[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

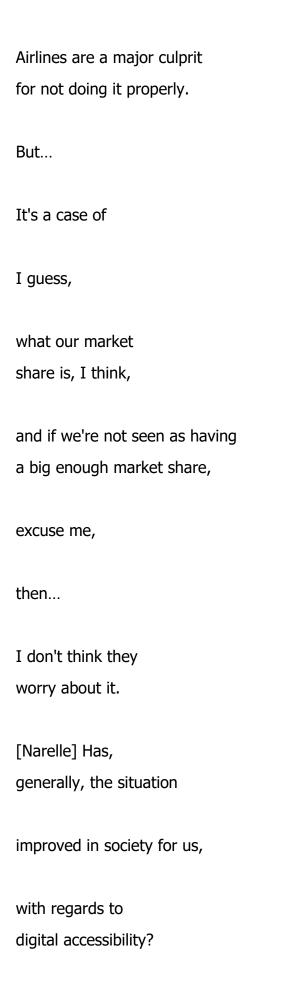
you get tired. This process is very... time consuming and demanding. [Narelle] One, one of the things I think people forget as well, that as a person with a disability, not being able to access information is not an occasional thing It's occurring all the time for us, isn't it? [Paul] It certainly is. And some companies

are better at...

right than others.

trying to get accessibility

other thing is that...



[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.

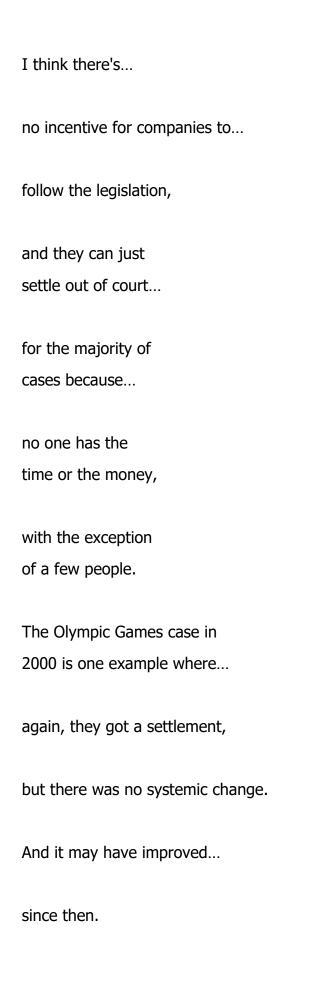
He was asked the question,

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'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.

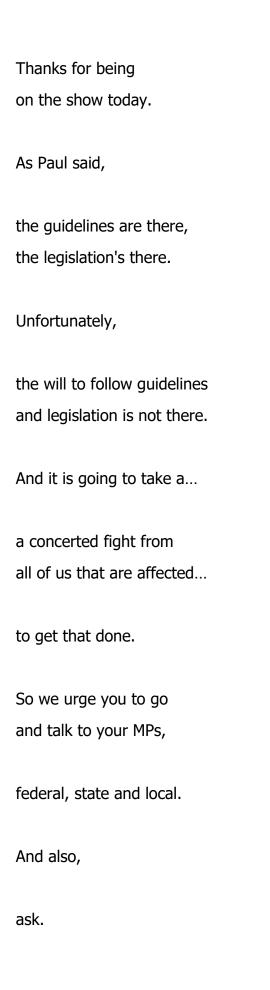
The radio station phone number is 07 3831 1296.

07 3831 1296.

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

That's contact at reading radio.org.au,

[Narelle] Thanks, Paul.



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]