

Speaking up through Self Advocacy – Telling our stories and making a difference about our rights

Self Advocacy History Project

Reinforce with academic partners Chris Bigby & Patsie Frawley

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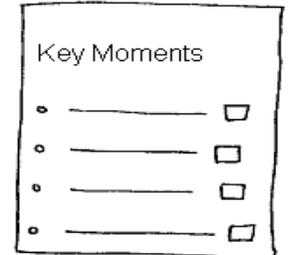
How we have done the research

- Looking at files – meeting notes, books, videos
- Interviewing people who have been involved over the years: self advocates, supporters, people who work in government
- Writing people's stories



What we are going to present today

- Some of the important memories
- Ideas about self advocacy that have come from the research
- Some thoughts about doing stories as part of the research



Timeline

- 1977 → Started meeting up at Middle Park Social Club
- 1980 – 1981 → Camps at Inverloch and Lancefield bring people together from across State
Became known as Force 10
- 1981 → Organised and ran the 5th Strand of the Intellectual Disability conference;
Code of Rights presented to Senator Fred Chaney
- 1982 → Drummond St Squat
- 1984 → People First Conference in Washington
- 1986 - 1987 → People First Victoria & National Self Advocacy Resource Unit
- 1987 → Reinforce Incorporated; Raising our voices on Radio 3CR
- 1988 → Self Advocates from across Australia meet at State Film Centre
Melbourne ; Victorian advocacy and self advocacy groups hold Housing
Conference
- 1992 → Protesting to close Caloola
- 1995 → Funding stops from State Government
- 1996 → 'Plain English Less Jargon'
- 1998 → Reinforce member goes to People First Conference Alaska
- 2000 → Spreading the Word project begins
- 2001 → Project worker steals money from Spreading the Word Project
- 2006 → 25th anniversary AGM held
- 2008 → Self Advocacy Reunion held at Story Hall RMIT with guest speakers Dorothy
Atkinson and Mabel Cooper from the UK; Patricia O'Brien and Errol Cocks

Middle Park Social Club



“Middle Park was a beautiful drop in place....it was a social club.... that is when we really, really got together as a group”



“Well the one we had at Inverloch we called Fungress because part of it was going to be work , and the rest of it was going to be fun” (Self Advocate)

The one I can recall was Lancefield..eighty people were at that camp and they wanted something to happen for people with an intellectual disability so they said “we’ll form a group” (Des McIntosh, self advocate)

“Why don’t we just get people away, and start workshopping, put these ideas up?” (Supporter) “Well let’s have a camp where people can talk, let’s sort of do it that way” (Supporter)

You’d sit in a group.. you may or may not participate, that was fine (Supporter)

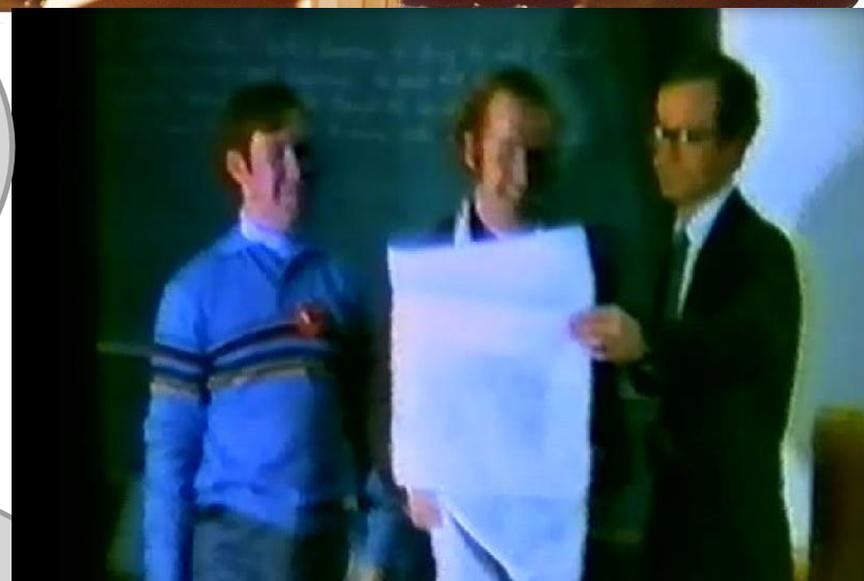




I went to the conference, we all wrote out, what we wanted to say, you know like how bad it was, how badly treated we were, how we weren't heard, how people didn't take us seriously (Self Advocate)



This is the first time at a national conference on retardation that retarded people, intellectually handicapped people have got a chance to have a say to tell the service providers, the professionalsthe needs that they have....they are making some pretty strong demands" (Video of 5th Strand Conference, 1981)



If we don't start to do something now no-one will, so we start with this conference and from there we will have others and we will keep having more until such time as they realise we are human and we do get our rights because until then we are nothing" (Self advocate 5th Strand conference, 1981)

"We took a petition on our rights that we want" (This code of rights was presented to Senator Fred Chaney at the conference)

