



# Speaking Out for Your Community:

**Training Notes for Listeners and Recorders  
at SpeakOut Events**

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# 1. Introduction

This material, prepared by Wendy Sarkissian, contains edited versions of extracts from the following book:

Sarkissian, Wendy and Wiwik Bunjamin-Mau with Andrea Cook, Kelvin Walsh and Steph Vajda (2009). *SpeakOut: The Step-by-Step Guide to SpeakOuts and Community Workshops*. London: Earthscan.

It is designed to help those planning and assisting at *SpeakOut* events to prepare for those events.

For further information, see [www.speakoutplanning.com](http://www.speakoutplanning.com)

## 2. Designing and Managing a *SpeakOut* <sup>1</sup>

### What is a *SpeakOut*?

The *SpeakOut* was originally developed by social planners Wendy Sarkissian and Andrea Cook in Adelaide in 1990. It has taken off worldwide as an engagement model and is now used in many countries. Award-winning *SpeakOuts* have been held in northern Canada, Townsville, Honolulu's Chinatown and in most Australian capital cities during the past two decades.

Some characteristics are summarised below.

### Purpose

An interactive staffed exhibition, a hybrid event combining some of the characteristics of a meeting and some of an exhibition or 'open house'.

Used to provide an informal and interactive 'public meeting' environment where a wide range of people have a chance to participate.

Designed to facilitate structured 'drop-in' participation.

Participants come to the venue, find the issues on which they wish to 'speak out' and have their say, with their comments clearly recorded by a Recorder, while a Listener pays close attention to what they are saying and asks pertinent questions.

### Features

Works well where specific community feedback or contributions are sought.

Can be effective when wide community participation is sought.

Is a less structured time format than a formal public meeting.

A lively and colourful event that relies on capturing people's attention and imagination.

Interpretive materials provide public information and keep people occupied while they are waiting to 'speak out'.

Footnote:

<sup>1</sup>

From Chapter 5.

## 2. Designing and Managing a *SpeakOut*

### Budgeting

Budget allocation is required for the following:

Display information describing the stages and timing of the process.

Display information illustrating site analyses and other data about the site and the project, survey results, past planning, research and design work or other appropriate information.

Employ friendly and eye-catching graphics for these illustrations.

Sign up sheets, green sheets for comments, Accountability Group sign-up sheets.

Questionnaires and questionnaire box.

Bold, large issue stall signs (for example, *Vandalism, Traffic Safety, Children's Play*) and display space (pin boards, tables and chairs).

Issue 'prompts' (for example, annotated photos, provocative questions and points related to the issue).

An annotated map of the study area with transparent overlays for community comments at each issue stall.

Props for the selected children's participation process.

### The step-by-step process explained

Allocate sufficient time and resources to design and set up issue stalls.

A separate program must be provided for children.

Determine issues on which you wish to have community advice and participation.

Organise an 'issue stall' to display information about each issue (about seven to nine issues).

Prepare visual prompts (for example, annotated photos of problems, annotated plans, other displays to encourage comment) for each issue stall.

Prepare the appropriate props for each issue stall.

Determine an appropriate time (such as a Sunday afternoon) and find a convenient, central venue (preferably one within the study area).

Ensure the venue has space for a separate children's participation.

Engage and train Listeners and Recorders for each issue stall, Council staff to answer questions, and people to staff a Welcoming table and conduct the children's participation.

Advertise widely via letterboxing to community organisations, newsletters, posters, newspaper and other media coverage, and/or other methods.

Advertise approximately ten days to two weeks before the event and then again perhaps four days before.

Cater with casual finger food (for example, a sausage sizzle), ideally provided by a local community group.

Be sure to welcome participants and give them clear instructions on how to be fully involved.

Debrief all staff at the end of the event.

Organise follow-up information (for example, an evaluation report, establishment of an Accountability Group, feedback to the participants and/or the wider community).

## 2. Designing and Managing a *SpeakOut*

### Key roles

The roles of welcomer and the reception desk are essential. People must be drawn into the *SpeakOut* and have the process explained to them.

If the *SpeakOut* is being held as part of a larger event, such as a community festival, it is necessary to have someone acting as a 'town crier' moving throughout the crowd encouraging people to come to the *SpeakOut*.

Listeners and Recorders are critical to the success of this process; otherwise, it is nothing more than a staffed exhibition.

Encourages wide community participation.

'Drop-in' format maximises attendance.

Works well with a wide range of community groups, particularly if attention is paid to catering for local language/cultural groups (for example, engaging bilingual translators as Listeners/Recorders).

### Vote with Your Hands

*Vote with Your Hands* is an innovative approach, which has been used for adults, young people and children, often associated with a *SpeakOut* event or a community celebration.

This innovative approach is particularly useful in communities where there are low levels of literacy or where children's views are sought.

Used with a *SpeakOut*, this process has the following features and advantages:

It advertises *SpeakOut* issues (for example, at a festival);

It draws people inside a room or marquee;

It is bright and engaging;

It does not rely on participants' ability to read or write;

It is especially effective for shy or hesitant people;

It is great with children: they can make their mark with little supervision;

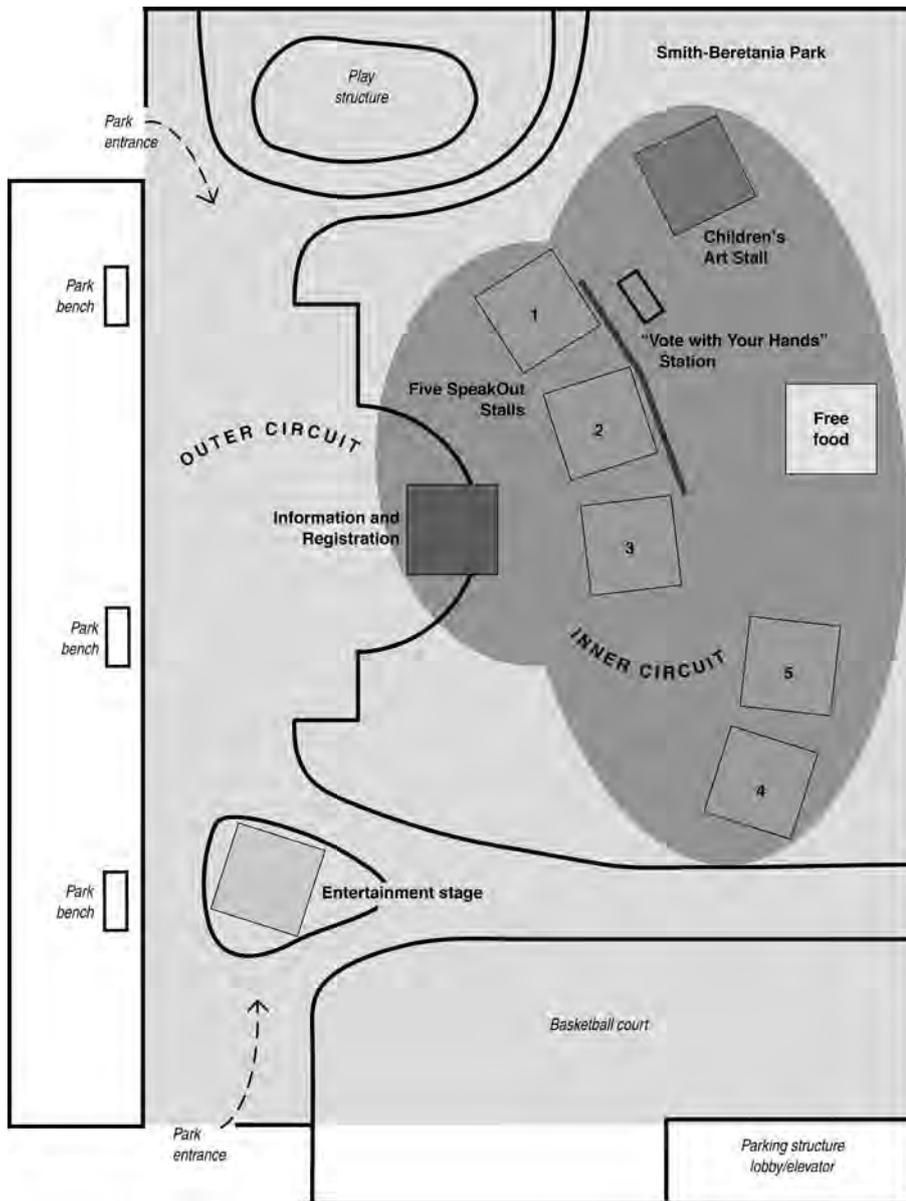
The results of the 'voting' can be analysed if votes are allocated systematically;

