



**SENIORS  
CREATING CHANGE**

**FROM IDEA TO  
INTERVENTION**

MARCH 2014



Townsville Community  
LEGAL SERVICE INC



WELCOME TO  
RICHMOND

SENIORS CREATING CHANGE

SENIORS CREATING CHANGE

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
Background	4
A Need for Early Intervention?	4
Step Up Speak Out & Dance Like a Butterfly	5
Seniors Creating Change – A Primary Intervention	5
Seniors Creating Change – The Formative Years	7
Practice Makes Perfect	7
Debut Performance	7
SCC Commits to Ongoing Work	7
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
Events in 2012	9
Events in 2013	10
♪ When Seniors Create Change*	11
<b>POLITICAL KUDOS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>WHAT ARE SCC SINGING ABOUT?</b>	<b>14</b>
Positive Ageing	14
Elder Abuse Awareness	14
Opposing Ageism	15
Combating Social Isolation	15
♪ We Are Seniors*	15
<b>PRIMARY INTERVENTION</b>	<b>16</b>
Community Development	16
Group Work	16
The Strengths Perspective	17
Empowerment Theory	17
<b>HUMAN RIGHTS OF SENIORS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>REFLECTIONS</b>	<b>20</b>
An Important Message	21
Strong Belief in Goals and Purpose	21
Fellowship and Friendship	21
Health Benefits	22
Personal Contentment	22
Leadership	22
♪ We'd Like To Teach The World To Sing	23
<b>THE FUTURE OF SCC</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>27</b>



# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Townsville Community Legal Service (TCLS) is a non-profit, community based legal centre established in 1991. It provides general legal advice, casework and representation and a range of specialist services. One specialist service – the Seniors Legal and Support Service (SLASS) provides free legal assistance and support to people over sixty (60) years who are at risk of, or are experiencing elder abuse or financial exploitation. SLASS began as a pilot in 2007 funded by the Queensland Government in five sites including Brisbane, Toowoomba, Hervey Bay, Townsville and Cairns. SLASS was triennially funded in 2010 and is due to renew its funding in 2014.

In Townsville, the SLASS is staffed by three full time positions – administrative officer, solicitor and social worker. This multi-disciplinary team takes a holistic approach to client work, using promotional activities like Seniors Creating Change to raise awareness of the issues facing seniors and to generate client referrals.

## A Need for Early Intervention?

During the first few years of service provision, TCLS noted that SLASS clients would often have limited legal or other remedies available to them. SLASS identified a **need for early intervention and prevention** around elder abuse and financial exploitation.





## Step Up Speak Out & Dance Like a Butterfly

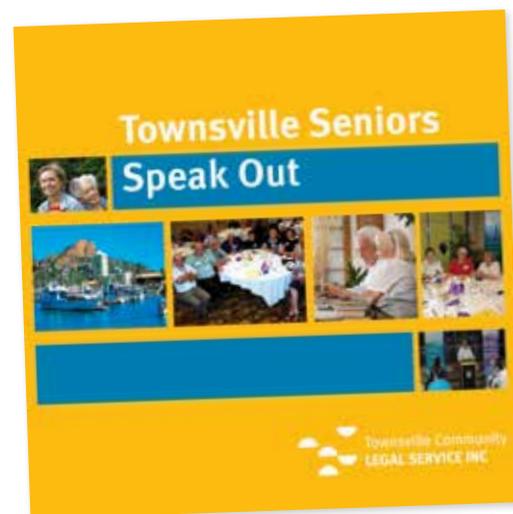
In 2010 TCLS held the **Step Up Speak Out Campaign** to mark **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** held on 15 June annually. As part of the Campaign, two seniors' forums were held at Townsville RSL Club. The forums gave several hundred seniors an opportunity to step up and speak out about issues affecting them. Actress Una Way portrayed scenes from Aviva Ravel's play **Dance Like a Butterfly**. In *Dance*, Tillie Rheinblatt is an octogenarian recovering from an operation. As hospital staff and relatives visit, she takes her audience on a journey that examines our conceptions of old age. Way's portrayal of Tillie prompted seniors to reflect on key ageing issues.

