

Melbourne Course Report

May 1st-4th 2008

by Anne Vreugdenburg

Location: Victoria Hotel, Melbourne Australia.

Sixteen new students attended the Melbourne course. Students attended from NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, ACT and New Zealand. Of the sixteen new students there were three females and thirteen males.

Thirty five graduates attended the course, some attending for the full course and others attended at various times to provide assistance to students and other graduates and to regain a strong technique. Coaching instructions on this course was shared by Geoff Johnston, Rob Lucas, Chris Gerraty and Julian Di Bez. Several interactive workshops were facilitated by past graduates and coaches.

New students, returning graduates and coaches met Wednesday night. The atmosphere was filled with excitement and apprehension, as new students mingled with returning graduates and coaches. First day videos were conducted and Geoff Johnston gave an overview of the course content for the next four days.

Thursday commenced with learning and drilling the new breathing and speaking technique, followed by the psychological and physiological causes of stuttering. By midday all new students stood up in front of the group and stated their name using the new breathing technique. Later that afternoon all present participated in Harrison style workshops using elements of the checklist.

Thursday evening the group was treated to a special visit from Dave McGuire. Dave spoke to students, graduates and coaches, encouraging all to continue on their path to recovery. He stressed the importance of remaining strong in the use of the technique and supporting others to do the same.

Friday's session commenced with learning and drilling the new breathing technique and learning the checklist. In the afternoon returning graduates and students commenced contacts in the streets of Melbourne, with the graduates demonstrating the techniques to students in a supportive and inclusive atmosphere.

Feedback from students and graduates was positive and some entertaining stories shared. Split session on Friday evening offered a choice to students and graduates, the three sessions covered Aspects of Covert Stuttering, Strategies for Phone Contacts and Sound Production and Your Words.

Saturday's sessions included interactive workshops on public speaking techniques. The room was electric as students and graduates combined using their new speaking technique with practical public speaking skills. The session was fun and productive and was followed by students doing contacts and having a go at facing their fear by giving an optional public speech in the Bourke St Mall. All the new students had a go and without exception were very eloquent.

On Saturday night participants had a choice of workshops to attend, Who's Driving Your Bus and Assertive Communication. Geoff Johnston had a session with all the new students.

Sunday activities involved reviewing learnt techniques and looking at the relapse traps. Invited family and friends attended at 1pm and were presented with valuable information on how to support their family and friends in the following months. Closing speeches enabled all to reflect on the past four days and plan for the future. Graduates were presented with certificates and encouragement awards, and graduates past and present left the course with new found skills and strategies to continue on their road to recovery.

Congratulations to all!