



**People with  
Disabilities  
Speaking up for  
Themselves**

**A Report**

WWILD-SVP Service  
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Disability

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## **1. Introduction**

This is a report from workshops that were done on 7 July and 21 July 1998 at the Nundah Community Centre in Brisbane.

The workshops were called People with Disabilities Speaking Out for Themselves.

The workshop was done for people in the community with a disability to put their opinions and ideas across.

## **2. Why have a workshop?**

My name is Daniel Thomas I first did a workshop in 1996. I did this workshop because I saw a film called Winnie about a woman who had disability and I thought it would be a good thing to talk about with other people with a disability. After this workshop the group members decided to keep meeting which is how the Rebels with Attitude group began. It has now been going for two and a half years we got funding from Brisbane City Council for one of these years.

How I came to do the workshop again was that we needed to move on in the group, get more members and talk about issues for us. I think that it is good for people with a disability to express their feelings and thoughts about their community with each other, and to talk about what changes they would like to make and how to take action.

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At the workshops we had speeches from members of the Rebels with Attitude group, activities, information about self advocacy and group discussions. We also decided what action

to take to make things better in the community and to get our voice heard. This workshop had many people come along and wanting to be involved. It was a good way to get people interested.

### **3. Who was involved**

The groups that came together to make this workshop happen were Rebels with Attitude, Community Living Program, Nundah Community Centre, and other people with a disability. 13 People with a disability came to the workshops

#### **Rebels with Attitude**

- helped with organising, setting up and recording on video the workshops
- some members made speeches
- helped advertising by making up flyers
- R.W.A. will continue to be the support group for the actions taken from the workshops

#### **Community Living Program**

- support from two workers for organising and setting up the workshop
- Financial support - equipment and materials
- Video editing

#### **Nundah Community Centre**

- Use of a meeting venue
- Use of equipment

## 4. C.L.P. Involvement

The Community Living Association Inc. has supported the Rebels with Attitude group since its beginnings, as well as supporting Daniel Thomas and the other members of the group to present and facilitate these recent workshops.

The Community Living Association Inc. exists to support:

"An improvement in the social and economic conditions of life of young people with an intellectual disability/learning disability through working developmentally with them to enable them to achieve their maximum potential as members of society."

Community Living Association in its work with young people has often heard individuals speak of how they have been disadvantaged and demeaned by people's attitudes in the community. We were therefore eager to work in partnerships with Daniel Thomas and the Rebels With Attitude Group as they sought to offer an opportunity for people to collectively express "What it's like to have a disability".

The role of the workers from CLA was to work with Daniel and other participants in the preparation and planning process, monetarily resource the workshops and its advertising, as well as co-facilitating the workshops on the day.

It was exciting to be part of the workshops and CLA Inc. is eager to continue to support Rebels With Attitude as it pursues the outcomes from the workshops and continues to **speak out.**

## 5. Workshop outlines

### **People with Disabilities Speaking Out for Themselves**

#### **Workshop 1**

##### 1. Welcome (Danny)

Hi, I'd like to welcome everyone to this workshop. And I thank you for being here today. My name is Daniel Thomas. The workshop is about people with disabilities speaking out for themselves. Today we are going to talk about what it is like to have a disability, and what people in the community don't understand about disability.

##### 2. Introductions. Could everybody introduce themselves, can we go around in a circle and say your name. (Danny)

##### 3. Ice breaker Names In A Box. Write your name on a piece of card and put it in the box. Then everyone picks out a name from the box and has to find that person. (Danny)

##### 4. Speeches

John to introduce. 1. Danny

2. Paul

3. Katalin

John to say something after the speeches and hand back to Danny.



5. Danny to ask

**What did you like about the speeches?**

**What did you think about the speeches?**

Break (until 3pm)

6. Questions on butchers paper.

**What do you think it is like to have a disability?  
(What is it like to you?)**

**How are you treated by people in the community when  
you have a disability?**

**Why do you think people in the community treat you  
this way?**

**What don't people in the community understand about  
disability?**

7. Wrap up. Sum up of what has happened today and  
some information about the next workshop. (John)

8. Thank you (Danny)

Thank you everyone for what you have said and thank you  
for turning up, hope to see you at the next one, on the 21  
July.