The issues raised by participants were legion. Big picture items included **elder abuse, neglect, ageism, disempowerment** and **social isolation**. The issues raised by seniors perfectly aligned with the known risk factors and causes of elder abuse, exploitation and neglect.

The forum's concept came from the World Health Organisation and International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse report **Missing Voices: Views Of Older Persons On Elder Abuse**. This report called for seniors to be empowered to exercise their own rights and advocate their own interests. In 2011 TCLS published **Townsville Seniors Speak Out** reflecting the views and conclusions of the forum participants, including recommendations for areas of policy intervention and attention.

## Seniors Creating Change – A Primary Intervention

After the forum, SLASS's approach to elder abuse shifted. In 2011 a **primary legal intervention** was established. Called **Seniors Creating Change (SCC)** it focused on seniors empowering themselves to call for an end to elder abuse and raise awareness of root causes such as ageism and social isolation. The strategy was underpinned by the **UN Principles for Older People** and based on a **Public Health Model**.



“Singing cheers me up.”

# TCLS ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION PLAN



<b>Primary</b> <b>Structural</b> <b>Social Change</b>	<b>Secondary</b> <b>Capacity Build</b> <b>Early Intervention</b>	<b>Tertiary</b> <b>Treat</b> <b>Regulate</b>	<b>Quaternary</b> <b>Harm Reduction</b> <b>Rehabilitation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law Reform</li> <li>• Seniors Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Townsville Seniors Speak Out Report</li> <li>• Financial Abuse Prevention Working Group</li> <li>• <b>Seniors Creating Change</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptom Identification Education</li> <li>• Community Legal Education</li> <li>• Newspaper Articles</li> <li>• Radio Interviews</li> <li>• Step Out Speak Out - WEAAD Campaign</li> <li>• TV Ad Campaign</li> <li>• Bus Ad Campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Casework / Advice</li> <li>• Social Work / Advice / Assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Casework / Advice</li> <li>• Social Work / Advice / Assistance</li> </ul>

**UN Principles for Older People**

Independence    Participation    Self-fulfillment    Dignity    Care

## Seniors Creating Change – The Formative Years

Seniors Creating Change was designed to capture the attention of the community, media and politicians. In 2011 a **Queensland Government Regional Arts Development Fund Grant** funded the pilot. These funds secured the services of a **Registered Music Therapist** and a **Theatrical Director** to put the model into practice. It also funded associated costs such as musical instruments.

## Practice Makes Perfect

Practice sessions involved warm-up vocal exercises and light stretches lead by the Music Therapist. Group decision-making processes were developed and morning tea facilitated socialisation among the members.

Five practice sessions occurred before the debut performance. The first session explored the purpose of the group, discussed singing experiences and begun singing songs from a songbook created by the Therapist. The second and third sessions focused on song choice. The third session had members explore what they would change if they had the opportunity. Issues discussed included improving respect for seniors, the invisibility of seniors' issues, improving aged care, housing and transport. The fourth session brought the chosen song together with theatrical components including spoken word and placards.

## Debut Performance

The debut performance was a **'flash mob'** at Stockland Shopping Centre in Aitkenvale. This flash mob consisted of thirty (30) seniors surprising shoppers in the Food Court. The seniors stood up, peeled off their over-shirts to reveal a common red t-shirt and sang Seeger and Hay's classic, civil rights movement song, **'If I had a hammer'**.

The performance roused considerable interest among media sources. Footage of that event has almost 8,000 hits on **YouTube**. The debut lead to requests for future performances across North Queensland.

## SCC Commits to Ongoing Work

Given their initial success, SCC elected to stay together. Throughout 2011, they continued to sing for change and raise awareness of issues affecting seniors. They aimed to create awareness, connect seniors with the community, promote positive images of seniors and most importantly sing for justice, freedom, respect and dignity. Within SCC, seniors were empowered to create change.

