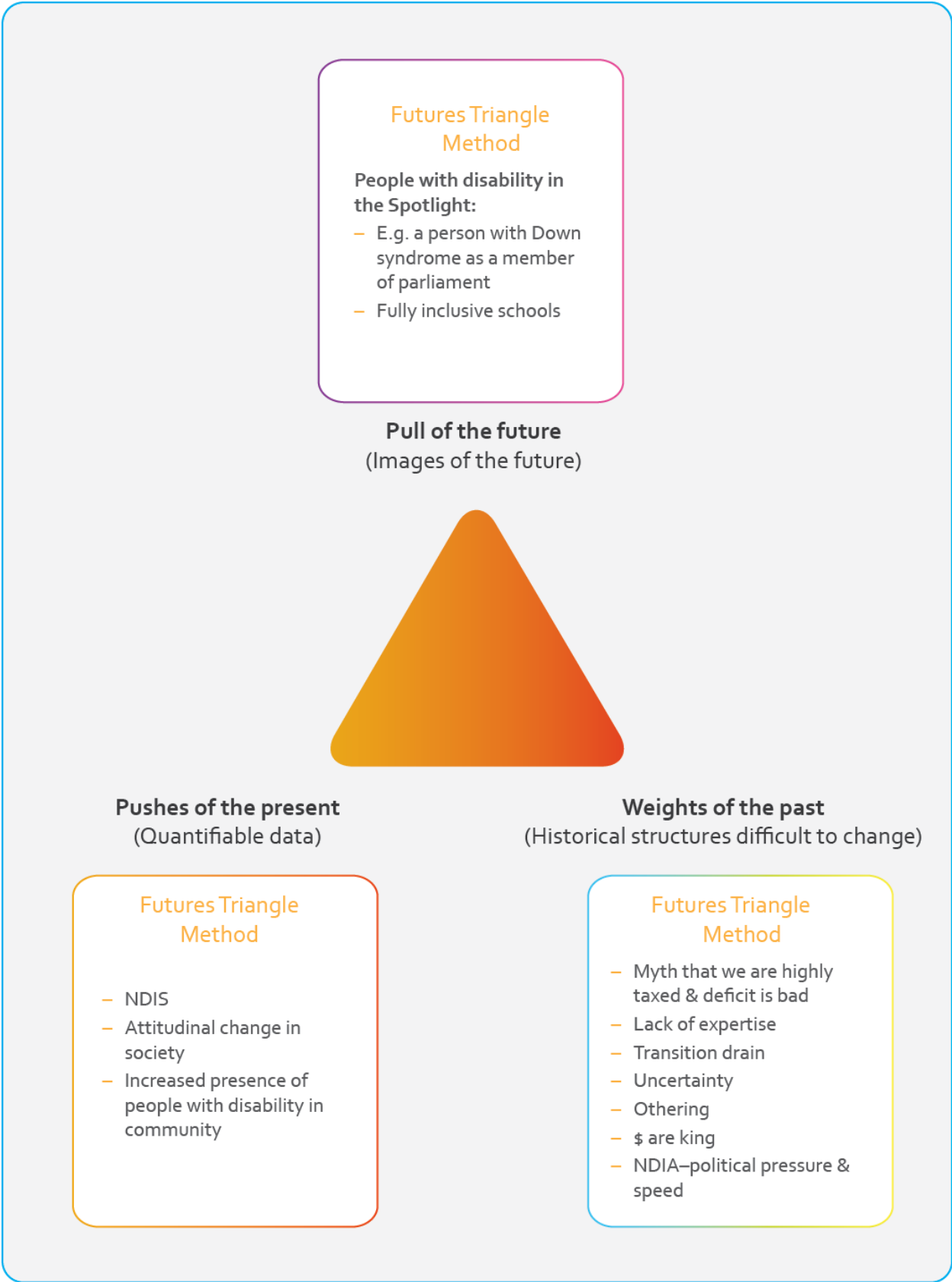
In discussing these four archetypal scenarios, groups considered that the most notable scenario having the greatest impact or influence was the disowned future. That is, the future that one pushes away, wants to ignore. This disowned future was named the 'elephant in the room'. In this case the disowned future scenario was indicative where the disability sector worker only seeks reward and recognition, money, status, and power at the expense of others in the sector. The worker goes from martyr to capitalist to megalomaniac.

