



Final grant report: Talking FactSheets

Project title: Talking FactSheets - films made by and for the mob https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxTqByWNqE9vnXt8CpCeRSnzGu2gC5k0y	
Grant recipient	Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT
Project manager	Kate Finlayson
Position	Media and Communications Officer
Law and Justice Foundation awarded amount	\$45,500.00
Grant period	August 2013 – March 2016
Date of this report	8 March 2016

Description of the project

Describe the project in just enough detail so that anyone can understand it. What was the aim of the project, who was the intended audience and what strategies did you implement to achieve the aim?

The aim of the project was to increase accessibility to legal and human rights information for Aboriginal men, women and children in Aboriginal communities and households across NSW.

To achieve this aim, we trained key Aboriginal ALS staff members in basic video production, using available local resources (eg. Handycams, mobile phones with video cameras, cameras), who then in turn assisted with training young Aboriginal community members in the same set of skills.

In each community we visited, we targeted young Aboriginal people already being assisted by local agencies, thereby increasing local community engagement in the project and with the participants.

We used 'yarn up' skill sets to encourage sensible and accurate discussion about legal rights issues in a community setting, allowing people to respectfully tell their stories and share their experiences in a safe setting. The stories participants told reflected real life experiences, and they collaborated in developing the stories into a film.

Through producing moving images that reflected real-life legal/human scenarios that Aboriginal young people face in their local communities, the 'Talking Fact Sheet' project tapped into the power of visual storytelling, the huge potential created by making filmmaking accessible to all, and the advent of social networking tools, promoting 'accelerated crowd learning' and potentially a platform for social change.

As a result of the Talking FactSheet project, 17 legal information videos were produced by Aboriginal community members. In addition, a training video was produced illustrating the steps in making a short film for local community members.

The last output of the Project is a video being produced on the making of the Talking FactSheets project using raw footage taken by participants in their local communities.

The project – what happened?

Briefly set out the project stages and what happened in each stage.

Stage One

- Two day workshop training five ALS field officers in ‘yarning up’ about legal issues, story creation based on the ‘yarn up’ of the most prevalent issues, story development for film, and the basics of film-making.
- Created a documented video of the workshop to be used as support material for ALS field officers and community members in regions across NSW.

Stage Two

- In-community workshops (2-3 days) with a film-making facilitator working in tandem with the trained ALS field officer (or the Project Manager) in Taree, Moruya, Wagga Wagga, Bourke (x2), and Parramatta.

Stage Three

- Films uploaded onto ALS YouTube Channel.
- Distribution of films through social media channels, and via traditional media.
- Launch of films produced in Redfern.
- Information about development of the project uploaded to the CLEAR database http://www.naalc.org.au/cle_database.php.

If resource materials were produced as part of the project:

How were they distributed?

All films have been distributed to Aboriginal community members who participated in the Project via social media channels and DVD.

All short films have been uploaded onto the ALS YouTube account which currently has over 80 subscribers. In addition to being uploaded as stand-alone videos, we also created two playlists which contain all the short films running one after the other. The first playlist contains the short films with subtitles, and the second one contains the short films without the subtitles.

All of the short films have been uploaded onto the ALS Facebook account, which has over 5,000 followers. Most ‘posts’ about the short films have been shared by followers to their own pages.

All short films have been 'tweeted' via the ALS Twitter which has an account following of over 2,500 followers. Most 'tweets' we have posted about the short films have been 'retweeted' to thousands of others.

The short films have been uploaded on the ALS website.

All short films were advertised via a Pozible crowd-funding campaign (put together to fund the children's travel costs to Sydney for the Festival of Short films) which was distributed very widely.

All short films were advertised widely for the launch of the films in Sydney, at the 'Festival of Short Films', which attracted an audience of over 100 people.

One of the short films was submitted to and selected for inclusion in a local Sydney film festival of short films, playing to an audience of over 50 people.

What was the extent of the distribution?

The extent of the distribution is fairly hard to measure. The short films are largely online, so we can measure the extent of the distribution through the number of 'views' of each film.

