

So when I'm given a document that I can't read, or someone says to me, I'll just read it to you. That is actually very disabling for me. I've got a lot of education, and know how to do it. So today's guest, I think is in a similar boat to me with added extras. So, I'd like you to meet Jen Engels from Engels Floyd.

Jen, thank you so much for coming on. [Jen] Thanks, Narelle. It's great to be here. Jen, can you tell me a little bit about yourself, and your journey with your disability? [Jen] Yes, so I was born into the human services sector. And so, when I was 16 or so, my friends were actually going out, getting part-time

jobs after school,

and then starting to get their learners,

drivers licenses, all that exciting stuff that,

you know, people of that age do as they get independent.

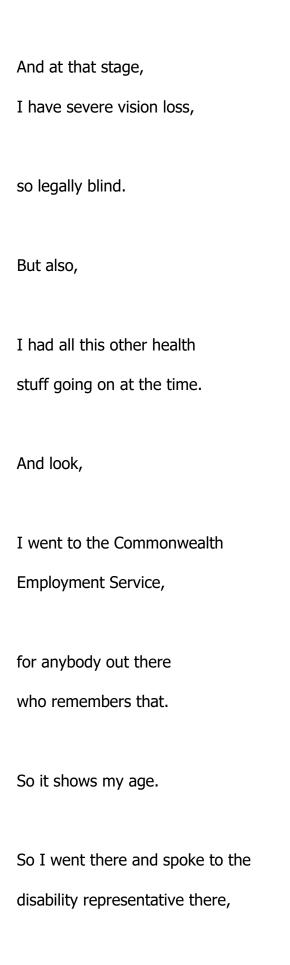
And I thought, oh, I want a piece of that.

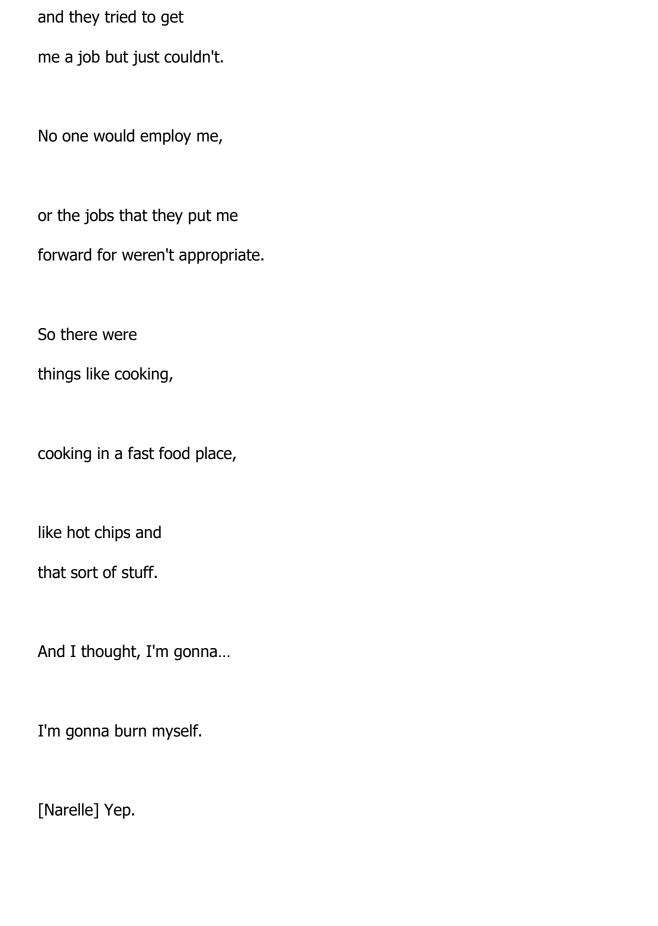
And I was never in a position to be able to drive,

or get it past the learner's test.

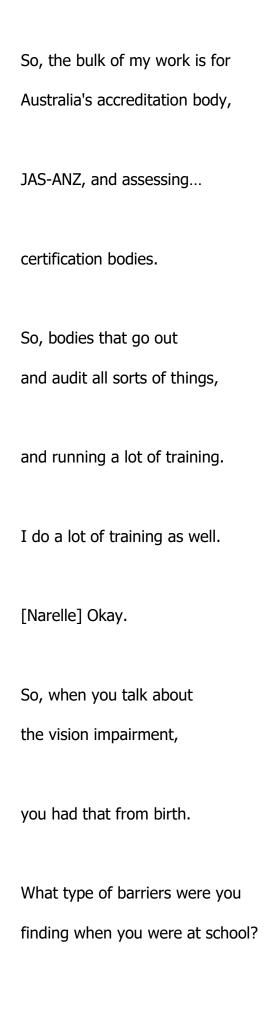
So I thought, well, actually, maybe I could get a job.

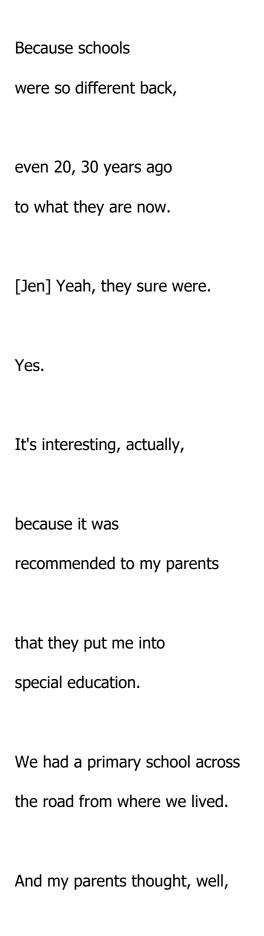
And so, I tried to get a job after I left school.