## The Futures of Disability and the NDIS in 2025

The third group – **futures of disability and the NDIS in 2025** – creatively imagined a future in which disability was invisible, the words inclusion and integration no longer needed. They saw a person-centred approach where the individual's needs and aspirations are both nurtured and supported. The image that was pulling this future forth was the person with Down syndrome in a highly esteemed public position, such as being an elected member of parliament. The following analysis maps the history of the present.



Figure 4: Disability and NDIS Futures 2025, Futures Triangle



The weights of the past and the pushes of the present were strong forces that could potentially hold the disability sector back from its preferred future. CLA gave this group the opportunity to further unpack the current disability sector situation from a multi-stakeholder perspective.

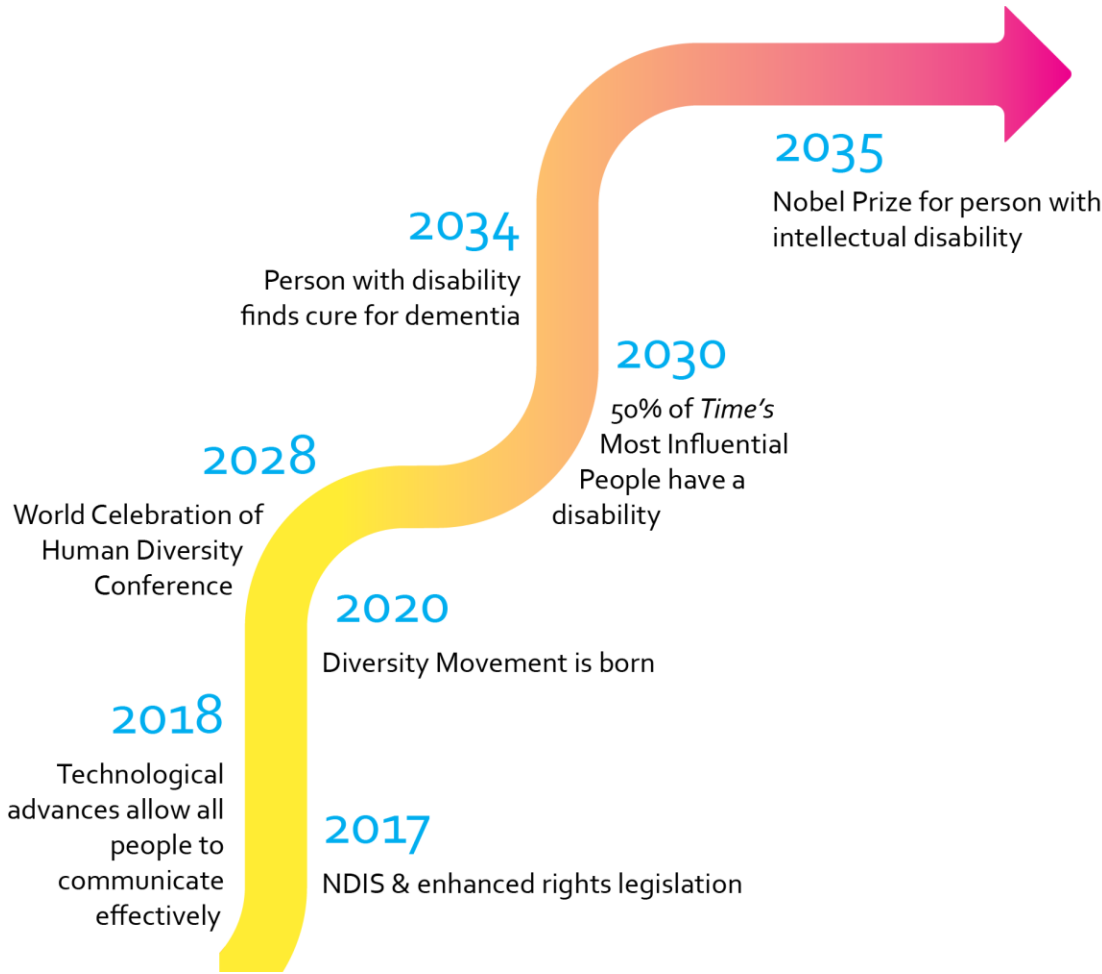
**Table 3: Causal layered analysis results**