# **People with Disabilities Speaking Out for Themselves**

## **Workshop 2**

### **1. Welcome (Danny)**

Hi, I'd like to welcome everyone to workshop 2. And I thank you for being here today. My name is Daniel Thomas. This is the second workshop on People with Disabilities Speaking Out for Themselves. Today we are going to do some activities about what you would have to make your community better and to talk about what we can do and to watch a video.

There looks like there are some new people here. Can we go around and everyone say their name to meet the new people.

### **2. Ice Breaker - Barn Yard noises (Lisa)**

### **3. Re-cap on last workshop (John)**

4. **(Danny)** Let's get into 3 groups with about 3 or 4 people in each group. And every group needs to make a sculpture with the materials provided. About what you would have in your community to make it better.

***Questions to ask groups (Danny, John, Lisa)***

***What would the houses be like?***

***What would the people be like?***

***What would the services be like?***

*Ask each group what they are doing?  
Sculpture (need clay or plasticine, boards, pipe  
cleaners, paddle pop sticks)*

**5. (Danny) Ask the group to come back  
together.**

**Ask each group:**

**Can you tell everyone about what your group has  
done?**

**What could we do to tell people in the community  
about our ideas about what would make it better?**

**Break 15 minutes**

**6. (Danny) Let's watch a video now. Let me know if  
you would like the video stopped at any time to ask  
questions or to see something again?**

**At the end of the video**

**What did you like about the video?**

**What did you understand in the video?**

**7. (Danny) How do you think people with a  
disability in the community can stand up and fight  
for their rights?**

**8. (John) What will WE do? What should happen  
from here?**

***Wrap - up, explain report. Hand over to Danny to talk  
about R.W.A. group as a venue to continue discussing  
the issues and where to go from here.***

## 6. What happened Workshop One

Speeches were made by three people, Daniel Thomas, Paul O'Dea, Katalin Takacs. They spoke about their experiences and lives around the question of "What is it like to have a disability?". Following are copies of the speeches made by Paul O'Dea and Katalin Takacs.

### Katalin Takacs

Hello my name is Katalin. I am a women from C.L.P. and Rebels with Attitude group I am going to make a speech today.

I went to special school in Caboolture After school we went on the Deception Bay bus to high school and change to Burpengary.

The high school students called me and my friends spastic, stupid, dumb because we went to special school and had a disability. They should not tease people with disability

Don't swear at people with disability. Some bosses Don't want people with disability to work . They think they can't handle it full time work they should let them have a go

Some people might not respect people with disability .When you are on the D.S.P it is easy to get broke on the pension there is not much money to pay for bills rent food transports .I am afraid go out at night because people might grab or kidnap you or stab you. It is a important for people with disability to have services and organisations to help them. I think they are very important.

Sometimes people laugh at other people they know have a disability because they went to a special school or have a support worker. I think this is very bad.

I think we should tell people in the community not to laugh or swear or stare at people with disability. And that it is okay to have workers to help people with disability.

People in the community should respect people with disability and understand that sometimes we might need help with things but people with disability are smart and can do lots of things.

Thank you for coming along to listen to my speech.

Good afternoon,

I would like to talk to you today on what it is like to have a disability and what don't people in the community understand about disabilities.

Having a disability is quite normal.

There are a lot people with different types of disabilities in the community and around the world.

People with disabilities are discriminated against when they want a job even though they know they could do the job.

I go to an employment agency to try and find work. They are meant to help me find a job but they haven't found me one. What is the point of going into see them if they are not doing anything to help.

I have been unemployed for under three years. Employers do not want to give people with a disability a chance to prove themselves.

If I had a job it would mean that I would have more money to play around with not just relying on the pension. The pension that I get is very limited. It is very hard to live off \$350.00 a fortnight.

It is very hard to get the big things like TV's stereos etc. You can't splurge on things. It is even hard to pay the bills sometimes. Sometime I feel it is not enough to live on. The disability that I have disadvantages me in ways but that doesn't stop me from doing many things like tenpin bowling, walking etc.

My family find it hard to cope with my disability. I can't do anything about the way that I am physically. People don't treat me as seriously as I would like them too.

People in the community do not understand people with disabilities because they think that we are different than they are. In my life it is my personal experience that people treat me unfairly in the areas of jobs, being bullied at school, sport because people make fun of us, and people talking behind my back.

People with disabilities are treated differently but they should be treated equally.

If every one in the world did not have a disability the world would be boring.