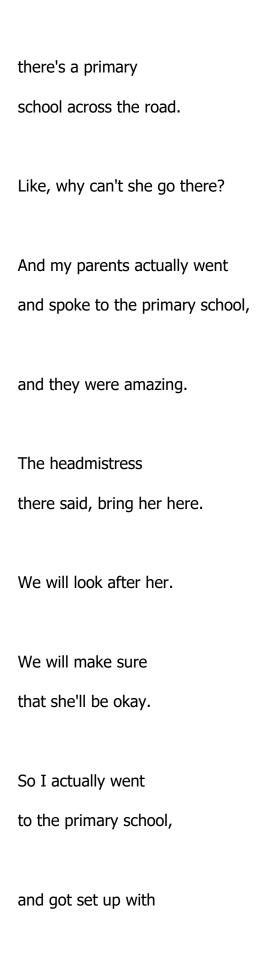




[Jen] And I wouldn't have been able to hold down a job. So I thought, all right, well, if no one is going to employ me, I will employ myself. And so at age 20, I did that. And then got an ABN and thought, right, this is it. I'm going to employ myself, and so I did. So fast forward to now, I am doing all sorts of things.







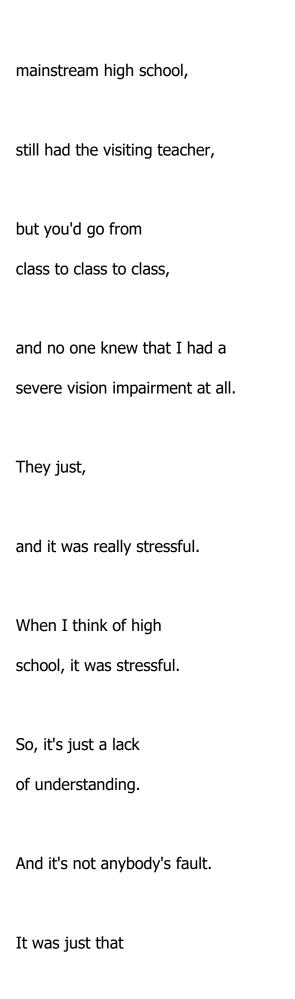
a visiting teacher, as it was back in the day. The problem was, though, that I was a little child sitting there with glasses, so teachers thought that the glasses fixed my vision. But glasses don't actually fix your vision, particularly if you've got something significant going on. So I would sit up the front, got my glasses on, and they would write

on the chalkboard,

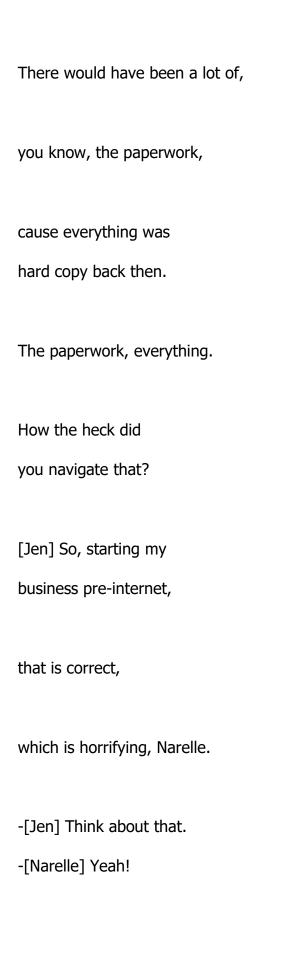
[Narelle] It's all right. I'm with you so far. It's all good. [Jen] But like with blue and green chalk and stuff like that, and of course I couldn't read it cause the contrast wasn't there. And my visiting teacher would only visit like once a term, and it just was not sufficient. And that became more apparent when I moved into high school.

So, again, still

I am ageing myself.



they didn't realise, there's lots of kids in school with glasses and they do the job, you know, the glasses fix the issue sufficiently, but not in my case. And so the teachers just weren't aware of that. [Narelle] So if we take it to the next step, where you had to create your own business, what were you finding there? There must've been lots of barriers there.



[Jen] Thinking about it now, I think, how did I even do that? But... Look, I had to be really thoughtful about... the amount of time that I spent reading things. At first, the type of work that I did was public speaking, and it was running training or education sessions, talking about basically my own personal experience. And so, because of that,

[Narelle] Yeah.

there wasn't heaps of paperwork because I know me.

And so, I didn't have to make notes on myself,

or anything like that.

So it was sort of minimal.

The paperwork side probably didn't hit me until we had,

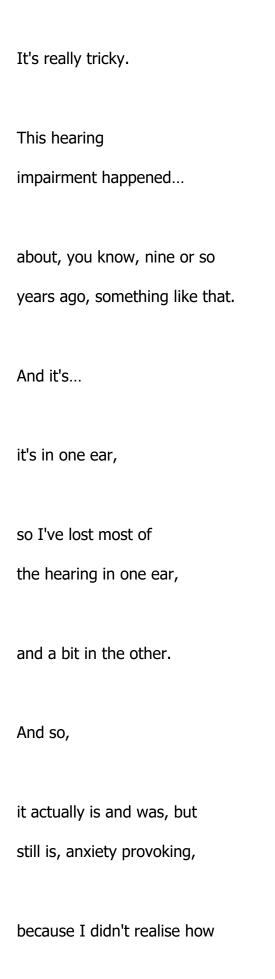
you know, computers and internet and stuff anyway.