It provides great visual material for later advertising and promotion of issues.

## 2. Designing and Managing a *SpeakOut*

### The Outer Circuit

A *SpeakOut* is like a wedding reception: the organizer needs to consider many details to be prepared to host hundreds of guests. In all the *SpeakOuts* we have organized, seen or heard about in many different settings and venues in different types of communities, one thing has remained consistent: having an *outer circuit* and an *inner circuit*.



The outer and inner circuit  
Drawing: Wivik Bunjamin-Mau

In most cases, the outer circuit serves as the general area that greets participants as they first enter the *SpeakOut*.

It is critical that participants feel welcome and accepted there. It is also important that when they initially arrive, participants learn what to expect, what to do and what is likely to be expected of them. Any confusion at this critical first stage can lead to weaknesses in the *SpeakOut*.

## 2. Designing and Managing a *SpeakOut*

### The welcoming process

At its most fundamental, a *SpeakOut* is a welcoming process: participants are welcomed by organizers and the Listeners and Recorders (in a *SpeakOut* model). Feeling 'received' is an essential ingredient. You may be dealing with fairly large numbers of adults and children, so some measure of queuing design and 'crowd control' will be necessary to ensure that there is not a long line of people waiting (possibly in poor weather) to come inside.

### Registration desk

At the registration desk, new arrivals will have to be advised how a *SpeakOut* works.

You will need to have a staffed welcoming desk in a highly visible position.

Participants will also need to be confident that their children are being well taken care of.

The registration desk is often the first point of contact for the community with a *SpeakOut*. Listeners and Recorders must be on hand to welcome participants and assist them to settle in. The people staffing the registration desk must be hospitable, friendly, efficient and welcoming. It's good to have extra people to assist with orientation, as most workers will be occupied at their *SpeakOut* stalls.

Congestion is always a problem at the registration desk.

Depending on the expected size of the *SpeakOut*, two tables and at least two people to assist with registration may be required. In small communities, everyone may come at the same time (especially if lunch is provided). So it's wise to have lots of people on hand to greet them and explain the process.

### Drinks on arrival

We have found it useful to have drinks available when people arrive. Often people come to these events after a rushed day at work, dinner preparations or with their families and need a 'cuppa' to settle them down. The volunteer can offer a cup of tea or coffee as a welcoming gesture. An urn can be bubbling away in a corner of the room

## 2. Designing and Managing a *SpeakOut*

### The Inner Circuit

Once participants arrive, receive a warm welcome and explanations about what to do and expect in the process in the *outer circuit*, they will start visiting the *inner circuit*.

In a *SpeakOut*, the main component of the inner circuit is the issue stalls. A *SpeakOut* is usually organized as one stage in a larger or wider process. Thus, for the most part, issue stalls in a *SpeakOut* display work in progress, pose related issues or problems and probe related questions to gain feedback.

### Presentation and display boards

One of the objectives of participatory processes like *SpeakOuts* is to share basic and important information pertaining to the plan or design under consideration. In our experience, presenting information using big and bold letters, as well as images and interactive activities, is effective. Any reports need to be summarized and big words or jargon need paraphrasing to help communicate a clear message. This type of presentation appeals to participants, as it is easy to understand and in many cases can trigger more meaningful discussions than can complex material.

Use foamboard, cardboard or large sheets of on walls to create display boards that can be written or drawn on.

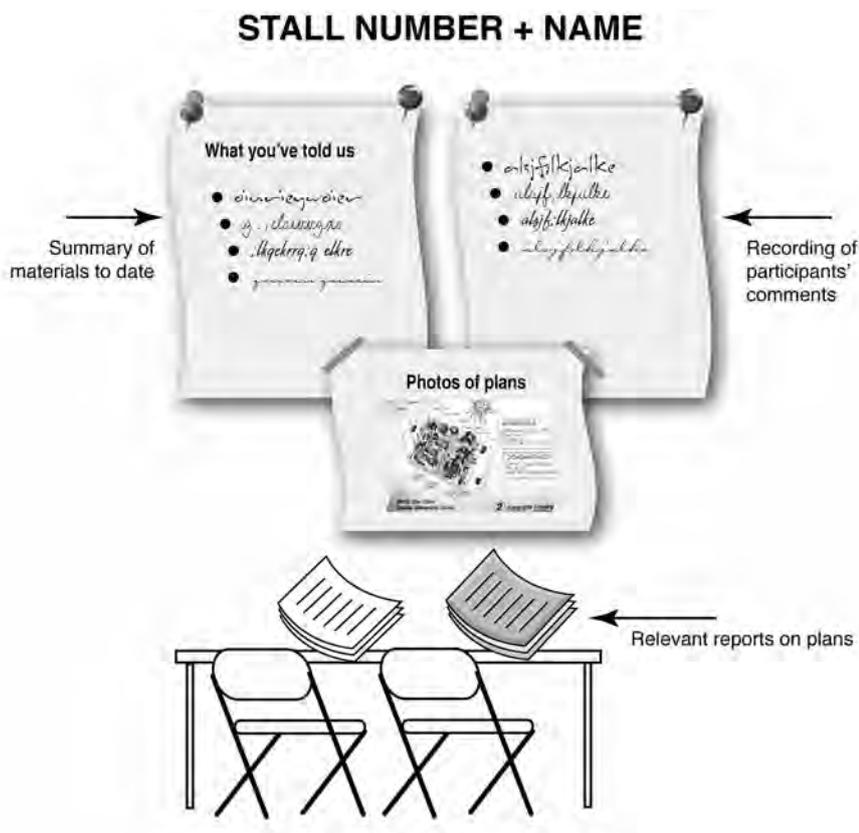
### Issues and questions

Depending on the communities for which the *SpeakOut* is organized, it is important to rephrase issues and questions to reinforce clarity. This is particularly critical in multicultural communities for participants who may have language and cultural barriers that keep them from fully understanding complex issues and questions presented in English. Presenting these issues and questions using simple images, pictograms or clipart helps to communicate the message. This is because most people process visual images faster than they process the printed word. These representations are particularly useful for interactive exercises or activities where they are presented in the form of questions.

