

Reinforce Self Advocacy



Speaking up over the years

Acknowledgements

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This book is dedicated to the memory of David Banfield and Doug Pentland, long term members of Reinforce and committed self advocates.

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Research partners:



Foreword

This is a moving and inspirational account of the emergence and development of possibly the most effective self advocacy organisation for people with intellectual disabilities we have seen in Australia. I feel privileged to have worked with Reinforce in the early 1980s when the movement to reclaim the lives of people who had spent much of their time in large Victorian institutions really took pace. These were very exciting, fulfilling, and demanding years. Although opposition to reform of disability services in Victoria continued, what impressed me greatly was the large constituency of people committed to positive change and the need to hear the voices of people with disability themselves. Force Ten was in its infancy, but already a force to be reckoned with. I was also impressed with the support the group received. My first contact with Reinforce members was at Middle Park early in 1981 where young professional workers who participated in the Easter meeting from which Force 10 emerged were strong advocates and supporters of this new development of self advocacy. Movement of people out of institutions was occurring, but with inadequate support. I have many positive recollections of subsequently working with Reinforce members on activities ranging from confronting institutional practices, challenging political and industrial interests that supported continuation of institutions, and developing policy and legislation.

I felt we were in an important partnership in seeking similar change and reform. The influence of Reinforce was felt outside Victoria, at both national and international levels. I recall the impact Reinforce members had during IYDP and at an annual meeting in Canberra of the (then) Australian Association for the Mentally Retarded in the mid-1980s. AAMR members were somewhat taken aback by the direct way in which Reinforce members who attended the meeting for the first time asserted their rights to participation. Most of all I warmly recall the members of Reinforce, particularly those who have sadly passed on, and express my appreciation of their comradeship.

Professor Errol Cocks
Centre for Research into Disability and Society,
Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA.

Errol was the Director of the Newly created Mental Retardation
Division of the Health Commission of Victoria in the early 1980s.

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The History of Reinforce:

Victoria's oldest self advocacy group

This book is about the history of Reinforce self advocacy group in Melbourne, Victoria Australia. You will learn about this group and about self advocacy when you read this book. We wanted to put this book together as a legacy of our work in self advocacy – this means we wanted to leave something behind for other people to learn from. Doing the history project was important for us, it gave us the chance to look at what we had done – to start from scratch and look right up until 2012. We have gathered everything we could find – photos, papers, videos and talked to a lot of people who were involved, then we thought about what it all meant. The book gives a picture of self advocacy past and present and will hopefully make people think about what the future will be. It was important to us that we did this properly, that is why it took so long and why we worked as a group to do it. As we have said “we are the history, we know it, we made it”.

**Amanda Hiscoe on behalf
of the Reinforce History Group.**

This book is one of the major outcomes of collaborative research that explored the part of self-advocacy in building social inclusion for people with intellectual disability. The findings of this research point to the significance of self-advocacy both in the lives of individuals and as part of a wider movement for social change. Much has also been learned from this work about the processes of doing inclusive research. More formal and perhaps less accessible accounts of these findings are found in the journal papers, Sian Anderson's PhD thesis and conference presentations listed in the back of the book. These are available from Living with Disability Research group at La Trobe University.

At one level this book tells the chronological story of Reinforce, the first self-advocacy group in Victoria. It captures the memories of members, the professional allies who supported the organisation and the colleagues from other advocacy organisations who worked alongside it. The book sets out the major events that defined Reinforce, such as its early radicalism and the social context of deinstitutionalisation. At another level it reveals the importance of self-advocacy as a place where the personal relationships, fundamental to inclusion, flourish, and where opportunities for social and economic participation are created. This story of Reinforce demonstrates too the critical role of financial support in shaping self-advocacy; showing for example how uncertain or low levels of funding divert energy from social change to organisational survival, and threaten independence.

Above all else this book chronicles the remarkable achievements of the first generation of self-advocates in Victoria and their allies, and demonstrates the case for the continued support of independent self-advocacy groups such as Reinforce as one means of building more inclusive communities.

Christine Bigby, ARC project Chief Investigator

1979-1981 Getting together

1979

Middle Park Social Club
(opposite)

1979

▀▀ Middle Park was a beautiful drop in place... it was a social club.... that is when we really, really got together as a group. ▀▀
[Self Advocate]

1980

Inverloch Fungress
page 08

Group named Force 10.

1980

1980

First office. Force 10 move into their first office at St Marks Church North Fitzroy.

1981

Conference at Lancefield
page 09

1981

1981

UN International Year of Disabled People (IYDP). Force 10 members march in the IYDP march in Melbourne City Centre with other groups.



1981

5th Strand Conference - a self advocacy conference within a conference on Mental Retardation
page 10

1981

Reinforce becomes the name for the first Victorian self advocacy group – changed from Force 10.

Rock for rights concert at Northcote Town Hall.

▀▀ They were ... fearfully independent in their attitudes, and very reactive against the sort of upbringing they'd had, where they'd sort of hadn't been allowed to make any decisions for themselves or anything. ▀▀
[Supporter]

Forming friendships

In 1979 a social club was set up in Middle Park, a suburb of Melbourne. The social club was part of a new service that was developed to support adults with an intellectual disability, many who had recently left institutions. It was funded by the State government department responsible for disability and was staffed by a group of young professionals including Social Workers, Youth and Recreation workers and Occupational Therapists. Staff at the service worked with people so they could live in the community, they supported people to manage their money, find a job and find things to do outside the places they lived. This included supporting people to make friends and do social things together. It was where people could drop in and relax or talk to staff about what they needed. Through the social club people got together and developed friendships, they ran sporting and social events and formed a committee that involved them in the way the club was run.

■ ■ The idea of the drop-in centre was to be a low key way of [providing support] it was basically centred around social activities, but from the beginning, there was a very, very strong emphasis on just facilitating peer supported networks. ■ ■ (Supporter)

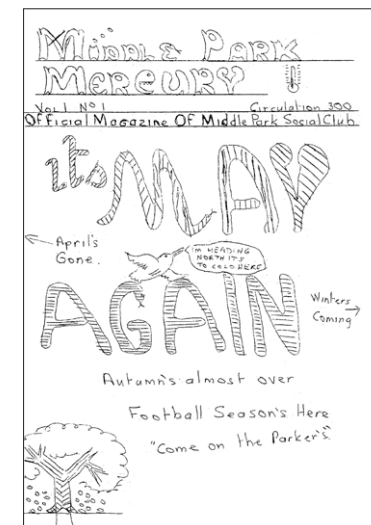


The Middle Park disco.



■ ■ Oh Middle Park was central to it all...I mean people just came there, and the one thing that was really obvious about Middle Park was that there was an awful lot of people did do an awful lot of talking for themselves, and didn't need people to talk for them. ■ ■ (Supporter)

Middle Park Social Club.



People came together to share experiences and form a group.

1980 Inverloch Fungress.

A camp and conference was held in the coastal town of Inverloch. People with an intellectual disability gathered to have some fun and start having a say about rights in their day to day lives. The conference was planned by people from disability services in Melbourne including Kew Cottages, Oakleigh Centre and Middle Park. A group formed and called themselves Force 10.

“ [One of the Middle Park workers remembered thinking] Why don’t we just get people away, and start workshoping, put these ideas up? Well let’s have a camp where people can talk, let’s sort of do it that way. ” (Supporter)

“ They called the group Force 10 which was meant to be more powerful than an earthquake. ” (Supporter)

“ 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. ” (David Banfield, Self Advocate)

Group discussion at Inverloch Fungress 1980.



1981 Lancefield.

Force 10 held a conference in the Victorian country town of Lancefield. This conference brought together people from day services and employment services across Victoria. Force 10 became the Union for Intellectually Disadvantaged Citizens.

THE FORCEFUL TIMES

Vol. 1. No. 1 ★ A LANCEFIELD FIRST ★ April, 1981

WHO CAME

WILLY CONIDI
JO CONIDI
SUE GEORGE
GLEN THAME
ANDREW PERCIVAL
JENNY CORFE
GEOFF HALL
DOUG PEATLAND
ADAM ZADLOW
CHRIS PARSONS
COLIN MORAN
ROBIN KENT
KEN GASCORN
LORRAINE ROBERTS
BARBARA DOUGLAS
BRUCE THOMPSON
CLAUDE CHITTORY
JOHN BUTTERY
ROBERT CARTER
JAN BEATTIE
NORMA TUTTLEBY
BARBARA REED
MARGARET ALLEN
JANNA KUTALICK
NINA BARNES
ELEEN BENDALL
LEONIE MUDGE
JANINE EVANS
SPENCER MALONE
ROBERT HILL
LEA BARNY
PETE PARSONS
GAPLE NAUGH
BILL McDONALD
CARM CHIES

NORMA KELT

JERNETTE DEVERON
ROBERT PERRYMAN
ROBBIE ROZIER
CHRISTINE VARGOFF
DAVID SALMAN
PHILIP SPITZBERN
HERBERT SONELL
DON SNEEDY
TERRY WILLEY
DRAUL SUNDERS
DRAUL BIRSWAN
DRAUL BURTON
STUART KENDON
ZEV BURGESS
JUDY WILSON
PAUL BOURKE
TIS MARSH
JOHN LABLAN
MAUREEN WILSON
JULIE BRITTON
VIVIANE TOMP
FRANK DE VREE
JOHN BRITTON
KEN HELLING
EDDIE EYARS
KEVIN NORTH
TAL LANE
BRENDAN LILLYWHITE

Lancefield, I remember there were people there from Janefield, ...Gippsland...people from all over the place, and a lot of people just got up and started telling their stories,...it was incredibly powerful,...some of these people had never said a word before, in a group. (Supporter)

Force for the handicapped

"Force for the handicapped"
The Sun, April 21, 1981.

A GROUP of intellectually handicapped people formed a union yesterday to fight alleged exploitation in state-run institutions and centres.

The Victorian Union of Intellectually Disadvantaged Citizens plans to make as much noise as a hurricane — which is why they've called their union Force 10.

Force 10 is a first for Victoria and possibly Australia, its organisers say.

"We will be fighting for recognition of the rights of intellectually disadvantaged citizens," Force 10 committee member Jan Beattie said yesterday.

Ms Beattie attends the Health Commission's Middle Park social club and day centre.

"People in institutions are virtually treated as prisoners," she said.

Force 10 was formed during a four-day residential camp at Lance-



● JAN BEATTIE

By MARIA TRIACA

field, attended by 80 people, including residents from 30 state-run institutions and welfare workers from the Division of Mental Retardation Services.

