

[Music] [Narelle] Hello and welcome to the next episode of The Digital Access Show. Today's guest, I've been wanting to talk to for a while. Paul Bryan has an NDIS coaching business. He's based in Perth, WA and it's Action And Intent. Paul Bryan, I've been following for quite a while. Because I've, and I've had a few conversations with Paul about different things. And yeah, Paul, welcome. I don't know what to say, but welcome and thank you for coming on. [Paul] No worries. Thank you so much for having me, Narelle and I'm so glad we met up. I guess it must be late last year we first had a conversation. where we got, met through a mutual contact and a couple of conversations since. Great to be here. Thank you. [Narelle] Thanks Paul. Paul, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what you actually do and where you're sitting within the disability sector? [Paul] Yeah, certainly. So I'm, a bit different. I'm not a provider or a participant. I'm a business coach and I work with NDIS providers, allied health providers. And the whole idea of what I do is just simply being better at business. I have a very strong passion that people working with vulnerable people should have a good business. Because if their business falls apart, then the support for that person falls apart. So I think that if we can make sure the businesses are operating well, and to be honest, profitable. But with a, with a person focus, then that is the best solution for a participant because their support will be there for a long time. It will be high quality support because the business owner isn't stressing about money. And they have the ability to do great things when their business is running well. [Narelle] Yeah. And that's it. And on the participant side, because as you're aware, I'm actually an NDIS participant as well. So us, it's really important as well that these businesses survive as well, because we build that relationship with the support workers. They understand our communication methods. They understand our needs. And for myself, I know that if I'm somewhere with my support worker and someone will say to me fill in a form, well, I can't fill in the form. But my support worker doesn't even blink an eyelid and just says, yeah, my job. And we go to the side. And yeah, it probably shouldn't be when I get to the place that they ask me to fill in a form. It should have been something done digitally in the first place where I can be independent. But because my support worker takes that stress off me for worrying about it when we get there or even down to little things where because currently our community is not very digitally accessible, they fill that void for me. So for me, if something goes wrong with my support workers and the business they run, I'm in a real pickle because I don't want to start again. So Paul, with the support workers and the work you're doing, and particularly with the NDIS changes that are happening, there's a real fear out there, people like myself where we have that great relationship. We know how to communicate with them. Our support workers know how to fill in the gaps, how to let us be independent, what do you see is happening with the NDIS legislation, with digital accessibility and with that whole sector? [Paul] Yeah, well, just on the really first point there about support workers, a good support worker will always be employed. No matter what the format looks like and whatever the business is that they're working for. Whether they're independent or for a business, if the business is operating well, they'll be empowered to do good work. They'll be regularly trained and all that sort of thing. So on that point, whether they are independent or part of a business, if they're good support workers, they'll always have work because people always need people who understand where they're coming from and be able to help them do really cool things. But on the side of the new legislation and all these things that are coming out, I've spoken to a lot of people who have sort of come across this with the the sky as falling attitude. And that can be quite