Moving through the *inner circuit* of a *SpeakOut* is a process of participants determining what to pay attention to and what to ignore. In our *SpeakOuts*, we design and create every issue stall to make it easy for participants to make decisions about how to participate. They will want to decide which issue they want to learn more about and share their thoughts. Although all participants are encouraged to visit all issue stalls, some may choose to visit only one or two. Therefore, selecting stalls needs to be a simple decision from the start. It's critical that participants do not feel that they are being forced to wander through a long route to reach those stalls (and speak out about the issues) that most interest them.

For participants to have the most enjoyable and satisfying experience, they must be able to follow easily the sequence of displays and activities at each issue stall. Directions from each stall's Listener and Recorders can foster an easy circulation of participants. It's important to design a diagram of the flow (or circulation), as well as a diagram for each issue stall before putting up presentations and display boards.

## 2. Designing and Managing a *SpeakOut*



The basics of a *SpeakOut* stall  
Drawing: Wihwik Bunjamin-Mau

### Stall essentials

A *SpeakOut* stall is not a complex matter. The components are very simple:

1. A stall number and sign
2. A place where illustrative materials pertaining to one topic can be displayed
3. A place for vertical scribing of participants' comments
4. A small table and seating
5. Displays of photographs, materials and summaries of previous studies or engagement activities
6. Display of participants' comments from this *SpeakOut*
7. Space and materials for interactive activities.

## 2. Designing and Managing a *SpeakOut*

### Finishing Up

#### People who still want to talk

There are always people who do not want to leave *SpeakOuts* at the end. Listeners and Recorders in *SpeakOuts* will have to leave for their debriefing meeting. Thus, the best advice we can give is to use the 'green sheets' for this purpose to finish things up: ask these participants to fill out their concerns or comments and a responsible person will get back to them.

Ensure that all 'green sheets' are placed in the questionnaire box or given to a Listener.

#### Ending, debriefing and socialising phase

Some Listeners and participants will want to stay and speak to participants who linger. This often creates a problem with the timing of the debriefing session, as other Listeners and architects are tired and wish to leave. It may be possible to have a volunteer deployed to speak to 'hangers-on' while others are being debriefed. When the time comes to begin the debriefing meeting, all participants will have to have left.

#### Arrangements for debriefing

Debriefing is regarded as an essential part of the *SpeakOut* process. It must not be left out, as this is where very important process and content issues that do not come up can be raised. The improvement and eventual refinement of any model depend on the information which these trained people can give directly after a *SpeakOut*.

Some guidelines will ensure that the debriefing session is as effective as possible:

- Select a quiet table away from noise and cleaning up: in a separate room or at least a in a corner.

- Select one person to take notes (preferably someone who has not been recording all through the event).

- Ensure that all Listeners, Recorders and others are paid for debriefing.

- Put a time frame around the debriefing so that people will know how long they will have to spend.

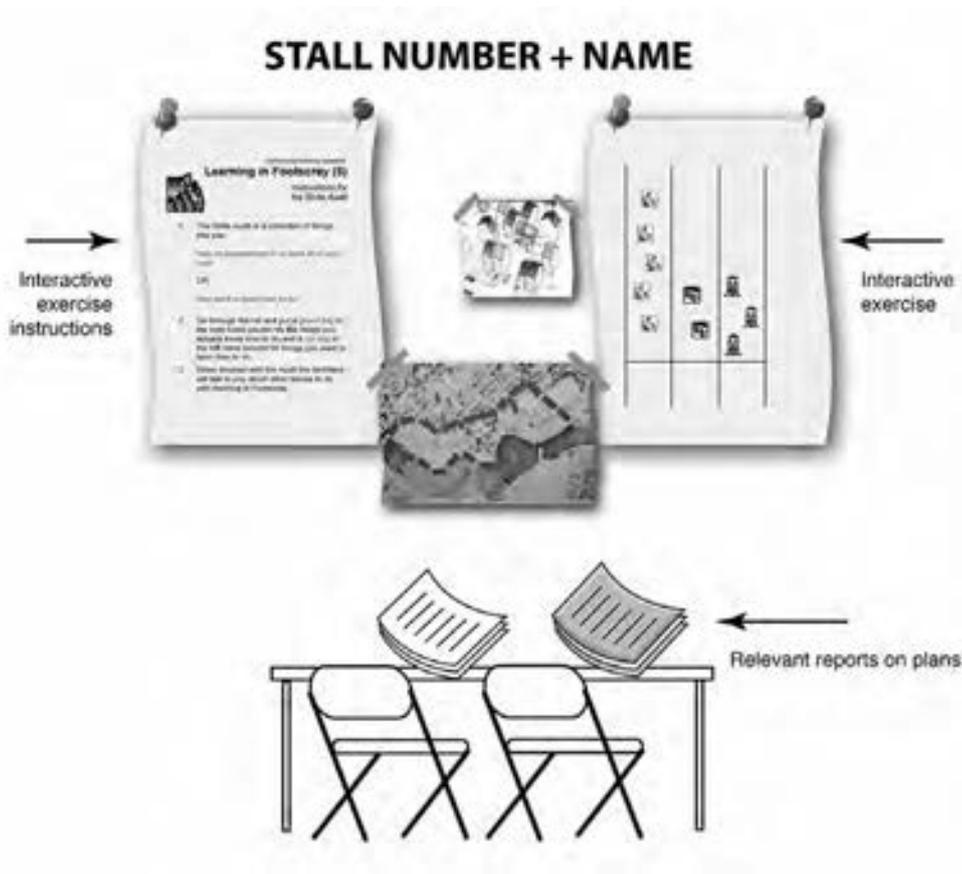
- Use the debriefing time to hand out payment sheets so that workers can write down their hours and, if possible, receive cheques on the spot for their work.

- Acknowledge that these people will be exhausted. Therefore, try to get feedback in 'advice' or 'recommendations' mode as quickly as possible, so that they can leave.

- Ensure that everyone who facilitated or worked on the event has some way to give feedback, even if they fill out a short form.

## 3. Interactive Activities <sup>2</sup>

Interactive activities can be highly effective during a *SpeakOut* or as components of other processes. They offer a variety of enjoyable and informal ways to collect information and perceptions, while building community capacity.