Since the debut, SCC met each Saturday for practice. They performed at many events in assorted venues. They developed a Facebook presence and email list of supporters. The group has grown strongly with a current membership of 60+ seniors from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The outcomes for the group went further than initially imagined and included social re-connection for victims of elder abuse, increased inclusion for residents of nursing homes, increased awareness of elder abuse in the community and opportunities to socially and politically engage.



SENIORS  
CREATING  
CHANGE'S  
COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENTS  
HAVE BEEN  
**HECTIC** AND  
**ECLECTIC.**



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Events in 2012

Nomination for Townsville Art Awards  
Townsville Hospital -World Health Day  
Good Shepherd Nursing Home  
Belgian Gardens Senior Citizens Club Open Day  
Flash Mob at Reef HQ  
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Street March  
Full Throttle Theatre Season Launch  
Ross River Cruise  
Charters Towers Gold Festival  
'Dance Like a Butterfly' play at Full Throttle Theatre  
Wulguru Senior Citizens Club  
Seniors Picnic in the Park  
Magnetic Island Seniors Day  
National Community Legal Centres Conference  
RSL Open Day  
Garden Settlement Nursing Home  
Older Persons Health Forum at Jupiters Casino  
Mental Health Conference at James Cook University  
'Light the Night Lantern' Fundraiser for Leukaemia  
Grace Cottage Open Day  
Christmas Break up party  
Anglicare Aged Care Event  
Charters Towers Neighbourhood Centre

## Events in 2013

Angel Paws Family Day  
Full Throttle Theatre Season Launch  
International Women's Day at Thuringowa Library  
AASW World Social Work Day event  
Seniors Harmony Expo  
John Hathaway MP visit to SCC practice  
Ignatius Park School assembly (1200 students)  
Human Services Staff Training Workshop  
ATSI Family Day  
RSL Open Day  
On Golden Pond – Theatre event  
'Light the Night' Candle Ceremony at The Women's Centre  
Rotary Willows Markets  
Rollingstone Seniors Morning Tea performance  
'Respect for Seniors' Street March & Civic Reception  
Fundraiser Movie Night 'Song for Marion'  
Grey Nomads Rally Performance & Ross River Dam Cruise  
Willows Markets  
Ingham Seniors Day  
Rollingstone Seniors Lunch  
Seniors Week Information Stall  
Seniors Week Luncheon  
James Cook University Human Rights Lecture  
Cotters Market Singing & Sausage Sizzling  
Belgian Gardens Seniors Citizens Club Open day  
Cotters Market Main Stage performance  
Cranbrook State School Fete  
Ryan Community Centre Dementia Info Morning  
Villa Vincent Nursing Home  
Tropical Gardens Expo Riverway Arts Centre  
Garden Settlement Nursing Home  
Richmond Full Moon Festival  
Strand Night Markets  
North Qld Association for the Blind  
SCC Christmas Party  
Thuringowa Seniors Club

“It’s inclusive and friendly in a way that no other group offers.

I am still a member of SCC because of the close bond with all members.

We are united together in songs. ”



## When Seniors Create Change\*

\* To the tune of ‘When the Saints go Marching In’

### Flash mob call out lines:

**We are traveling in the footsteps of those who’ve gone before  
And we will stand united until a new world is in store  
Some people say this ageist world is the only one we need  
But we’re waiting for that morning when a new world is revealed...**

We are the seniors creating change; we are the seniors creating change  
O how I want to be in that number, when the seniors create change

O when the seniors get respect, O when the seniors get respect  
How I want to be in that number, when the seniors get respect

And when our leaders learn to listen, when our leaders learn to care  
How I want to be in that number, when our leaders are really there

When we can live in dignity, when we can go with dignity  
Yes when we are **‘the people’** - not just cogs in the ec-ono-my

And when the banks are there for us - when its people, not profits, count  
Because everyone is struggling – but the profits mount and mount

When we are safe within our home, when its safe to walk at night  
When the abandoned, addicted and homeless are treated fair and right

When there’s money to pay the bills and the bills are sent for free  
When we can pay for the dentist and the doctor...then we’ll jump & shout  
with glee!