There was this period, though, of not having really good...

screen reader availability or anything like that,

or not having, not having a decent big monitor. So, my vision was better back then admittedly, although still severely vision impaired but... but there's degrees, isn't there, of sight loss. And so, because of that, I just, I don't know how I managed for so long on, on just a regular-sized monitor. I do now have problems with my back

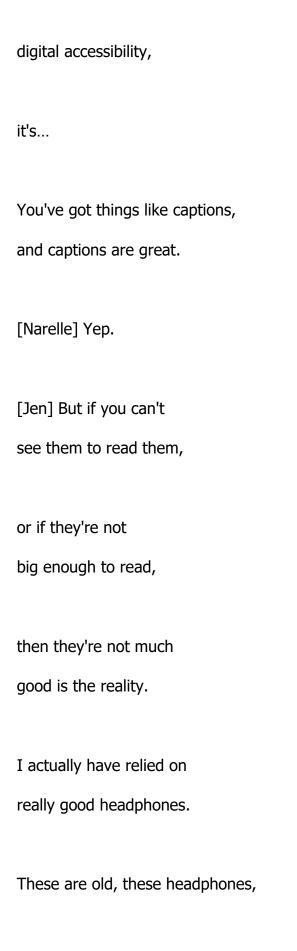
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and my arm,
and all of that sort of stuff
from really bad
posture over the years,
unfortunately, so now
I'm really aware of that.
[Narelle] Yeah. So if
we fast forward to today,
cause I believe you've got a bit
of a hearing impairment as well.
What are the
barriers that you're...
finding every day in
everything you do?
[Jen] Yes.
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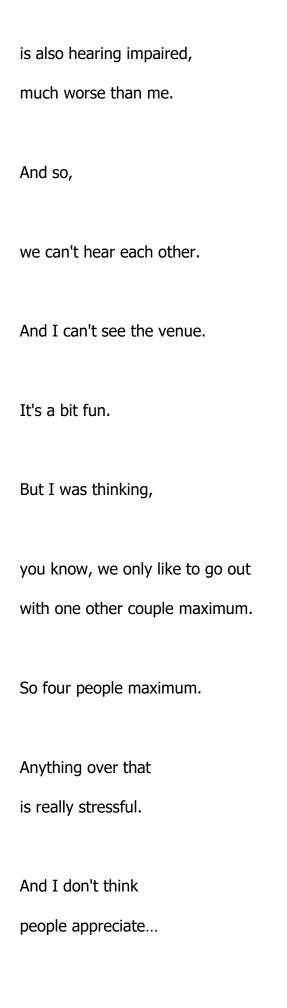
much I relied on my hearing. Because when you don't have a lot of sight, your hearing is what you rely on to get across the road. So, getting across the road, can I just say can be tricky, because obviously I may not see the car, or I'm not sure how far the car is away. And now,

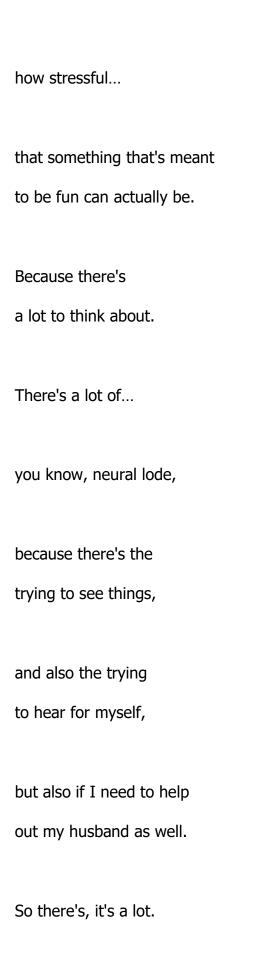
I can't necessarily judge that by the sound of the car either.

So in terms of

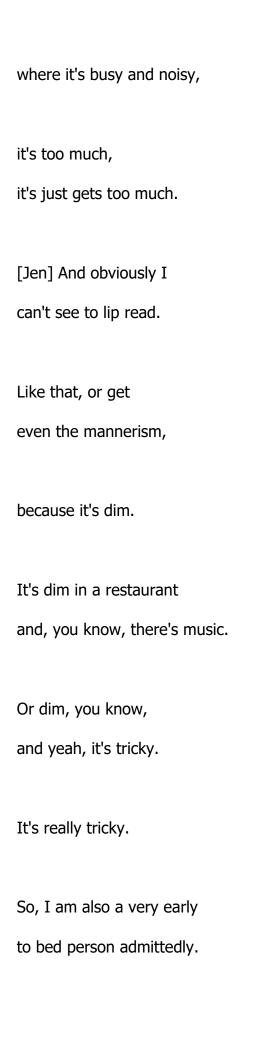


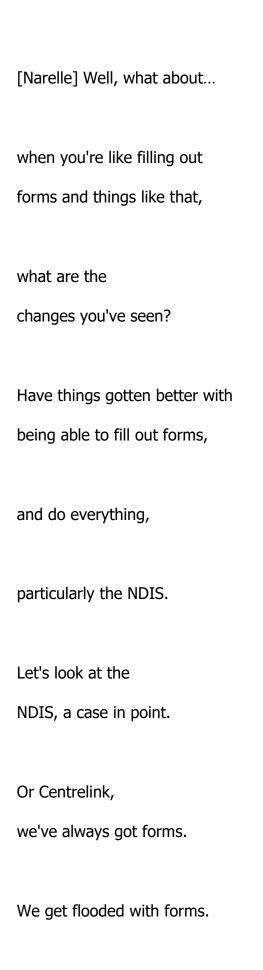
but they are really good. And I find that if I'm in a situation like this, online situation talking to you, I find that they're actually quite good. And I tend not to mishear anything. But out, like socially, like, and I was thinking about this last night, going to a restaurant, if my husband and I go to a restaurant, my husband...



