

'I don't know how to answer that!': Exploring community perspectives on engagement activities

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Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

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change
that lasts

Acknowledgment of Country

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways on which our organisation operates. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging.

Today we acknowledge the Muwinina people, the traditional owners of the land, Nipaluna upon which we gather. We acknowledge and pay our respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities, and we also acknowledge our Aboriginal colleagues who are present today; all of whom have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity and culture.





Dylan Alcott

'... listening to lived experience and employing people with disabilities, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it's bloody good business!'



***“The people with disabilities, and all their
carers, are experts”***

Do we need another framework



[Toolkit resources](#)



Walking the Talk

Walking the Talk

A framework for effective engagement with people with disability, families and people who support them

for Disability Services Queensland



DEVELOPING LIVED EXPERIENCE OUTCOME INDICATORS





"I don't know how to answer that"

What we wanted to explore



Why: to inform the development of engagement practices and frameworks used by BSL

What: to explore the experiences of people with disability in participating in engagement and consultation activities.

- How important is it to have a say about program and service use?
- What is the suitability of different communication activities
- What does safe and respectful engagement look like?

How we did it



- Small, online discussion groups with 20 people, recruited through social media and newsletters. Co-facilitated with a Community Project Officer
- Demographics:
 - Mostly female (n=16)
 - Mostly aged 45+ years
 - English speaking
 - Living in Melbourne metro

<i>People</i>	<i>Count*</i>
Person with disability	9
Parents	10
Partners	2
Allies	4

How we did it



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- Participatory Action Research
 - Sessions co-facilitated by Vas and Amber, using live captioning
 - Small discussion groups, max of 3 participants
 - Interactions could be verbal, or written (via chat function)
 - Structure of the discussion session and sometimes questions were shared ahead of time
 - Separate sessions for people with disability from parents/partners/allies (n=13)
 - Positive feedback on methodology

What people told us

Rules of engagement



'... explain (the) rules ... like the stuff that's not flexible at all, but on the stuff that is flexible ... be able to give me choices with some of those things'

'don't make it some sort of secret society where we have to guess what's behind the box'

'I only get action when I kick up a fuss'

'But the council never ever asked you how well they're doing? They just, they ask us questions. And they say, yeah, thanks very much. Goodbye.'

Impact of language & power dynamics



'... this is the service we provide – love it or lump it.'

'I expressed what I need but then get told that I am being difficult ... that I'm too sensitive'

'I was told ... I should tell people I am deaf, and could they please speak slowly and clearly ... as if I've not been doing that all my life ... And ... (they) accused me of selective hearing on and off during the phone call ...

Practical tips



Sacred pause

'Oh, something has come up. Feelings are happening. We've communicated as much as we can, let's just take a minute. And I don't know, it's just taken really gently and respectfully and with the desire to learn from each other.'

Community agreements

'... at the beginning of every session, they will put up the agreements on the screen. Talk through them all. And we all have to like put our thumbs up or do an emoji reaction ... it's like, listening to understand, understanding that there are multiple truths in any situation ...'

Scaffolding

'... all these extra things (captioning; using chat function; knowing who would be in the session and the format) that make it more accessible for us lower our anxiety, we know what to anticipate in that, then it's easier to focus on what it is we need to be doing in the focus group'

360-degree feedback

'... tell me where my feedback's gone ...'

Digital can be good

'... with Covid, suddenly all this technology is available ...'

Vas' reflections



Key ideas



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- The importance of engaging with lived experience perspectives **AND** the importance of doing it well
 - High stakes – do no harm **AND** don't lose people

'If there's any feedback at all, to them, that is negative, then the experience of working with them can get pretty awful actually ... You're the person who has to say, Your idea is good, but the reality of it, or the practice of it is difficult for these reasons. It puts you in an awkward position, because you're bringing problems ... I've changed services because of it.'

Thank you!



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