O when the air is fresh and clean and we all have food to eat  
When big business does not control us and cruel taxes we defeat

We are the seniors creating change, we are the seniors creating change  
O how I want to be in that number, when the seniors create change

We are the seniors creating change, we are the seniors creating change  
We want **YOU** to be in that number – and we **ALL** can create change

# POLITICAL KUDOS

Seniors Creating Change is recognised on the political stage. Politicians have attended events – even become honorary members. The Mayor of Townsville and Councillors have invited SCC to perform at many local events.

The **Member for Townsville, John Hathaway MP** twice mentioned SCC in the **Queensland Parliament**. In April 2013, Mr Hathaway said:

*This group has grown to a membership of over 50 members and they receive calls to perform from across North Queensland. I first saw them perform as part of Townsville Seniors Week in March last year. However, last Saturday week I was privileged to be a guest at their rehearsal. The news of my singing ability preceded my arrival, because a tambourine was thrust into my hand. If they had had information about my inherent lack of coordination and rhythm they might not have been so eager to assign me to percussion. I enjoyed the morning with them. They have a broad repertoire, including many of the traditional protest songs of the sixties and seventies and many old chart busters with their message for change superimposed over the lyrics. I was presented with badges and booklets—and I proudly wear that badge tonight—for myself and the Premier, which I have passed on...*

Following that **Premier Campbell Newman** wrote to SCC commending them on their work:

*What a fantastic grass roots group!...I admire the goals of the group...it is always encouraging to hear about groups such as yours and I wish you all the very best for the remaining events you have planned for this year.*

The **Member for Herbert, Ewen Jones MP** recognised them in a speech in the **Australian Parliament**:

*The 'Red Shirt Brigade', my friends, then struck up a song—and for the benefit of Hansard and most people here, I will not sing it. The tune was When the Saints Go Marching In and the key lines were as follows: that the seniors could create change themselves; that seniors deserve respect; that we as a community and political leaders have to listen to our seniors and actually care about them; that all they want is to live with dignity and not just be part of the economy; that they want to be safe in their own homes; that they want to walk safely in the evening; and that those who have fallen on hard times are treated right and fair; that they want to live sustainably and not be belted by big business and cruel taxes.*





“ It has a powerful message to deliver and I believe we are **raising awareness** of the impact of ageism in our society. ”

# WHAT ARE SCC SINGING ABOUT?

What are SCC singing about and what issues do seniors face? The same ones recently identified by the **United Nations** as significant:

*...major challenges faced by older persons that were common to all or most regions and that undermined the social, economic and cultural participation of the aged, namely, income security, access to age-appropriate health-care services, access to labour markets and social protection, protection from abuse and violence and age discrimination. (Economic and Social Council, Commission for Social Development, E/CN.5/2014/4)*

The group isn't afraid to be political, but most of what they sing about are everyday issues affecting seniors.

## Positive Ageing

Seniors Creating Change promote the positivity of our ageing society. Seniors are the fastest growing population worldwide, and one that raises major societal, economic and political challenges. Nationally, seniors will be one quarter of the population in 40 years time. In Townsville seniors currently make up 9% of the population. By 2031 they will be 17.5% of the population. They are the fastest growing group between now and 2031 with a growth rate of 250%. The only other group that will grow is those aged between 45-64, which will increase to 24% of the local population at a growth rate of 37%. All other age groups have negative growth projected. Given these projections SCC's work as **positive role models** can only become more important as time goes by.

“Ageism, is insidious and menacing, a conspiracy to sap confidence and deny competence.”