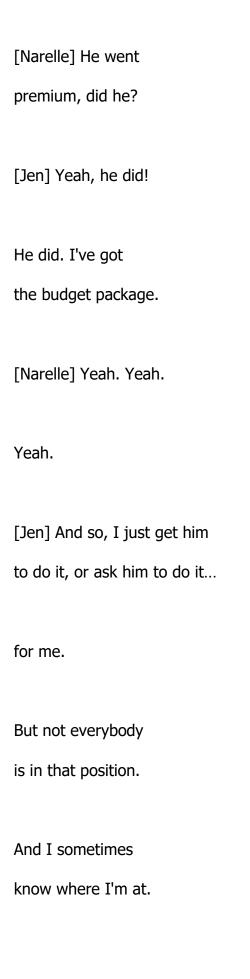


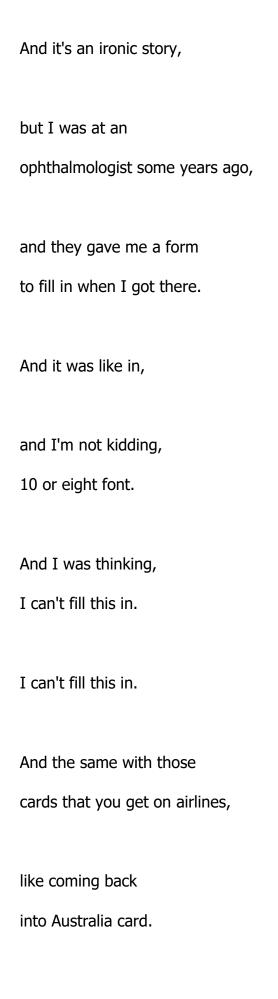
[Narelle] Yeah it is, and it's very tiring. [Jen] It is. Yep. [Narelle] I know, when I did have full sight, I would come home, and oh yeah, I'm ready to rock. Now, half past eight, yeah I'm done. I am tired because it's... that extra stress of trying to work out who's talking. [Jen] Yep. [Narelle] In a restaurant

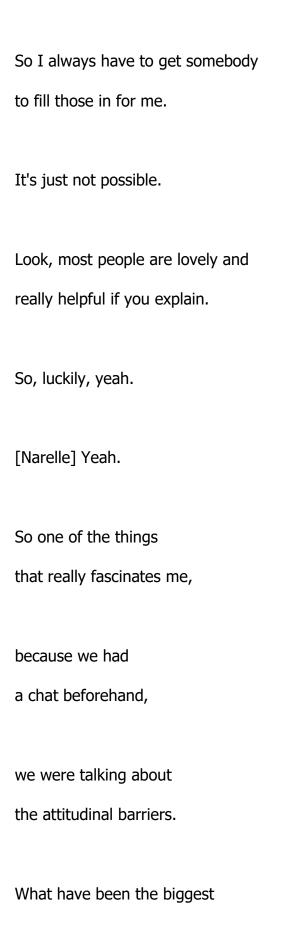


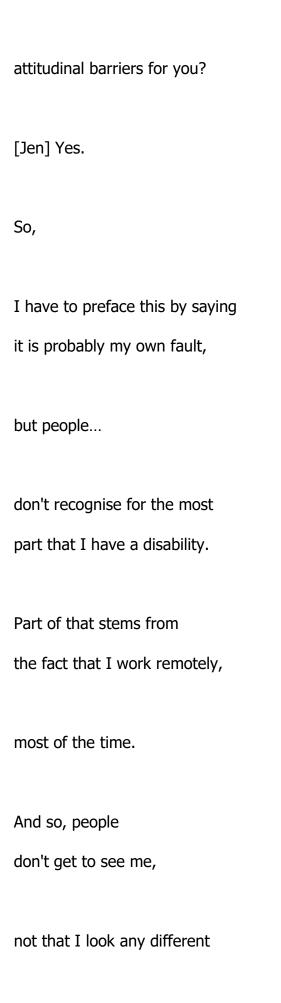


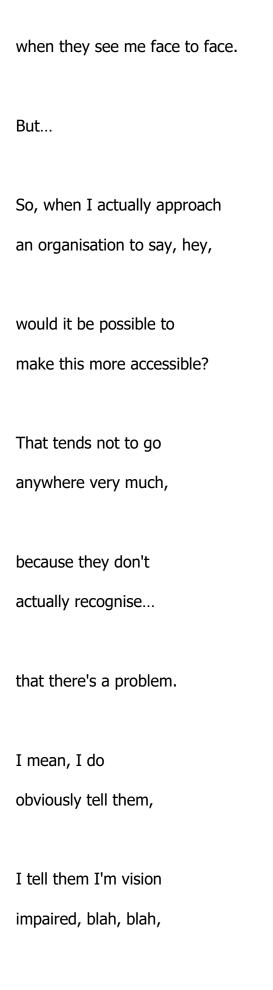
What do you find there?
[Jen] Look, if it's
an electronic form,
I can fill it in electronically,
that's not a problem.
If it's a printed form,
I get my husband to complete it,
because I'm just
because I'm just  And luckily, I've got a husband that can complete it for me.
And luckily, I've got a husband
And luckily, I've got a husband that can complete it for me.

