

We all want a good life, and each of us decides what that looks like based on our unique history, the things we care about, and our personal goals. And there are goals that we're likely to have in common with each other, like having friends, having family, being well, having a good job that pays enough to do the things we want to do, having a place of our own, and learning and growing.

Many of these ideas involve a person taking up active roles in their family, and their community. That's roles like being a friend, a parent, a son, an auntie, a wage earner, customer, traveler, volunteer, a student, a sports fan, and lots of others.

These social and economic roles are not only meaningful to the person, but they're also valued by other people in our communities. So because of this, when a person takes up these roles, they have valued membership in community life. At JFA Purple Orange, the word we use for this is citizenship. And we think life is much more likely to be good, to be rich, and fulfilling, if a person has plenty of roles of citizenship.

It's not the same as citizenship, which is about being a member of a country, and having legal rights and obligations. Citizenship is much more dynamic. It takes effort and time to grow, and you can lose it.

People living with disability have had less opportunity to take up roles of citizenship. Usually this is because they've been burdened by the low expectations of others, and have been treated differently. Separate schools, separate houses, separate places of work. All of these have made it much harder for a person living with disability to take up social and economic roles, and to become valued members of our communities.

Since we wrote the model of citizenship support in 2011, we've used it to assist people living with disability, and their families, to reclaim their right to a fair go. We've also used it to help service agencies rethink the way they provide their services. And we've used it to shape our policy advocacy to government. We've had some successes, and we're going to keep pushing, because everyone deserves a fair go at a good life.