Now that the project has concluded, how did the implementation and/or the outcome differ from what was originally intended? Did anything surprise you? Were there any unintended outcomes?

Overall, we believe the Talking FactSheet project was an enormous success. Most of what we originally envisaged was achieved. There were some lessons learnt however.

We trained five ALS field officers in the art of film-making and 'yarning up' about legal issues at the beginning of the Project. Our commitment to continue working with those field officers was tested however. This was partly due to the extended length of the program, partly due to their day-to-day work/court commitments, and partly due to staff turnover.

The ALS Talking FActSheet Project was well extended predominantly due to a huge campaign being run by the ALS to reverse announced massive government funding cuts to our organisation. The campaign went for many months, and although ultimately and thankfully successful, absorbed all of the resources of the Project Manager. This meant the Talking FactSheet project was significantly delayed.

ALS field officers are very time-strapped. Because they work in tandem with lawyers who are representing Aboriginal clients in court daily, it became apparent quite quickly that the expectation of having 3-4 days out of the workplace placed a huge burden on the lawyers they worked with, and on the administration staff in each location who had to pick up some of their work. In the case of Bourke, the field officer was not able to assist at all.

The workshops were not able to proceed in Newcastle or Dubbo, two of the expected locations for the workshops. An ALS field officer from these locations participated in the training to become a co-facilitator of the Talking FactSheet workshops in those communities. However, in the case of

Newcastle, the field officer was unable to participate due to an extended office move and staff shortages, and then that person left the organisation. In the case of Dubbo, the field officer again, and unexpectedly, left the organisation.

In one area, an unexpected outcome was the inclusion of an ALS administration officer in facilitation and organisation. This person was able to 'fill in' when the trained ALS field officer was called away with a court/work commitment. The ALS administration officer in effect job-shared the role of organising the workshop, enlisting interested young people, engaging local community organisations in the process, and in helping the young people produce the films on location. This was a happy and unintended result, and demonstrated a more efficient model for the Talking FactSheet workshop than had occurred in other locations.

A second unintended outcome was the unexpected enthusiasm of the local young people in some of the locations, particularly Wagga Wagga, Bourke and Moruya. The young people found the workshop and project experience very rewarding and were very keen for the Project to return once again for a second round. Although the Project did return to Bourke, this was not possible for all locations due to limitations in the Project budget, and being outside the scope of the original intentions of the Project.

A big aim of the Project was to provide enough skills for the young people to be able to pick up a mobile phone or camera and using the steps they had learnt in crafting a story during the workshops, to produce their own short films into the future. We have found some limitations to this expectation. Firstly, even though the Project relied in part on the resources available in a local community – phones, cameras, and other recording and editing equipment such as computers – it became apparent quite quickly that these resources were not readily or otherwise available in many communities. Secondly, even if the young people did have mobile phones, it became apparent that the sound quality obtained when using the phones during filming was not clear enough, unless the phone was directly in front of the person being filmed. That meant that wide shots etc could not be employed. As a film is only as good as its sound, we supplied microphones and some cameras to increase the quality of each film. Thirdly, the project relied on the organisational skills of the ALS and partner youth organisations in different areas to bring the young people together. It would appear that facilitation and leadership is needed to further the young people's desire to produce more short films, as the young people themselves have suggested. This leadership is particularly important when it is noted that most of the young people that participated in the Project came from homes, schools and communities heavily affected with unemployment, poverty and intergenerational issues and from homes (or foster homes) with family separation, dysfunction or trauma. That the young people desire leadership to group them together and help facilitate the process is in retrospect of no real surprise, and it would be advantageous to be able to provide ongoing facilitation and leadership into the future, either through ALS field officers and/or partnering organisations.

We were pleased with the uptake and understanding of the legal messages throughout the workshoping process, evidenced in the interviews the young people gave to 'media' organisations after the launch of their short films in Redfern. They were very keen to impart the legal message and to share their experiences of why/how that legal message can help others.

