

## Headlights and taillights

Veronica Williams and her training company has been providing healthcare workers with new insights into emotional health and strategies to reduce violence, abuse, and anti-social behaviour in communities. This series of stories provide examples to the question: *What would it look like if these ideas took off?*

(An email from community)

Hi Veronica, its Carol here. David S. is with me and he wants me to type this message as he talks. As you know he has been pretty fired up since that day in Katherine when he got some new ideas to try. Mainly working with Tommy. I'm not sure if you heard but Miralda (Tommy's partner) was in hospital pretty beaten up and hot water burns too. Dave took Tommy to visit her but the hospital wouldn't let him see her, lucky Dave was with him because Tommy went off his head, but Dave managed to settle him down and they had a good talk coming home. That was two months ago and a lot has happened since, I will let Dave tell you.

Hi Veronica, I can't type fast enough so Carol is doing it for me. I want to tell you what has been happening with Tommy cos he did a pretty bad thing from drinking and gunja. I decided it was time for big bad talking so we did. He wouldn't listen at first but we kept at it and one day we sat over at the footy shed cos nobody was around and I tried out some of the stuff we heard that day in Katherine with you. We had two cans each but I told him these have to last all arvo, kinda relaxed and friendly it was. He knows jail is coming up after the court case and he doesn't want to go back there. The lawyer fella told him he had better get his shit together to show big changes and convince the judge that it won't happen again so that's why we had that talk.

I talked about headlights and taillights off the wrecks around here, how he could get started on taking all the good ones and selling them on the internet, give him something to do to instead of doing shit. We talked about tools and maybe kids helping him, and sending them away and he started to get interested. Then comes the good bit. I told him to relax and close his eyes while I talk. I got him to breathe

slowly, and he relaxed fine, then I just talked making it up as I went along and before long it just sort of flowed and it was like I was him as well as me if you know what I mean, kinda weird but anyway it worked.

Carol told me to tell you what I said but it is not that easy. I asked him to see Miralda and the kids, happy and playing, then to picture himself part of that scene standing tall and proper like a man. Then after a while I got him to see himself taking lights out of the wrecks, taking his time like and kids helping him, and putting them in cardboard boxes from the shop and sending them away. I told him to take a headlight now in his mind and feel its shiny glass and talked about how we need to see where we are going when it all seems dark. Without that light we crash into things and go round in circles never getting where we need to go. Like a big crash that means jail. Then I told him to imagine holding a red taillight and said these are to stop other people crashing into us, without these it is not just us that crashes it is other people that it's not their fault but because we did dumb stuff. And I also talked about the lights not being any good without power and grog and gunga are like dead battery, black and heavy, no power, no lights, make us go round in circles and crash and making others crash too. Then I talked about power like a good spirit that has light that gets rid of dark stuff. I don't know how I did it but I did.

Well I kept on his case, loaned him some tools and got him started. He needed a bit of pushing but after a while he got going with it. We had a few headaches cos the fella in Darwin who said he'd buy them wouldn't pay enough to cover postage. Carol has been a good help cos she found out about a fella in Brisbane who will buy all we can send there. But he was fussy, said each light had to have no cracks, come with the plug not just wires cut like we were doing them, and they had to have a sticker about what kind of car it was from and what model number. Tommy said find someone else but Carol said let's try one box of lights done like he wants them and see how it goes. Then she said some kids had been wanting to help and she set

them up to find the names and numbers and helped them type the stickers. Tommy started to get on board and liked the kids helping him. I was amazed one time I heard him explaining where to cut the wires if the plug didn't come apart, it was like he got some authority from somewhere – like a new Tommy.

Even the boxes, they decided to turn them inside out to look like proper boxes, he told the kids we are not sending chips and stuff but valuable lights. They used rolls and rolls of sticky tape but hey it is worth it. Carol sorted the cartage out and even if it costs us more it still is better because we get paid more. The kids have been great and they made a video on youtube on how they work with Tommy after school and climb into the tight spaces with a torch to get the numbers cos the wrecks are stacked on top of each other. The lawyer wanted a copy of it to show the judge so that's good. When the fella in Brisbane sent carol the money, we all had a barbeque and bought some tools as well with still some money over. Tommy and I have a joke when we see each other, he says 'still got me lights on'.

Well that's about it. I thought you would like to know that what you did in Katherine was good. At the time I didn't think making up stuff would make any difference but it is like our old stories that used to give us direction and meaning in life and getting that back.

It's Carol again. Hey how's that for a story. Dave has done an amazing job it is like he has a new set of tools and is going round fixing stuff. He is so keen and it is getting us fired up too. I hated looking at those wrecked cars but now I see them differently. I never thought part of my job would be working with them but there you go. Just the other day the teacher said the kids are now wanting to read better and they want to type like Carol! Also the video has gone all over the internet and the kids want to make another one. Thought you would be pleased cos when we talked last time at Mataranka you said there must be stuff out there that can help us stop the damage of abuse and violence. I think you have found something that works.