**Voices of Change with Judith and Ella**

Judith: Okay what is your name?

Ella: Ella Darling.

Judith: My name is Judith Lavender.

Ella: Do you know what a disability institution is?

Judith: Yes. To me it's like a... it's a home like an institution. That is what my family used to say. I am going to put you in a home. It is like jail.

Ella: Do you know what kind of institutions are in Australia?

Judith: Yes they used to call them the mental hospital. They had one for other disabilities like autism. It is like you cannot be a self advocate because no support, no help to go outside. They can not go anywhere at all. Stuck in an institution all day long. There was no access to education, no access to get education at all. No access to anything. It is really bad. It is a bad place.

Ella: Do you have any experience of institutions?

Judith: I was kept isolated all the time. Not go anywhere. Not go out. I had to be at home. Because they think I was not capable of looking at myself, being self-independent. I had very bad speech impediment and severe learning difficulties and my disability level that time was moderate to mild as a 5 or 6 year old. It got better as I got older. Was not allowed to go anywhere. Kept in isolation. Until the welfare - they call them DOCS now - come visit my parents. They had to put me into school. Otherwise they would take me off to foster care. I was nearly 9 before started school. If I did not get an education they would have put me in a in a home. And I yelled out. I said no do not put no. I said I will get out. I kicked and screamed and yelled. A very rebellious teenager.

Ella: Do you know what deinstitutionalise means?

Judith. Yeah. I can not say the word but it was like to close them down. They closed them down and they got kicked out in the streets. Some people without any support. Without any help. Absolutely no help at all.

Ella: Can you tell me a bit about your experience about being a self advocate?

Judith: I got myself involved. I want to be involved with the community as well at that time. We need to just speak up.

Ella: What skills do I need to be self advocate?

Judith: Good support. Peer support to help. Help somebody out. Be there. I need see big changes in inclusion. We need to just speak up. Speak up about inclusion.

Ella: How can we remember the self advocates from the past?

Judith: They need to talk about their experience so that people to know. Do not go through it again.

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

Judith: At this moment it is joining with a group. Yeah. Be involved. I would love to be. I love to be around people. Yeah. Likeminded people. Explore out there more. Get involved with other things. They need to speak up to fight. Make them listen. Do something. You need advocate person to come in and help them out. Can you tell me what different kinds institution is in Australia?

Ella: So there was group homes. There was mental health homes and jail.

Judith: Do you have any experience in institution?

Ella: I was born originally in Romania. When I was 5 and a half I was institutionalised because my parents dumped me on the streets. And then really bad experience in the orphanage where we got treated like dogs. Pretty much fed us like we were dogs. And we had to share 1 bed with 6 people which was terrible. And I want this powerful message so people do not have that trauma. So we can talk about it to be better.

Judith: How do people advocate to close the institutions down?

Ella: You know the community can say this is not right. We want things to change and we want to speak up about these rights. And advocating like us with disability. This is not right. We spoke up about the issues and even the government has come in and supported us and the communities.

Judith: Why is it important we don't have any more disability institutions?

Ella: So we do not have people having trauma. We should be open for everyones right to live how they want. They should not be living, even if they high needs, they should have a choice and voice not just because their parents want them to live in a, you know, group home or institute. They should have a choice. I want things to change in a good way. So people with disabilities do not have to feel frightened or scared. They can speak up. The past is the past but you can not change it. You can try to move on and continue your life. I think this is what we want. We want people to talk about their experience not to hide it.

Judith: How do we remember about self advocates who helped close institutions?

Ella: We can remember by talking to them about their stories or videos or having a good conversation with them on the phone because we want to know what the next step to do for us. You know we want to be self advocacy and close all systems down. We do not want people to be living in you know institutionalised. We want people to be free and have a choice and voice.

Judith: What is your best memory being a self advocate?

Ella: The Royal Commission I did. I spoke up for peoples rights. And it was basically about employment. How people should give us a go, do not treat us like we are babies. Thank you Judith for coming in today and telling us your story. You are a very wise person and we are grateful for that. So thank you again.

Judith: Okay. Thank you for coming today and I learned a lot from your experiences. Thanks for coming in today.