

## McGuire Programme Brisbane Course Report – June 2006

From June 22-25 we held the first Brisbane course for over two years. Because of the A Current Affair television segment we had a great response with 16 new students and at various times during the course, 30 returning graduates. It was most pleasing to see several graduates from years ago getting back involved to help the new students.

The course was held at the Hotel Watermark and although a great venue, proved to be a little too far out of the city centre and not easily accessible to eating places.

We held our usual introductory session on the Wednesday night with an opportunity to introduce coaches and course instructors. The principal instructor on this course was Barry Fraser. It was the first course Barry had instructed for at least two years and it was great to see him back in action having lost none of his skill, knowledge and wit. We conducted the first day videos on the Wednesday night and found our new students had the usual mix of overt and covert stutterers ranging in age from 15 up to 65. The mix was a little unusual in that we had perhaps 50% male over the age of 40. The worst over, the new students looked forward with excitement and a little apprehension.

Thursday sessions consisted of learning and drilling the breathing and speaking technique. Also covered were goals and objectives of the programme, psychological and physiological causes of stuttering and the checklist. All students were flying by mid-afternoon saying their names and address without difficulty. Again a little unusual that everyone was so strong and solid so quickly. This of course provided coaches with a challenge in trying to bring them back continually to technique so that a solid foundation was established. Our visitor from South Africa, Hein, took groups of returning graduates out of the room on a rotation basis to drill the checklist and directions so providing a chance to re-establish technique and confidence.

Friday sessions included fear reduction tools, overcoming the psychological aspects of stuttering and taking charge of your mind and thoughts. We had one new student fall ill first thing on Friday and subsequently withdrew from the course. Another new student was flying high and decided that he'd learnt enough to overcome his stuttering and left Friday lunch-time. We wished him well but emphasised that you don't overcome stuttering in a day and a half. During the afternoon old graduates showed the new students how to do contacts with a great effort by everyone. Friday night everyone was given a choice of split sessions Positive Thinking, Listening Skills and Assertive Communication. All were well attended.

Saturday sessions included public speaking workshops, facing your fears and becoming an eloquent speaker. We then had contact sessions with everyone doing very well. Public speeches were held on a stage in the Queens Street Mall with mike and professional PA system courtesy of the City of Brisbane. The Brisbane Chamber Orchestra played before and after us so we were assured of a seated captive audience of about 60 with another 50-100 standing around. All new students, some who declared on the Wednesday night that they wouldn't be making a public speech, spoke wonderfully well. Give a person who stutters eloquent speech and it's hard to shut them up! Split sessions on the Saturday night were Using the Hexagon in Your Recovery, the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale and the Self-critic. These sessions are

conducted as "learning conversations" with discussion and exchange of experiences and ideas encouraged.

Sunday sessions included 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.

So completed a very powerful Brisbane course with renewed interest by many old graduates and a commitment by new students to use the support provided by the programme. A measure of this was the 22 new and old graduates who attended the first support group in Brisbane since the course.

Special thanks to Barry Fraser and the returning graduates. Thanks also to Gerry Hill and Andrew Harris for their tireless efforts in supporting Queensland graduates.

Geoff Johnston  
Regional Director  
The McGuire Programme (Aust)