Interactive Activities at a *SpeakOut* Stall

Drawing by Wiwik Bunjamin-Mau

### A smorgasbord of interactive activities

Described below are interactive activities that could be used in a *SpeakOut* context.

### Audits and other information-collection activities

#### Accessibility audit

This interactive activity focuses on areas within a community that are not accessible because they are not known about or seen. This is especially useful when completing needs assessments and services audits.

Footnote:

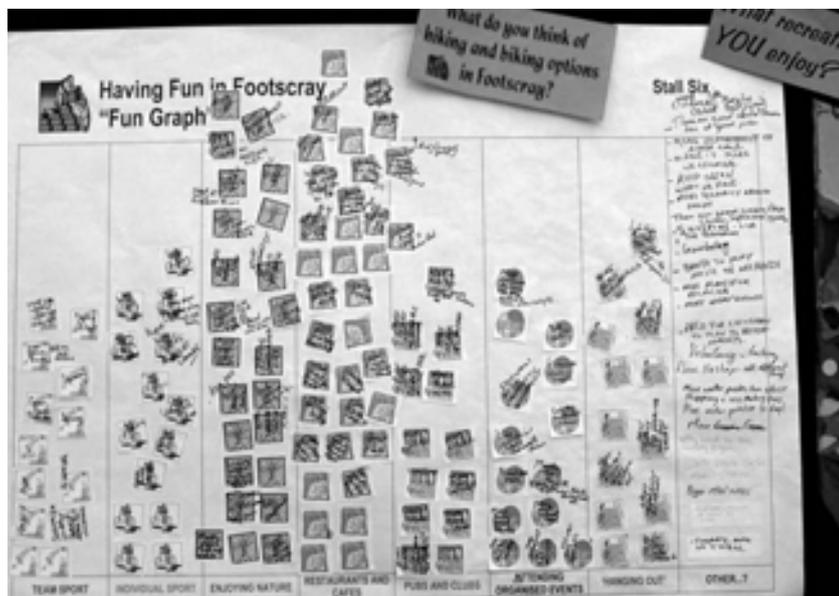
<sup>2</sup>

From Chapter 6.

### 3. Interactive Activities

#### Building a 'fun' graph

Participants are invited to build sections of a large 'bar graph' with pictograph symbols representing how they enjoy different types of recreation. Each participant is given a symbol, with a space to write comments; these are added to the 'bar graph' under the category. This provides an indication of preferred ways of enjoying community life.



Fun graph, Footscray, Melbourne, 2004

#### Skills audit

Based on principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and asset-based community development (ABCD),<sup>2</sup> this participatory activity enables participants to identify skills they are interested in learning and/or sharing. This is achieved via an interactive graph showing a comprehensive range of skill areas. Participants are invited to place a tick next to areas of interest and indicate skills they wish to share. A recent modification has new categories to reduce the risk of exclusion: 'I am *highly skilled* and I could possibly teach it', 'I am *moderately skilled* and would like to become more 'expert' and 'I am a *keen beginner* at this and would like to learn more'.



Skills audit, Braybrook, Melbourne, 2005

## 3. Interactive Activities

### Children's activities

#### Face-painting interviews

Using face painting, we can gather general information on a one-to-one basis about children's activities and perceptions of their everyday environments. The sensation of paint being applied to the face helps the child relax and helps to engage the child's imagination. It is best used when comments are required from younger children. It is a perfect technique to undertake a detailed discussion or interview. Young children aged between three and 7 years enjoy participating in this process. One facilitator (face-painter) is needed to work with each child.

Children are invited to have their faces painted. The face-painter engages the child individually in a conversation about their environment or the issue being discussed, referring to a set of pre-prepared questions. The facilitator gains inspiration for the painted design from the conversation. A digital or tape recorder is used. The face painting takes about 15 to 20 minutes, including the discussion. Facilitators are debriefed after the event and the transcript analysed.

#### Film interviews

Interviews with children can be conducted indoors, under a tree or in a convenient quiet or shady area separate from the busy *SpeakOut*. Interviews are sought with all participating children to maximize their opportunities to explain why particular ideas are important and relevant to the *SpeakOut* topic. Permission must be sought from parents or guardians to film and photograph children.

#### Neighbourhood drawings

This activity involves younger children (and children waiting to build models) in creating a neighbourhood drawing. It is best to use a pre-printed drawing sheet, with half devoted to a drawing of how they see their neighbourhood now and the other half devoted to how they wish to see it in the future. Careful note-taking aids further analysis.

#### Random object modelling

Facilitators help children create three-dimensional models of their design and spatial preferences using random objects such as clay, sticks, glitter, Plasticine, dirt, etc. The outcomes can be astonishing. Using a trained arts facilitator increases opportunities for developing models that truly reflect children's values and interests and in eliciting spoken or written descriptions. Modellers can also be interviewed on film, discussing their model or telling a story about it.

## 3. Interactive Activities

### Sketch interviews with children

Here children describe their engagement with Nature, open space needs, priorities and location of features in open space, as well as their overall planning and design preferences. Facilitators record children's stories and explanations as they draw. The sketch interview stall should be located away from noisy activities to reduce distractions and ensure that conversations can be heard and recorded. Sketches can be posted up in the *SpeakOut* for all to see.



Drawing by Bella, age 9

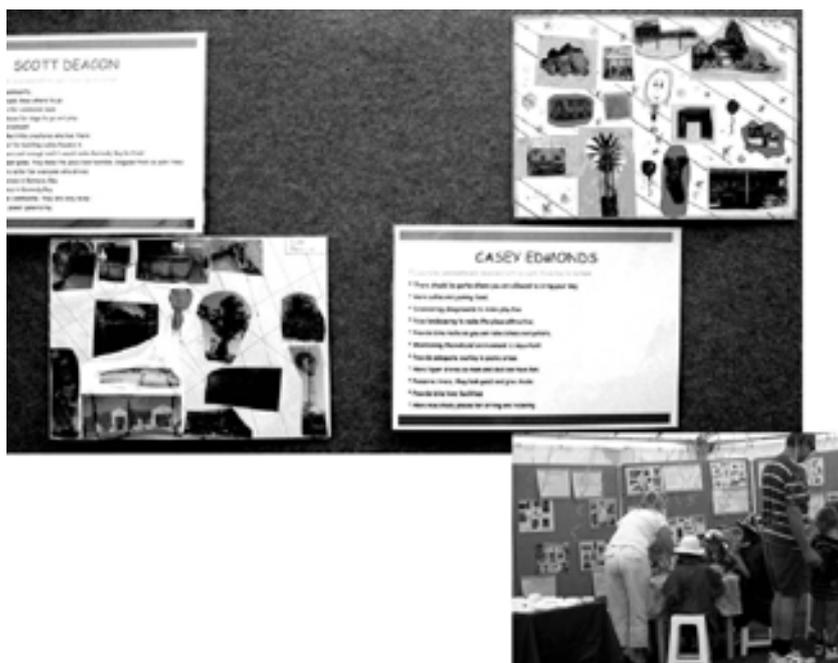
**Facilitator summary:** Bella depicts the street across from the *SpeakOut* with shops, the road and the fence in front of the community house. In her future drawing, Bella wants to see a pool, as there is only an outdoor pool now. Bella would like a playground (swings and a slide). She would like school to be closer to where people live so they don't have to travel so far (Bella goes to school in Lilydale where her mum works.) She would like people to come and stay and a big welcome sign and a motel are in the future drawing.