The long yarn-up sessions at the beginning of each workshop allowed the young people to ask questions and tell their stories, receive clarification around the law and their rights and responsibilities, and field scenarios and the implications of such. The enthusiasm around this process was unexpected, particularly as we were nervous about participants being shy, belligerent about the law, or not interested at all. Quite the opposite occurred. In some areas the yarn-ups went for over three hours, discussing a wide range of legal issues that affected some or all of them, and by the end of that process, in each location, the participants were able to articulate the predominant legal trends and issues in their local areas. At that moment, the participants were clear about their desire to articulate, through the storytelling process and film-making, the legalities of that issue and the consequences. It was also very clear that there is an abundance of stories that the young people would like to tell, but the workshop timeframe permitted only a few. The young people saw the advantage of being able to craft stories to highlight to their friends, families and communities what the issues are and how to deal with them, through their eyes.

The positive and sustained engagement of local community members and organisations was an unexpected outcome of the Project. In all of the locations we attended, we were assisted by local youth organisations, the local police, and various individuals who committed their time either by acting in the film or assisting behind the scenes with picking up the young people, catering, transport on location, and logistics. When we were in a location, the local townsfolk already had knowledge of what we were doing, gained through word-of-mouth or because of local media reports and they responded very well (particularly when the young people were filming 'on location').

The media interest in the Project was very exciting, and increased the 'reach' of the Project exponentially. Local media reported on the Project in some locations. Media was also generated through the Festival of Short Films where the films were launched, and many of the young people were interviewed about the Project for television, radio and online by the ABC, NITV, WIN television, Koori Radio, and by numerous other outlets online through Twitter and Facebook.

The massive support in the crowd-funding campaign to fund participant's journey to Sydney was another unexpected outcome. The campaign – [We need help getting to Sydney](#) – raised over \$4,000, enough money for transport, meals and accommodation for 11 workshop participants from Bourke, Wagga Wagga and Moruya, and their carers and/or ALS field officer. During the campaign the Project was advertised widely, and we built a strong foundation of public support for both the Project and the participants and their short films. We were delighted with the number of people who donated, and with their private and public letters of support for the Project and the participants.

We had originally envisaged launches in each community setting where the workshops were taking place. We realised it was impractical to launch only 1 or 2 short films that the participants had made in each setting, as each launch would have been completed in less than 15 minutes!

The Festival of Short Films, the launch of the Project and the films, was advertised widely and invited members of the public to view the films at a festival event in Redfern in December 2015. It was a brilliant success and an unintended outcome of the Project. Many of the films were showcased over a two-hour period, and the participants were encouraged to speak to the audience about their films, both before and after viewing. Over 100 people attended the Festival.

The happiness of the young people in seeing their films on the 'big screen' at the Launch was indescribable. They all, without exception, felt so proud of themselves. They had the opportunity to meet their peer film-makers from the other communities, and also film-makers and those from the media industry who came to the event out of interest. The chance to share their stories on making the films with these people elevated their self-esteem and gave them an equal playing field in all discussions.

After the launch, the young people involved in the Project suggested that 'next time', their films should be in a film festival where there are 'winners'. They identified as being film-makers and held a strong ambition for continuing to produce short films that would make a name for themselves and their communities.

The level of media interest in the films and the launch was a brilliant and unexpected outcome, and has generated a lot of knowledge about the project and the young people involved throughout NSW in particular.

Since the launch, another funder has approached the ALS and offered a small amount of funding to continue the ALS Talking FactSheet Project in one or two areas. This was an unintended and very welcome outcome.

One field officer has used the skills learnt to train another in how to make a short film. They then created a short film with an ex-ALS client. Although this was an aim of the Project, progress has been slow in this area. Training of all field / administration officers in this skill area would further the Project's original aims.

Evaluation

What questions did you ask to evaluate whether you had achieved your aim?

During each workshop community workshop, a two-three hour yarn-up session was held with young participants about the existing ALS legal factsheets and other legal issues affecting them. Participants had a safe space to discuss issues affecting their home and daily lives, and the legal ramifications of those issues were discussed in the presence of an ALS field officer who was able to provide information, and in some cases referral.

