

[music playing]

[Narelle] Good morning.

Look, welcome to another episode
of The Digital Access Show.

What we're looking at today
is the legislation in Australia,

and whether it has actually made

a difference to
people with disability.

So the current
legislation is federally,

the Disability
Discrimination Act 1992

And the just released Guidelines

for Equal Access to
Digital Goods and Services.

In Queensland, it is the
Anti Discrimination Act 1991,

and the Human Rights Act 2019.

To discuss these
acts and the effects of...

the legislation upon society,

I've brought along Paul Price,

who is a sound engineer from
Blind Radio. Thank you, Paul.

[Paul] Thank you for having me.

[Narelle] Paul, can you tell
us a bit more about yourself?

What do you do?

[Paul] I'm a sound engineer
at Reading Radio in Brisbane,

which is formerly 4RPH.

I've been there for...

26 plus years, or
nearly 26 years.

I've done every
job in the station,

from station management, board,

on air, sound
engineering, volunteer,

answering phones,
all that sort of stuff.

I'm also a member of the...

Disability Media
Australia Organisation...

that sits above all the
stations in the country.

I'm Vice President
on that board as well.

[Narelle] Paul, do you
have a disability yourself?

[Paul] I do. I was
born totally blind.

I was born two months early

and stuck in a humidicrib.

The oxygen damaged my
eyes when I was in the crib,

and I've had them removed,
and have artificial eyes now.

[Narelle] And I will admit,
the first time I met you,

the joke did fall flat, because
my vision is that bad as well,

I think you pulled one eye out
and said, I'm looking at you,

or I'm keeping an eye on
you, something like that.

And the joke don't work.

[Paul] I don't remember that,
but yeah, I would have.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[Paul] Something I'd do.

[Narelle] It was.

I remember thinking,
what is he going on about?

Paul, over the years,

you've obviously being,
you know, born blind.

The legislation that's
currently enacted in Australia,

and was enacted for you as a
child, has it made a difference?

[Paul] Not really.

I've had to lodge a number of

complaints through
employment mainly.

I have found that
there's a tendency,

unless you've got a
lot of money and time,

to...

push for a settlement
rather than systemic change.

I've had a number
of instances where...

I've either been refused...

passage through
to interview for a job,

or I've been taken out of
jobs because of my disability.

And...

You can lodge a complaint, but
when you lodge that complaint,

it's a nine to 10 month wait at
the moment, on current figures.

I think my complaint ended
up being six to eight months

before we got to conciliation,

and there was a

settlement offered,

but no real systemic change,
which is a little unfortunate.

[Narelle] So you're
talking about settlement,

what are you exactly talking
about, and who was involved?

[Paul] I can't say too much
about the individual complaints.

It's monetary settlement.

So the idea is to pay
you enough money,

so you'll go away and
the problem goes away.

[Narelle] But the problem
doesn't go away, Paul.

[Paul] No, it doesn't,
because nothing changes.

[Narelle] So, the companies

were happy to breach the...

Disability Discrimination Act,

and continue breaching,
is what you've said.

[Paul] Pretty much.

Yes. There was...

no incentive,

legally, unless you
want to go to court,

or spend a lot of time and
money on lawyers and...

that sort of thing.

There's no incentive,
unlike America, where...

they are required to do it.

Here, it just seems
that it's a guideline.

[Narelle] The Human

Rights Commission maintains,

and implements these acts.

What are they doing
to improve the situation?

[Paul] I think they're
trying their best,

which is why the guidelines
have come out to educate people.

But there's only so far they can
go because anything further is...

a legal matter, which will cost,
as I said, time and money.

[Narelle] Yeah, and
people with disability,

basically, don't have
the time or the money,

particularly if it's not
accessible information anyway.

[Paul] And the

other thing is that...

you get tired.

This process is very...

time consuming and demanding.

[Narelle] One, one of the things

I think people forget as well,

that as a person

with a disability,

not being able to

access information

is not an occasional thing

It's occurring all the

time for us, isn't it?

[Paul] It certainly is.

And some companies

are better at...

trying to get accessibility

right than others.

Airlines are a major culprit
for not doing it properly.

But...

It's a case of

I guess,

what our market
share is, I think,

and if we're not seen as having
a big enough market share,

excuse me,

then...

I don't think they
worry about it.

[Narelle] Has,
generally, the situation

improved in society for us,

with regards to
digital accessibility?

[Paul] I think in
some ways, yes.

When I was going to
school and studying at uni,

a lot of information was
provided in Braille and cassette,

which was very time consuming.

I know I had to defer study for

a number of semesters when...

books were not produced on time,

or they were produced,

and then the lecturer
changed the book in the last

month, before the
classes started.

So that problem has been

fixed with online lectures

and online classes.

I'm not going to
go back to study,

to try and find out whether,
how well it's working.

However,

I believe it's a lot better
now than what it used to be.

What should the Human
Rights Commission be doing?

Actually, let's
take a step back.

The Human Rights Commission
can only enact legislation

that's been passed
by government.

The ones that actually have
the real power are the MPs,

your ministers, your,

you know, those that are
elected to represent us.

What should they be doing?