Force 10 members are angry at what they say are abuses suffered by many of the 3500 residents in state institutions.

They allege bashing by staff, lack of privacy, restricted visiting hours, lack of information on contraception, forced sex with staff members and "slave labor" in sheltered workshops.

"We totally underestimated people's anger and their capacity to express that anger," Force 10 member John Britton said yesterday.

Exploitation in sheltered workshops and cases of repeated bashing were common, he said.

"One man works 30 hours a week making wooden clothes pegs and gets \$2."

Force 10 has drawn up a manifesto of rights for residents of institutions. Staff involved in suspected bashing incidents should be suspended pending independent investigation, the manifesto says.

Withdrawal of money as a form of punishment should be stopped and residents should have access to their bank accounts.

Force 10 begins recruiting members today. It expects to send a delegation to the Health Minister Mr. Borthwick, after its first full meeting on May 9.

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)

List of people who attended Lancefield conference 1981.

Speaking out together

1981 5th Strand conference

- a conference held by self advocates at the 2nd South Pacific Regional Conference on Mental Retardation held at Melbourne University.

International leader in supporting self advocacy Bonnie Schoultz presented at the conference and met members of Force 10. This was the first time in Australia that people with an intellectual disability were involved in a conference like this. They developed the Code of Rights and presented it to a Federal Government Senator, Fred Chaney.



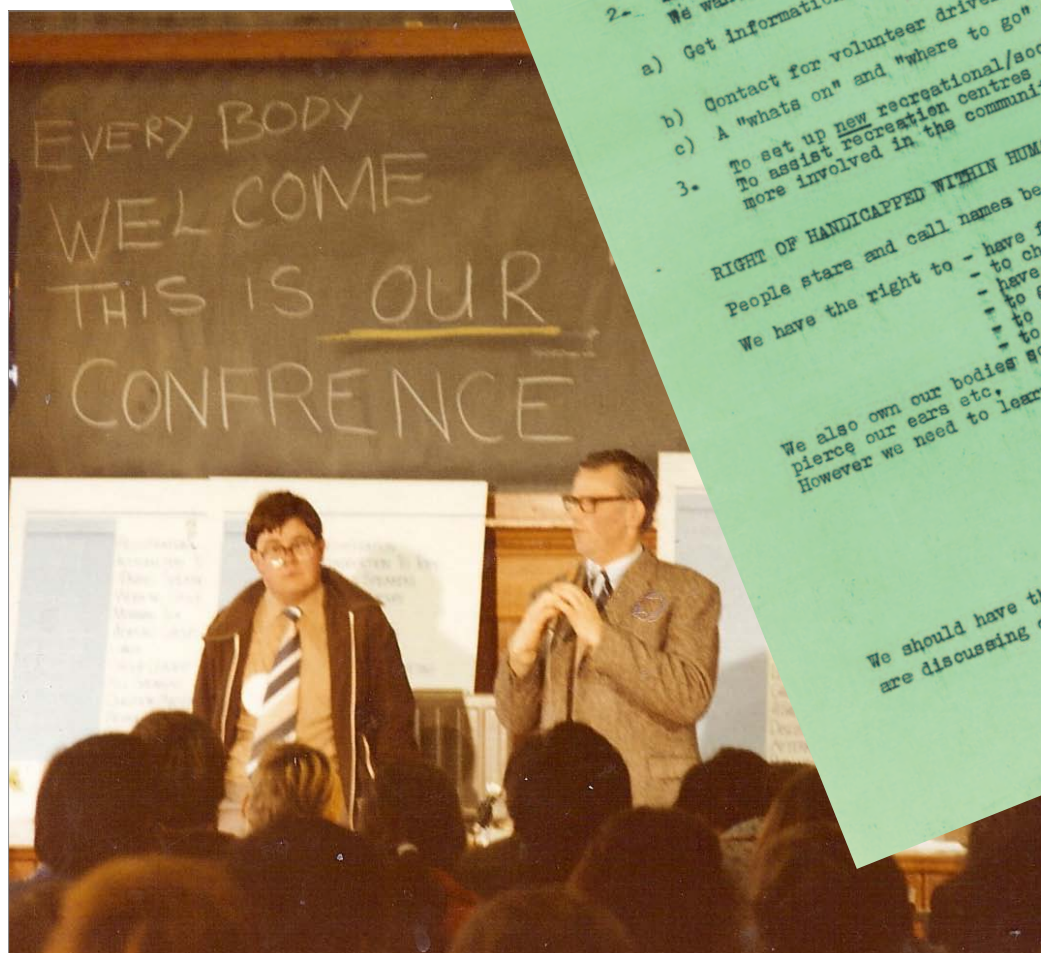
■ ■ I went to the conference, we all wrote out what we wanted to say, like how bad it was how badly treated we were, how we weren't heard how people didn't take us seriously. ■ ■ (Self advocate)

■ ■ If we don't start doing something now, no one will. So we start with this conference and from there we will have others and we'll 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)

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

Des McIntosh, Force 10 at the 5th Strand conference Melbourne University.

Self advocates presenting
at the 5th Strand conference
Melbourne University.



THE VOICE OF RETARDED CITIZENS
Resolutions from the working groups on social life,
Second South Pacific Conference on Mental Retardation,
27th August, 1981.

1. Transport.
 - a) We want half our taxi fares paid each trip for twenty trips per month or
 - b) Get taxi vouchers for certain amounts.
 - c) Get the help of voluntary drivers to get us where we want to go.
 - d) We want to be taught to use public transport.
2. Information centre.
 - a) We want an office funded by the government which we can;
 - Get information --- by phone
 - by newsletter
 - b) Contact for volunteer drivers.
 - c) A "whats on" and "where to go" directory.
3. To set up new recreational/social centres.
To assist recreation centres already exist
more involved in the community.

RIGHT OF HANDICAPPED WITHIN HUMAN RELATIONS
People stare and call names because we are different
We have the right to - have friends
- to choose our friends
- have different
- to get engaged
- to get married
- to choose to
- to choose to have children

We also own our bodies
pierce our ears etc.
However we need to learn things

We should have the right
are discussing our future

Documents presented
to Senator Fred Chaney
by the self advocates
in the 5th Strand
Conference.

CODE OF RIGHTS.

Presented to Senator Fred Chaney on the 28/8/81 by members of the
Fifth strand.

- We want more training for jobs outside.
- We want to see more people out of institutions.
- We want better transport and lower fares and better service.
- We are humans first and disadvantaged second.
- All theatres to have concessions for each session.
- We need more access to community facilities.
- Everybody living in institutions has the right to community living to be trained for jobs and to education.
- We want more group homes to be built and more halfway houses.
- Each pension should be above the poverty line and increased quarterly.
- We want the right to have our own choice of medical insurance and our own doctor.
- We have the right to have our rights protected.
- To be protected from violence and abuse.
- We have a right to information about marriage and relationships.
- We have a right to live in our own homes.
- We have a right to spend our own money.
- We demand all discrimination to cease.
- We have a right to live with whom we want.
- We have a right to know where our money is going
- Intellectually disadvantaged citizens should have access to low rental flats and houses in the community.
- We demand the closing of all institutions for intellectually disadvantaged people.
- We have a right to education.
- We have a right to privacy.
- We have a right to private ownership.
- We have the right to control our own lives.

David Banfield 1951 – 2012

Founding member of Reinforce.



David was from Bendigo. He grew up with his two brothers and mother. His father passed away when David was six years old. David had a strong connection to the railways. His Dad and brother worked in the railyards - there was nothing David did not know about trains.

Sandhurst Centre was an institution in Bendigo. David lived there from around 1968 to 1972 when it was called "Sandhurst Boys home". David remembered it as a 'training centre' where he learnt how to mend shoes in the "boot shop." The bedrooms were in Nissan huts", tin huts that slept about seven people.

David moved to Melbourne to work at the St Nicholas sheltered workshop for people with an intellectual disability. While he was there he heard about the Middle Park social club. David became involved in everything at Middle Park and was on the first committee. He helped organise the two conferences at Inverloch and Lancefield.

David was the first Secretary of Reinforce, was President at least three times and held other positions like assistant Treasurer. He was on the committee from when Reinforce was incorporated in 1987 until he passed away in 2012.



The highlights of David's time at Reinforce were the conferences he attended. He went to the People First Conference in Tacoma Washington in 1984, the 4th People First Conference in Alaska in 1998 and was involved in many other conferences locally. David was always keen on having an Australian People First and holding an international self advocacy conference in Melbourne. When David passed away in 2012 he was working on plans for a conference and was very involved in planning this book and the whole history project.

Norrie Blythman DOB 15 March, 1949

Founding member of Reinforce.



Norrie lives in Kew in Melbourne. He has lived there since he moved from Bendigo. He was born in Hopetoun in Victoria and is from a family of six who live all over Victoria and some interstate. When Norrie was in Bendigo he lived at the Sandhurst Boy's home. Norrie had been at Pleasant Creek training centre in Stawell before moving to Sandhurst. He left Sandhurst Centre to take up a job as a cleaner at Kew Cottages – he is not sure how he got that job but it meant he got to move out of Sandhurst and into a supported residential service in Kew where he still is today.

When Norrie was first in Melbourne he heard about the Middle Park Social club. He went along and met up again with his old friend from Sandhurst, David Banfield. Norrie remembers this time as a really good time, “Oh, the things that we used to do. We had discos, Dave and I used to sit at the door, doing the tickets. We were very popular for that ...It was basically where you'd go and hang out ...you'd go there, you'd play snooker. Or they may have cooking classes ...Or there might be a weekend you might go away”. Norrie says it was because of his involvement in Middle Park that he got started in self advocacy.



Self advocacy for Norrie is about helping others, “well supporting others, helping others to achieve and not just myself but for other people as well”. He remembers how they got involved in protests and what was important to them, “Closing institutions. Yes. And I was a bit involved with the Drummond Street squat. I had a megaphone, and was part of that”. Norrie has been on the Reinforce committee since the beginning of the organisation

Norrie has done a lot of different things at Reinforce including being involved in the Raising Our Voices radio show at 3CR, running training about self advocacy and talking at conferences. In his spare time Norrie goes on holidays – he loves travelling with his girlfriend and his family.

1982-1990 Speaking out

1982

'It's time for a change' conference in Sydney.
page 16

1982

1982/3

Government committees set up to advise on the development of new laws, policy for people with an intellectual disability. Reinforce is represented by Doug Pentland.