detrimental for a lot of people because fear is a major player in that. When we're talking people's lives and people's livelihoods, change can always be a really concerning thing. So I can't imagine myself, because I'm not a participant. I can't imagine what that with the threat of different types of funding, with, you know, will my support be gone, like what that's going to look like. But I do know that the government has made a commitment, albeit possibly not as well organized as it should be, where this is also being recorded. Ahm, So, but no, to really put, not to finer a point on it, there are changes happening and the way that I operate in regards to a business is, well it's going to be harder to be an NDIS provider and a good one at that. But it also means that when things are harder, less people do them. So we're going to start to see a bit of a drop away of people that aren't really committed, who aren't really fussed about being on top of things like digital accessibility. People that aren't really worried about how compliant they really are, because it's going to be too hard to not be those things. But we are going to really see a bit of a split between those people starting to happen over the next little while. So, very interesting to watch and it'll be really good to see what happens probably over the next 18 months I suggest. [Narelle] One of the things that we often find as participants, and obviously I'm coming from a severe vision impairment side of things, people that I know that have hearing impairment have the same issues. Like, I've got a niece that's got quite a major physical disability. So that makes it very hard for her to use a mouse. We all see the same thing that people really don't understand what digital accessibility is at all. When you're talking to the support providers, the service providers, do they really understand? are you finding there's a large percentage of them that are aware of why it's important and the benefits that can give to them and the participants? [Paul] Look, I don't think it goes across many people's minds, and I'm very honest about this. Never went across my mind until we had a conversation. If it doesn't affect you directly, most people don't think about it. Right. And it's one of those sort of, situations, but when you look at it from a business perspective, for instance, one of the things I do with my clients is, we have some ways that we communicate via text, not particularly for vision impairment, but so that when people look at, if someone gets sent an email, which is a wall of words, with no spaces, nobody wants to read it. Right. So we simply lay out words in a way that people can grab information visually, really easily. Now that's, that's one form of low-level accessibility. But then you step that up to be going, right, well, now we should really think about, well what's the contrast, and I was actually at a presentation the other week, where it was a yellow background on a presentation with white writing on it. I have no issues, and I can't see this. How is this for someone, for instance, that's vision impaired? And so I think it's really important that as a business owner, if there is any likelihood that anyone you're working with, or even possibly will be working with is going to be needing this, it should be at the top of your radar, because even, as I said, I don't, I use glasses sometimes. That's about, as far as I go. Some websites are really difficult to read, because the writing is so small, or there's so much going on, I don't want to be there anyway. So, as a business owner, I think it's really imperative that you really have this idea of what barriers am I placing in front of people to use my service? And what can I do to remove those barriers? And digital accessibility is really simply a massive barrier for a lot of people in Australia. [Narelle] It is, and I mean, I know it looks from my point of view, even reading my NDIS plan is quite an issue. Is the NDIS, in the training that they ask for service providers to have? Is that covered at all? Oh, look, I would, I couldn't

tell you exactly, but I can tell you from a broad scope that the, their train that comes from the NDIS is entry level at best. They're not going to be covering, as a business owner, your website, for instance, should be digital accessible, or your forms that you have people fill out. It will have information like make sure your information is accessible. And we see the NDIA put out different things. They put out audio versions of releases. They put out easy read formats and that sort of thing. But that, I've not really seen that filter down to how providers are required to deliver their information. [Narelle] That's interesting. That is really interesting, and it's actually quite scary in one way, because the participant is so dependent on the information. [Paul] And the information from the NDIA is often so convoluted. They would often need someone to, like, for instance, in our, in our coaching program, we have people often asking, like, I'm on the NDIA website and I can't figure this thing out. And it's just the ability to be able to decipher information is not a, it's not a disability thing. It's a human thing, because sometimes it's just so convoluted. [Narelle] Yeah, it is, and it's quite sad, really, that it is that way, because it takes away the power of the participant. [Paul] Yeah, 100%. I'm still surprised, to be honest, that a lot of providers, whether their participant has a visual impairment, a hearing impairment, or maybe a cognitive impairment, or even just a level of autism or ADHD, all these things can impair how they interact with other people, with how they interact online, How they interact in public spaces. And when it's so simple, I think, to implement things that will make the change, it's just not enough people know about it. So I think what you're doing here is fantastic getting this information out. [Narelle] Thanks Paul. What can participants do to get the information made more accessible? From your point of view as a business coach, what can partici, what could the participant potentially do? That's something that could work with the service providers. [Paul] I think that's a fantastic question because, as a participant, you, you're the client, right? I say clients always, right? At the end of the day, a participant is needing a service and the service should be fit for purpose. Okay. So they should be able to express if something's not fit for purpose to the provider. Like, I don't want to paint all providers with the one brush. So if we're just going, we don't want to go, "All providers are bad because they're not doing this." But they probably just don't know, right? So if a participant is coming across this, let's say the service agreement is too difficult to navigate. They should be able to say, hey, look, I'm actually finding it really difficult to understand this agreement, or I can't read this properly. Is there another format you've got? Or can someone go through it with me? What are the options that you have? And then the business on the other side of that should be looking, at right, well. how can we eliminate that problem next time and learn from this process? Do we need to have an audio version of our service agreement? Do we need to have an easy read version of it? A little while ago, I worked with a provider. We looked at the idea of most participants, aahm, or friends, they were working with parents, for instance, or participants, are working with kids. They found that most of the parents weren't really reading the service agreement. They were just signing a document and seeing it over. So why not at least have an easy read version? Can you please just make sure you look over those key points so you know exactly what's going to be going on? And that change made people a lot more informed about what was happening. You know, it had a lot less issues with people being concerned. But, if you can make it the, if you make your information accessible, that solves a lot of problems down the road, as well as a business. [Narelle] It does. I know for me, I work really hard to make our information accessible. And

