

Inclusive Language

Presented by Amy Young and Kerry Tavrou
Community Inclusion Team

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Language

It is true for most of us that we rarely spend time thinking about the language we use. Often, without intending to, we use language that can lead to stereotyping, labelling and disempowering people with a disability (Foreman, 1996).



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Background

Why Language?

From initial questions and discussions about language we sought to:

- Understand the affects that language has on
 - People's self perception
 - Community perceptions of people with a disability
- Understand and influence best practice language



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Initial research

- **Language is important.**

"even something as mundane as the words used to refer to a group of people are important because they have ramifications both for the self-perception of people with disabilities and what the general public believes about disability" (Dorries et al, 2006, p62)



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Initial research (cont.)

- **Language is powerful.**

The words we use and the meanings they convey have the ability to create attitudes, impact social policy, influence our feelings, direct our actions and affect the daily lives of people with a disability (Snow, 2003).



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Project Team

- Project working group members:
 - People with a disability who are supported at Scope
 - Community Inclusion Team
 - Service Coordinators
 - Support Staff
 - Quality Assurance Team
 - Communication Resource Centre
 - Marketing and Communications



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Project Plan

- Project Purpose –
To further shift the culture in Scope and the community toward person centered thinking and practice through the use of language
- Project was NOT –
Imposing our own values and opinions about language on people with a disability
Telling people what language they should be using



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Focus Groups

- 8 Focus groups across 5 regions of Victoria
 - 6 in Metro Regions
 - 2 in North West
 - 2 in Eastern
 - 2 in Southern
 - 2 in Rural Regions
 - 1 in Barwon
 - 1 in Gippsland



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DVD

- Some participants of the focus groups offered to share their opinions and views to help educate others about language and its importance



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DVD



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Key Themes

- Introducing people
- Talking to or about a group of people with a disability
- Talking about supporting people with personal care



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Language Is Powerful! – Introducing people

Situation	Try saying	What people say about this language	Avoid saying	What people say about this language
Introducing an Individual	Wherever possible, support people to introduce themselves	"I want my voice to be heard – I will introduce myself"	Client	"Does not make me feel like an individual"
	Refer to people by name	"this makes me feel normal"	My Client	"I feel like I have been put in a box and labelled."
Individual	Person supported by Scope	"People see my personal qualities"	Our Client	"Hi I'm Sally and this is my client Joe"
	"Hi I'm Sally and this is Joe"	"People see the person first and not the disability"	"Hi I'm Sally and this is Joe, he's a client of Scope"	"Hi I'm Sally and this is Joe, he's a client of Scope"
	"Joe has cerebral palsy"	"only use disability when it is required and not when it is already obvious"	"Joe is disabled"	"We are not disabled, we have a lot of other abilities as well!"
	<i>(Put the person before the disability and avoid using the disability to describe the person).</i>			



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Language is Powerful! – Group of people

Situation	Try saying	What people say about this language	Avoid saying	What people say about this language
Talking about a group of people	People who have a disability People we support People who use our services <i>(Put the people before the disability or service and avoid using the disability to describe people.)</i>	"People see the person first and not the disability"	Our clients My clients Our guys	"People see you as an object, not as a person"



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Language is Powerful! – Supporting people

Situation	Try saying	What people say about this language	Avoid saying	What people say about this language
Talking about supporting people	Supporting Joe with lunch Supporting Joe to go to the bathroom or freshen up Supporting Sally onto the bus Going with Sally to do some shopping	"When positive words are used it is good and more respectful" "I like it when people ask me if I would like to do something instead of telling me" "It is about giving people choice and having respect in the way it is said"	Feeding Joe Toileting or changing Joe Loading Sally onto the bus Taking Sally to do some shopping	"Makes me feel small, uncomfortable" "Doesn't make me feel good, like an animal or a baby and we are neither of them" "I would like some respect and privacy, that would be nice" "When people say 'take' it implies power over you"



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Changes at Scope

At Scope we have:

- Developed DVD and Poster to roll out to all staff at Scope to understand importance of language and how to use it appropriately
- Made changes to all Policies & Procedures to include inclusive language
- Worked with Marketing and Communication to change the language in publications, newspaper articles, web site.
- Worked with Learning & Development to change language used in training materials



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Summary

- The Language we use is important
- The Language we use is powerful
- Language affects how people feel about themselves
- Language affects how people in the community see people with a disability



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Summary cont..

- Think about positive and negative language
- There is no right or wrong answer
- It is about ensuring that the language we use promotes respect & dignity, with a focus on the person
- It is about talking to people you support about what language they prefer and are comfortable with



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Please Remember....

"Language matters...Words both define and reflect our reality. How many individuals have chosen to be labelled or categorized as consumers or clients? These are the words chosen by the system" (Snow, 2003, p2)



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