

The Dinosaur SQUAD, Sally Conning Fellow of the Elder Leadership Academy

Title: The Dinosaur SQUAD

Fellow: Sally Conning

Date: 2020-2022

Context

Sally responded to an invitation to participate in a Pride stories project, connecting older LGBTI people during the COVID19 pandemic. Sally's story became an intergenerational Pride fairy tale, to reflect a friendship she had developed with a 12-year-old TGD person called Jay. The Pride fairy tale, called The Roar!!!, is a story about Dinosaur Pride that reflects the fun times and mentoring that Sal and Jay enjoy.

As the fairy-tale ending to The Roar!!! was being written, it became apparent that Jay was being bullied at school and that the ending in the fairy-tale needed to come true in Jay's life. And so, a state-based project called the SQUAD, or Story Telling Queers Against Discrimination was born. A SQUAD is an intergenerational project, wrapping LGBTIQ+ community around members doing it tough. Sally played a key a critical role in establishing a Dinosaur SQUAD to support Jay.

Sally's role in the projects was one of real-life mentoring for Jay and cowriting a story that reminds LGBTIQ+ community and allies to support each other.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the project was to improve the wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ community members by bringing older and younger LGBTIQ+ people and their allies together to support each other, and particularly to support LGBTIQ+ people doing it tough/experiencing discrimination.

Activities

1. Wrote an Intergenerational Pride Fairy Tale called The Roar!!!
2. Established a Dinosaur SQUAD to write a happy ending to the story and then make the happy ending come true in real life. The SQUAD includes:
 - a. A member of Parliament
 - b. A local Police Officer

- c. The Principal and Wellbeing Coordinator from Jay's school
 - d. Community leaders, family and friends
3. Established a private Facebook group to communicate regarding ongoing support through the SQUAD
 4. Established a Dinosaur SQUAD webpage:
 5. Produced a colouring book for children
 6. Produced an animation called The Roar!!! in which the story is read
 7. Produced an animation from the Dinosaur SQUAD in which SQUAD members read the happy endings they wrote and reflect on how they made them come true
 8. Participated in a Dinosaur SQUAD reading hosted by Wellways in Geelong in 2021
 9. Participated in a Midsumma Festival reading of the story at the City of Yarra Library in 2021
 10. Developed a podcast for Celebrate Ageing.

Outputs

1. The Dinosaur SQUAD 2 years on has over 70 members
2. Animation of The Roar!!! – 200 views (2020-2022)
3. Animation of The Dinosaur film – 970 views (2020-2022)
4. Colouring book
5. Evaluation of the Dinosaur SQUAD (6 months on) – 200 views
6. Midsumma Festival event
7. Reading for health service
8. Podcast.

Outcomes (2021)

1. The Dinosaur SQUAD is still in operation 2 years after being established and has over 70 members
2. Andy Meddick MP thanks the SQUAD for The ROAR!!!! in State Parliament, [click here](#)
3. Funding applications have been developed to roll out a state pilot of the SQUAD approach
4. Take up of the story by families and community members.

Partnerships and acknowledgements

The project was supported by a grant from the [Department of Premier and Cabinet](#), Victoria. Thanks to [MIECAT](#) Masters study Jay Glasgott for supporting the project, Ferne Millen from [Ferne Millen Photography](#) for the stills and Chris Franklin from [Franklin Image](#) for the animations.

Links: <https://www.thekindnesspandemic.org/dinosoursquad.html>