Overcoming challenges in caring for a child with multiple disabilities

Trish Eerden¹
¹Rural health consumer

Is it when your car is packed and you get up bright and early to head off to your destination? Or is it when you begin the research about all the places you could go and then narrow it down to where you will go? Or perhaps even earlier than that ... when you are on your way home from your last journey and start talking about where you'd like to go next?

Our journey to disability is a lot like that; it’s hard to say where it all began. Was it when our daughter was 10 months old and was assessed by an occupational therapist, speech pathologist and physiotherapist as being ‘developmentally delayed’? Or was it when she was six months old and we started to notice that things weren’t quite right? Or at three months when she spent a week in the Women’s and Children’s Hospital on oxygen for severe bronchiolitis? Or maybe even before that?

Of course I realise now that none of that really matters. We are left with the realisation that regardless of how it happened, our child is unquestionably unique. In the scheme of things labels like epilepsy, ataxia, cerebral palsy, asthma, intellectual disability matter not a bit, only that we learned to live with this unique child and that we developed the skills we needed to navigate the systems of support.

This session will take you on a bird’s-eye view of that journey, with brief stops along the way to explore some of the challenges of caring for a child with profound disability in rural South Australia. You will see that, even when the journey takes a detour to a dark and scary place, it is possible to find the way to a positive outcome. And perhaps you might learn along the way how profoundly and positively rural families can be affected by strong, dedicated and passionate service providers.