Morgonroth Gullette, 2011

## Elder Abuse Awareness

SCC are particularly interested in raising awareness about and reducing the incidence of **Elder abuse**. Elder abuse is “any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person. Abuse can be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, social and/or neglect” (INPEA, 1997). Elder abuse is a serious social problem and important public health issue. It is a violation of human rights and causes significant injury, illness, lost productivity, isolation and despair (ANPEA). The extent of elder abuse is unknown and reported cases are likely to be the tip of the iceberg. As the population ages, elder abuse seems likely to increase. The consequences of elder abuse are stark. Seniors who are abused are more likely to develop depression and dementia (Bitondo et al, 2000) and enter residential care prematurely (Age Concern New Zealand, 2009). Elder abuse can even hasten death (Lachs et al, 2004). Elder abuse occurs for many reasons including a loss of respect for seniors. It is this lost respect that SCC seeks to regain.



## Opposing Ageism

SCC has recognised that ageism is at the heart of many seniors' issues. It is inherent to abuse in older populations (Megret, 2011). It is a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people simply because they are older (Lord, 2011). It is a prominent social phenomenon of labelling of older persons as incompetent merely for their age (Doron and Apter, 2010). In Australia there is an obvious negative attitude towards ageing and older people, a manifestation of which is the often-patronising, and devaluing stereotypes of older people portrayed by the media (EAPU). Accordingly, we do not give the same weight to something that happens to an older person (Yates, 2013) and we take the view that 'people cease to be people, or become people of a distinct and inferior kind, by virtue of having lived a specific number of years' (Megret, 2011). SCC opposes **Ageism** through their activities, by breaking down negative, ageist stereotypes and engaging with the community in contemporary ways.

## Combating Social Isolation

SCC identified **Social Isolation** and **Social Exclusion** as targets for their work, at individual and systemic levels.

Social isolation is a low level of interaction with others, combined with the experience of loneliness (Queensland Government, Department of Communities, 2007). It occurs when people are not able to participate in key activities in their community (Anglicare, 2010). People experiencing social isolation are less likely to access health and support services (Warburton and Lui, 2007). Social isolation is a risk factor of elder abuse.

Seniors Creating Change works to breakdown social isolation for its members and for those they visit in aged care.

## We Are Seniors\*



### \* To the tune of 'I am Woman'

We are seniors, hear us roar  
In numbers too big to ignore  
And we know too much to go back an' pretend  
'Cause we've heard it all before  
And we've been down there on the floor  
No one's ever gonna keep us down again

**Oh yes we are wise, but it's wisdom born of pain  
Yes, we've paid the price, but look how much we gained  
If we have to, we can do anything  
We are strong (strong)  
We are invincible (invincible)  
WE ARE SENIORS!**

You can bend but never break us  
'Cause it only serves to make us  
More determined to achieve our final goal  
And we come back even stronger  
Not a novice any longer  
'Cause you've deepened the conviction in our soul

**Oh yes, we are wise, but it's wisdom born of pain  
Yes, we've paid the price, but look how much we gained  
If we have to, we can do anything  
We are strong (strong)  
We are invincible (invincible)  
WE ARE SENIORS!**

We are seniors - watch us grow  
See us standing toe to toe  
As we spread our lovin' arms across the land  
But we're still just embryos  
With a long long way to go  
Until we make our leaders understand

**Oh yes we are wise, but it's wisdom born of pain  
Yes, we've paid the price, but look how much we gained  
If we have to, we can FACE anything  
We are strong (strong)  
We are invincible (invincible)  
WE ARE SENIORS..... CREATING CHANGE!**

# PRIMARY INTERVENTION

Seniors Creating Change was developed as a **Primary Intervention** and reflects a number of established social science approaches.

## Community Development

SCC fits the **Community Development** approach to overcoming issues facing seniors in society. Community development is a 'broad-based change for the benefit of all community members' (Telly and Caputo, 2005). Community can be locality, common geographical area or shared interest (Mayo, 2002). SCC helps 'people with shared interests to come together, work out what their needs are among themselves and then jointly take action together to meet those needs' (Mayo, 2002). SCC includes 'holistic, collective, preventative and anti-discriminatory approaches to meeting social needs, based on value commitments to participation and empowerment' (Mayo, 2002).