### A 'Week with a Camera'

A 'Week with a Camera' activity is usually undertaken in conjunction with one or several primary schools during a community engagement process. In one example, more than 180 children were given disposable cameras and asked to photograph what was important to them in their neighbourhood, following a briefing session in the classroom.

The children were encouraged to photograph 'things that they would like to keep' and 'things that they would like to change'.

### 3. Interactive Activities



Display of children's 'Week with a Camera' collages, Port Kennedy, Western Australia, 2003

'Week with a Camera' photos are then incorporated into collages in an intensive, facilitated workshop and displayed at the *SpeakOut*. This display works well to attract parents specifically to see their children's handiwork.

#### Recording children's *SpeakOut* results

Drawings, paintings and models are always photographed before children take them home. Children are always given a certificate of appreciation to acknowledge their participation.

#### Design games

Design games can take many forms and are often helpful at the 'options' stage of a project. For example, they can be used for working on a preferred option and then work 'on the plan' to refine and annotate the option. Annotated notes from each participant's redesign are then summarized in the reporting and used to assess community responses to options. Sometimes this approach reveals a new option that had not yet been considered.

#### Health check

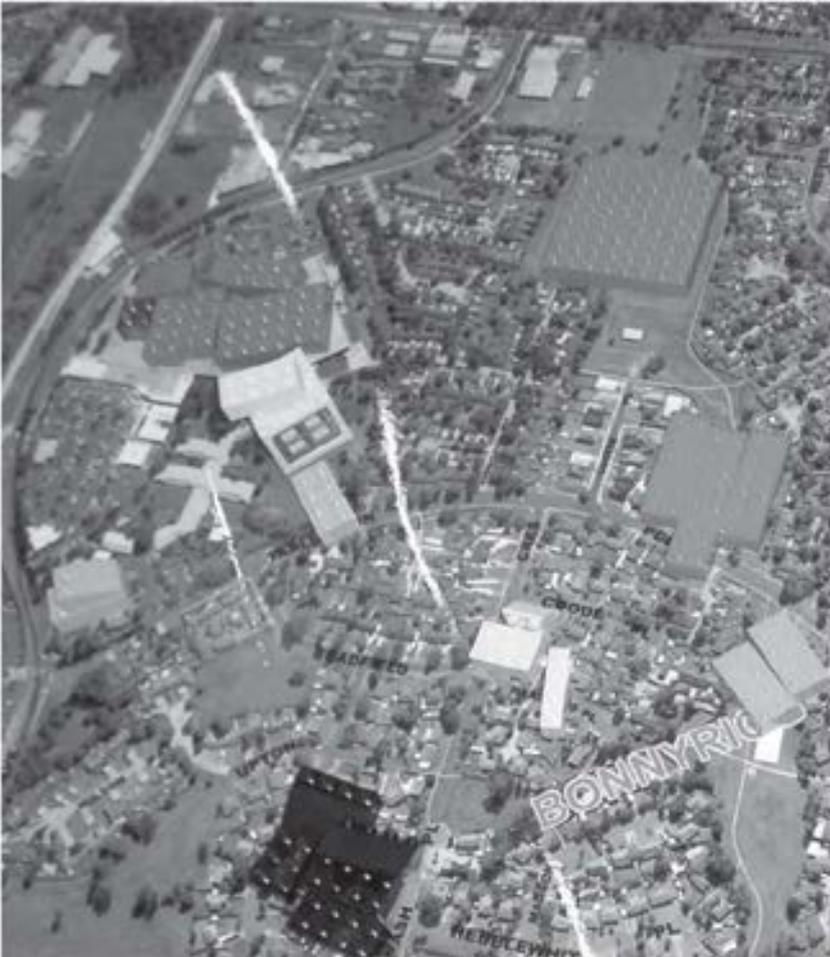
A small stall near the *SpeakOut* entry could allow participants to take part in a basic health check. Results of the health check could be anonymously mapped and displayed, thus allowing individual participants to compare their perceptions of their state of health with health check results.

## 3. Interactive Activities

### Housing 'building block' exercise

#### Density block modelling

The activity is well suited to exploring site-planning, housing layout and density issues. Participants work with facilitators using coloured Lego™ building blocks to represent different heights, densities and design elements they want included in the future vision or project. Building blocks are placed on tracing paper over large aerial photographs, which can then be annotated.



Density block modelling, Bonnyrigg, Sydney, 2005

Participants' models are photographed and their comments recorded on large sheets of paper.

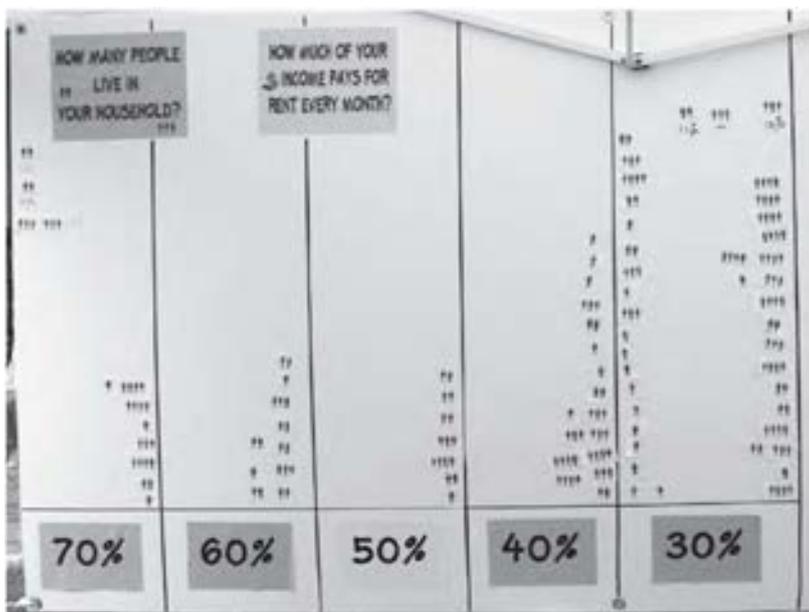
After each participant builds their density model, it is photographed and the base map cleared for the next participant. This proved a useful exercise in a neighbourhood with redevelopment and planning pressures for increased densities and community concerns and anxieties. It allowed participants to express their views about where higher density development was acceptable and what they saw as appropriate height limits.

### 3. Interactive Activities

#### Housing survey

Participants share basic information, such as household size and the percentage of their income spent on rent or mortgage by building a bar graph.

