

*Fellow Whistleblowers,*

**The May Meeting Workshop: A Time for Action**

Let us imagine Whistleblowers Australia in one year, two years, five years (the year 2000!).

Over the past year there have been a number of very significant firsts in whistleblowing in Australia and some most successful results.

That hasn't happened by chance, but through hard work by many individuals and a vision for a better future. So let us now imagine Whistleblowing in the months and years ahead. How can we best use the present, and successes of the past to achieve our dreams of a better future?

You can see by the attached lists that the February Brainstorming Workshop was outstandingly successful in identifying issues and generating ideas. We are now in a position to convert those ideas into action.

As with the February meeting we will be breaking up into groups to develop strategies and plans of action. The key focus will be to develop strategies which can be achieved with limited effort, but which have high pay-offs in the medium and long term.

Among the high benefit areas are:

- **Immediate needs** of incoming Whistleblowers: A friendly ear; explanation of what is happening to them; information on what they can do. This topic might also include ways of publicising this service.
- **Funding** for Whistleblowers Australia to provide equipment, meeting ongoing costs and for implementing future plans. This will include promotions, events, etc.
- **Information packs** for various groups including the first line of Whistleblower contacts such as Doctors, Emergency Care-lines, Social Workers, Unions, and also background material for the Media.
- **Prevention:** In this topic would be identifying prevention issues and strategies and research so that problems in organisations are fully and properly addressed without the need to go to the media. It would also include challenges such as how we get those organisations established to address corruption, malpractice and waste, to do as they ought.

To achieve the dreams of tomorrow we need action for today. Here is a chance to get involved. Look through the attached lists and give some thought to the key topic areas listed above.

The workshop meeting is on Sun May 7th at 1:30 pm at the Campbell St Church Balmain. Everybody is welcome to come along and there are plenty of opportunities to contribute.

Do come.



Charles W.

## **"We Are, No Longer, An Audience to Horror"**

The February meeting, the first in a series on problem solving was very successful at identifying the many issues that face Whistleblowers. Three groups actively participated in identifying and focusing on particular problem areas — Care and Emotional Needs, Funding, and Media issues . . . or as one person so aptly put it:

"We are, no longer, an audience to horror".

There was lots of great input from all who participated. As a result of the meeting and ongoing efforts by the committee, some of the ideas are already being implemented. Thanks so much to all who helped.

Having identified the issues you can now become involved in one of the most rewarding parts of problem solving — devising strategies and putting the plans into action.

A list of the ideas / issues generated at the February meeting is included in this newsletter. So, have a look through all the ideas, add some of your own, and bring them along with you.

If you have been waiting and wanting to contribute, now is your chance.

## **Brainstorming Funding Issues:**

### **Problem: How to Get Funding**

### **Needs / Costs:**

#### Telephone

- 1800 Number
- Counselling Service
- Conference Calls

#### Photocopier / Printing Capabilities

#### Computer + Printer + Modem + Software

- for use by Whistleblowers
- Internet connection

#### International Links

#### Mailing and Administration

#### Newsletter

- better quality
- higher impact
- circulation to decision makers

#### Promotion

- Advertisements?
- Free / Editorial material
- Events

#### Research

- Full time
- Casual
- Consultants

#### Paid Administrative Employee

#### Test Cases / Legal Costs

#### Freedom of Information

## **Suggestions / Ideas:**

#### Request-Letter to Businesses

#### Broader Membership

- promotion in Union Newsletters
- increased associate membership

#### Presentations to Service Clubs

- Spread the message + donations

- reach influential decision-makers
- Lions
- Rotary
- View

#### Speaking Engagements / WB advice Course

- Business
- Government

#### Raffles

- donated prizes
- restaurant meal
- trip

#### Government Grants

- for research
- for general application
- what is available
- submission requirements

#### Identify Interests

- savings of ethical behaviour
- improved communications
- costs of corrupt practices
- ongoing distraction
- loss of trade
- loss of business

#### Businesses

- Insurance Companies

#### Alan Jones? — Announce Prizes — Publicity

#### Garage Sale

#### Phased Funding Campaign

- Greatest Impact /
- Maximum advantages early

#### Professional Fund-Raising??

## **Presentations to Service Clubs:**

#### Suggested Guidelines for Speeches:

- objectives of WB
- guidelines for presenters
- not of their own cases
- but of 'great' WB
- presenters to be capable confident
- committee member present /
- go in pairs

## **Brainstorming Care Issues:**

### **Problem: The Emotional Needs of WBs**

#### **Needs to be Satisfied**

Need for emotional outlet / individual acceptance in confidential environment.

Desire to "Get it off their chest"

Damage control — to establish and maintain equilibrium — a calming role

Supply of information: If required, can we recommend credible / appropriate doctors and / or solicitors? Actions to follow. List of? Doctors, agencies, actions to avoid.

Provide a sense of identity

- others have been there
- and coped
- acceptance that "blowing the Whistle is OK".
- support of other people

Knowledge / database of role models in the same industry.

How can these needs best be met?

#### **Suggestions / Ideas:**

##### **Running a 'Care-Share' Program**

Model on the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 step Program?