[Paul] I think the
major problem is that,

as...

a lot of people consider it a
guideline rather than legislation,

or they can get out
of it with settlement.

It's not considered...

to be a high priority,

whereas in the US,
there's consequences...

for not following the act.

Here, there doesn't
seem to be, and...

members of parliament
need to be pushing for...

legislation that's
actually more binding,

so that there are...

legal consequences
or fines that are...

imposed for not doing this...

with accessibility.

[Narelle] Because, after all,

I think one of the best descriptions
I heard the other day is,

you cannot build a
commercial building...

without putting in ramp access.

However, it's not
legally binding to put in...

digital accessibility.

And I just loved
that description,

because I think
that's what it is, isn't it?

[Paul] It certainly is.

But that reminds me of a story
of when I was at university,

I was on an
accessibility committee,

and it's sort of
off topic, but it

explains the situation.

And they were installing a lift.

One of the
architects said to us,

We're not going to do it.
It's going to cost \$100,000.

He was asked the question,

what's the university's
profit per year?

The answer came
back at 8 million.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[Paul] And...

[Paul] That's the thing.

Barring unjustifiable hardship,

which can be a case
for small companies,

I think larger companies need to
consider digital accessibility,

implement it properly,

because if they do it the
right way the first time,

which involves user
testing, which involves...

co design with people with...

print disabilities,

or any other
disabilities, actually.

Then...

it can be done well,

and it can be done
relatively cheaply,

and it benefits more than
just those with a disability.

[Narelle] So what could the
Human Rights Commission do...

with the current legislation?

Do you think there's any teeth in
that legislation that they could...

do more to get systemic change?

[Paul] I don't believe so,
the way it is at the moment.

I think there's...

no incentive for companies to...

follow the legislation,

and they can just
settle out of court...

for the majority of
cases because...

no one has the
time or the money,

with the exception
of a few people.

The Olympic Games case in
2000 is one example where...

again, they got a settlement,

but there was no systemic change.

And it may have improved...

since then.

I'll be interested to see what sort of digital accessibility we get...

for the 2032 Olympics.

[Narelle] Yeah.

And that's it.

I mean, 25 years later,

and we're still talking lack of digital accessibility.

What can people with disability do?

[Paul] If they have trouble with a

company, they can contact that company,

and explain why digital...

accessibility is important.

And if they have no success with that company,

then the only other
option is to lodge...

disability discrimination
complaints,

and wait the nine to 10 months,

which is currently the
standard at the moment,

because they've got
so many complaints.

[Narelle] How easy is it
to lodge the complaint?

[Paul] The process
is reasonably easy.

You fill out a form online,

which is accessible,

and explain your situation.

Gather your evidence,

and...

just wait for the
commissions to come back

and advise whether your
complaints going to be...

accepted or not.

[Narelle] Paul,
what's the takeaway?

What's a piece of advice,
so you work for BlindRadio.

[Paul] Yes.

[Narelle] And...

[Narelle] Obviously, you'd be
very aware with Blind Radio...

for the accessibility needs.

What's a piece of advice that,

with all your experience being
on boards, everything else,

that you can give companies,

in regards to the legislation,

everything that
we've talked about.

[Paul] I think it's
important for companies...

to familiarise themselves with
the guidelines and standards.

And...

accessibility, if done well,
doesn't cost that much extra.

I was involved in setting
up our radio station,

so it was accessible.

All the software and...

things that we need to use is...

are, are, are accessible.

If you do it from the start and
you do it from the ground up,

it's not that hard.

[Narelle] What advice do you
give to people with disability?

Other than talking to their
MPs, their federal members.

What's the advice
you can give to them?

[Paul] Just keep
fighting for it.

It does take a toll,

but while you've got the energy,

fight for it and give yourself
time, give yourself breaks...

when you need it, because...

in this fight, like any
other fight, we have to...

undertake as people
with disabilities,

you're going to have days
where you don't want to,

and for those days,
don't, because...

if you burn yourself out,

it's not going to be
any good for anyone.

So take your break,

do something else,

and then come back to the fight
when you've got more energy,

because it does take energy.

[Narelle] Thanks, Paul.

[Paul] Thank you very much.

[Narelle] Thanks for having us on.

Paul, how can

people contact you,

if they want to find
out more about...

your work as a sound
engineer on Blind Radio?

And keep the conversation going?

[Paul] Probably the best way
is to contact the radio station,

and they can
pass the details on.

The radio station phone
number is 07 3831 1296.

07 3831 1296.

And the email address is
contact@readingradio.org.au.

That's contact at
[reading radio.org.au](http://readingradio.org.au),

[Narelle] Thanks, Paul.

Thanks for being
on the show today.

As Paul said,

the guidelines are there,
the legislation's there.

Unfortunately,

the will to follow guidelines
and legislation is not there.

And it is going to take a...

a concerted fight from
all of us that are affected...

to get that done.

So we urge you to go
and talk to your MPs,

federal, state and local.

And also,

ask.

Whenever you're going somewhere
and it isn't accessible,

ask.

And you have that right.

So if you like what we do,

please like, subscribe, review,

share.

And see you next week
on The Digital Access Show.

See you then.

[music playing]