Another housing survey activity invites participants to share their reasons for living in their community (the things they like and dislike). Using a list of reasons, participants place a plus (+) symbol next to the reason they like and a minus symbol (-) next to the reason they don't like or would like to change.



Housing survey graph

#### Intergenerational letter writing

Participants explain to people from different generations what it's like today to live in a community, what their needs are and to explore in a creative and visionary way their ideas for creating better relationships among members of different generations. Letters and diaries can later be analysed.

#### Interviews with parents

Interviews can be held at tables and chairs set up in front of the SpeakOut space. Interviewers use 'input sheets' and interpretative materials to develop an understanding of parents' perspectives related to the children's environments (in one case, a children's garden) and children's needs in general.

Questions can be aligned with the inquiry framework guiding the project so that comparable information can be received from both children and adults. Listening to the adults separately allows facilitators to work with children on their own, allowing children freedom to be creative and express their personal views without adult 'editing'.

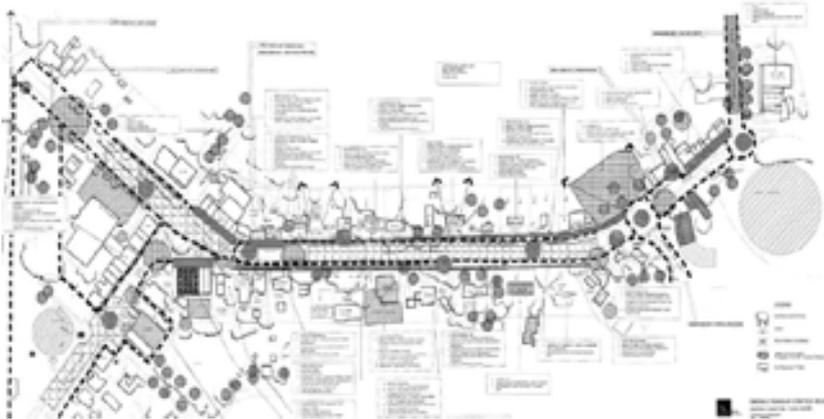
## 3. Interactive Activities

### Issues/opportunities table

Participants are invited to comment on issues, opportunities and/or solutions relating to the topic under consideration. Comments are structured around predetermined issues and objectives. For each issue, participants can identify an issue or opportunity, where it occurs and a potential solution. Participants can also suggest solutions for other issues. This activity is suitable for young participants, as well as older ones.

### Mapping exercises

Many mapping exercises can be used at *SpeakOuts*. The two essential components are a facilitator familiar with the local area and a high-quality orthophoto map with streets and landmarks clearly labelled. Participants' preferences can be drawn on a laminated map, with a photo taken before the map is wiped clean for the next



Marking where I live, Footscray, Melbourne, 2005

participant.

Annotated maps are valuable for revealing personal perceptions and assessments. We have encouraged participants to map 'preferred' retail precincts (i.e., what they would like to see in the future). Mapping exercises often contribute to *SpeakOut* stalls being extremely busy.

## 3. Interactive Activities

### Mapping 'where you live'

At the registration desk, participants can be asked to place a dot on a large, labelled, laminated map or aerial orthophoto to show where they live. Participants living beyond the boundaries of the photograph put dots around the border. This is a surprisingly effective exercise, a good 'ice breaker' and introduces participants to the interactive format of the SpeakOut and the role of facilitators. This process has the further advantage of identifying gaps in the geographical representation of *SpeakOut* participants.



Marking where I live, Footscray, Melbourne, 2005

This activity provides a good indication of perceived safe and unsafe areas. Each participant places red dots on small maps representing where they feel unsafe and green dots representing where they feel safe. The dots are later collated and analysed to show perceived community safety 'hotspots'.

### Mapping sacred spaces and hated spaces

In a redevelopment context, participants are prompted with instructions to consider 'sacred spaces' (elements of the community or the environment to keep) and 'hated spaces' (elements of the community or environment to change) and their ideas for change. Participants' comments are recorded onto maps or plans of the local area.

### Mapping social networks

Participants can map their social networks relevant to their language groups. This requires the help of a bilingual facilitator.

### 3. Interactive Activities

#### Roaming range maps

Participants are asked to map out their 'roaming range' (i.e., where they travel to on foot, by bicycle, on public transport). This is a useful tool for developing composite pictures of how public spaces are used (or avoided). Participants are invited to mark on individual A4 size (or letter size) maps their usual and preferred routes for walking, cycling and for using public transport, while describing current issues or difficulties they experience with local transportation modes. Maps can then be posted in the *SpeakOut* stall.



Roaming maps, Footscray, Melbourne, 2004



## 3. Interactive Activities

### Postcards to this place

At the 'Where to from Here?' activity stall, a 'postcards to this place' activity could be used. Participants record their final comments as they leave the *SpeakOut*. At this stall, participants could leave their entry form, received at registration, for a prize draw.

### Sandbox modelling



Preparing for sandbox exercise and the actual exercise, Braybrook, Melbourne, 2005



Drawing on the powerful therapeutic sand-play model, this activity allows participants to model and remodel parks or public spaces. Or even their whole imaginary environment, visualized and then created in the small sandbox. While this activity is often used with children, it can easily be tailored for adults. In one exercise, children were asked to build a perfect community.

The activity is facilitated and each model is annotated and recorded by a facilitator.

Where permission is given by parents and caregivers, we take photos of the child with their sandbox model. Alternatively, a photo is taken of the annotated model by itself. Great care must be taken in selecting the objects used in the sandbox. Lots of small objects are needed to maximize creativity. Warning: as these small items are prohibitively expensive, it's good to keep an eye on them throughout the process.

### *SpeakOut* passport

To help explain to participants how the *SpeakOut* works and encourage participation at each stall, visitors can be given a '*SpeakOut* passport', which explains the issues covered at each stall and offers an opportunity to win a prize. Participants tear out the last page (which has been stamped at each stall) and deposit it in a box. A prize draw occurs later.

### Spending your tax dollars

As each participant completes their visit to a *SpeakOut* stall, the facilitator presents them with a symbolic tax dollar. Before they leave, participants are asked to decide where to allocate their tax money among the various topics discussed at stalls. Participants can deposit their tax dollars in boxes corresponding to the *SpeakOut* stall topics. They are also encouraged to record a specific suggestion on the back of each of their symbolic tax dollars. This helps organizers understand community preferences related to how community funds should be allocated.



## 3. Interactive Activities

### Voting

Many of the *SpeakOuts* we have organized have had formal voting components. In one Queensland community, participants selected among competing proposals for the design of a city square. In another *SpeakOut*, in a small village in rural New South Wales, participants voted for their preferred development options. A very formal process of counting ballots was held at the conclusion of the *SpeakOut*.

### Engagement voting activity

The question here is: 'How would you like to be engaged with this project or process?' A participatory voting activity uses a large piece of paper marked up with a table showing a list of engagement options or issues in the left column and space in the right column for participants to place dots to vote for that option or issue.

