



Penrith Photo-voice Project

The Penrith Photo-voice Project was a research endeavour facilitated by Janice Ollerton (DEN Business Excellence Team) in April 2007 as part of her doctoral studies with the University of Western Sydney".

The aim of the project was to support people with learning difficulties explore things in society that they believed stopped them from living their life their way or having control of their lives. The project utilised self-determination research as a means of developing the group members' independent skills.

Central to the inclusive research methodology; the project was committed to not only include people about whom the research concerned in the research process but also that the research be useful to those people. The Penrith Photo-voice Project also gave each of the members the confidence to challenge stereotypes and seek social justice.

Using disposable and digital cameras, the group identified many different areas in their lives where they felt there were unnecessary barriers. Together they developed a research plan and implemented their plan to change the way things are so that life could be better for people with learning difficulties.

With the generous support of Break Thru People Solutions, Janice and the Penrith Photo-voice Project group travelled to Victoria to share their story with the wider disability community.

The *Having a Say Conference* is the largest disability conference for service users, in the Southern Hemisphere. And it was an honour for Break Thru to be able to speak at such a venue and we believe it was an excellent means of disseminating the findings to a wide and appropriate audience.

The Penrith Photo-voice Project has also received international academic recognition and applause within the field of disability studies for their achievements. In June 2008, Janice spoke about the research at the *Canadian Disabilities Studies Association Conference* and she was invited to return to Vancouver as the keynote speaker at the *University of British Columbia's Disability Health and Research Network Conference* in January 2009.

Break Thru supports the right for people with disabilities to be included in disability research and thus through their generous support of inclusive research projects, like the Penrith Photo-voice Project, Break Thru is actively building a more inclusive Australia.

To read more about the Penrith Photo-voice group visit www.penrithphoto-voice.net.



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