1982

Drummond Street Squat.
page 17

1983

Reinforce attended a protest at the Health Commission Office in Melbourne about funding for disability services. page 18

1983

1983

Regional members Bruce Moody and Bob Little from Gippsland join Reinforce committee.

Reinforce join with other self advocacy groups from across Australia to run the National Housing conference
page 19

David Banfield represents self advocates on the Federal Governments National Disability Advisory Committee.

1984

Reinforce represented at the Disabled People International Conference in Adelaide.

Reinforce receive funding from State Government to set up an office in Swanston St in Melbourne CBD.

1984

1984

Eight Reinforce members attend the **International Self Advocacy Leadership conference - Tacoma Washington USA**, together with six supporters. Grants from Stegley and Myer Foundations used to pay for travel and accommodation. Extra funds raised from "passing the hat around" on pay day to members of the Waterside Workers union. page 20

Reinforce meet with managers of Victorian residential institutions to discuss closing institutions.

Reinforce and DEAC work together to hold conference on employment.

1985

1986

Reinforce move to new office in Melbourne suburb of Northcote.

1987

Reinforce became an incorporated organisation so it could apply for funds and grants.

Reinforce members Amanda Hiscoe and Norrie Blythman join others from Reinforce and AMIDA to start the radio show **“Raising our voices”** at 3CR Community radio station in Melbourne. [page 21](#)

1988

Government announces plans to close Caloola Training Centre - a residential institution for people with an intellectual disability. Reinforce members did voluntary work at the institution when all staff went out on an indefinite strike.

1990

Reinforce move to a new office at Ross House a community organisation hub in Melbourne’s CBD.

1986

1986

The National Self Advocacy Resource Unit was funded by the Australian government. A forum was held at the Melbourne State Film Centre to launch the National Self advocacy kit project and the Reinforce video ‘What is Self Advocacy’. It was noted that this was an historic day for self advocacy in Australia. [page 22](#)

1987

1988

1988

VALID (Victorian Advocacy League for Intellectual Disability) launched at Melbourne Town Hall.

1989

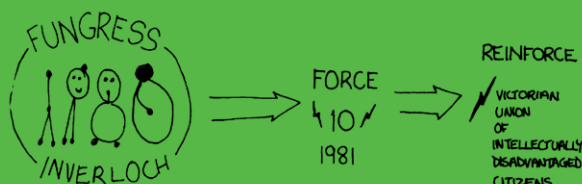
1989

People First Victoria (PFV) formed as peak State self advocacy group. Reinforce were represented on the planning committee along with AMIDA (Accommodation for Mildly Intellectually Disadvantaged Adults) and the National Self Advocacy Resource Unit. [page 24](#)

1990

1990

‘Working together forum’ held in Sydney organised by the National Self Advocacy Resource Unit. [page 22](#)



Speaking out for rights and inclusion

1982 Following on from the success of the 5th Strand conference Reinforce made connections with self advocates in different states and joined up with them to hold a national conference in Sydney. People came together and talked about their own experiences of housing, institutions, employment and education. A video was made of the conference.

Well I think it was by being so vocal, everywhere... so radical, whenever you went to a conference Reinforce were there, usually at the front, you know, speaking up. Reinforce were now more and more getting a position as speakers, at things... (Supporter)

REINFORCE

VICTORIAN

UNION OF

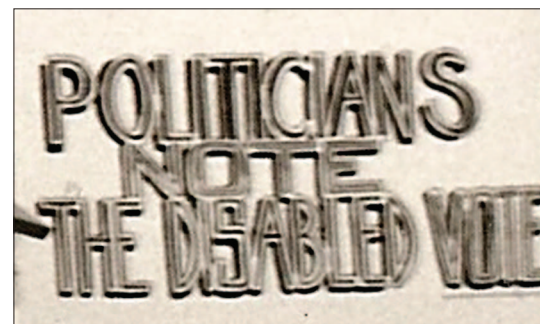
INTELLECTUALLY

DISADVANTAGED

CITIZENS

1982 Squat at Drummond Street Carlton

August 29 – September 5. Five Reinforce members squat in house owned by the government to get emergency accommodation for all homeless people with an intellectual disability. Self advocates talked to passersby with a megaphone to let people know what was going on. When it finished they sat in Minister Tom Roper's office drinking a bottle of champagne. The empty bottle was kept in a box like a trophy.



■ ■ We were radical then. ■ ■

(David Banfield -Self Advocate)

Handwritten report on the Drummond St Squat.

The Peoples Struggle for freedom took place when Drummond Street squatters defeated the health Commissions bid to reclaim 112 Drummond St. & further deny Intellectually Disadvantaged Citizens the right to live where they choose. Victory celebrations erupted across Melbourne as Reinforce members, associates & supporters rejoiced at Drummond Street capture. This is one house MRD staff won't be living in at the expense of I.D.P.s said... Tony Maxwell

commenting on the large no. of MRD houses used for staff living quarters at 6% of the wages. Whilst I.D.P. struggle to survive with no where to live or paying 90% of a pension to live in a special accom. houses.

112 Drummond St was handed over for use as an emergency accom. house when the health commission conceded to all the demands made by Reinforce members.

Reinforce squatters left Drummond St. today after a 5 day struggle. With the exception of Tony Maxwell who will stay on at the house until he finds somewhere else to live.

We Need MORE Houses FOR the disabled and cheap Rent in Houses for Pensioners and disabled people's. Julie Cooper.

by MD Banfield.

Julie Cooper. Anthony R Maxwell

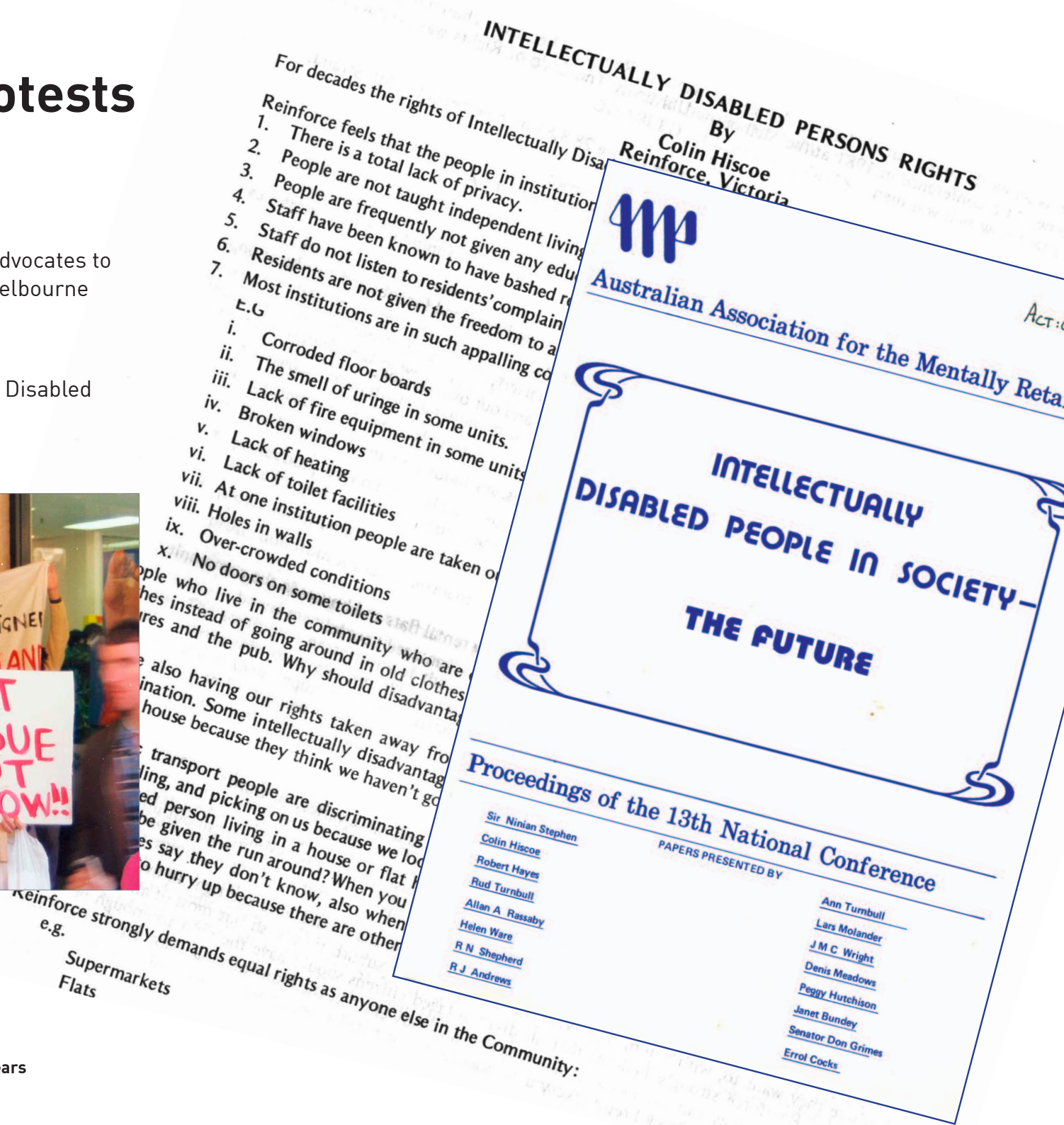
Speaking out at protests and conferences.

1983 Reinforce join with other disability advocates to protest at the Health Commission office in Melbourne about funding for disability services.

Colin Hiscoe presents a paper on behalf of Reinforce about rights at the Intellectually Disabled People in Society Conference in Canberra.



Doug Pentland (left), Daisy Serong (middle with megaphone), John Harriwell (with placard) protest outside Health Commission Office Melbourne.



1983 A planning committee led by Reinforce met after the 'Time for a Change' conference to organise another national self advocacy conference called the National Housing Conference. A Report 'Into the eighties, into the community' was written about the conference.

Some Of The Resolutions

1. **Joining In And Having Your Say**
(Talking about taking part in committees, having your say and making sure people listen to you.)
2. **Where We Want To Live**
(Looking at choices in housing and the sorts of places people want to live in.)
3. **What We Need Once We're Out**
(What sort of supports we need, e.g. Friendship, shopping, budgeting. Who can we get support from and how we get help.)
4. **Staying Out and Feeling Good**
(About what it means to be independent.)
5. **Doing Your Own Thing – Standing On Your Own Feet**
(About learning to be independent.)
6. **Keep Out This Is My Space**
(About privacy, your right to know about life and decide who comes into it.)
7. **Getting The Lowdown**
(Everything you wanted to know but were too afraid to ask. How to get the facts you need to know.)
8. **Self Help – How To Change Things**
(How to change things, how to get things moving.)