	CURRENT REALITY NDIA/Politicians	CURRENT REALITY PWD /families	CURRENT REALITY Services	RECONSTRUCTED Desired
LITANY	"NDIA enables change; Government brings NDIS in on budget"	"Individuals and families confused and unaware"	"Business as usual"	"NDIS– the system works!"
SYSTEMIC	NDIA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enacting vision</li> <li>▪ Pay master</li> <li>▪ Cost Control</li> <li>▪ Government:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PR</li> <li>- Re-election</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Political system</li> <li>▪ Disability system and transition to NDIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Current review of structure that will be needed in the NDIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NDIS system is balanced, transparent, integrated.</li> <li>▪ New Measures:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life quality, social and economic impact</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
WORLDVIEW	NDIA: Individual is the only important person Government: re-election	What will I get? I'll believe it when it happens	People need us	People with disability are productive Everyone belongs Sense of unity is important for everyone.
MYTH-METAPHOR	NDIA:Knight on white charger Government: Treasurer as a juggler	Light at the end of the never ending tunnel	Dory from Finding Nemo "just keep on swimming"	Maypole a connecting and celebratory event

# THE FUTURES OF DISABILITY IN 2035

Continuing on from the previous group, the **futures of disability** group stretched their vision out to **2035** to creatively imagine a future in which diversity was celebrated and disability was lessened with the help of advanced technology. So how did they get to their preferred future? The following is the group's back cast suggested a series of key events were necessary to create this type of future:

Figure 5: Back cast



So how will the NDS Qld and similar organisations take robust, conscious steps towards this future? CLA says that true systemic change happens from the ground up. It is the underlying narrative that gives rise to the systems. To change the future you need to change the story of the past and present. When this group critiqued the disability sector from a multi-stakeholder perspective they were able to step into other ways of knowing by incorporating the diverse and varied views of others in the room. The important aspect here is that including many ways of knowing the same phenomena adds robustness and rigour to both the analysis and the solution as inclusion of multiple perspectives brings great innovation and adaptation that may assist stakeholders in moving ahead in their preferred direction from a whole systems perspective.

Considering the point of there being many ways of knowing, the following CLA is representative of a CLA process through multiple stakeholder perspective. This differs from the other groups' CLA approach yet adds richness to the overall CLA application by demonstrating other ways of using strategic foresight methods within futures thinking workshops. Table 4 below is an example of CLA by stakeholder perspective.

**Table 4: Causal layered analysis results**

	CURRENT REALITY Government	CURRENT REALITY Activist	CURRENT REALITY Traditional	INTEGRATED
LITANY	"It's government's responsibility to provide"	"Imposition—the disempowered banging at the barricades"	"The squeaky wheel of disability"	"Employment rates for people with disability and the general population are equal"
SYSTEMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial system</li> <li>▪ Bureaucratic system</li> <li>▪ P &amp; P duality</li> <li>▪ Crisis Response</li> <li>▪ Structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NDIS goals</li> <li>▪ Anti-discrimination</li> <li>▪ representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding models</li> <li>▪ Care models</li> <li>▪ Welfare system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NDIS principles enacted</li> <li>▪ Community-based responses</li> <li>▪ Light &amp; strong government</li> </ul>
WORLDVIEW	Paternalistic	"Lived" experience Fight back	Dependence	Co-creation Interdependence
MYTH-METAPHOR	Gatekeeper -Government knows best	Agents of change -we hold the truth	The Burden Damaged Goods -liability	People need People
				

The activist voice is one of the key stakeholders, took this group out of their traditional ways of knowing and confirmed the importance of community engagement and collaboration.

