

The McGuire Programme

Course Report – Melbourne March 2007

By Geoff Johnston, Regional Director, Australia

The first 2007 course in Australia was held in March at the Victoria Hotel in Melbourne. The course was attended by 11 new students with about 35 graduates from all states participating in the course at various times. Many returned to further develop their speaking skills and many attended just to help the new students. It's always inspiring for me to see people who have done well with their recovery wanting to share what they have achieved by helping others.

Instruction on this course was shared by many people with Peter Jumeau instructing on his first course. Well done Peter. Others who helped out with instructing and running split sessions were Rob Lucas, Chris Gerraty, Justin Vietz, Phil Jeffrey, Peter Nastasi and me. Other senior graduates were given the opportunity to lead parts of the course. It was encouraging to the new students to see so many recovering stutterers in leadership roles and speaking so well.

First day videos were conducted on the Wednesday night. Students ranged in age from 14 to 64. Following a course introduction by me, instructors and returning graduates introduced themselves with great confidence and eloquence. Hearing recovering stutterers speak so well to a large group of people gave the new people hope and faith that at last here was a Programme that works!

Thursday sessions lay a strong foundation for recovery. The strong breathing and speaking technique taught on the first day, is a strong basis for moving forward with confidence. All 11 new students were able to stand up in front of the group and say their names without any problems by lunch-time on the first day after only two hours of learning how to breathe. This "instant success" always impresses upon me the importance of breathing in speaking well.

Friday sessions maintained the focus on technique that was continued throughout the entire course. The course then began to address the issues of fear and anxiety by "peeling" back the layers of avoidance built up over the years. The graduates then demonstrated to the new students how speaking can be fun by talking to people on the streets of Melbourne. The "Sport of Speaking" provides an entirely new perspective on how to overcome stuttering. On the Friday evening course participants had a choice of attending three split sessions Letting Go and Having Fun, Assertive Self-acceptance and Choose Your Own Channel.

Public speaking workshops were conducted on the Saturday morning followed by students doing contacts. Public speeches were held in the Bourke Street Mall. Several new people who at the start of the course didn't feel as if they would be able to make a public speech, took up the challenge and made great speeches.....several even came back for a second go! On Saturday night participants had a choice of three split sessions, Why Speech Blocks are so Unpredictable, Assertive Communication and, Understanding and Over-killing Plosive Sounds.

Sunday sessions focused on what to do when people left the course including modifying the system that is you, assertiveness training, followup provisions and allocation of coaches. Family and friends attended at 1:00pm and were provided with a course summary. Closing speeches followed with presentation of graduation certificates and encouragement awards.

Since the course many of the new graduates are now active in Toastmasters and are challenging their limiting beliefs big time! The changes required for long-term recovery have started for those people.