

What is Our Job?

Our job is about facilitating positive change in others, and at the same time, improve our own effectiveness and professional competence as change agents. One of the major challenges facing our organization relates to finding better ways to help community members become more effective inquirers and ultimately competent facilitators of change. The collective experience of our team amounts to over 80 years of practice in self-development and community change. Careful analysis of our individual approaches has led us to believe that *personal change* sits at the very core of any effort to create a more just and sustainable world.

Why is community change important? Tasmanian Community Resource Auditors (TCRA) was formed in response to ongoing calls from the community for a greater role in decisions made on its behalf. While community groups around Tasmania displayed passion and an enthusiasm for change, our numerous interventions have shown us that many groups, despite all the best intentions, are simply not equipped to deal with the complex issues they face. Be they issues relating to water quality, forestry operation, organic food production, community health or crime we see time and time again community groups struggle in their attempts to facilitate meaningful change. In some cases, this can lead to “burn out” and a sense of frustration and disenchantment on the part of community members. At TCRA, we have established a number of innovative strategies to help community groups overcome these hurdles. The process begins by recognizing the strengths, and weaknesses, in the critical thinking abilities we all use. We work with the group members to define and express their concerns, we then delve deeper to explore root causes. We encourage the development of clear, concise arguments that lead the participants to compare problem situations with desirable or improved situations. The issues generated then become the foci of the change processes.

Over the past four years, we have successfully used an approach known as “co-operative inquiry” to help several community

groups on their journey of change. The approach, strongly supported by credible research and a wealth of successful community change stories, is simply a disciplined method of sharing ideas and ways to undertake change. One important power of the inquiry process is that it enables participants to explore their approaches to making sense and problem solving. Each of us has a “learning style”, or way of dealing with problem situations. Knowledge of one’s individual learning style can be an important starting point for further personal change. TCRA is about helping others take that step.

Bibliography

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