**Voices of Change with James and Jack**

Voiceover: It can be hard to hear about disability institutions. You can ask for support.

Jack: Hi I am CID director Jack.

James: I'm also CID director James.

Jack: Can you tell me a bit about your experience of being a self- advocate James?

James: I can. I advocate for people who were stuck in institutions. I advocated for people who ended up in prisons. I advocated for people who needed help.

Jack: Do you know what a disability institution is?

James: Yep. It is an institution um where they used to hold people with disabilities back in the 70s and 80s and 60s as well. They are like a hospital but not actually a hospital where you get treatment from a doctor. The other thing that happens in there is abuse and neglect behind closed doors. They were locked in toilets, put in dark cupboards because they misbehaved or absconded. They were either signed in by their relatives or doctor. They were taken away from their parents by child protection people and put in the institutions.

Jack: Do you know what the different kinds of institutions are in Australia?

James: There are children's institutions where children with disabilities used to be get taken to. There is some adult institutions where they had adult people with intellectual disability. Then there are mental health institutions old ones where people with mental health were detained under the mental health act. And then there were corrective services institutions which are jails. Jails are considered institutions because people are locked up.

Jack: Do you have any experience of institutions?

James: I was in one institution in the Blue Mountains. I was abused by the staff that worked there. It happened in 1982 to 1985. For the period I was there as a child. I gave evidence later on to the Federal Parliament committee and the Royal Commission. Deinstitutionalisation. That means they are closing down institutions. Governments agreed to close all the institutions down, relocate people to accommodation suitable to their needs. Group homes are not always suitable because there are mini institutions because people can not leave. An institution is also... look nice they might have a nice garden and that but it is not what is on the outside, it is what happens on the inside.

Jack: How did people advocate for closing down institutions?

James: I started when I came on the board. We would discuss it then we would put an action in place. Staff would write letters to governments. We would tell government there is a lot of abuse in the institutions and that they should be closed down. They are past their use by date and that people have a right to live in the community. And what CID does is protect those rights. If we get any hint from the government they are going to reopen again we would oppose it very strongly. What happened, it shall not happen again.

Jack: Why is it important that we do not have any more disability institutions?

James: There is a risk of abuse and it's not safe to have institutions. There is no way to monitor it, there is no way to check whether a person is being looked after, and if that person is a child there was no evidence that child protection services went back to check on them to make sure they were safe. What happened to me cast doubt and that there should have been psychologist services, child protection coming in and checking on people that were there, and medical examinations which never happened.

Jack: What skills do you need to be a good advocate?

James: Well knowing your rights and having people respect your rights.

Jack: How can we remember self advocates that helped to close disability institutions? We tell our stories as it happened. Each person tells their story. Kim Walker has told a lot of stories in her book. We have taken over her legacy since she died and we continue that work in writing stories and get people to tell us their experience and get people to say no to institutions.

Jack: What is one of your best self advocacy memories?

James: Getting disability access to courts, ensuring that support was in place for people with intellectual disability in the court system, supported the client, talked to the legal aid lawyers and understand what was being put to them.

Jack: Thank you James for allowing me to come and listen to your story.

James: That is fine with me.