## Group Work

SCC is a grassroots group within **Group Work** theory. Group work is 'goal directed activity ... aimed at meeting socio-emotional needs and accomplishing tasks' (Toseland and Rivas, 2011). SCC's group goal is to raise awareness of elder abuse and break down ageist attitudes and stereotypes. SCC achieves this by spontaneously singing in public places and adding commentary about seniors' situations, rights and interests. The activities have a dual focus including individual member benefits and benefits to the group as a whole (Toseland and Rivas, 2011).

SCC is established as an open group, which means the group is ongoing and members can join and leave when it's appropriate (McDermott, 2002). Each new member is provided with a red SCC T-shirt, SCC badge, calendar of events and a songbook. The red T-shirt entitles them to Life Membership and they come and go as they want. This creates a sense of belonging, without conditions attached.

SCC is a social action group that 'empowers members to engage in collective action and planned change efforts to alter some aspect of their social or physical environment' (Toseland and Rivas, 2011). SCC has the capacity to bring about social change and within this personal empowerment (Mullender and Ward, 1991). The benefits of the group setting include providing help and mutual support, instillation of hope by other group members, removal of stigma from problems seen as socially unacceptable by the larger society, opportunities to overcome isolation, and group members confirming similar experiences, problems and concerns (Toseland and Rivas, 2011).

Music is a powerful source of communication and is pivotal to SCC as it 'facilitates communication which goes beyond words, induces shared emotional reactions and supports the development of group identity' (Hallam and MacDonald, 2013).





## The Strengths Perspective

SCC articulates a **Strengths Based Approach**. This approach is grounded in the principle that people have existing competencies, resources and capabilities to learn new skills and problem solve (Ponnuswami et al, 2012). Further, it recognises the resilience of individuals rather than looking at their limits (Scera, 2012). Group work is a unique opportunity to identify and build upon member's strengths. The approach ensures member's voices are heard and understood (Ponnuswami et al, 2012).

## Empowerment Theory

**Empowerment** focuses on empowering the individual to define and meet his or her own needs (Mullender and Ward, 1991) or overcome challenges (Rankin, 2006). Empowerment is 'a social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life, and social justice' (Lord et al, 1993).

Empowerment is 'the means by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives' (Adams, 2003). In SCC it was acknowledged by group leaders and members that 'elderly people have innate capacities for musical development and those capacities are maintained with age' (Creech et al, 2013). SCC noted that members had the capability to learn, or re-learn, musical skills when facilitated in groups where they are treated as capable and functioning adults (Creech et al, 2013).



“ For me it's being a part of a group that I can relax with and have a couple hours of singing ... its stress free.

I laugh a lot, I relax.

I have learnt that I can **laugh** a lot more and be more **relaxed**. ”



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“ Singing is a great way to have a good time. It is very rewarding and helps to keep you feeling young and alive. The satisfaction of creating a **happy atmosphere**. There was a period in my life recently where I didn't want to leave my unit ... the seniors singing group has given me the incentive and a reason to get out and enjoy life. ”



# HUMAN RIGHTS OF SENIORS

**Human rights** are defined as the 'rights people are entitled to simply because they are human beings, irrespective of age, citizenship, nationality, race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality or abilities'.

Seniors 'suffer disproportionately from human rights violations' (Megret, 2011). Seniors have all the 'hallmarks of a constituted group raising specific human rights challenges' and they are 'indeed one of the last global groups not to have their own human rights treaty' (Megret, 2011). 'Seniors are also a group that have specific vulnerabilities and human rights needs' (Rodriguez-Penzon et al, 2003; Doron and Apter, 2010).

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights noted 'it is remarkable that no specific UN Convention exists to proclaim and regulate the rights of elderly people' (Yuen, 2010). Currently, older persons only have a set of principles, The United Nations Principles for Older Persons. These principles include independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment and dignity (UN, 1991). They are not legally binding and are referred to as norms and precepts that governments agree to but without any requirement to account for adherence (UN, 2009).

