The Living Stories – Ray’s Story [Video Transcript]

[Text on slide] Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

This video contains material and discussion relating to mental health challenges that may be triggering for some individuals.

If you or anyone you know is struggling, you can reach out to one of the helplines below. There's always help available.

Lifeline 13 11 14
Beyond Blue 1300 224 636
Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
QLife 1800 184 527
13YARN 13 92 76
MensLine Australia 1300 78 99 78

[Ray] I used to have a stutter for about 30 years, and finally over the years, I've resolved that. And I now thought I'd pass on the information of my childhood, which I think was the basis of my stammer.

[Text on slide] Ray was born in England in 1944. After his schooling he joined the workforce at the age of 19 he married and emigrated to Australia.

After working here for several years he returned to England where due to his skills in mathematics and computers he was able to take on extra training and significantly advanced his career.

Returning to Australia just as the computer boom of the 1980s occurred and returning to his old employer he further developed his expertise being sent on courses overseas.

Ray retired in 2007.

He spent thirty years as a stutterer before seeking help from a psychologist.

This is Ray’s story

[Ray] I noticed the stammer when I was about four years old. I was born into a very poor family. My mother worked, my father fell off a roof on a building site and he ended up with the fits.

So the family was fairly poor. But I think in those days in London, the entire family was poor. And I was teased at primary school and they asked me why I stuttered.

So I lied to myself. I said it's my tonsils. After my… I'm going to have my tonsils taken out soon and the stammer will vanish, which I knew was a complete lie.

Anyway, the primary school wasn't bad because we didn't have to do much reading, but I did excel at mathematics, which was a joy to my life.

Anyway, on leaving primary school, I then entered the high school. Now, the high school is a place where it's really tough because kids are a bit nastier. The primary school is gone, where kids are all good. I'm in a tough environment.

Every four weeks, we used to have a reading class where everyone spoke, everyone had to read from a book. Now, I was about number 32 on the list, and they'd get through about six every lesson, every week. So I knew in week four or five I was going to have to read, and that was absolutely hell.

I stuttered and stuttered just couldn't get the words out. However, I noticed once I got two or three words out, which took me about 20 seconds, I found I could read smoothly, and then I continued reading from the book. And the teacher used to say, “Right, stop”, and I wouldn't stop, because I didn't want to stop, because I wasn't stuttering.

I went to see a psychologist. He took me through my background. Now, this is the important part for me about my recovery from stuttering. Well, I say stuttering, you only recover 95%. Will always be a day when you're freezing cold, you're shivering, and that stutter will return just only for a few seconds. But you've controlled it after this treatment, and so everything is fine.

Anyway, I went back to him three times, and what he'd done, he took me back to my childhood of four years old, and he went through the things that scared me in life. My mum said to me, “You and John”, who's my next up brother, he's about three years older than me now.

I was about three or four and he was about six, right? And we go alone in this house upstairs, two story, hundred years old, the house, and we're both laying in bed that night and just laying there, and then suddenly sort of half woke and I could see, it was a shape, like a black shape. You couldn't make it out, but it moved. The black shape moved.

It looked at my brother and I thought, seeing coming towards me, I put the blanket over my head and just laid there for about a minute until I thought, he'd gone. And this shadow went over to my brother again and he saw it as well. He just covered his head up as well.

So even today I saw him a couple of years ago, I said, “Do you remember in bed?”

He said, “Yeah. The shadow.”

So that really destroyed me.

I wasn't the perfect child, but my mum, she had a big bamboo stick. It wasn't just a little cane, it was a stick. And I offended her one day and she got this stick in the other room and whack, whack, whack. And she whacked me to the knuckles. Swelled up from that day.

I sort of stuttered, stammered all through life. This psychiatrist, he said to me, “That's where your problem started”. He put me straight and I was really pleased.

It didn't happen straight away, but this happened over about, oh, must have been four weeks, five weeks. I seemed to stutter less and less and I found out if I shouted, if I got annoyed, the stutter had gone.

You have to really get angry to get rid of that stutter because you shouldn't have it anyway.

The learning from this is ‘stammering confidence’. Confidence is the main thing.

And the last thing I'll say is, “People, seek help”. It's in the mind. And once you can get confidence, once you can be, you think to yourself as the best. I'm better than all those. You will stop stammering.