RESOLUTION SUMMARY

- 1) Housing in all country and city areas to house people from institutions.
- 2) That people in institutions are taught independent living skills.
- 3) Better public transport so that people can live where they choose to live.
- 4) The least possible supervision in institutions.
- 5) More support services to enable people to live as independently as possible.
- 6) That government owned houses be made available to people coming out of institutions.
- 7) Access to information about what is available in the community on
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Training Skills
- 8) Access to independent living
- 9) Reinforce wants a place on all decision making bodies.



Groups G

GROUP 3: WHAT WE NEED ONCE WE'RE OUT

GROUP 3: WHAT WE'RE OUT

(What sort of supports we need - e.g. Friendship, shopping, budgeting. Who we can get support from and how we get help).

Resolution

Resolutions

1. There should be different amounts of support available according to the different degrees of disability.
2. Deinstitutionalization and community placement should be accompanied by an adequate range of support services, employment, Staffing and resources must cover direct services, support services, and management services.
3. People have had to learn skills the hard way by going through a range of services. Better planning of services is essential so that people can gain independent living skills less painfully.
4. People should be able to say what they want to learn, instead of having programmes entirely set up by staff.
5. People should be made to feel more confident about their ability to learn, and to run their own lives instead of being made to feel dependent on staff and parents.
6. There should be appropriate support services for people who want to live alone.

7. Staff should be available to work with parents, to ensure that parents allow their children to become more independent of their own. There between

The Organisation



Because of pressure on the Organising Committee some recorders of the workshops recorded statements to a more professional style of language. The stark differences will be easily seen. Hopefully this problem will be sorted out during future conferences.

The Central Planning Committee started meeting in June 1982. By early 1983 this group was meeting every week. The theme of the conference was taken from the Code of Rights which was put together at Melbourne University in August 1981.

The Central Committee was supported by sub-committees which included: Finance, Media, Workshop, & Drama. All groups had contact with each other.

Reinforce is committed to strengthening the 'voice' of people. In previous conferences care has been taken to use the words of consumers

Because of pressure on the Organising Committee some recorders of the workshops recorded statements to a more professional style of language. The stark differences will be easily seen. Hopefully this problem will be sorted out during future conferences.

More about Reinforce:

Most of Reinforce's membership are Victorians. There are members in most Australian states together with some overseas associate members.

Only people with intellectual disability can serve on the Central Committee or have full membership in Reinforce. Associate membership is available to others. Associates have no voting rights and often act as resource people.

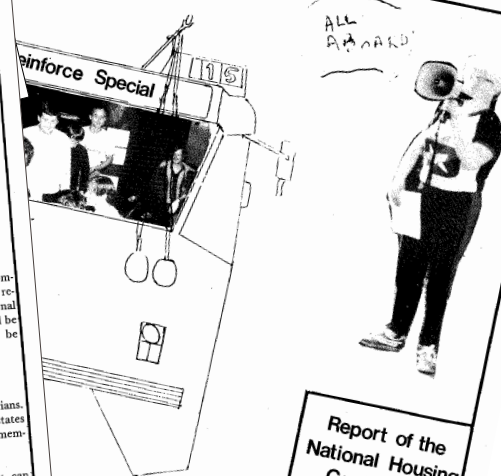
The contact address for Reinforce can be found on the inside back cover.



Act: conf:

INTO THE EIGHTIES

INTO THE COMMUNITY



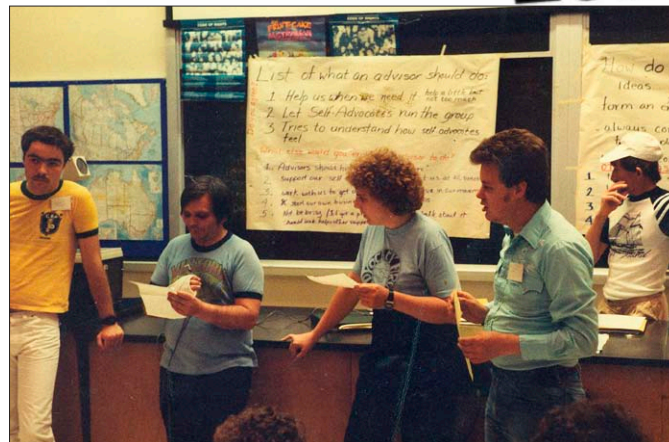
Report of the
National Housing
Conference
run by and for
Intellectually
Disadvantaged
Australians

1984 Reinforce members receive grant from Myer and Stegley foundations to send eight members and six support workers to the first ever International Self Advocacy conference in Tacoma, Washington. Extra funds to pay for the trip were donated by the Waterside Workers Union.

International Self-Advocacy Leadership Conference

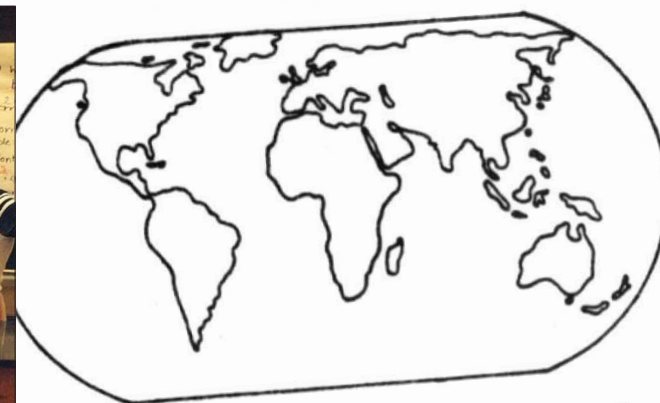


Amanda Hiscoe [then Tuttleby] at the Tacoma self advocacy conference in the USA.



Australian self advocates presenting at the international self advocacy conference in Tacoma, Washington, USA.

■ ■ 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, oh, and people would think that it's best for us to be locked up, away from the community ...the discrimination should stop, how it should be against the law...and all that sort of thing ...yes, it was a 14 day conference, it was very tiring, but it was fantastic, you know. ■ ■ (Self-advocate)



Speaking Up And Speaking Out

July 23-29, 1984 Tacoma, Washington USA



David Banfield, Amanda Hiscoe [then Tuttleby] with other self advocates at the Tacoma Self Advocacy conference in the USA.

Raising our voices

1987 Reinforce member Amanda Hiscoe worked with AMIDA to get a radio program for and by people with an intellectual disability on Melbourne community radio station 3CCR. It is still going today.

■ ■ One day sitting at home in May or June I thought of a radio program idea... So we [Amanda and people from AMIDA] went to 3CR. It took two or three meetings to start with. Then we got accepted to do it... My aim was to have a radio program to give people with disabilities a voice on the airwaves'. ■ ■

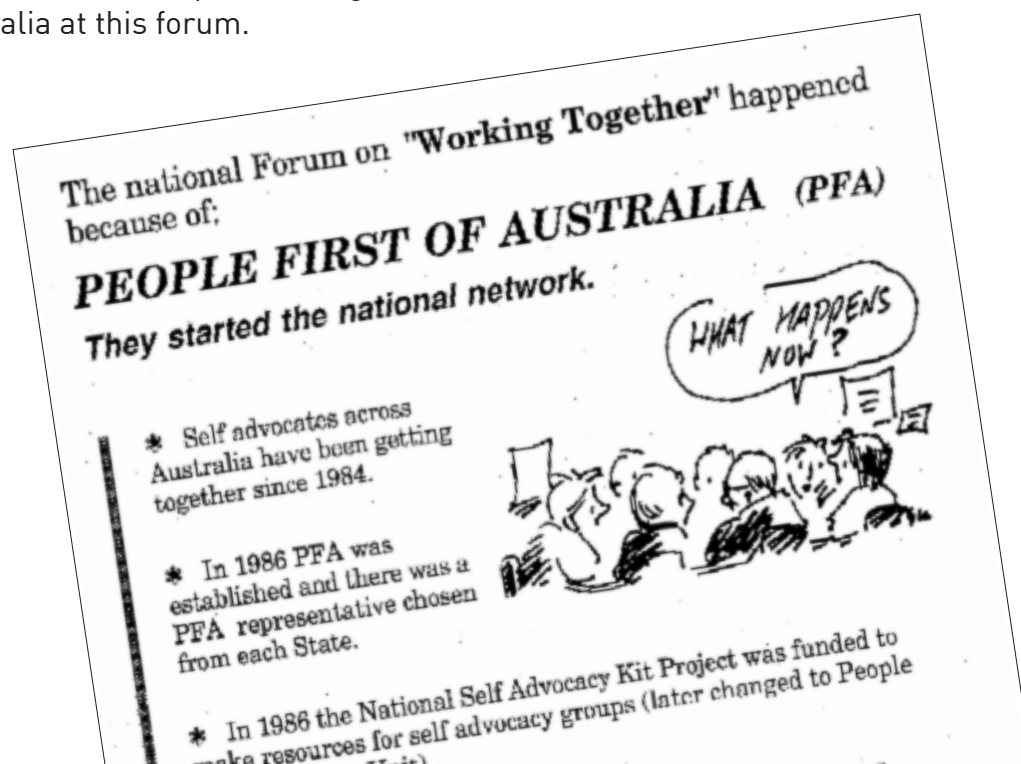
(Amanda Hiscoe)



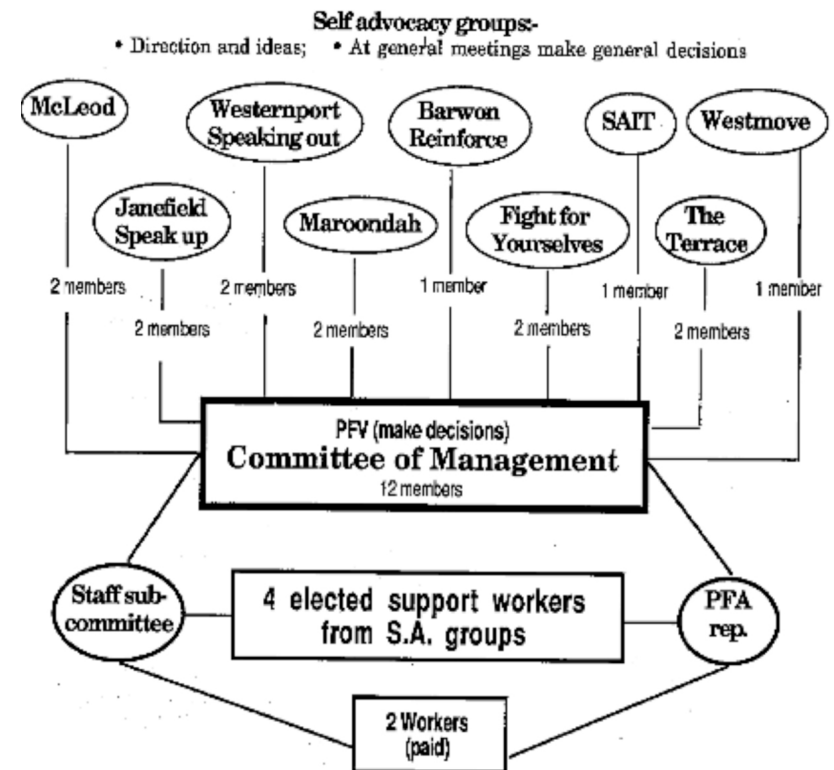
People First Australia

1990 National forum of self advocates across Australia had formed called People First Australia. This network of self advocates had been supported to meet together and run activities and events by the National Self Advocacy Kit Project (later changed to People First Resource Unit) since 1986. In March 1990 at a meeting in Brisbane this network decided they no longer wanted to be supported by the People First Resource Unit. The Unit was closed down in June 1990. Later that year the Working Together forum was held in Sydney attended by People First representatives from across Australia. A book was put together about People First organisations across Australia at this forum.