From the CLA scenarios can be developed. When layering, the use of the integrated scenario method incorporates four archetypal scenarios, which includes preferred, disowned, integrated an outlier as previously mentioned. The outlier scenario resonated with this group because the idea of technologies radically changing the world of both service provision and the lives of people disabilities was creatively imagined as an outlier scenario. Outlier scenarios tend to be reflective of signals of change which go undetected and remain rather stealthily yet when they emerge have significant impact. This outlier future in which assistive technology ruled and consumer radicalism had taken over was considered quite out there by this group. It was perhaps an exaggerated story of a way in which the activist group might take back control and re-claim their disowned selves who had given their power away to the government and lived their lives with a “damaged goods” mentality.







## KEY METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

As mentioned previously the six pillars approach provided a framework in which workshop participants could question the current national disability services discourse and begin to explore probable, preferable and possible futures. See Appendix 1 for further information on the six pillars approach. In addition to the envisioning of preferred and desired visions for the disability sector a large portion of this workshop was on futures pedagogy. Key insights from the groups follow.

### Metaphorical Insights

During the course of the workshop participants explored the power of the metaphor and its ability to shape the present and more importantly, in the context of the futures of disability, how metaphor becomes a powerful narrative in its capacity to influence and shape the decisions we make regarding many possible futures. Accordingly, our ability to find solutions to problems can hinge on the metaphor being used to describe the problem (Gorlick 2011). George L. Kelling, a professor of criminal justice at North-eastern University and a fellow of Harvard University in criminal justice also says:

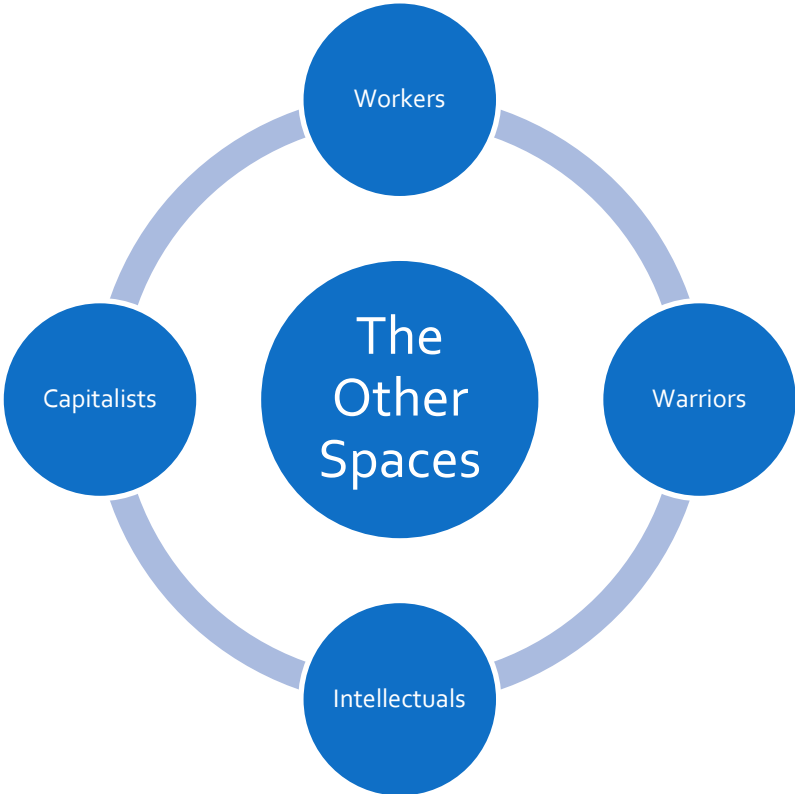
*The power of metaphor to shape public policy reaches its peak when a metaphor becomes so ingrained that it drops out of sight. In other words, metaphors gain ideological power as their literary power fades. When metaphors lose their capacity to attract attention-when they become a linguistic habit- they become dangerous: A trick of language becomes an intellectual trap (1991)*

The key insight regarding metaphor in futures thinking is that futures thinking seeks to disrupt the dominant ways of knowing all the stories we tell ourselves about the future. Often the stories remain hidden at an unconscious level, yet become so compelling in shaping and influencing our thoughts and ideas when we imagine the future. Inayatullah argues that most compelling futures work and futures analysis is best done at the narrative and metaphor level as it is these levels of reality that have the greatest influence on our ability to transform. Thus, the importance of a powerful metaphor that is so compelling that it is naturally adopted by all and that gives and creates the foundation upon which new, healthier systems can be developed, within the disability sector and beyond.