Each individual speaks:

- no feedback listen respectfully
- no comment on how they did
- each participant simply ventilates their feelings
- we provide reassurance

Meet for mutual feedback and discussion after the more formal part

Benefits of one-to-one contact

Each participant controls his / her information input.

Possible Alternate View: Emphasising that the individual is NOT broken (the comparison with alcoholic is not completely accurate) and therefore: Should we give them something 'to take away' — some positive technique they can use?

Can these alternative views be integrated?

#### **Advise of Potential Difficulties**

Information Kit for newcomers.

No automatic representation by WBA Inc but Each individual situation judged on its own merits

Individual expectations treated with all care but no responsibility accepted

#### **Issues of First Point of Contact**

Need wide public knowledge of first point of contact (phone numbers?) . . . who is / are willing to do this?

How to publicise this info?

Possibility of unattached line allocated in turn by switching?

A need to talk to a credible knowledgeable person — newcomer would ideally meet someone in WBA who has encountered an identical situation and who understands the Department / Company / field.

"Crisis Counselling" at first point of contact allowing person to debrief if required, providing calming influence.

Training needs for this?

Can other established organisations do this for us? If so how do we achieve this?

People have different need levels and different expectations

What are those expectations (find out?) and how can we currently meet them.

How can we do all this better in the future?

## Brainstorming Media Issues:

- What to publish
- form to deliver the information
- through what medium or media
- credibility issues
- how to deal with negative PR
  
- Need to change the rules in public sector to allow public discussion / media comment. (Provided they tell the truth.)
- How to change the culture so that those not directly involved will have the guts to speak up.

How to get media interested — finding the right journalist

How to identify which media groups to talk to?

Need to analyse what media outlets are available and what stories are most suitable for each

Use of media other than for "stories"  
— general articles  
— background briefings  
— promotion of activities  
— community service notices

Maintaining a list of friendly (and not friendly) journalists / contacts / media outlets

How do we define "credibility" with respect to  
— individual journalists  
— media organisations

How do we ensure our own "credibility"

Database of competent individuals / experts in various aspects of WB to comment to the media for special purposes.

Database of  
— newspaper stories  
— radio tapes  
— Videos of stories  
— relevant documentaries

## **Facing Potential Problems:**

What are the "Crucial Negative Problems" that we have to face?

How to deal with situation if media reports situation wrongly

How to deal with lies / negative publicity from the Corporate PR. machine

How to deal with set-backs, (Ombudsman's reports, bad publicity etc.)

Once public, a WB may be dismissed, discredited, harassed, by public, by other journalists (with axe to grind from the other side).

How to deal with defamation and malicious "Slap Suits"

How to Whistleblow on the media itself if that becomes necessary?

## **Image Issues**

What is the image we want to present?

Need for some kind of a symbol of liberty (c.f. Amnesty International Candle)

Focus on ethics, accountability, responsibility of government and individuals to uphold individuals rights.

## **A need to communicate our issues**

We are NOT Dobbers

Some consider WB's as "Dobbers" We need to communicate that we are not "dobbers" (eg. quite uncharacteristic of dobbers we report on those more senior in the organisation. Likewise, dobbers are usually despised by their fellow workmates, where WBs are often very much admired albeit, at present, at a distance.) . . . The 'dobbers' tag is a management label, not reality.

A need to change the cultural perception in this and other issues . . . so that it becomes culturally acceptable — even desirable — to expose malpractice.

### Research

Quality research such as that already being conducted at the University of Qld needs to be promoted in other Universities in the departments of

- sociology
- media studies
- ethics courses within faculties

### Other:

Promote discussion in suburban newspapers

Make official contact with local newspapers in each WB area so we can get assistance / make our view known quickly.

Share media information with newcomers. Make them feel welcome.

Establish written material which can be handed out to newcomers on how to use the media successfully.

Get training sessions / talks on media skills.

How to prevent / avert problems of invasion of privacy by reporters. Damage Prevention for the WB family. How to use the media to address that.

How to facilitate contact with the media by the individual WB.

Training on how to handle media interviews. Radio, Newspapers, TV.

Develop media releases on WB issues so they are available as required.

Need to document the issues that we want the media to report on.

How to use the media to gain greatest possible exposure of WB issues. Maximising

effectiveness through careful use of various channels.

Getting information under FOI that will have the maximum impact in the media.

Media is used to make ourselves publicly known to the head of corrupt / wasteful organisations. In respect of this contact what types of messages can be effectively communicated in the media?

How can the media contact be most effectively used to help other organisations solving their problems so that there is no need to blow the whistle?

The need to get the Unions on side.

### Quotes from the Brainstorming Sessions:

Surely no-one would pay money to get some-one to lie (Woody in "Cheers")

"Self-questioners' always strive to do the right thing. 'Others-blammers' do not."

"I may not agree with your opinion, but I will fight to the death for your right to voice it!" (Voltaire?)

(eg. Basic Human Rights  
Freedom of Speech  
Freedom of Association  
Freedom to be an Individual)

"He who dives into the void owes no explanation to those who stand and watch" (Source?)