Col [Colin Hiscoe] and I [David Banfield] had ideas for setting up an Australian People First group sort of thing. And from that the National Self Advocacy Kit Project, which Colin was working for at the time – got hold of it. (David Banfield)



PEOPLE FIRST VICTORIA





Des McIntosh, Amanda Tuttleby(Hiscoe) and Doug Pentland at the Reinforce office.



Josie and Doug dance at 'Rock for Rights' at the Northcote Townhall in the early 1980's. Bands included Slim Whittle and Mental as Anything.



Doug Pentland Speaking Out for Reinforce.



Doug protesting.



(Left to right) Norrie, Josie, Doug, David, Lilly, Des. Christmas break up party at the Northcote office in the late 1980's. Collin's Mother Lilly (2nd Right) was a very supportive advocate.

Amanda Hiscoe (Tuttleby) DOB 5/02/1956

Founding member of Reinforce.



Amanda was born in Deniliquin in NSW. She grew up with her family on their sheep breeding farm called Delta. Even though Amanda's parents were told to put her in an institution because of her disabilities they decided not to. When she was six she came to Melbourne to go to a special school called Sellbourne

House in Glen Iris. She enjoyed school and says it gave her the skills she has got today. When she was at school she went home for holidays to spend time with her parents and her two sisters and brother. Amanda has a great relationship with her family.

Since Amanda moved to Melbourne she has had lots of jobs, starting off at St Nicholas' workshops – this is where she met David Banfield and Julie Cooper, who were to become lifelong friends and co-workers at Reinforce. Amanda has done a lot of voluntary work but her first paid job was with STAR on "By me, for me – shared experiences" a research project about women with an intellectual disability and their experiences of to becoming a woman and making decisions about having children. She has also had a chapter written about her experiences as a woman with an intellectual disability in a book called "Women with an intellectual disability – finding a

place in the world"¹. Amanda also worked as a co-researcher on a project called the Community Living Partners. She worked in this job with a student who did her PhD on people with disabilities living and learning in the community.

Amanda was one of the people who got Raising our Voices started at 3CR radio station, she says she did this because she wanted to "Have a radio program to give people with disabilities a voice on the airwaves". Like Reinforce this has been going now for over 30 years. Over the years Amanda has also been on the committee for AMIDA (Association for Mildly Intellectually Disadvantaged Adults) and for Villamanta Legal Service. She is really interested in the law and rights of people with an intellectual disability. Amanda has some great memories about her time with Reinforce including going to America to the self advocacy conference in 1984. Amanda has held many positions on the Reinforce committee over the years including being Treasurer for ten years and President three times, she was also the first Public Officer of Reinforce. Amanda has written a story of her life called "Amanda's story: a day in my shoes".

She hopes people will get to read it one day.

¹ Millear, A. & Johnson, K. (2008). Thirty nine months under the Disability Discrimination Act. In R. Traustadottir, and K Johnson, Women with intellectual disabilities: finding a place in the world. London: Jessica Kingsley.



Janice Slattery DOB 25/06/1957



Janice was born in Melbourne and lived with her family until she was a young adult. She has got one brother and one sister. Janice is married to John Slattery, they met through self advocacy and have been married since 1992. John has also been a long time member of Reinforce but he works full time in a tyre company so has not worked at

Reinforce. Janice, John and their animals, their cat Ginger and dog Cocoa, live in a house that they own in Bentleigh a suburb of Melbourne.

When Janice was young she went to school at Marillac special school where she was taught by the nuns. She met one of her lifetime friends there – Julie Cooper. After school Janice went to a day centre called Gawth Villa but after awhile there she wanted to do different things. She heard about Middle Park social club so started going along to it. She moved out of home and did some courses so she could get a job. Janice has had a few different jobs, most coming from her involvement with Reinforce. She appears in many of their videos and training materials. Janice has written a book chapter about her life it is in a book called 'Women with an intellectual disability finding a place in the world'². Working in areas including research, project work and

training Janice has been able to talk to lots of other people with an intellectual disability about being independent. She has worked on two projects about relationships with LaTrobe University, worked for Women's Health West for ten years as a peer educator on a women's health project and worked with AFDO on a project about inclusion in conferences and meetings.

One of the things that Janice enjoys through her work is travelling. She has been overseas a few times now talking at conferences – once in Seattle in 2000, then in Iceland and South Africa in 2011 and Sweden in 2012. She really enjoyed a trip to London on her way to Iceland and instead of seeing the Queen she saw the US President Barack Obama who was visiting London!

Janice has had a long involvement with Reinforce and has been President and Secretary at different times. She has also been on committees at AMIDA and STAR and was on the Federal Government National Disability Advisory Council. When Janice is not working or travelling you will find her at home watching all the TV shows from the 1970s she loves – in particular Neighbours and Home and Away but she loves the old ones too including Starsky and Hutch.

² Slattery, J, with Johnson, K. (2008). Family, marriage, friends and work: this is my life. In R.Traustadottir, and K Johnson, Women with intellectual disabilities: finding a place in the world. London: Jessica Kingsley.



1991-2000 Keeping going— partnerships and projects

1992

Reinforce join with other advocacy groups to protest on the steps of the Victorian Parliament to stop government from shifting people from one institution to others.

page 28

A Liberal government is elected in Victoria led by Premier Jeff Kennett. State government funding for disability advocacy and self advocacy re-organised with two peak groups to be funded.

“ The government just wanted to deal with one group because it [would be] much easier... to control and everything. ”
(Self Advocacy supporter)

1992

1992

Reinforce makes applications with STAR, PFV and AMIDA for State government self advocacy funding. Offered 'partnership' with VALID but said 'no' to this so they can stay independent.

1993

1993

Reinforce Annual General Meeting report notes that funding from State Government to Reinforce is to stop from 1995. Fund raising is to become the focus for Reinforce to make sure it can keep going.

1994

1995

1995

The new president of Reinforce Des McIntosh writes to a number of Trusts to ask for money so Reinforce can keep operating.

1996

Doug Pentlands book **'Doug's story: the struggle for a fair go'** is launched at Melbourne University.



1998

David Banfield attends the 4th International conference of People First in Alaska, USA.

1996

1996

Reinforce get funding from the Myer Foundation for a campaign called "Plain English Less Jargon" a video, T-shirts and badges to promote 'Jargon Free' language in planning and meetings with people with an intellectual disability.
page 31

1997

1997

Plain English Less Jargon campaign starts. Reinforce use the Plain English Less Jargon video at information sessions and give out T-shirts and badges at a number of forums across the State.
page 32

1998

1999

1999

Reinforce and AMIDA start working on the Rights in Residence project.

2000

Spreading the Word project funded by three Trusts. Four short videos were developed to talk to people with an intellectual disability about their rights in accommodation and recreation services.

Protesting and projects

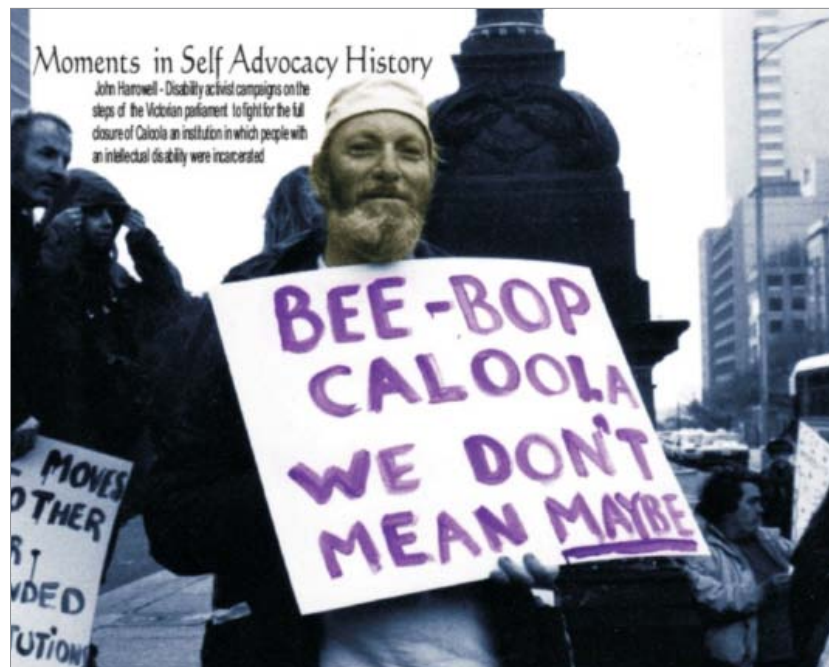
1992 Reinforce join with other advocacy groups to protest on the steps of the Victorian Parliament to call for the full closure of Caloola and make sure people are not moved from there to other institutions.

Des McIntosh, David Banfield, Colin Hiscoe and I (Doug Pentland) went to Caloola (to look at what was happening for people there... we were driven there by the Public Advocate, Ben Bodna. (Doug Pentland, Self Advocate)

There were not many residents left [at Caloola] but many of them were getting on in age and did not have much choice. [Reinforce] spoke to the people in one Unit, only those who were going out into the community, some of the other people [were going to be] placed in other institutions. (Doug Pentland, Self Advocate)



Reinforce members with placards protesting on the steps of the Victorian Parliament.