### Sarkar Game Insights

The Sarkar Game explores the dynamics and interactions between four groups: workers, capitalists, intellectuals and warriors. Many questions arose in response to the game which stimulated healthy discussion, particularly about the role of ideology in the sector. Is the sector's ideology difficult to kill off? Is this ideology preventing key disability sector 'intellectuals' from listening to the needs of other stakeholders and from moving forward in a co-creative and collaborative manner? Other questions that arose concerned how people working in the sector could step into 'the third space', the 'unknown space'. This unknown or third space is the new space that could be created, a neutral space where new ideas and new ways of collaborating could evolve.

Figure 6: The Sarkar Game



### Scenario Insights

The scenario work invited participants to explore different frames of thinking. It also provided the opportunity for participants to understand how the design of scenario structures and the elements that constitute a scenario can be based on the results of previous strategic foresight methods results. That is, the results from a futures triangle can include the drivers of change and images that pull us towards an idea of the future. Furthermore, by developing competing images and different interpretations around the drivers of change, the weights of the past and the pull of the future, these interpretations can be reflected within different scenarios.

As participants logically progressed with their futures thinking analysis, each method generated results which could be incorporated into the development of the scenarios. Most importantly, the use of causal layered analysis or four levels of analysis can further help in expanding within each of the diverse archetypal or organisational or integrated versions of scenario design. Thus, one of the most useful and integrated consequences of strategic foresight methods is that they can complement and build upon each methods results further advancing both the level of analysis and the insights that can be derived from the foresight findings.

## Observations on the scenario results from the workshop by the report author

The implications of the different narratives driving change was one of the most obvious aspects recognised in the scenario designers. For instance, one scenario that was reflected in various ways in all of the groups was the 'dead duck' scenario in which the NDIS is unsuccessful, funding is limited or non-existent. Others were the outlier, the 'dictatorship' in which the military steps in to stop the people rising and commands control, and the preferred, the 'gold star', where the NDIS is fully and successfully rolled out as intended and meets everyone's needs. Ultimately, stepping into various scenarios allows individuals and organisations to determine whether they wish to be the outlier or whether a more integrated approach is needed.

## Anticipatory Action Learning Insights

Action learning used within a futures context is called anticipatory action learning and is used with the end result of organisational and societal transformation in mind (Inayatullah, 2006). The key aspects of anticipatory action learning that were relevant for participants in this workshop is to consider why, what and how in their own contexts could a futures thinking investigation or analysis and the use of strategic foresight methods assist in transforming or addressing wicked problems. It is recommended to those who have previously participated in a futures thinking workshop to consider applying the futures methods in their workplaces and to read further the merits and applications of futures studies and futures thinking. The *Journal of Futures Studies* is a wonderful resource and provides access to a range of theory and case studies recorded by futurist theorists and practitioners. The Journal is accessible to the public and can be accessed at: <http://www.jfs.tku.edu.tw/>

## Sensitivity to the social environment

By being sensitive to the environment during a workshop, a facilitator has the ability to respond to the needs of the group as they arise, the result being a workshop that is more relevant and productive. In this workshop, for example, Professor Inayatullah was able to respond fluidly to the groups desire to learn more about futures theory.

## AAL can lead to uncomfortable areas of inquiry for the organisation

Questioning the future means seeking to understand the default future we are given, then challenging this default future (unpack it, understand if it is a 'used future') and to create desired futures (Inayatullah, 2006). What is revealed is not always easy to digest, let alone accept. In this workshop we saw participants challenged as they examined the many assumptions that they held that prevented them from seeing past the default future. Many were stretched even further when they were invited to question their past, present and future from various perspectives, but, as one participant noted, "futures thinking starts with self".

“Questioning the future means seeking to understand the default future we are given, then challenging this default future (unpack it, understand if it is a ‘used future’) **and to create desired futures.**”

(Inayatullah, 2006)



### **Resistance can be named and understood**

When resistance and fear are acknowledged as important and valid experiences in the futures process then they are much easier to manage and to harness. Providing time to allow these voices to be heard is important, yet it is just as important to know when to quarantine them.