Another engagement activity involves the use of symbols to represent different physical activities that are possible in local public spaces. These symbols could also be placed on aerial photos or maps to identify specific preferences for activities or facilities in public spaces.

### Voting for preferred ways of participating in the community

Voting exercises can include voting for preferred ways of engagement, voting for types of community engagement processes and events, where they should be conducted, who should be included and how often they should be held.

Voting could also be used to assess public spaces that are currently under-utilized, asking participants how these local, smaller-scale spaces could be better used.

### Video blogging

As one of the final *SpeakOut* stalls, a video blogging space can be set up to offer individual or group privacy so that people can talk about their issues and needs to an inconspicuously placed video camera. Participants can speak for as little or as long as they like and be left alone if desired. With participants' permission, video blogs can then be projected onto a screen located in a small marquee on the other side of the event.

Using film, particularly where there is opportunity for private space for the camera, provides another medium for participants to share their perspectives and also provides great marketing materials. Getting participants to sign permission forms is a vital component of successful video blogging within a *SpeakOut*.

## 4. Vote with your hands<sup>3</sup>

### Introduction to the exercise

This simple voting exercise creates colour and vibrancy at the start of the *SpeakOut*.

Participants can vote for categories/issues that interest them most using different paint colours to represent those issues. Participants create a handprint in a specific colour to indicate their interest in an issue (for example, arts and culture). A legend corresponds to each colour and participants annotate their handprint with comments about their 'vote'.

Participants can also use colours corresponding to the 'Vote with Your Hands' to mark a small map to show the desirable locations. Each colour can represent a different aspect of the community that participants value, such as: a clean environment, parks and playgrounds, people, public buildings, schools, churches, temples and other religious buildings and shopping centres.

'Vote with Your Hands' is a method for recording preferences and suggestions. It has been used with adults, young people and children, often in association with a *SpeakOut*, community event or celebration. This activity is appropriate in communities with low levels of literacy or where children's views are sought.



Some annotated votes, sample of voting choices and preparing paint

Footnote:

<sup>3</sup>

From Chapter 8.

## 4. Vote with your hands

### Advantages

Used with a *SpeakOut*, this process has the following features and advantages:

- It advertises *SpeakOut* issues (for example, at a festival).
- It draws people inside a room or marquee.
- It is bright and engaging.
- It does not rely on participants' ability to read or write.
- It is especially effective for shy or hesitant people.
- It is great with children: they can make their mark with little supervision.
- The results of the 'voting' can be analysed if votes are annotated and/or allocated systematically.
- It provides great visual material for later advertising and promotion of issues.

This is an engaging way to conduct a survey about a specific topic. The 'Vote with Your Hands' (VWYH) station displays a question and several responses for people to consider. Participants are invited by the facilitator to choose a colour corresponding to each response, dip their hand in the colour tray and leave a handprint on a large sheet of fabric as a vote.

Votes can then be annotated.

### 'Vote with Your Hands' checklist

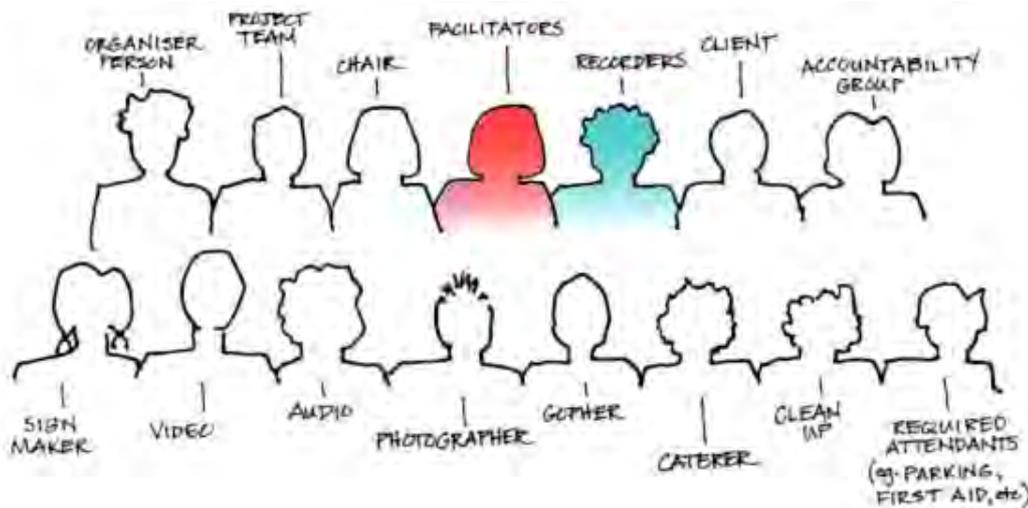
- Make sure you have shade or are located to the south or east side of a building or marquee (in the southern hemisphere)
- A sign that explains the steps and instructions
- A large white sheet or calico that can be used for the painting
- Large coloured sign displaying 'Vote with Your Hands'
- Sturdy backing for behind the calico to protect marquee, walls or glass
- Nine colours of non-toxic children's paint. It needs to wash out of clothes and off marquee walls. You will need enough to fill the takeaway containers a couple of times
- Nine takeaway food containers (large enough for a man's hand) to put paint in
- Nine thick sponges that fit well in the takeaway containers
- Tarp(s) or drop sheets to protect the floor
- A large bucket
- Water on tap
- A safe place to dispose of the paint-contaminated water afterwards
- Rags or wet wipes or old towels for washing hands
- Wedge-tipped black pen for extra signs
- Bullet-tipped black pens for annotating handprints
- A stepladder would be hugely helpful to help with tying things to a marquee's high walls
- A long table and two chairs for this stall. It would be best to cover the table also – it can be covered with paper or you can tape butcher's paper to it
- Materials to fix the fabric to the marquee. Perhaps ropes are needed

This method also allows everyone else to see the votes. It is fun, inclusive and informative. Children can participate and see that their contributions are recorded.

# 5. Staffing, facilitation and recording 4

## Staffing a *SpeakOut*

Teamwork is the essence of a *SpeakOut*. To do this valuable work effectively requires lots of helpers.



Staffing for a *SpeakOut*  
Drawing by Andrew Cook

## Guidance for Listeners and Recorders

Good processes don't necessarily guarantee good *SpeakOuts*. However, a lack of attention to these issues almost certainly guarantees failure. With honest intent and care for the needs of each participant, the opinions of the community should be able to be communicated fairly.

Set out in the box below is a summary of the roles required for successful *SpeakOuts*.

### At-a-Glance Summary of *SpeakOut* Facilitation and Recording

#### Purpose

Facilitation in a *SpeakOut* aims to help people share their views openly in a balanced way.

A well-run *SpeakOut* is equitable, recognises each individual and tries to balance personal and group needs, while not letting anyone dominate the discussion.

With careful facilitation, even the most shy and reticent can be encouraged to speak out.