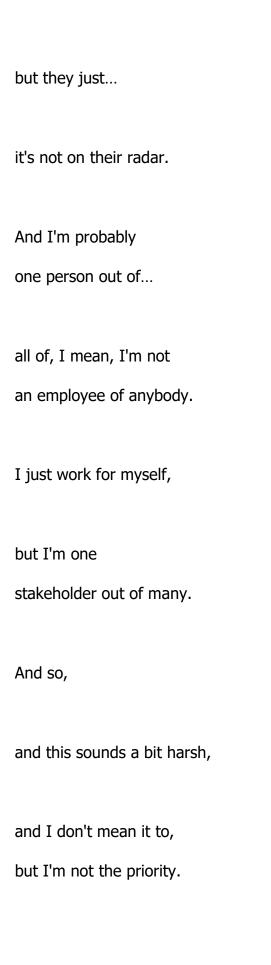






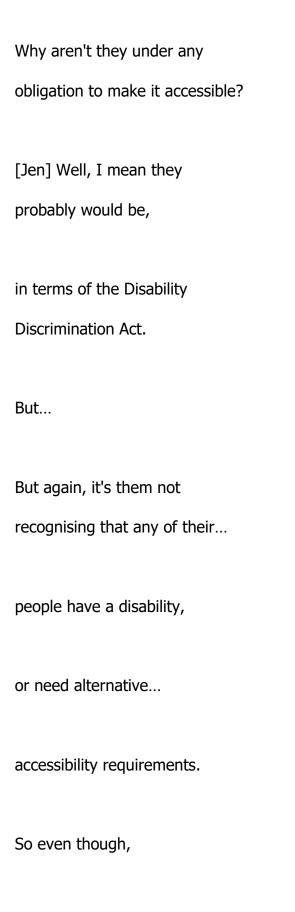




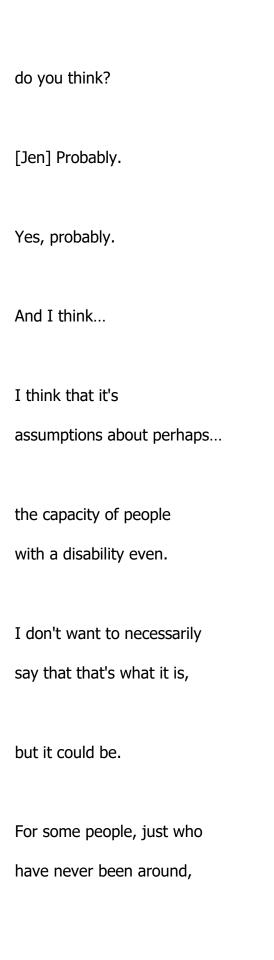


and they're under no obligation to make their... stuff accessible, except for the fact that I need it to be able to do my work. Yeah. [Narelle] So, why aren't they under obligation? We've got the Disability Discrimination Act, we've got the digital accessibility standards,

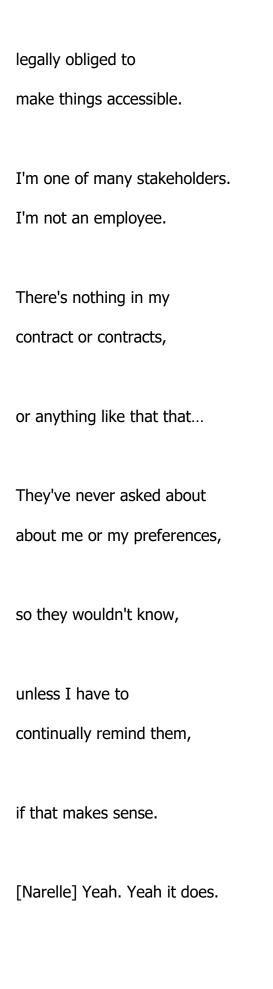
we've got the legal framework here in Australia.

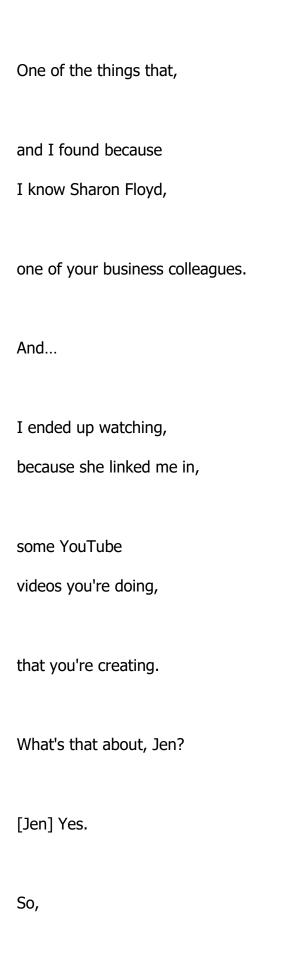


you know, I have mentioned this a couple of times, and things just move slowly, just things move so slowly. [Narelle] So it's assumptions? [Jen] I think it's assumptions. But I've sort of pushed back a bit, and have no longer participated in things that I can't do. If I put things in the wrong colour font, not my problem. [Narelle] Yep. So, it's assumptions that have caused the issue,

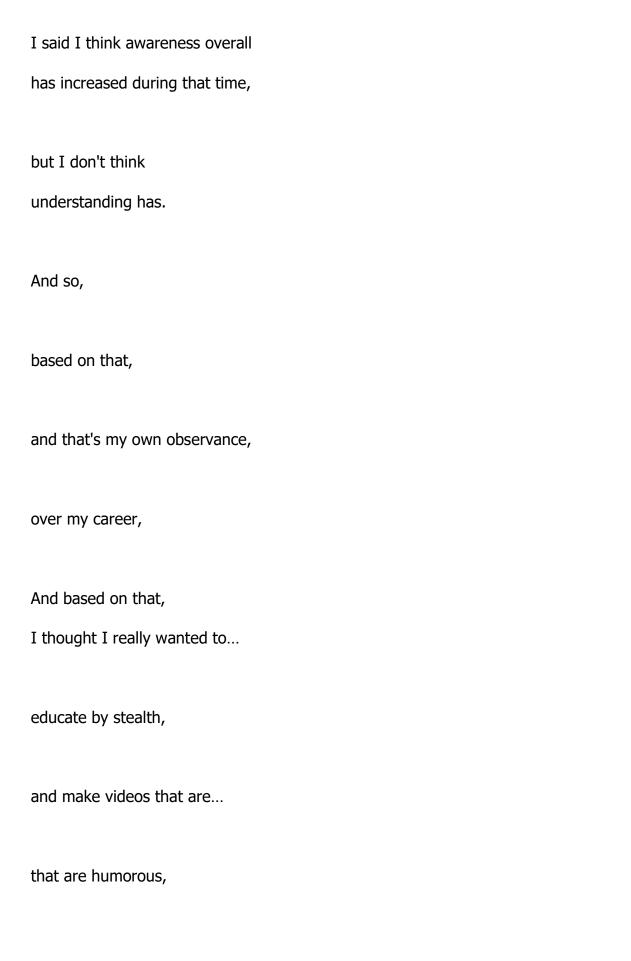


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you know, the
disability sector at all. Yep.
[Narelle] Yep. And you said
there's no obligation...
for them to make it accessible?
Why not, considering
we've got the,
you know, legal
framework here in Australia
with the Disability
Discrimination Act,
and everything
that goes with it?
[Jen] Yeah, well, I
mean, they are probably...
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recently I had a discussion with a friend, or about a year ago it was, and she said to me, what do you think... has changed in the disability scene, in terms of awareness, from now to when I first started. Because I was doing a lot of disability awareness stuff, when I first started my career, and she said what do you think has changed?



that, you know, people will have a laugh at.

