



CONFIDENCE: Ania Craus practises public speaking with Rostrum. Picture: EMMA BRASIER

TO SPEAKERS, PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT SENSE

SPEAKING well in public and gaining the confidence to do so is a skill that can be learned.

US research released last year found 74 per cent of people suffer from speech anxiety, while other surveys report public speaking is feared more than death.

Ania Craus joined Rostrum Club 26 three years ago to practise speaking in public to help with her HR role, but has also found it helps with personal presentations, such as a speech at her birthday party.

"Because I'd already been through it (at a Rostrum meeting) it helped me on the day," she says. "It's good to practise in front of a crowd."

Craus was also able to practise her skills while on maternity leave, which she says made her return to work less stressful.

"I just completed my masters of management and I practised my presentation for university," she says.

Rostrum is the longest-running public speaking organisation in the world, helping thousands of people to conquer their fears and practise presenting, as well as learn business and committee procedures such as taking minutes.

There are 16 clubs across Adelaide, which meet at various times and are open to people of any age and situation, whether they are a student, unemployed, in work or retired, who want to learn how to speak with confidence in front of a group.

Members can run through a presentation they have prepared for an occasion, or be given a topic to speak on, to practise in front of

other members. Aside from gauging the initial reaction of other members, a trained coach can help outline what they have done well and how they can improve.

Club member Geoff Thomas says he appreciates being able to try things out in front of a group of people and make mistakes before making his work presentations.

"You train for a sport – cricketers don't just play cricket but hit in the nets as well – and if you're going to stand in front of people, you have to train for it," he says.

"Every two weeks I go to a meeting and have to stand up and say something. It reinforces things you have done well and things you could improve on."

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