# REFLECTIONS

A detailed survey of members was undertaken in 2011. 28 participants provided feedback on the music therapy and general aspects of the group. Members thought the music therapy aspects provided a good approach to explore issues for older people. Members felt that SCC processes were safe, supportive, inclusive and democratic. Outcomes reported by members included improved and increased self-expression and self-confidence.

In 2012 another survey was undertaken. Feedback reflected a group moving beyond formative stages:

- Reasons for joining included social outing, meeting peers, interest in singing, supporting the work of TCLS and being involved in the community
- The positive aspects of SCC were good laughs and company, bringing folk together, making friends, good exercise, having fun, entertainment value, helping peers, sharing ideas and raising awareness
- It could be improved by more gigs, more targeted audiences of peers
- Personal involvement brought new friends, new social opportunities, learning to sing, enjoyment, entertainment, stronger sense of community and being more active
- Awareness raising was successful because the group was out and about, involved in the community, at local events performing positively, covered by media and getting direct feedback about their message

In 2011 and 2012 Members' feedback was used to inform group processes and better reflect members' needs. For example, based on feedback the group booked more and better targeted gigs, took the message outside Townsville to Charters Towers and Richmond, and targeted vulnerable seniors and aged care residents.

In 2013, TCLS thought it was again important to capture the thoughts of SCC members. 32 members completed a survey form. Additionally, the group facilitators and musician completed in-depth questionnaires. Feedback showed that members remained in the group for long periods and the group was still attracting new members. Common themes arising out of the 2013 survey included:

- SCC was active in the community, raising elder abuse and other seniors' issues
- Members had a strong belief in what they were doing
- Seniors started as members but became friends
- There were health benefits in participation
- Including musical leadership, was an important aspect of SCC's success

Each of these themes is now explored in more detail.



“ Delivering a musical message about human rights issues. ”



## An Important Message

Members thought SCC was effective at raising awareness about elder abuse and other important seniors' issues in the community.

*I relish the thought of being able to partake in a group whose principal agenda is to raise awareness of the plight of elderly people who are being abused, exploited or neglected.*

*Creating change in a novel way through music.*

*All the activities have a purpose and therefore reach a group of people to help them understand the issues.*

*It has a powerful message to deliver and I believe we are raising awareness of the impact of ageism in our society.*

*We have a message to get out to the wider community.*

*Stand up and be counted and bring forth real issues.*

*You have to get out and be counted.*

*Acknowledges elder abuse is not ok and helps to make the public aware that this is a very important seniors issue.*

*Hopefully putting pressure on local politicians, to improve the lives of the elderly.*

There seemed no doubt that SCC facilitated greater community activity, activism and engagement for members.

## Strong Belief in Goals and Purpose

SCC members identified that believing in and working towards the overall purpose and aims of the group was essential.

*Dedication and belief in a cause.*

*Believing in the cause wholeheartedly.*

*To believe in what it's all about.*

## Fellowship and Friendship

Creation of fellowship and friendship was a commonly stated outcome of involvement. Musical interventions can act as an aid to social bonding (Glynn, 2013) and SCC members reflected on the social bonding aspect within the group.

Listening to music offered a medium for members to express themselves and connect with others. Additionally, membership of the group provided a context where they could maintain social relationships (Creech et al, 2013). Singing in groups was a strong community resource that fostered trust and created fellowship between members (Creech et al, 2013).

## Health Benefits

Musical interventions (singing, listening to music, playing) play a health care role:

- Impacts on physiological and psychological health
- Increases happiness
- Contributes to recovery from depression
- Lowers stress
- Increases and aids relaxation
- Provides a source of enhanced social cohesion, enjoyment, personal development and empowerment
- Is spiritually refreshing and can assist in promoting self-expression, positive health and well being

(Coffman, 2002; Sixsmith & Gibson, 2007; Glynn, 2013; Creech et al, 2013). SCC Members experience all of these important health outcomes.

## Personal Contentment

SCC members found personal contentment through their involvement. It reinforced their 'value' as a person and as a senior.