Certainly not having a laugh at the disability community,

but having a laugh,

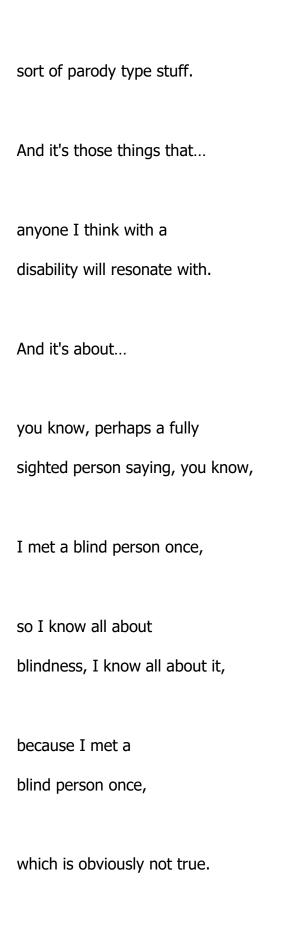
and walking away thinking, gee, I didn't know that.

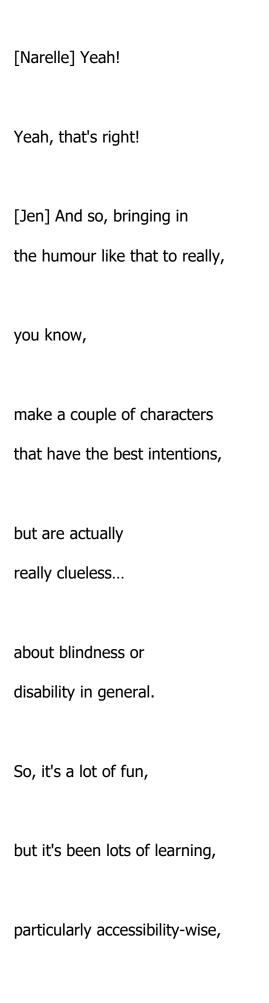
And that was something that they've learnt...

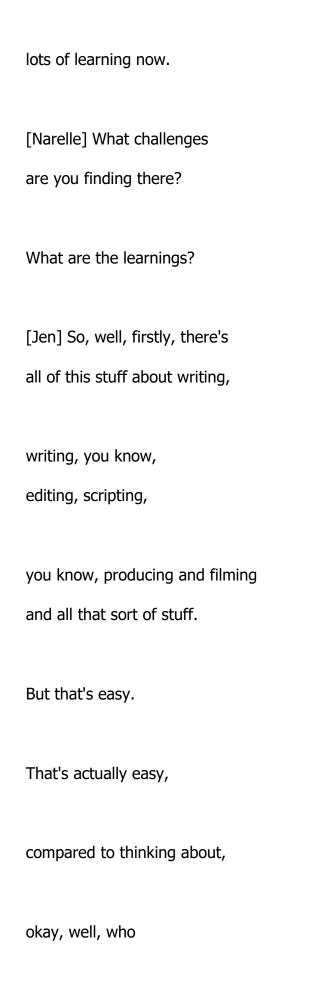
purely through watching something they've enjoyed.

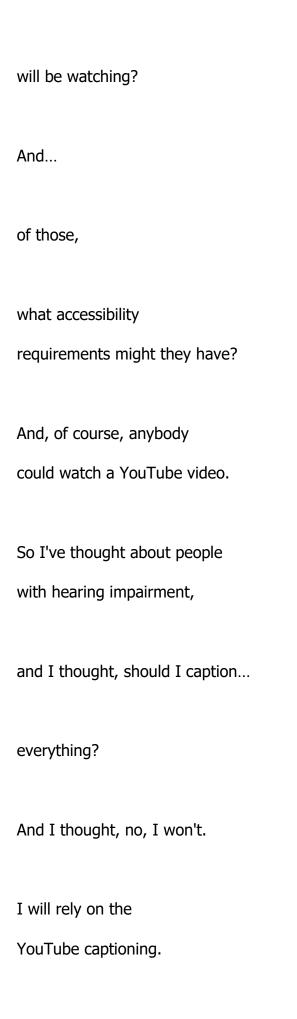
And so, I created this channel, A Certain Eye,

and I've recently pivoted to doing...









And the reason I do that...

is cause having captioning can be overwhelming for some people

that you can't turn off.

So, the YouTube captioning, you can turn on and off.

And I thought I have to leave it at that,

because I can get overwhelmed if there's too much on the screen.

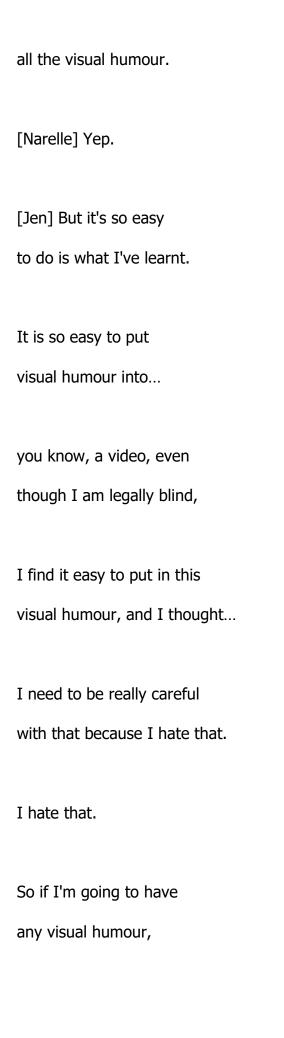
So, I've sorted that out for the most part.