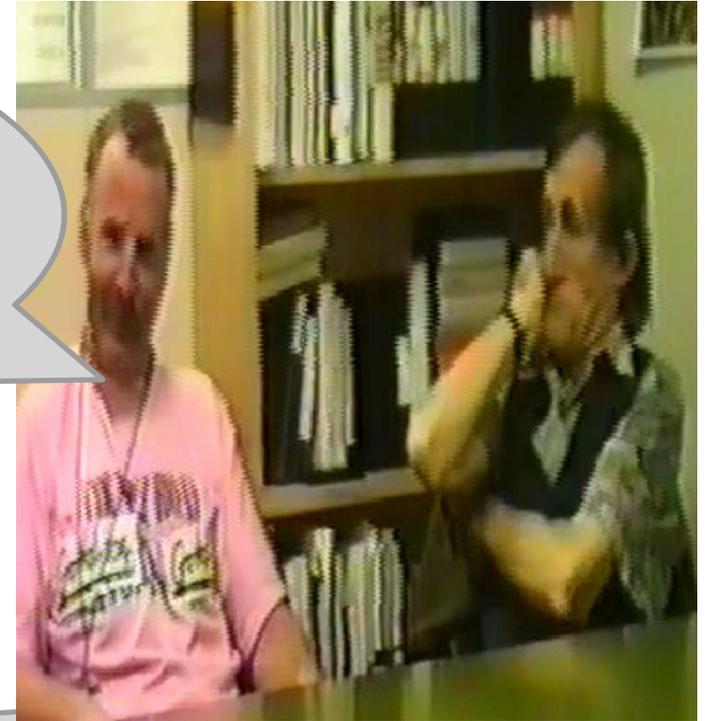


“We were radical then” (David Banfield -Self Advocate)



“You’ve got to be strong, you’ve got to be powerful, you’ve got to show right... you’ve got to think: “Right, we’ve had enough, we’ve got to be seriously strong about this and forceful” (Past self advocate)

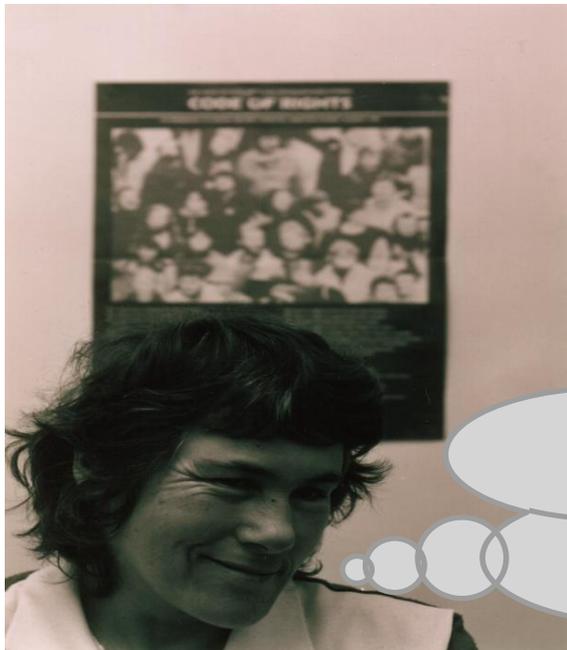
We promote people's rights, we sit on various government committees making sure there is not too much jargon floating around. ...It must be jargon free language so people can understand it. (Des McIntosh speaking about what Reinforce did in the 1990's)



I can remember the last video I made was the "Plain English, Less Jargon".... you think of all the videos I made well you'd be there all day ... Oh I had, heaps of different videos, on the disabilities, yes.... mainly because of my, my expertise, with films... I always used to come up with and different ideas (Doug Pentland)

On a shoe-string budget. We had to scrimp and save as much as we could. We had to stop going to conferences for a while. Basically we had to stop paying people's travel fees like we used to do. Because we just couldn't afford it. Yeah a lot of people [stopped coming]. They just went their own way. Some went to sheltered workshop. Things like that. (David Banfield – Self Advocate)

It was very difficult keeping our doors open..we nearly came to the crunch to where we had to shut our doors, I don't know how we did it..it was as I said, just to pay the rent, just to keep our doors open, it was unbelievable, but we did it... we did it, and I feel so proud, I'm proud of all of us. (Julie Cooper, past self advocate)



Yes, every time we put in a submission, it always seemed to go to [other organisation], and we were always concerned that they must have a link with the Department somewhere, because all the funding seemed to go to [other organisation], and not self advocacy groups, and there was a lot of confusion about that time, they should mix up the money but not, but all of it went to [other organisation]. (Janice Slattery, Self Advocate)



Janice Julie was the one who started the news letter, going....
That's right, because it hadn't been going for a long time.

Mm, so I started it off. **Janice:** And since, Julie started the news letter, I've kept it up.

JC: And even now, I'm enjoying, doing my editorial, I'm enjoying a lot, of it, that's why I don't like to give it up, because it's my baby (laugh), and I enjoy doing it.

JC: That's good.

Norrie: And now we're putting, now the newsletter's still going, we're even putting photographs in them.

JC: Yes, that's fantastic.

Janice: Yes, yes.

JC: I'm glad you're still going on with it, that's fantastic, that's good, yes.

I enjoyed my time there, with Reinforce, although it did have its up and, ups and downs and disagreements, I'd like to put that first. I had a lot of health problems that affected me in the long run. When I think about all the work I've done in the past, how I helped other disabled people to become what they are now, I really put them on the map, and the road, and they can follow on the way that I've left off, they can follow the road and the same map (Doug Pentland)

Reinforce means we reinforce
the issues that come our way
(Des McIntosh)

“ It was very important, about what they [Reinforce] were doing, there was a lot of good things they had been involved in over the time”. Reinforce had its up and downs, ups and downs, but in the main it was able to do things, with and without support, to do things they believed in themselves, as well as others.” (Doug Pentland)



Where to from here?

- Finishing interviews
- Finishing life stories
- Writing papers about what we have found out
- Putting together a book with pictures and a DVD about the history

**THANK
YOU**

**You can contact the History Group through
Reinforce**

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or LaTrobe University 03 94793041