

## **Melbourne, 21 Nov 2007**

The November course in Melbourne was held at the Victoria Hotel. The course was attended by 12 new students and up to 25 graduates participated in the course at various times.

Instruction on this course was shared by many people with Geoff Johnston, Rob Lucas, Chris Gerraty and Ray Welchman playing leading roles. People such as Phil Jeffries, Julian Di Bez and Peter Nastasi along for Staff Training were given the opportunity to instruct modules and run split sessions.

Thank you to all the returning graduates who travelled from interstate to attend the course. I wish to say a special thank you to Kim Hurley visiting from Canada who is doing a Masters degree in Speech & Language Pathology next year. Kim attended the entire course.

New students and returning graduates met on the Wednesday night creating an atmosphere of both apprehension and excitement.

First day videos were conducted on the Wednesday night and we found around the 70/30 mix of overt and covert stutterers. Students came from SA, QLD, NSW, WA and of course VIC.

Thursday sessions consisted of learning and drilling the new breathing and speaking technique. Also covered were goals and objectives of the programme, psychological and physiological causes of stuttering and the checklist. By mid-afternoon all students were able to stand up in front of the group and say their names using the new technique.

Friday sessions included fear reduction tools, overcoming the psychological aspects of stuttering and taking charge of your mind and thoughts.

During the afternoon old graduates showed the new students how to do contacts with people in the streets of Melbourne. Many funny stories were related when reporting back about the contact session.

Split sessions on Friday night were Staff Training, Who's Driving Your Bus and Difficult Sounds.

Public speaking workshops were conducted on the Saturday morning followed by students doing contacts. Lovely weather, fair crowd and our public speeches at the Yarra went very smoothly. Everyone had a go and spoke facing their greatest fears. One girl who made it previously clear that she couldn't do a speech was the first to jump up to our delight and made a great speech using her new technique.

On Saturday night participants had a choice of split sessions Sharing Thoughts and Feelings, and Letting Go and Having Fun while some graduates attended Staff Training to commit to being future qualified Coaches and Instructors. One lady had to leave us Saturday afternoon as her child needed attention. To her credit she was back on Sunday still using her powerful new speaking technique!

Sunday morning was made special by the appearance of Nick Tunbridge who took a segment on Change Management. A very interesting and insightful experience as Nick relayed what his recovery was like and what he found helpful on his journey to fluency and freedom as a very successful recruitment consultant.

The morning finished with assertiveness training, winners and the relapse traps. Family and friends attended at 1:00pm and were provided with what to expect and how to support the new graduates. Closing speeches followed with presentation of graduation certificates and encouragement awards.

During the Sunday morning those involved in staff training sat the three hour examination including the Child Protection exam to ensure awareness of issues surrounding training children on the programme.

Great friendships were made and great foundations for recovery established for the new graduates of this course. Well done everyone!

Geoff Johnston