



Matthew O'Brien

To whom it may concern,

## MY STORY

My name is Matthew O'Brien and I am 42 yo. I am married with three children.

I have been a stutterer since early childhood. This posed a constant challenge throughout my entire school life and adult life. I believe this communication problem affected some parts of my life greatly. It is harder for a stutterer to make friends at school as you are concerned about your speech most of the time. The simple act of reading aloud in class caused a lot of embarrassment which sets your belief that you could not pursue a career that involves verbal communication.

To help with my communication problem I went to see a speech therapist who suggested doing a smooth speech course. This had short term improvement but the fear of stuttering never went away. I completed two of these courses, one in primary school and one in my early twenties.

I became a labourer and then a bricklayer. Whilst taking pride and working hard in my job I knew it wasn't for me so I completed several courses in the hope of changing careers. With stuttering never too far from your mind, you never quite take that next step, which I believe is due to years of holding back from showing the real you.

Eighteen months ago I joined 'The McGuire Program'. My sister saw this program on 'A Current Affair' and told me to You Tube the program. The program was founded by a stutterer and is instructed by stutterers. The program has a lifelong membership with an exceptional support network which has helped me getting over a lot of hurdles I never thought I would.

I wish this program was more widely recognised so I might have heard of it earlier. The program has been going since 1999 and I heard about it in 2012 by chance. WHAT IF? WHERE WOULD I BE NOW? These questions run through my mind regularly. I now volunteer to coach new people who join the program and assist with instructing some parts of the program.

I have now completed a Cert IV Training and Assessment and have applied for new jobs which involve verbal communication. After joining the McGuire program and benefitting greatly from this program I now have a confidence in speaking that I have never had before due to my stutter diminishing greatly. I would like this program and the obvious advantages gained from it to be acknowledged and advertised so that other people can have the life-changing benefits I have had.

Regards,

Matt O'Brien