But then there's people who are blind or vision impaired,

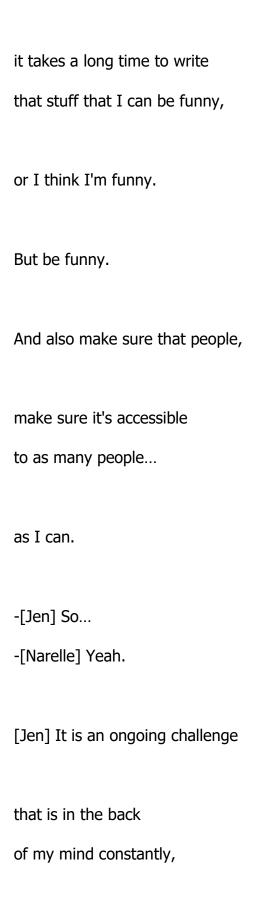
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and that is tricky,
because I...
I'm doing satire,
you know, I'm playing characters,
and so I have started to
develop these characters.
They all sound like me
because they are me,
and I know that's tricky for
somebody who can't see anything
to be able to get who I
am at any point in a video.
So I've started to,
and it's all learning
and it all takes time,
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and this character development takes time also. But I've started to define the characters as individual people, and having mannerisms in which they speak, and... you know, certain speech patterns that they use so you know which one is Cheryl or which one is Denise. -[Narelle] Yes. -[Jen] And... [Jen] But also then,

there's this... there's this thing about visual humour. Visual humour is great if you can see it, right? And I know myself, back when I used to go to the movies with friends and stuff, we'd see a movie and it'd be full of visual humour, and I'd walk away thinking that was... that was a rubbish movie, cause I didn't get the movie, because I missed



it must be accompanied... by something that makes logical sense written into the script, so that if there's a noise in the background, if somebody who has, you know, the... who has their screen off, who has their screen off could understand and follow the... the video, and understand what it's about and get the jokes. And so that is, it's taken...



because obviously, you know,

I'm a blind creator and I want to create for everybody,

not just the sighted community, not just the blind community,

but everybody.

So, there's always

lots to think about.

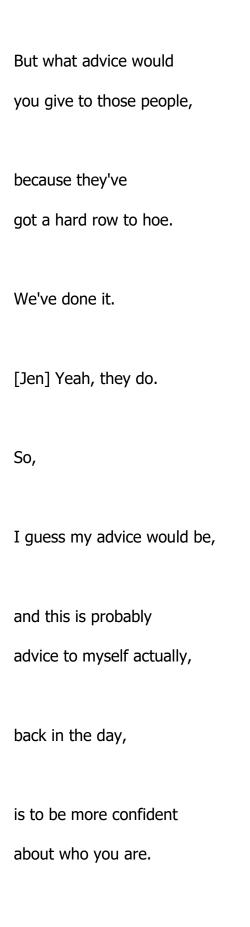
[Narelle] What advice would you give to anyone

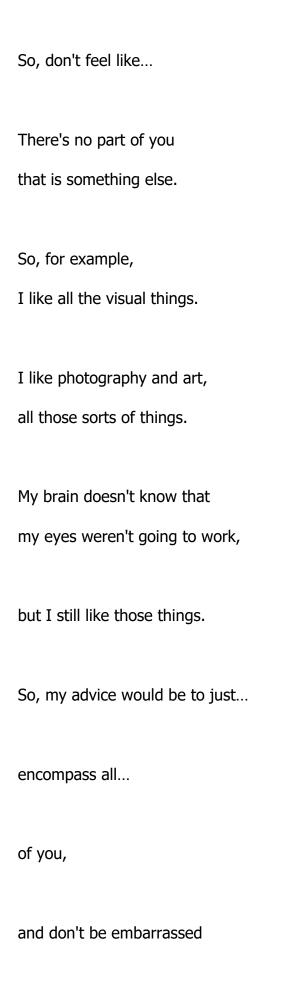
that's listening to this video in regards to,

you know, the creations that you're doing with the...

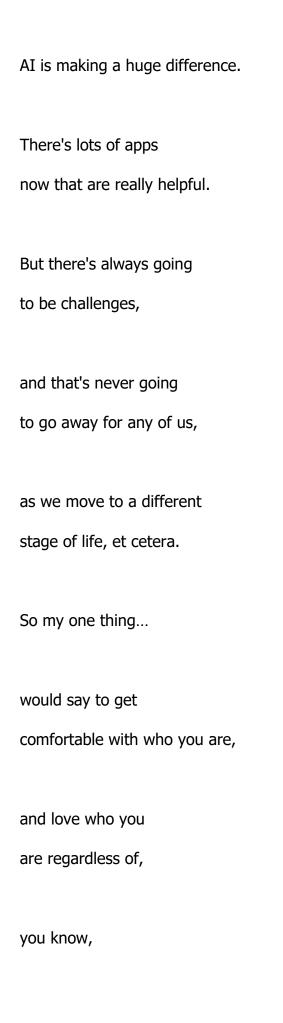
videos you're making,

or even a person starting out with blindness now today. I know it's a very different world... to the world that we grew up, pre-computers, and everything else, and chalkboards, I remember that. And the old dusters, you know the dusters, the wooden dusters that used to get thrown at people's heads. Yes. Thank God we were the good girls so that wasn't us.