### **Questions and participants comments:**

#### ***What do you think it is like to have a disability? (What is it like for you?)***

- Frustrating: people staring, people touching, you fight yourself and body to get the right words out for people to understand.
- Upsetting.
- Embarrassed (for people in wheelchairs and when I have to repeat again and again).
- Unfortunate to find things you can do.
- Seems unfair to have different rules: e.g. getting a bank loan being discriminated against.
- Everybody's the same they just work differently.
- Some people don't understand and don't care.
- Some people don't respect people with a disability and think it is funny.
- Pretending to read so people don't know you can read.
- Embarrassed to tell someone you have a problem so they can get a job.
- People hide away have no friends.
- People hurt people in a way they shouldn't hurt people.

#### ***How are you treated by people in the community when you have a disability?***

- Some people in the community are helpful.
- I get treated like dirt.
- Some people think people with a disability don't have a chance.
- People in the community don't understand disability.
- People think they are smarter than you but they aren't really, people with disabilities are smart in other ways.
- Centrelink/ all organisations should look at how they treat people.
- They might think that you are weird or unusual.
- "Pensioner" is a doomed word in banks.
- I don't think the government likes to pay pensioners.
- People criticise you.
- Sometimes people help you.
- There should be more people helping.

#### ***Why do you think people in the community treat you this way?***

- People don't care.
- People have nothing better to do other than criticise, tease and hurt.
- Some people treat you like children they don't care if you have a disability.
- High school kids treat you differently if you go to a special school, they think they know a lot more, they think that's the way people with a disability should be treated.
- People think you don't understand.
- People think people with a disabilities shouldn't be alive.

### ***What don't people in the community understand about disability?***

- People don't take the time to listen or read literature they don't get information.
- More access for physically disabled people.
- There should be more of us to be against them.
- Someone with a disability should be in politics.
- People with disabilities should speak up for themselves.
- Should be more people in the community to help.
- People don't understand that there are people with disabilities all around the world.
- Having a support worker to help you say what you want to say.
- People need to know not to be afraid of people with disabilities.
- We are not going to bite people's heads off.
- Should tell people not to make fun.
- News reporters don't care, media makes fun of people with disabilities.
- People don't look up to people with a disability.
- People with disabilities are not often talked about or on the media talking.

## 7. What happened in Workshop Two

### *Community Sculpture*

The group broke up into two smaller groups which turned out to be a group of men and a group of women. It took a little time for the groups to get into the activity but the participants did not want to stop at the end. Participants worked on pieces alone or with someone else to create to principles that they thought would make their community better as well as physical things. At first it was difficult for participants to interpret their ideas into something visual. People made scenes which involved people living together happily, people who were caring, train stations that were safe and physically accessible, parks that had trees and equipment with people having fun together, money, meeting areas, community centre, recreational venues such as bowling alleys, cars, accidents involving a politician not favoured by the participants.







## *Responses from the Video "What is Self Advocacy"*

- The organisation in the video was good.
- They learnt skills and sorted out problems.
- Good at inviting people to a meeting.
- Got to meet people.
- Helping each other.
- Taking responsibility for yourself.
- Inviting people in, making tea.

## *How do you think people with a disability in the community can stand up and fight for their rights?*

- Making a group, talking about community issues, working out solutions.
- Finding out about advocacy.
- Speaking up and writing letters to politicians etc..
- Going to the media to give a positive attitude.
- Talking more openly.

## *What will we do?*

- Forming a group (have R.W.A. already).
- Writing to the Prime Minister about the work of the group.
- Make the video send it to government, T.V. radio and community groups.
- More activities.
- Next R.W.A. meeting work on report from the workshops and ideas from the workshops.

## 8. How did it go?

Reflections from the workshop facilitators and organising party

- it was good because everyone got involved
- it was good to have speeches from people and ask questions
- everyone enjoyed themselves
- people found it was a bit easy and a bit hard
- people expressed their feelings about their disability and how people treat them in the community
- met new people
- met new friends
- people mixed
- games were good
- next time we could need some more money

## 9. Where to from here

The active participants from the workshop have connected with the R.W.A. group in a range of ways. There is a constant core group of people who, with support from other members, continue to complete tasks which work towards the goals of the workshop. Some group members have chosen to work on putting this report together, while some are editing the video of the workshops and some members are writing letters about the R.W.A. group. At this stage the whole group decided they would like to send the reports and letters to politicians and other organisations, as well as other people with disabilities. The group intends to use these documents and the video to let others know about the group and what they do, and to communicate their ideas and opinions with the hope of affecting change in their community.