Struggling to keep the doors open

Reinforce were struggling to keep the organisation running when funding for advocacy and self advocacy was changed to go to peak organisations.



Des McIntosh – President in the late 1990s.

“ [We were] on a shoe-string budget. We had to scrimp and save as much as we could. We had to stop going to conferences for awhile. Basically we had to stop paying people...like we used to. Because we just couldn't afford it...A lot of people stopped coming, they just went their own way. ”
(David Banfield – Self Advocate)

“ Yes, every time we put in a submission, it always seemed to go to VALID and we were always concerned that they must have a link with the Department somewhere, because all the funding seemed to go to [them], and not self advocacy groups, and there was a lot of confusion about that time. ”

(Janice Slattery, 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, Self Advocate)

Julie Cooper – Reinforce member.



Plain English Less Jargon

Reinforce get funding from the Myer Foundation for the Plain English Less Jargon project to educate disability services to use Plain English in planning meetings and discussions with people with an intellectual disability.





Daisy Serong, Des McIntosh (back view),
Amanda Tuttleby (Hiscoe), Doug Pentland.

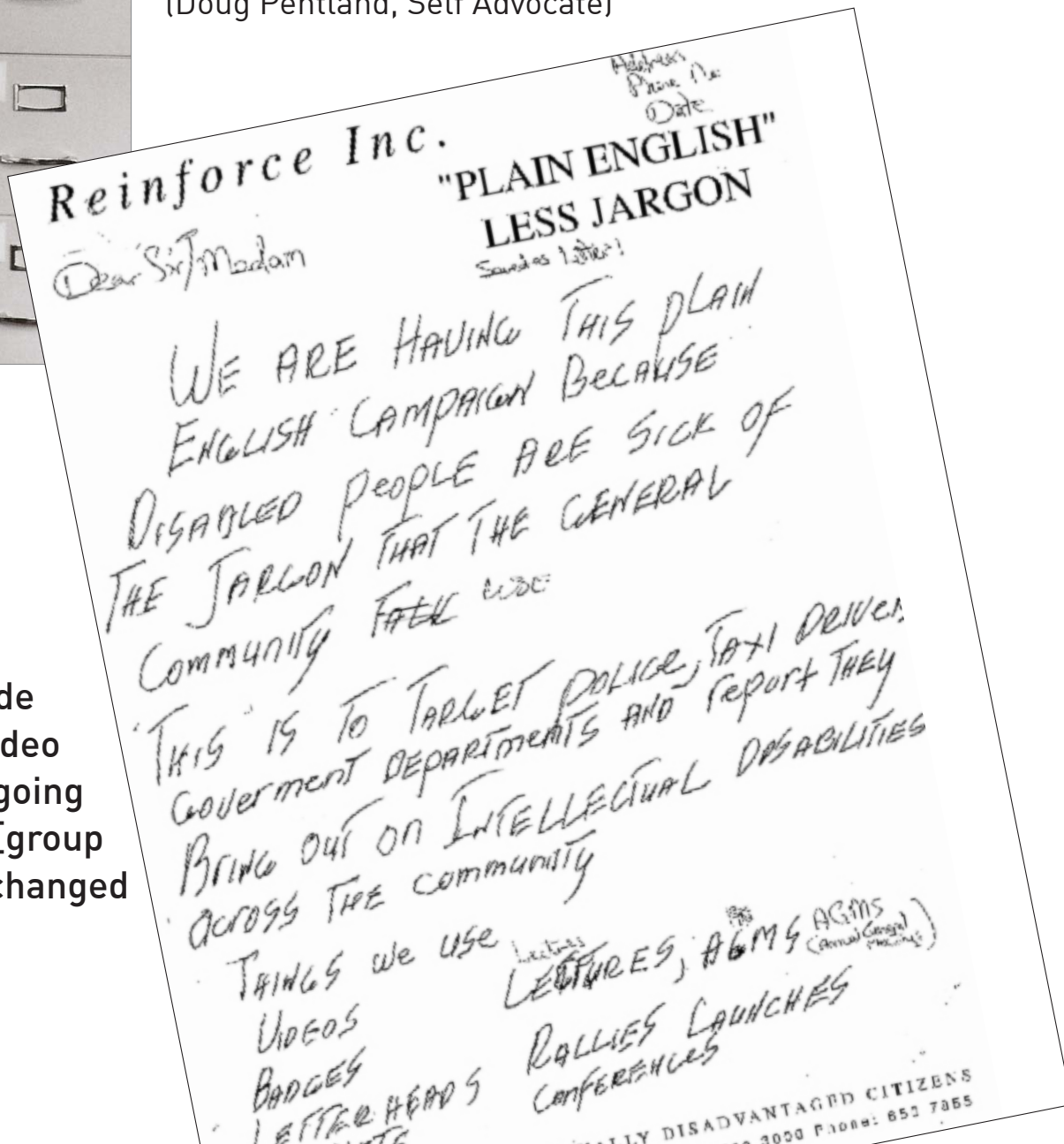



 I can remember the last video I made was the "Plain English Less Jargon..

(Doug Pentland, Self Advocate)


 Well that [video] had to be made ...had to happen ...or else ...if this video didn't happen jargon would still be going on now ...most people [staff] in the [group houses] saw the video ...and [that] changed their ways.

(Des McIntosh, Self Advocate)



Organisations that worked with Reinforce...

Reinforce have had strong and lasting partnerships with two other disability advocacy organisations that grew over the same time as Reinforce – STAR and AMIDA. Staff from these organisations have supported Reinforce with running their organisation and Reinforce members have been involved in the committees and in project partnerships with both STAR and AMIDA.



STAR is unique in Victoria in that it brings together people concerned with all aspects of intellectual disability, and works to support the interests and rights of people with an intellectual disability and their families throughout all their lives.



AMIDA advocates for tenants rights for people with a disability by:

- standing up for people with a disability as a group
- advocating for rights for people living in Community Residential Units
- working with other housing groups about rights for tenants with a disability
- speaking out for the rights of people in institutions.

Common Ground, a community co-operative in Seymour has hosted and facilitated Reinforce planning days for many years.



Phil Borune, Common Ground (back left) Reinforce members David Banfield, Janice Slattery, Emmy Baum (Reinforce Support worker), Amanda Hiscoe, Colin Hiscoe at Common Ground.

Phil Bourne from Common Ground Seymour has had a long association with Reinforce, first meeting some of the members at Middle Park. Since moving to and working from Common Ground in Seymour he has hosted and facilitated Reinforce planning days.

Friends of Reinforce



Michael Buckley and Amanda Hiscoe at the Reinforce reunion November 2008.

Michael Buckley worked with the National Self Advocacy Resource Unit in the 1990s developing many videos and publications. Over the years he has worked with Reinforce to produce a number of videos and other resources through Start Community Art. Michael has been a long time supporter of Reinforce.



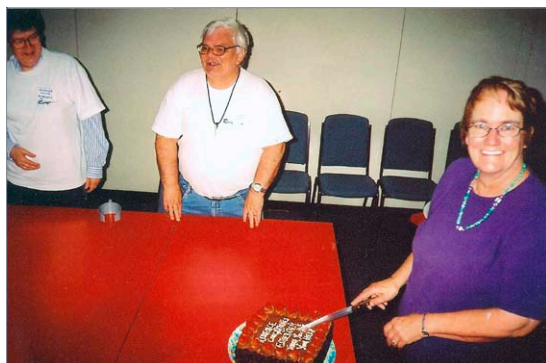
Sue Smith (front left) and Jacquie Ward (standing) with members of Reinforce in 2008.

Sue Smith and **Jacquie Ward** both worked at Janefield setting up the self advocacy group. Through this they connected with people from Reinforce and have been supporting them and working with them ever since. Sue has worked as a support worker with Reinforce and together through their arts company they have worked on resources and projects with Reinforce. They are now with the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) where they continue to work closely with Reinforce.



Tib Mahaly (right) talking to self advocates at the Middle Park social club disco.

Tib Mihaly came to know members of Reinforce through Middle Park Social Club. He later worked at the National Self Advocacy Resource Unit with Michael Buckley and was instrumental in forming an Australian network of self advocacy groups. Sadly Tib passed away in the early 1990s.



Esther Harris (STAR) with Colin Hiscoe and Amanda Hiscoe (Reinforce).

Esther Harris works with STAR the advocacy organisation for people with intellectual disabilities and their families. STAR is also based at Ross House with an office nearby to Reinforce. Esther has worked closely with Reinforce supporting them with their day to day and financial management. She has been an 'ever-present' supporter and mentor.



Pauline Williams - AMIDA (standing) at an AMIDA meeting.

Pauline Williams works with AMIDA an organisation that focuses on housing advocacy for people with an intellectual disability. AMIDA's office is also in Ross House and AMIDA and Reinforce have worked closely over the years on many projects including running the Raising Our Voices radio show on 3CR, the Rights in Residence project and Spreading the Word amongst others. They currently work together on the SARU management group and members of Reinforce have paid jobs at AMIDA and sit on their committee.



Phil Bourne (standing) and David Banfield at a planning day at Common ground.

Phil Bourne has been involved with Reinforce since the beginning having worked at Middle Park Social Club. Over the years he has supported the work of Reinforce in many ways but in more recent years through working with the committee on the planning at Common Ground in Seymour – a community cooperative.

Colin Hiscoe



Colin was born in Leeds in England in 1950. He came to Australia with his mother in 1962 when he was 12 years old. They lived with his uncle aunty and cousin near Wangaratta for awhile, until Colin was moved to a boys home in Melbourne. After some time there Colin was moved again to a training farm in Tatura – he hated it there and had some really bad experiences. Eventually Colin ended up back in Melbourne and met some people who were involved in the early days of self advocacy. He went to one of the camps in the early 1980s and really liked what he heard there. Colin says ‘I just liked what I was hearing ...and what people were trying to do and because I’d been in an institution, and because I’d been in the sheltered workshop I knew, I knew all the problems that they were talking about ...I could relate to what they were trying to do so I thought, wow ...instead of trying to fight the system by myself, I’ll join this group and see”. Colin has been involved in self advocacy ever since – mainly at Reinforce but he was also involved in self advocacy in South Australia when he lived there for awhile. Colin is well known by many people for his work in self advocacy and while he keeps saying he is going to retire in 2013 he is still at Reinforce doing projects and being on the committee.