All opinions have equal value in a forum and all views are recorded in a form that everyone can see.

The two roles of Listener and Recorder are separate. The Listener gives their undivided attention to the person who is speaking, while the Recorder records participants' comments in a vertical format with a large pen for all to see.

A workshop Facilitator (or manager or organizer) is in charge of the whole *SpeakOut*.

continued on next page...

Footnote:  
4

From Chapter 10.

## 5. Staffing, facilitation and recording

### Features

- Recording on a vertical surface for all to see.
- Listener and Recorder work closely together.
- Participants can challenge the written record as it is produced.
- Has a cooperative flavour.
- Shy people feel they can speak out.
- Conflict is handled competently and not discouraged.
- Is rewarding to individual participants.

### Key roles

#### Listener

- Explains their role.
- Summarizes *SpeakOut* goals.
- Demonstrates active listening skills.
- Adapts to the participants' communication styles.
- Supports and validates participants and their views without bias.
- Helps people feel welcome.
- Introduces themselves and invites participants to introduce themselves.
- Ensures participants' voices are heard fairly by Recorder.
- Clarifies and paraphrases to assist the Recorder.
- Manages the time so that the Recorder can keep up.
- Has the necessary equipment ready.
- Has a clear mind, free of distractions and is able to focus on the needs of the people who are speaking out.
- Has some questions ready for beginning the listening process and restarting discussion if people are hesitant.
- Ensures participants' voices are heard fairly.
- Pays close attention to language, style of speech and how the participant is feeling.
- Manages silence with new questions to keep the conversation moving.
- Demystifies the role of the Listener.
- Explains why they are doing things.
- Ensures that people who come to speak out can accomplish their goals.
- Works closely with the Recorder to ensure recording accurately represents participants' views.

#### Recorder

- Introduces themselves and explains their role.
- Stands close to the person who is talking so they can hear easily.
- Pays close attention to what is being said.
- Has some control over timing: makes sure that the person is not speaking so quickly that a good record cannot be made of the discussion.
- Records on a vertical surface so everyone can see as the public record emerges and comment upon and correct recording if it is inaccurate in any way.
- Uses verbs and action words to Summarize comments.
- Avoids paraphrasing if possible.
- Seeks clarification from the person speaking where necessary.
- Is responsible for getting the paper to the typist for transcription and for labelling all paper from their table.

## 5. Staffing, facilitation and recording

### The qualities of a good Listener

In a *SpeakOut*, each stall has a Listener, the active participants and a Recorder to write down what is being said, when it is said, without interpreting what has been said. The Listener's role is crucial to the success of any *SpeakOut*. Being grounded and well organized means that everyone is made to feel as comfortable as possible at the start. *SpeakOut* facilitation is done by Listeners, supported by Recorders and other helpers.

This process can be helped by ensuring that all materials are ready so that the Listener can concentrate on the participants.

We have found that people from the following groups make the most effective Listeners: counsellors, social workers, community development workers, teachers, child-care workers, therapists, community services staff and, of course, people trained specifically in group work. Few architects or technical specialists make good Listeners, in our experience. We recommend that you select Listeners who have good listening skills. Recorders can also be selected from these groups. Some people in the more technical professions make good Recorders if they are good listeners.

We have had great success working with local residents who have been trained as Listeners and Recorders. The effectiveness of Listeners can sometimes be impaired if they do not understand the site or the project. They may need to be taken on a site visit beforehand as part of the briefing.

### Facilitation and communication

The Listener's effectiveness depends on his or her ability to communicate well with the group and to help group members communicate well with each other. It's wise to try to adapt to group members as much as possible. Language is very important: avoid technical terms, professional jargon and slang, which may offend some participants.

Believe it or not, dress is an important issue. Listeners are advised to dress neatly, but not too formally. Sometimes professionals feel the need to 'dress down' for *SpeakOuts* and local people may find that offensive.

### Listening

We have found that when you are listening to someone, it's valuable to try not to evaluate immediately what is being said in terms of what it means to you. A more effective way can be to try to understand what it means from the other person's perspective. Asking questions helps us understand better and provides the opportunity for us to give an answer that has meaning to the other, from her or his point of view.

Having some good questions ready (related to the contents of your issue stall) is imperative. That's why it's good to know which stall you are working at well ahead of time.

## 5. Staffing, facilitation and recording

### Clarifying roles

#### Demystifying the Listener

As participants are sometimes unfamiliar with facilitation as a leadership style, it's necessary to be pretty direct to ensure that all group members understand the Listener's role. You may find yourself repeating yourself as you explain that you do not have authority and are not 'expert' in any way.

#### Recording

**The role of a Recorder:** The Recorder works closely with the Listener. Recording, or writing down the content of group discussions, is an essential component of good SpeakOuts.

#### *Seven guidelines for SpeakOut recording:*

1. The Recorder does not contribute to the discussions at the stall beyond seeking clarification of a particular point.
2. The Recorder sets the pace and can therefore halt discussion to ensure that a point is recorded or to ask a participant or the Listener what is meant by their comments.
3. Everything must be printed up with a large pen publicly and clearly (this is called vertical scribing). Usually large, separate sheets of butcher's paper are pinned up for public recording. It is better to record on a vertical surface so everyone can see as the public record emerges and comment upon and correct recording if it is inaccurate in any way.

We never use flip charts, as the previous pages are obscured when the page is turned over.

4. Remember that all information recorded will be included in the appendix of the report.
5. To help in the interpretation of recorded notes, it is imperative to use verbs, that is, a word that asserts action, occurrence or being. For example to record 'traffic' as an issue is meaningless, but by recording 'traffic is a problem' or 'traffic causes no problems' explains what is meant.
6. Recorders can seek clarification from stall participants. This can be done by simply asking: 'Is this what you meant by that statement?' or 'I didn't quite get that. Could you repeat it, please?' Or, "Does this capture what you meant?"  
It's also a good idea to record as much as possible in people's own words.
7. Ensure that each piece of paper with recorded contributions is clearly marked with the stall number and the page number. This crucial detail avoids misinterpretation in the analysis stage.

## 5. Staffing, facilitation and recording



Recording as listening, Western Australia, 2003

### Debriefing of *SpeakOut* Listeners and Recorders

The Listener must stay in touch with the mood of the participants as they come to and go from the stall, sense their energy and try to keep it on track, while ensuring balanced participation. Much of what goes on will be recorded intuitively and subconsciously in the mind of a sensitive Recorder and Listener. A debriefing session of an hour or less asking the Listeners and Recorders (in a *SpeakOut*) to discuss all that transpired that was not recorded yields invaluable results.

It is also a rich source of information about local politics and interpersonal relations, often issues not reflected in the formal *SpeakOut* record. In debriefing, more complex matters of community trust, expectations of betrayal, confidence and capacity can be discussed.

Further, fine-grained details can be identified, such as problems with catering, entertainment, participant comfort, needs of people with disability or those from culturally and linguistically diverse background, acoustics, queuing or interpretation of material provided at stalls can be discussed.