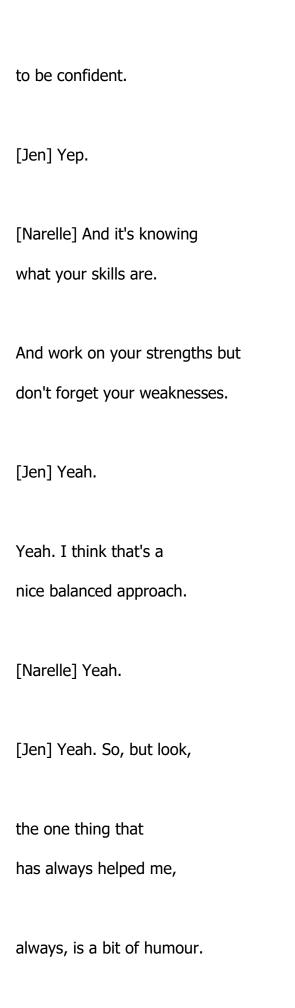




or ashamed of any part of you, because it is what makes, your uniqueness is what makes you unique, and special for all of us. And so, saying that is a great platitude, it's easy to say. -[Narelle] Yeah. -[Jen] But... [Jen] There's always going to be challenges, and things are always changing. In some ways, you've got things that are easier.

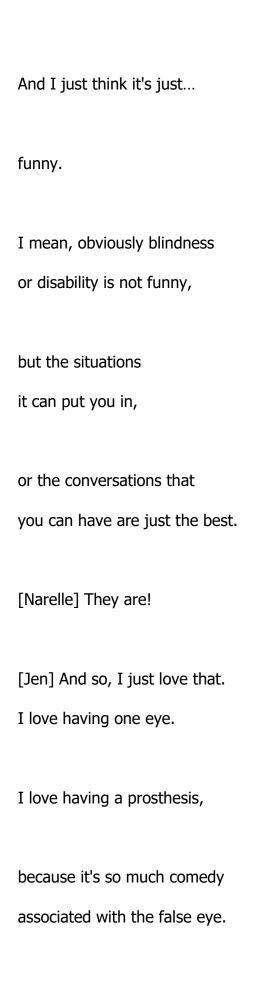


any quirks that you may have, because we've all got them, let's be honest. [Narelle] And let's be honest, I look back at the person I was when I was 18, 19, 20, and I didn't accept myself and I had no confidence. [Jen] Same. [Narelle] That's a learning thing as well. And people forget that, I think. You really... have to learn how



[Narelle] Yeah. [Jen] And I can find the funny in most things. [Narelle] Yes. [Jen] So, like my husband and I were walking home from dinner. And I said to him, you're looking particularly handsome tonight, darling. He said, well, forgive me for not taking that as a compliment, given you just almost walked into a phone booth.

So, this is like the every day.



[Narelle] Yep. I've got one...

One particular

bloke that I knew,

we were at a meeting,

and I didn't realise that

he only had prosthesis,

and of course I'm sitting there

not seeing much, and he said,

Narelle, I'm looking at you,

and I'm thinking, what?

What's Paul going on about?

Then I'd realised he'd actually

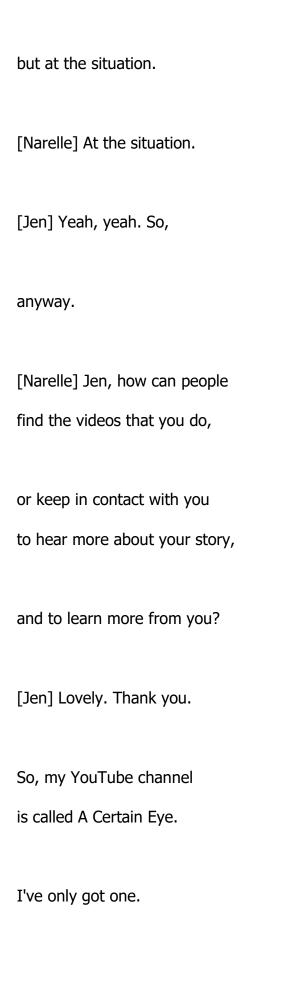
taken one of his eyes out,

put it in front of me and it

And he says, you really can't see much. I said no. But everyone around us must be going, what on earth are those two doing? [Jen] Yeah, it's endless. It's just endless. So I think that actually, for me, humour is a big part of life, really, and there's nothing better than having a laugh.

Not at anybody's expense

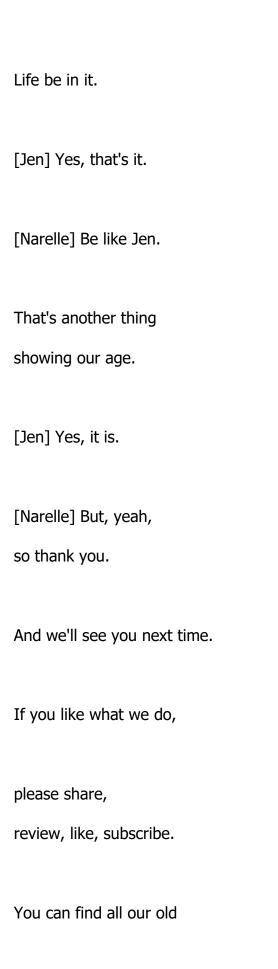
took me ages to work it out.



And so, have a look at that. You can find me on LinkedIn. So I'm under Jennii, J-E-N-N-I-I, I wanted two I's in my name if I can't have two I's in my head. [Narelle] Yep. I like it. [Jen] So, Jennii Engels. [Narelle] Yep. That's E-N-G-E-L-S. We'll put it up at the end of the podcast. Jen, thank you so much for coming on and being a guest.

Particularly I really enjoyed

learning about A Certain Eye, and just the things there but, you know, just the fact you had to start your own business, because you couldn't get work, and I think that is a common issue for people with disability. [Jen] Yes. It certainly is. [Narelle] In other words, be like Jen. [Jen] Thank you. [Narelle] Yeah. What was it? Life be in it? What was it? Oh, be like norm.



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and also on our website, dasat.com.au.
And we really do,
and would love to receive any
feedback that you can give us.
Coalli cooa. mort time
So, we'll see you next time
on The Digital Access Show.
Bye-bye.
[music playing]