Doug Pentland

24.03.1942 – 28.06.2009



Doug Pentland’s name and self advocacy go hand in hand. Doug lived some of his life at Caloola institution in Sunbury and when he got out of there he moved to Melbourne where he got to know about self advocacy through Middle Park and the early camps. Doug spoke about his life at one of these camps in Lancefield – many people remember this as being very powerful. He met Des McIntosh through Reinforce and together they did a lot of public speaking – running sessions at TAFEs and schools. He was involved in many videos and training resources about self advocacy and rights. Doug said he got involved in self advocacy because he wanted to “change people’s live, [lots of people had spent] most of their time in institutions, people needed to have a new life, to prove that they can do things for themselves, didn’t want anyone breathing down their necks, they needed the choice to do it”. Doug was really involved in all of the work of Reinforce from the early days – he went to America in 1984 to the self advocacy conference and from then on spoke at many conferences in Australia. He received a medal from the Victorian government for his service to self advocacy, wrote a book about his life with a student from Deakin University, has a memorial wall in the Reinforce office to remember his contribution to self advocacy and an award named after him at the Having a Say self advocacy conference organised by VALID each year. Doug is remembered warmly by all who knew him.

Julie Cooper



A long term Reinforce member, Julie has also been Secretary of the committee. Julie was involved in some of the early conferences and continues her involvement and support of Reinforce even though she is busy with full time work.

John Slattery



John was a founding member of Reinforce and has kept his membership going since the start. John works full time so has not been involved in the committee but he stays in touch with the work and social life of Reinforce through his wife Janice Slattery.

Des McIntosh



Des was born in Hobart in Tasmania – he is a triplet and has two sisters. He moved to Victoria with his family when he was a teenager. Des was attending a day service called Gawth Villa when he first heard about self advocacy – that is where he met Doug Pentland and Janice Johnston (Slattery). He went along to one of the camps and then got involved in Reinforce in 1981. Des says he has been president of Reinforce ten times over the years. He is really proud of his work as President in the 1990s when they had to work hard to get money to keep the organisation running – he says he did a lot of work to “keep the doors open”. His other happy memories are of the Plain English Less Jargon project where he starred in the video and along with Doug went around Victoria showing people the video. Des says the idea for this project came about because the government brought out the Disability 10 year plan and people with an intellectual disability could not understand it – so they got money to write a consumer version and do the project. He and Doug also did a lot of talks at schools, TAFE colleges and the police training organisation. Going to the self advocacy conference in Tacoma Washington in 1984 was another highlight for Des. While he has moved around a lot Des has always tried to keep in touch with Reinforce and really values his time there.

2000-2012 Staying involved

2000

Spreading the Word a project to talk about rights in group homes funded by the Myer, Reichstein and Stegley foundations.

2001

Ownership of our Own Lives project begins – following on from Spreading the Word.

2002

Reinforce represented on a reference group for the Supporting Leadership Opportunities project funded by the Disability Affinity group of Philanthropy Australia.

2000

2000

Rights in Residence project funded by the Victorian Law Foundation. Reinforce and AMIDA developed peer training about rights and ran the training in Kew Residential Services, Plenty Residential services, Colanda and Sandurst Centre.

2001

2001

Inclusion International conference held in Melbourne.

2002

2001/2

State Disability Plan consultation.

2003

2003

Stories of Self Advocacy published by Reinforce.

2004

2004

Reinforce members involved in the photographic exhibition Hidden Lives – a project of Westernport Speaking Out, Start Community Art and People First Victoria.



The History Group

2008

Know your rights training resource launched by Arthur Rogers – Executive Officer Disability Services. Reinforce run Know your rights training for new self advocacy groups.
page 40

2006 Reinforce speak to Patsie Frawley from LaTrobe University about doing their history.

2007 Application made to Australian Research Council for research funding.

2008 Self Advocacy reunion held at Storey Hall RMIT with guest speakers from the UK self advocate Mabel Cooper and researcher Dorothy Atkinson.

2006

Reinforce join with LaTrobe University and RMIT to apply for funding from the Australian Research Council for research about the History of Reinforce.

2005

2005

Reinforce hold their 25th Anniversary Annual General Meeting – Guest speaker Arthur Rogers Executive Officer Disability Services Victoria.
page 41

2006

2006

The Self Advocacy Resource Unit is funded by the Victorian government. Reinforce joins with AMIDA and Start Community Art to manage the unit through the program management group.
page 40

2007

2007

Reinforce joins the Shut In campaign – an Australian wide campaign to close disability institutions led by People with Disabilities Australia.

2008

Self advocacy reunion held at Storey Hall – guest speakers Mabel Cooper and Dorothy Atkinson from the UK.
page 44

2012

2009 History Group runs self advocacy strand at ASID conference in Melbourne.

2010-2012 History group do interviews with self advocates and supporters of self advocacy.

2011 Presented at University of Sydney forum on inclusive research; Presented 3 papers at ASID conference in Adelaide and Keynote address to this conference.

2012 Presented at Having a Say self advocacy conference Geelong (2011) Keynote presentation.

Working to develop self advocacy in Victoria

2000s Throughout its history Reinforce has been funded by the state government and philanthropic trusts. Often funding has been on a one off basis and tied to particular projects that were decided by the funders. At times Reinforce have had to use their energy in simply keeping the doors open.

In the early 2000s as part of the Victorian State Plan for Disability Services, a project was funded to find out how disability advocacy and self advocacy could be strengthened. DHS proposed the development of resource units to work with existing groups and develop new ones. As a result the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) was established to support self advocacy groups for people with intellectual disabilities and people with brain injury. Reinforce were part of the group that formed to manage the SARU.



Members of Reinforce and New Wave – a new self advocacy group in Gippsland doing the train the trainer program – Know your Rights.

■ ■ A program like [self] advocacy, didn't really get a look in unless somebody, at a really senior level, said: "We need to put a little bit of extra money in here"... But... the issue I suppose for [self] advocacy, is that if we are to try and get extra ...funding... we've got to have evidence, to say: "This is what it does" [and funding projects was a way of doing this]. ■ ■ (Supporter)

■ ■ It [project funding] occurred on an ad hoc basis because we [did not] have a strategy for self advocacy. ■ ■ (Supporter)

25th Anniversary AGM

▮▮ [Other groups] are saying the right things, but not with the same sort of energy and passion, and that makes it a lot harder for groups like Reinforce. ▮▮

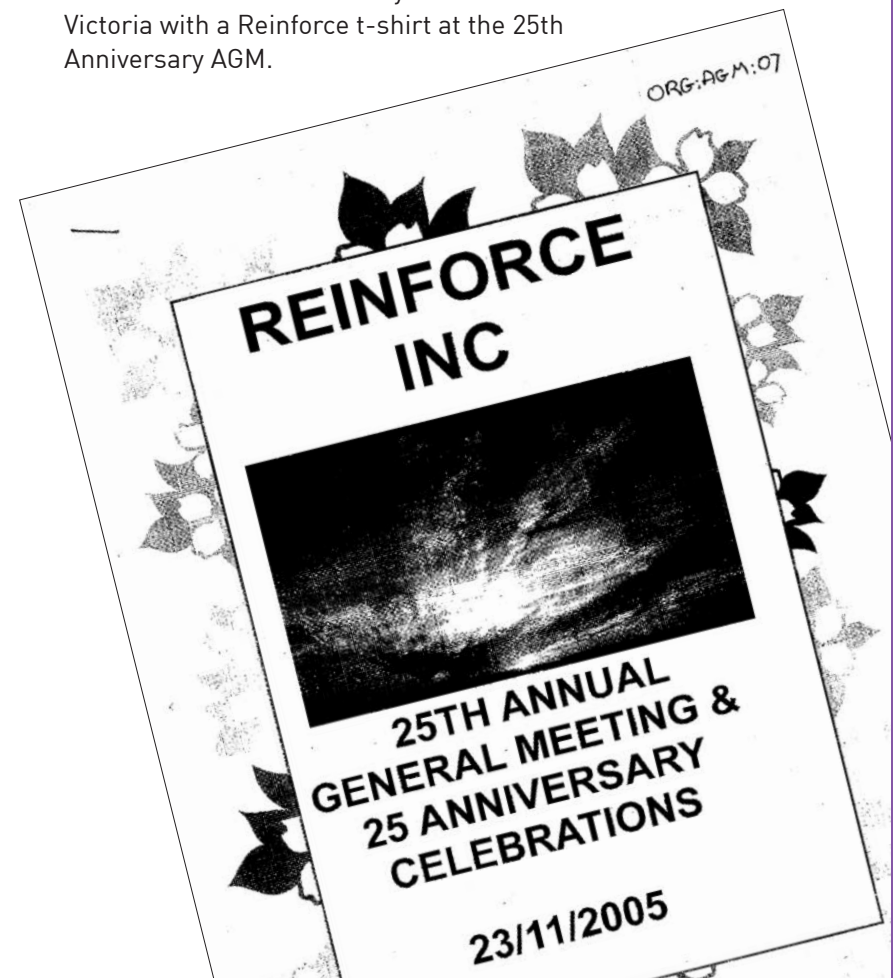
(Supporter)

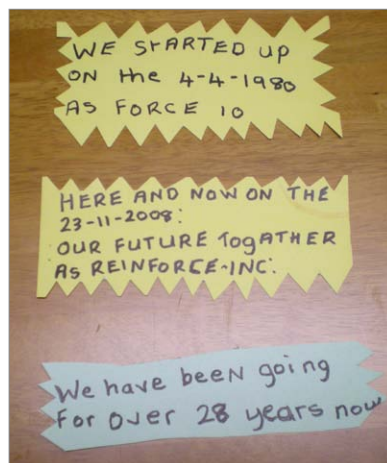
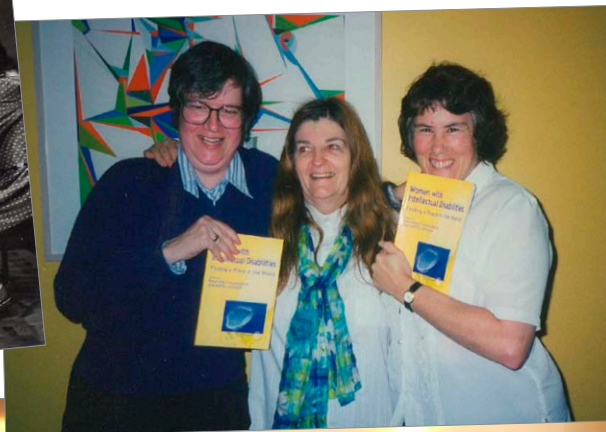


Janice Slattery President 2005 thanking the Guest Speaker Mr Arthur Rogers at the 25th Anniversary AGM.



