Trish Eerden

Trish Eerden spent her formative years living in rural South Australia, from the west coast to the mid-north and then back again. She is number six in a family of eight, which is probably why she’s very good at negotiating for what she needs. That’s probably also why she decided to only ever have two children. Today, Trish and her family live in the Riverland of South Australia around three hours from Adelaide.

In August 2000 Trish and her husband and their son welcomed a new bundle of joy to their family; Jaime. It became apparent quite early that Jaime wasn’t progressing in quite the same way as other babies and what followed was a journey of epic proportions. At 10 months Jaime was ‘developmentally delayed’; at 12 months she had ‘epilepsy’ and ‘ataxic cerebral palsy’, by the time she was about two she was ‘intellectually disabled’; at three she stopped eating. There is no end to this journey, it has no destination. There is just a road that needs to be travelled to the best of everyone’s ability.

Trish rejoined the workforce when Jaime was two and took on the task of managing a full-time job, a husband, a son and a daughter with profound disabilities. The fractured and ‘silo’ like services available to families supporting a child with a disability in rural SA meant that over Jaime’s lifetime, Trish has negotiated with somewhere in the vicinity of 12 different organisations and countless departments. It’s fair to say that she is an expert in navigating the ‘system’.

Trish is always ready to use her experiences to influence change and advocate for improvement and last, but certainly not least, to remind service providers that every last person has the capacity to make a difference in the life of even one family.