*That I am ageing and its ok.*

*I can still do things as a senior. Age is no hindrance at all.*

*Friendship, acceptance, value as a person.*

*I feel appreciated for the input that I can contribute but don't feel put upon to do more than I can.*

## Leadership

Leadership, including facilitation and musical leadership, was fundamental to SCC's success. The leader(s) were central contacts for members and brought a range of resources and qualities to the group including ideas, visions, personal characteristics and style of leading, and capabilities, skills and knowledge to achieve the group's purpose (McDermott, 2002).

*The tremendous effort put in by coordinator and facilitator ... the right personality people for the situation.*

*I believe the leadership/facilitation is strong and dedicated.*

*The guidance and energy of coordinator and facilitator, the fortunate choice of musician.*

*The organisation by coordinator and facilitator and musician's music.*

*The keys to success have to be facilitator, coordinator and musician – because without them there would be no SCC.*

*The continuing support of the musical director who leads the singing with force and clarity.*



“ Music positively influences the quality of life amongst older people.

(Creech et al, 2013).

”



## We'd Like To Teach The World To Sing

We'd like to teach the world to sing  
In perfect harmony  
We'd like to see all seniors get  
**Respect and dignity**

We'd like to feel safe at home  
And live there with no fear  
We'd open up our hearts to all  
Spreading universal cheer

**(chorus) that's the song we hear  
Let the world sing today  
A song of peace that echoes on  
And never goes away**

We'd like to see the world for once  
All standing hand in hand  
Grandmas, grandpas, grandkids too  
Spreading peace throughout the land

We'd like to teach the world to care  
For all of those in need  
We'd like to show you how to share  
There is no place for greed.

**(chorus) that's the song we hear  
Let the world sing today  
A song of peace that echoes on  
And never goes away.**

We'd like to see a great big smile  
On everybody's face  
We'd like to say 'just stop a while..  
Enjoy the human race'

We'd like to share this song with you  
And you can sing along  
We'd like to stand together in truth  
United we are strong!

**That's the song we hear...let the world sing today...a song of  
peace that echoes on & never goes away (repeat)  
It's a song of peace that echoes on & never goes away (repeat)**

You  
Tube

[www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=U3feA7ILxjo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3feA7ILxjo)



“ I remind us all, older people are us, now or later. What do we want for ourselves? „

Intervention Speech – National Association of Community Legal Centres to the UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing.



# THE FUTURE OF SCC

The engagement and inclusion of seniors in society is fundamental to combating elder abuse, exploitation, ageism and social isolation/exclusion. SCC is an effective means of overcoming social isolation for its members. It creates fellowship, support and trust and is a means of building and maintaining social relationships for members. It also provides a powerful role model for our community. SCC offers a stress free environment for its members and this is key to its sustainability.

The members of SCC are deeply committed to seniors' rights – their own rights. They have a strong vision of what these rights should include and are content with their efforts to make this happen. Seniors Creating Change is a platform for members of the community to actively engage and participate in making change for seniors. The group is essential as a way of:

- Raising local awareness of elder abuse
- Putting seniors issues on the agenda
- Overcoming social isolation and exclusion in the community
- Challenging ageist stereotypes of seniors

SCC grew from idea to intervention. Importantly, SCC grew out of grass roots consultation with seniors. It has become a recognised primary intervention with political and institutional respect. It remained local, building on core strengths of group work, empowerment, human rights and community development. While SCC has built active seniors it has also built strength of purpose among members – a faith in what SCC does. It has created strong, lasting friendships, had health and wellbeing benefits for members. It has fostered leadership around important community issues. It has made seniors visible where they were hidden. It is Seniors Creating Change!

“ That I am ageing and its ok.  
I can still do things as a senior.  
Age is no hindrance at all.

**Friendship, acceptance,  
value as a person.**

I feel appreciated for the input that  
I can contribute but don't feel put  
upon to do more than I can.

”



## DEDICATION

Some members of Seniors Creating Change are no longer with us. Their memory lives on through their performances and friendships with those who remain.

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“Always keep  
a song in  
your heart.”



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