During the yarn-up, the participants selected two or three of the issues that they had been discussing, which they best thought could be transformed into a short film. Further group discussion was held on each of the issues, including how to tell a story about that issue, and what the legal message was that they wanted to get across. With each concept the question was asked of the group, do you understand the legal message, how can the legal message be incorporated into a short film, and what can a short film about it teach other people.

ALS lawyers were invited in to each workshop to check that the legal messages participants wanted to convey in their films were legally correct.

User-testing of the legal message occurred in the workshop space, through group discussion and scenario building. All participants participated in this process, testing their ideas through the process of concept development, storyboarding and scripting. There was no time to conduct user-testing outside the workshop space, as there were too many activities to complete to be able to produce the short film (eg. Storyboarding, locations, costumes, enlisting acting help from the community, etc)

Following film distribution, the following questions were asked of a sample target group in most of the settings:

- Have they seen the films before?
- Do they understand the legal message in the films?
- Do they think short films are a good way to share legal messages?
- Do you think more short films like these should be made by local young people?
- How could the short films be better distributed among young people?

We also put together an electronic survey. Questions asked there included:

- What films have you seen?
- What were your three favourite films?
- Did you know about the legal message before watching the film?
- Did the film help you understand your legal rights and responsibilities?
- Do you think people's attitudes and feelings about the legal system and the law would change after watching these films?
- Do you think short films made by Aboriginal young people are a good way to let people know about the law?
- Did you share the films on social media?

What data did you gather to answer your questions?

- User feedback during workshops
- Questions from sample target group
- Online data
- Electronic survey

Did you achieve your aim? What did you find out?

It would be fair to say that the Project achieved Aim One, in that there have been many views of the short films and a greater awareness of the legal issues aired in the films. As the participants appeared in a number of radio and TV interviews which were widely viewed, the legal messages in these films were a discussion point for a huge section of the community, whether those persons viewed the short films or not. In addition, Aboriginal Legal Service as a provider of legal services, and the other legal services listed at the end of each short film have been well advertised as providers of legal assistance services to the community through this Project.

In the same vein, Aim Two has also been achieved. The short films were a celebrated medium. The participants were very happy to share the films with their communities as they were very proud of their films. This is demonstrated through online comments, and in the feedback provided orally to field officers and the project manager, and finally through the media coverage where the participants spoke very positively about the Project, their films, and the importance of the legal messages they had chosen to represent in the films.

Aim Three has been less achieved. Participants have been skilled in the art of basic film-making to a point, but the transferability of those skills when a project leader is not there is questionable. Further training would be required to cement the new skills learnt while building further skills in uploading and downloading video content. In addition, access to film-making resources is a problem in some areas that is not easily rectified. Partnering with local organisations who already have basic film-making equipment may be a way to alleviate this issue in the future, and as a means to make the project more sustainable in a community setting.

Aim Four was achieved. The Project produced more films than was anticipated. The number of short films they produced about their legal rights and responsibilities is exciting in terms of meeting the needs of the online content vacuum in this area, particularly with/for Aboriginal young people.

Conclusion and recommendations

What is your conclusion?

The ALS Talking FactSheet Project is a wonderful model for working in a community engagement setting with children and young people. It is self-empowering, educational, self-determining, results-driven, and the films produced are entertaining, informative, and culturally appropriate and relevant, and accessible to all.

We would love to continue the Project into the future, and will endeavour to source further funding to do so.

What are your recommendations for improvements both for the intended audience of your project, and for the strategy you used to achieve your aim? What would you do differently next time?

Notwithstanding that a degree of flexibility is required when working with vulnerable Aboriginal people (and organisations), the timing of the project could have been better organised. This was due to ALS resourcing capabilities.

Three workshop sessions with each group, over a period of some months, would be a preferable model. This would allow film-making skills learnt to be built upon, community engagement with local agencies and individuals to be strengthened, local publicity to be increased, and local agencies geared to continue to run the project themselves, and the children being further celebrated in their communities as role models and mentors.

We would spend more time in distributing the films via local networks in towns and centres that did not host the workshops this time.

We would spend more time with our field officers building understanding of the Project and the importance of it. We would build in a training component for all field and administration officers, so that they can team-share the workshops, while also transferring and utilising their skills on-the-job.