### **The future is deepened by authentic understanding of the other**

A key focus of futures work is to support individuals and organisations in creatively adapting to change and emerging challenges. One of the most effective ways to do this is to invite the voice of various stakeholders into the process. This is about bringing their voices into the physical world.



## CONCLUSION

By the end of the two and a half days of futures discussions each group had identified a number of strategies towards which they could decide to move. More importantly, considering the size of the systemic shift facing the sector, the workshop offered participants the opportunity to practically use (and *understand* the use of) the futures tools in a group setting and begin to reflect on their own futures. The optimal outcome from this experience is for participants to have garnered enough knowledge and experience that they can then take these tools and processes into their own organisations and develop a greater ability to creatively adapt to new challenges and more strategically influence the realisation of their preferred futures.

To support the ongoing work of transformational change, a range of applied futures thinking resources and links to relevant resources were provided to participants who engaged in the workshop. In July 2014 two strategic foresight resources were cocreated for the disability sector as part of the *Sector Readiness and Workforce Capacity Initiative* – an initiative designed to support the community services sector to prepare for reforms. The strategic foresight film resource, *Creating Preferred Futures with Strategic Foresight*, includes an interview with Professor Inayatullah led by futurist Steven Gould and discusses a foundational introduction to applied futures thinking, the six pillars approach, concepts and methods and how this relates to developing future flexible organisations. A strategic foresight facilitator guideline provides facilitator notes to guide planning and facilitation of the *Seven Foundational Futures Questions* with others. The guideline compliments the film resource and further supports the translation of the theory into practice within organisations. The resources are available at the links below:

### Film Resource:

- Play All Version:** [Creating Preferred Futures with Strategic Foresight](#)
- Introduction:** [Introduction - Creating Preferred Futures with Strategic Foresight](#)
- Session 1:** [Futures Thinking and the Six Pillars Approach](#)
- Session 2:** [Pillar 1 Mapping](#)
- Session 3:** [Pillar 2 Anticipation and Pillar 3 Timing](#)
- Session 4:** [Pillar 4 Deepening](#)
- Session 5:** [Pillar 5 Creating Alternatives](#)
- Session 6:** [Pillar 6 Transforming](#)

### Written Resource:

[Strategic Foresight Facilitation Guideline](#)





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## APPENDIX 1: SIX PILLARS

The futures triangle was used to stimulate questioning and understanding of how the past, present and future dimensions interact and compete with one another. It was through this understanding that the participants were able to work towards envisioning a more plausible future and, in the case of the scenarios, what a range of alternative futures might look like.

The second pillar includes 'anticipating the future' and in this workshop involved widening the horizon of the participants through emerging issue analysis and the futures wheel, so that they could see what was emerging and what seeds of change could affect them and their organisation in the years to come.

The 'timing the future/macro history' pillar is about searching for deeper patterns of change in order to understand the stages of history and the shape of the future (Inayatullah, 2007). Methods used in this workshop to understand timing and its impact on the future were macro history, an understanding of the macro-patterns (the linear, the cyclical, the spiral, the pendulum and bifurcation) and the Sarkar Game, which explored the nature of power within the participant group.

After expanding the horizon, the next natural step was vertical, into the fourth pillar known as 'deepening the future'. The key method used here was CLA. Through a process of deconstructing current reality, the litany, systems, paradigms, worldviews and underlying myths and metaphors of the organisation were revealed, in some cases from a multi-stakeholder perspective. CLA theory argues that the way a problem is framed changes the policy solution and determines the actors responsible for creating transformation (Inayatullah, 2007). To instigate real, systemic change a new narrative, a new frame, is required.

The fifth pillar, 'creating alternative futures' utilised the method of scenario planning. By stepping into scenarios that require different frames of thinking, the disability sector could begin to determine the effectiveness of current decisions and on that basis decide whether it wished to be the outlier or whether a more integrated approach is needed.

The sixth pillar, 'transforming the future', allowed participants to express their preferred future and, most critically, the pathways they were going to take to get there. The methods used to articulate these alternative future pathways were visioning and back casting; visioning being the context within which individuals explored the image of their own desired futures and back casting the tool with which they could identify the steps necessary to move towards this future.







Creating **alternative**  
and **preferred**  
**futures** with the six  
pillars approach

