



# What possibilities open up when a community of lived experience workers have the capacity to speak up in their workplaces and lives?

## CLEW: COMMUNITY OF LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKERS WORKSHOP 3: SPEAKING UP BELONG - ACACIA RIDGE | 15 MAY 2019

Our third time together. A wonderful group of 13 people came together to learn how to speak up at work and in our lives. We used participatory processes, stories, experiential learning activities and games to share our experiences of speaking up, to learn from each other and practice speaking up. We learned by doing! We welcomed Alison, Catherine, Graham, Claire and Tina to the group as well as Kris from Red Thread Stories who helped to host the workshop.

### Check in: What's your hope for today?

- See CLEW growing
- Breathe
- Get some evenness in my voice – sometimes strong, sometimes weak
- Try to be present
- Learn what it takes to speak up
- Smooth and beneficial day
- Have fun and one step at a time
- Step from passive to assertive in my communication
- Learn something new
- Build my confidence and assertiveness
- Develop my capacity
- Build skills and take back to my workplace
- Learn something and take it back
- Meet new people
- Meet good people
- Get out of the house
- Learn to be assertive
- To grow and learn something and have fun



## Who else?

We stepped into the middle of the circle and expressed something that is true for us about speaking up. 'Who else experiences this?'

Others said 'Me too' if that was also true for them.

When I want to move on its hard, but when I do - it feels good...

- I use lots of words to say what I want ... Who else experiences this?
- I'm shy - it's hard to express myself well - it's frustrating
- Being inside a space is limiting for me - I like to look outside
- Speaking up with strangers is easier for me than with people I know
- When I push through the fear and attend it is always worthwhile
- By the time I think what I want to say the moment has passed
- Sometimes I think too much and it stops me
- I get upset and disappointed when people don't get back to me
- I love to be a place where I can listen to the wisdom of others
- Sometimes I don't speak up, I hold on to it - and then explode!
- I need to think about what I want to say before I speak
- I am nervous at public speaking
- English is my second language. I want to speak up but get embarrassed because I can't find the words

We discovered we are not so alone in finding it difficult to speak up.

## Headlines! A TIME WHEN I SPOKE UP... A TIME WHEN I DIDN'T SPEAK UP...

We then told stories in pairs. One person spoke while the other listened without comment. At the end of each story we gave our partner's story a headline. Here are a few of the headlines:

- Bullied and dismissed
- Speaking up at 15
- Setting up a sewing class with limited English
- Being of service brings great joy
- Speaking up even without fruition
- If you don't ask you don't get
- Super 'moon boot' woman helps others
- Keeping peace for family
- Putting a friend first
- Keeping quiet creates less safety
- Strong words - yet to be voiced
- Fear is disempowering
- Employee excluded
- Fear causes more harm
- The voice is building up, it needs truth, it needs to cross distance -maybe it will!



## Story circle: There once was...

We were invited to come to a 'story chair' to tell a story to the whole group. Three women told stories. One story was speaking up as a volunteer on behalf of someone else, while the other two stories were about speaking up for themselves with support. All of the stories related to the health system. The rest of us listened and then told back the heart of the story using words and music. Here is the heart of what we heard:

- There once was a hospital system that didn't listen
- There once was a woman who showed 'em
- There once was 'moon boot' girl who fought the system
- There once was a patient in an alien space
- There once was a woman who was treated like a leper
- There once was a woman who went above and beyond
- There once was a woman who never gave up
- There once was a woman who finally found courage
- There once was a woman who found her wisdom to be heard

If you don't have a CLEW  
then you don't have CLUE!

## What helps people to speak up?

From our experiences and stories we talked about what helps people to speak up and what we learnt.

- Knowing you have support
- Realising it's okay to be wrong
- Feeling safe - safe, confidential spaces and a friendly environment
- Realising that everyone is nervous
- Information and knowledge – knowledge is power
- Fire in your belly - passion, courage and confidence
- Knowing that what I am speaking up for is right
- Planning and preparation
- Finding your voice
- Overcoming barriers eg language
- Prompts on what to talk about
- Positive affirmation and validation

## What lessons did we learn?

- Be ready to repeat yourself
- Having a voice keeps you safe
- Professionals don't always act in your best interests
- We are the experts of ourselves
- Everyone has a story – 'There is a book in everyone'
- Advocate and support for yourself and others
- Learned about myself
- Speak up for your rights
- Learnt to listen
- If you don't ask – you don't get
- Persistence pays off

## What's important to me to speak up about?

We did an activity based on the presence 2nd circle work of Patsy Rodenburg. Individually we stepped into the the front of the group and spoke up in an authentic way about what we want to speak up about next at work.

- Continue to be myself
- Receive qualification in peer work
- Continue to learn to support and listen so I can support others
- Be part of the interview process for peer support workers at my workplace
- Challenge colleagues perceptions about LEWs
- Use the skills I learned today to speak up and get the message out there
- Learning to curb excitement, keep eye contact
- Practising to slow down when I speak



## An update

Nathan, Lara and Karalee gave an update about the groundwork done in **Session 2**

- Awesome how we worked together because we trusted the people in the other groups
- Learned more about letting go of control and trusting whoever is there
- I noticed asking myself the question 'How can an individual like me do this work?' and realising that I can!
- I noticed that when we trust the process we can do this!



## Check out: How are you leaving today?

- This was a very useful session. Lovely to see you all and see you next time
- More knowledgeable
- More energised
- Reconnected and strength to go forward
- Looking forward to being part of this and keeping in contact
- Comfortable
- Helpfulness
- Trust in good people
- Inspired and excited to be here today
- Thankful
- Excited about what CLEW can achieve
- Wish you all the very best with your hopes and dreams
- Learning to live in this community
- Glad I came today
- Nice to know you are all supporting each other
- Feel hopeful
- Confident and motivated
- More skills to be centred and grounded
- Rejuvenated and happy to see what comes in the future for CLEW

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