obviously it's our business as well. But for me, as even a person going to a shop to buy food, I'm really lucky where I live because I've got the most fantastic IGA. And they don't shift things around much. If they do, they're so on the ball, I'll walk in. They know what I buy and they'll say to me, oh Narelle, Yeah, look, we've shifted the rice. We've worked out how to teach you. And they go and they do it. So I'm really lucky. However, that, as you said, that knowledge is not out there. What, with even away from the NDIS sector, we all buy food. We go to the shops, we buy gifts, we read books. Participants buy petrol. [Paul] Yeah. What is a message that you could give to everyone generally about how to make the service providers life easier and the participants life easier ? [Paul] Look, I think on the participant side, it's ahm, being bold enough to actually stand up and say, this is not working for me. I need some help with this. Or, what you're doing is not helpful for me to get what I need. Right. And that can be a bit full on and into itself. And so maybe if they have a, another carer who can go with them to communicate that. But that's really the first step because, again, a provider who is unaware, they just don't know. But as soon as they know, the onus is then on them to do something about it. And so, for a provider, they brought, a business owner in general, they should be just looking at what are the potential needs. I mean, they look at potential risks all the time. Right. What are the potential risks of doing this sort of thing? We have risk reports and all that sort of stuff. What are the potential issues that are going to come up with what we're doing? Right. And it can be a difficult thing to do. So there's people to ask for help. Right. [Narelle] People like yourself. [Paul ]And people like you to be able to come along and go, is this accessible? Is this look right? And, you know, I've been able to, you know, work with some of my clients just on their websites. For instance, as an example and say, look, that's, that's a little bit difficult to read. And there's a lot of moving things. I don't think, like, will an audio, you know, text-to-speech program work on this. Right. And they go, oh, plus it's also really busy. So let's just make it less busy. And make it simple because that gets the message across better anyway. [Narelle] Yeah. That's it. [Paul] Yeah, absolutely. [Narelle ] Paul, I always ask for a couple of takeaways because just to leave people, just summary, a couple of good takeaways that you can say to the people listening to the show. Participants, service providers, if they listen, that a good message for them just to think about. [Paul] Yeah, absolutely. Well, look, you know, just we mentioned about the changes that are happening at the moment. One of the takeaways that I try and leave people with at the moment is we're at a bit of a crossroads at the moment. The things that happen, the things that people stand up for right now will shape things later on. So, you know, accessibility should 100% be a part of, especially the NDIS. So, if you're a participant, get a bit loud about things that don't work. Don't be consistently, oh, you know, I'll just leave it. I'll just leave it because that doesn't shape the future. It just allows it to continue as is. Right. And then for providers, we're heading into a space now where it is going to be harder to, you know, operate within the NDIS. There are changes coming. But that means that less people are going to do the hard things. So, choose to embrace things that are a bit more difficult like ensuring that your business is a fully accessible business. Ensuring that the way you guys communicate in the business with your participants and stakeholders is the best practice for the people that you're working with not just one size fits all. These things are going to make your life easier because you've embraced the harder things. [Narelle] That's two really good points. Paul, how can people contact you if they want to keep the conversation going? For me, that's very important that people can contact

you. [Paul] Yeah, absolutely. Thank you for that. Look, I'm available on most social media platforms under @NDISbusinesscoach. Or you can search up Paul Bryan on in the, any of the Face one, I'm pretty much in all the FaceBook Groups. But really simply, my email is Paul@actionandintent.com.au And I'm pretty good with getting back to people. But if you get me on Facebook messenger, that's pretty much the place I hang out all the time. [Nnarelle] Yeah, look, thanks Paul. Thanks for giving up your time and coming, talking to us because, obviously for me, it's a very important subject. It's what, everything I'm doing. And as I laugh and say, I've only got nine years left till retirement. And I'm going to make the most of getting the message out there. And thank you for helping us get the message out. So that's another episode of The Digital Access Show. Please, if you like what we do, like, subscribe, share. Definitely find Paul Bryan on all the media. He is a really good guy to know as well. He's just a really good guy to have a conversation. So Thanks. And we'll see you next time. [Paul] No worries. Thank you so much, Narelle. [Music]