Julie Cooper presents Arthur Rogers the Executive Officer of Disability Services Victoria with a Reinforce t-shirt at the 25th Anniversary AGM.





Jane Rosengrave (Hauser)



Jane was born in Melbourne in 1963. She didn't live with her family for very long because they had lots of problems – her brother and sister were sent away together and Jane was sent away on her own. From when she was six months old until she was five years old she lived in Ballarat at a home for babies. After that she was sent to Pleasant Creek Training

Centre in Stawell where she stayed until she was twenty-one. These were difficult years for Jane because she lived in a place where people were always punished and experienced other things that were really bad. This experience and not knowing her family are two things that she has focussed on now for many years.

In 1990 Jane moved to Cranbourne in Melbourne with her partner where they rented a house. When Jane got to Melbourne she started to do courses at the Community House and that is when she first heard about self advocacy. Someone from Westernport Speaking Out, a self advocacy group based in Frankston gave a talk about self advocacy. After this Jane was invited to be on the committee of Westernport Speaking Out. She really enjoyed it at Westernport and stayed involved with them for a number of years but eventually she decided to join Reinforce. This was after her brain surgery.

During her time at Reinforce Jane has been involved in making videos, running training for new self advocacy groups and she has worked for the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU). She also does some work for AMIDA and has been involved in the campaign to close institutions called 'Shut In'. Through her work at Reinforce she got the chance to travel to New Zealand for a self advocates conference. This was her first time overseas and she had a great time. In 2011 she travelled to Adelaide for a conference where she talked about her story as part of the History project.

Jane has been the President of Reinforce which she found very interesting but hard work. She is very proud of her work in self advocacy and has found out a lot more about herself in recent years, including her Aboriginal background. She really wants to find out more about herself and to deal with things that have happened in her past. She is now living on her own and getting on with her life – Jane says "You only live once".

The History project – 2006 to 2012

After the 25th Anniversary AGM some Reinforce members spoke to Patsie Frawley who worked at LaTrobe University about doing a project about their history. This had been spoken about many times by Reinforce members but although various projects had started the history had not been fully researched or written. This time the outcome was different. Three academics worked with a small group of Reinforce members and became known as the History group. The group developed an application to get funding from the Australian Research Council. They got the funds in 2009, the second time they applied. One of the first things the group did was organise a reunion of self advocates and people who had supported self advocacy in Victoria. It was held on November 23, 2008 at Storey Hall at RMIT in Melbourne. Dorothy Atkinson a researcher from the UK and Mabel Cooper a self advocate from the UK were invited to be the key note speakers. This was the beginning of the history project.



Colin Hiscoe, Arthur Rogers and Amanda Hiscoe – cutting the ribbon.



Reinforce members and history group researchers outside Storey Hall, RMIT for the reunion.



Dorothy Atkinson -Open University England and Mabel Cooper self advocate from England guest speakers at the reunion



Daisy Serong and John Harriwell attend the reunion.

It's important to know that self advocacy has been going for a long time for the new people coming in... when the 'old people retire' it will be important for the younger ones.

(Self Advocate – history group)

...So there needs to be something in place that sort of pulls the system, at the end of the day, and I think Reinforce is now sort of embedded anyway.

(Supporter)

Doing the History Research.



Overview

- Between 2007 and 2008 we had 16 meetings to talk about the research.
- By November 2008 we had organised a reunion and in 2009 a self advocacy stream at the ASID conference to talk about research.
- 2009-2011 we did group Interviews with 27 people - self advocates, and supporters.
- Over the whole project we have looked at over 200 documents and resources that Reinforce had and organised them so we could use them in the research.
- The history group members wrote their stories with a historian David Henderson.
- We wrote this book – Reinforce Self Advocacy: Speaking Up Over the Years.



Interviews and research group meetings



The History group met at the Reinforce office almost every two weeks for two years. We planned how to do the research, developed a tool for doing the interviews called “Key Moments” and did the interviews as a group. These were different kinds of interviews – they were like having a long chat about things we did in the past. It was great to catch up with people and share our memories. After we did the interviews we talked about what people had said and what was important. The researchers – Patsie, Chris and Paul, had a few meetings on their own linking what came out of the interviews with what other researchers had said about self advocacy. We also had a historian David Henderson write the stories of the individual history group members.

Presenting at conferences

Telling other people what we have found out from doing the research has been really important. We have presented about the history and about researching in a group with researchers from universities. Our presentations have been at self advocacy conferences, forums in Sydney about researching together, conferences for disability researchers and professionals in Australia, New Zealand, Italy and Canada. At these conferences either the whole group or two or three people from the group have presented. A lot of people have heard about our work through these presentations and we hope it will be used to better understand what self advocacy is about, what it has been and what it can become.

The future of self advocacy

Its got to be driven by people who are affected by the issue, and have good support that...enables and empowers...to be good at working out...what are the issues now that are really important to people with intellectual disabilities? What will make life better now? Is it about getting more services, or is it about getting the community more accessible?  
(Supporter)

What was always strong in Reinforce is no matter how bad things might have been going otherwise...it eventually pulled through...it had such an impact across not only Victoria but Australia in showing that people with an intellectual disability can really speak up and have something to say and the right to be listened to.  
(Supporter)

History Group Presentations and publications.

- Bigby, C., & Frawley, P., (in press). Conceptualising inclusive research with people with intellectual disability: paradigm or method. In G Higginbottom and P. Liamputtong. Using Participatory Qualitative Research Methodologies in Health. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Bigby, C., Frawley, P., Ramcharan, P. (in press). Conceptualising inclusive research with people with intellectual disability. Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability.
- Bigby, C., Frawley, P., Ramcharan, P. (in press). A collaborative group a method of inclusive research: 'That's how you get things done by working together. Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability
- Frawley, P., & Bigby, C. (in preparation) . Reflections on being a first generation member of self-advocacy group.
- Bigby, C., & Frawley, P. (in preparation). The early years of Reinforce and the development of self-advocacy in Victoria
- Bigby, C., & Frawley, P (in preparation) . The significance of self-advocacy in building individual, social and political inclusion of people with intellectual disability.
- Bigby, C. (2013). Learnings from the history of self-advocacy in Victoria - much more than advocacy. Invited keynote presentation. Finding Voice: Roundtable on Issues for People with Intellectual Disabilities, Brisbane, Qld. (June 2013).
- Anderson, S., & Bigby, C. (2013) Building positive, included identities: The experience of engagement in self-advocacy by adults with an intellectual disability. Paper presented at 2013 annual conference of the Australasian Association for Intellectual Disability, Sydney
- Bigby, C., Frawley, P & Ramcharan, P (2013). Self-advocacy and inclusion: The significance of self-advocacy in building individual, social and political inclusion of People with an Intellectual Disability Paper presented at 2013 annual conference of the Australasian Association for Intellectual Disability, Sydney
- Frawley, P., Slattery, J., Hiscoe, A., Bigby, C., & Ramcharan, P. Self-advocacy speaking up over the years: Looking back and learning for the future Paper presented at 2013 annual conference of the Australasian Association for Intellectual Disability, Sydney
- Frawley, P., Blythman, N., Hauser, J., Slattery J., Bigby, C., (2013) Telling stories of life and self advocacy. Paper presented at Having a Say Conference, Geelong 2013
- Frawley, P., Ramcharan, P., Banfield, D., Blythman, N., Hauser, J., Slattery J., Bigby, C., (2012) Speaking up through Self Advocacy – Telling our stories and making a difference about our rights. Keynote Presentation at Having a Say Conference, Geelong 2012.
- Frawley, P, Bigby, C., Ramcharan, P. (2012) "The thing is I believe in fighting for rights of people with an intellectual disability": Understanding self-advocacy through the eyes of Victoria's first generation self-advocate. . Paper presented at the 2012 annual conference of the Australasian Association for Intellectual Disability, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Anderson, S., Bigby, C., Ramcharan, P. (2012, Nov) Building positive, included identities: The experience of engagement in self-advocacy by adults with an intellectual disability. Paper presented at the 2012 annual conference of the Australasian Association for Intellectual Disability, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Bigby, C., and Self Advocacy History Group (2012, June). Conceptualising inclusive research with people with intellectual disability. Invited key note address. The Disability Inclusive Research Collaboration (DIRC). Conference, Research Rights: Disability Inclusion Change, Sydney University. <http://www.cdds.med.usyd.edu.au/news-a-information-66/videos/146-christine-bigby-et-al-conceptualising-inclusive-research-with-people-with-intellectual-disability-paradigm-or-method>
- Bigby, C., Frawley, P., Ramcharan, P. and the Reinforce History Group (2011). Insider Perspectives on the Key Moments in Self Advocacy. Paper presented at the National conference of the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability. Adelaide.
- Bigby, C., Ramcharan, P., Frawley, P. (2011) The Early Years of Reinforce and the Development of Self Advocacy in Victoria Paper presented at the National conference of the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability. Adelaide.
- Henderson, D., Bigby, C., Ramcharan, P., Frawley, P. (2011). Whose life story is it anyway? 'Life history' research with self-advocates. Paper presented at the National conference of the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability. Adelaide.
- Bigby C., Frawley, P., Slattery, J., Hiscoe, A. (2011). Symbolic, tokenistic or value added. Inclusive research with people with intellectual disabilities. Invited keynote presentation. National conference of the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability. Adelaide.
- Bigby, C., Frawley, P., & Ramcharan, P. (2012). A collaborative group model as a method of inclusive research, Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 56 (7-8), 722.
- Frawley, P., Bigby, C., & Ramcharan, P. (2012). Understanding the development of self-advocacy in Victoria, Australia: The early years. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 56 (7-8), 720.
- Bigby, C., Ramcharan, P., & Frawley, P. (2010). Researching self-advocacy: the first 3 years of an inclusive study by self-advocates and academics. Journal of Applied Research on Intellectual Disability, 23 5, 453

Reinforce members looking forward
to the future of self advocacy.



▮▮ Don't ever close the lid, on self-
advocacy, leave it open. If you throw
it away you throw away information.
Sharing things is very important,
especially for those people that
need to know. ▮▮

(Doug Pentland, Self advocate)