

[music playing] [Narelle] Good morning, and welcome to season two, episode two of the Digital Access Show. This month, we're really looking at perceptions. And the reason we're looking at perceptions is, people think that people with disability can't access computers or iPhones or any other digital technologies. However, you know, they are our best friend. And that's a perception that people have. So I thought this month we dig into perceptions a bit. Perceptions about people with disability. Last week's guest was Mark Warren, from First 2 Care, and as you understand, Mark is in an electric wheelchair, and people have perceptions about Mark. This week, I've got another special guest. Peter Archer is a support worker. He's a support worker with a difference. And I'm really happy to have you on. Thanks Peter for being here. [Peter] Thank you, Narelle, for having me. I really appreciate it. [Narelle] Peter, can you tell us a bit about yourself, what you do? [Peter] Yeah, no worries. So

I'm a community support worker. I also have a vision impairment myself. I have a condition called Stargardts, which is a form of macular, sorry, juvenile macular degeneration. I've been a support worker for getting close to 12 years now. And for the last two years, I've been running my own business, which I named BeyondVision, Community Access and Support. But for short, call it BeyondVision. And I primarily support those who are who are vision impaired and, and blind to access their community and connect with each other in a number of different ways, including tailored activities and events. So I'll do, you know, extensive research into... what my participants are interested in, and then I'll see what activities and events I can sort of put together around those interests. I also do a home cooked meal delivery service. I do individual support so, you know, anything from assisting people to get to appointments, to, you know, things that need to be done around the house, to companionship, mentorship. And most recently, I run my BeyondVision

interactive themed zoom groups. So I've been really, sort of, I try to get the word out there about these groups, because I'm really wanting to connect with people, not not just people with disabilities, but anybody who'd like to get involved, anybody who's... feeling isolated, who, you know, wants to connect with others, who wants to be involved in something fun, and engaging and educational, and it's something that's, you know, just easy to be a part of. That's something I've been doing for the last month or so before. -[Peter] Before... -[Narelle] And I... [Peter] Yeah, sorry. [Narelle] I've got a friend friend that actually is involved with one of your interactive zoom groups. And he really loves it. He gets the giggles when he tells us things that happen. So yeah, it's, it's really well done. [Peter] He's an amazing person, as you know. Really brings a lot of positive energy towards the groups. And... yeah, just very grateful to have him in so many of my groups. And, yeah, it's a great time we're having. [Narelle] Peter, can you tell people what Stargardts is, for people that are not aware? [Peter] People of people

sort of refer to it as, like, the opposite of retinal pigmentosis. So, you know, I can't speak much about that, but... the people who have it, I guess your central vision is a lot better than your peripheral. You're... sort of seeing down these, these tunnels, so to speak. But with my vision, so my central vision is all distorted, so I see like black and white dots everywhere, like those old static TVs. -[Narelle] Okay.

-[Peter] So... [Peter] Showing my age by by talking about them. -[Mark laughs] Yeah.

-[Narelle] Yeah. [Peter] And I can't make out people's eyes or read small print without a magnifier. And I have about four or five meters of usable vision until my sight starts getting very, very blurry. But I can confidently get around, and... and it's not so much of a hindrance to me now. It's frustrating every now and again, which I'm sure a lot of people can, can speak to who are, who have vision impairments or who are blind. [Narelle] Yeah. Steve, as we mentioned at the start, we're talking perceptions. And I think one of the,

Steve, I'm sorry. [Peter] You can call me Steve. -[Narelle laughs] I can't.

-[Peter] It's a good name. [Narelle] Steve's a good name.

He's a good bloke. I'll cut that bit. Peter, as we mentioned, you know,

as I mentioned at the start, we're talking perceptions, and one of the

things I notice is... the perceptions of

others create the barriers for people with disability. What are your thoughts? [Peter] I

think so. You know, I think that people have

a general idea about... people who are vision

impaired or who are blind. And... having that general idea

means that you form an opinion... of somebody or something before, really, you get  
the chance to... to, to experience that,

that person as an individual, and although they

are vision impaired, one vision impaired

person to the next, any kind of disability, I mean, we all

handle it differently, and there's, there's no... exact case. So by somebody looking

at me and saying, oh, you know, he's vision

impaired, how's he, how can he possibly

do support work, you know? That can, that can get

a bit frustrating, and, um, that's, that's a

perception that can be, you know, quite damaging. But I'm sure on,

on the other hand, there can be, you know,  
positive perceptions too. I mean, as vision impaired and  
blind people, we, we... you know, we're very agile. We want to live a full life,  
and we want to do... whatever it is we  
want to do in life So we find ways to do  
that, whether that's with... digital accessibility  
or just willpower, you know? I, I find a lot of people I  
support have amazing willpower, which is, which I would  
consider a positive perception. [Narelle] I think the  
other thing, you know, particularly when I'm thinking  
of people that you support, that I actually know, they are tremendous  
problem solvers as well. And people don't realise  
that, they look at the outside. They make that assumption based on their beliefs. But  
when you sit there and think  
about what these people do, and this one guy in particular,  
he surfs, he swims, he runs, he's actually quite a,  
he's a very fit guy, actually. -[Peter] Yes.  
-[Narelle] Well, the two of them  
are in different ways, but the perception is, that they have to have  
people do everything for them. [Peter] Yeah. And that is, you

know, it's almost debilitating, you know, because... it's really the, the ethos of the NDIS, right? They want to be, they want to see people building skills, and... you know, striving towards being independent. And you may think that you're, you're helping at first, by doing as much as you can for that person, but... in support work, I mean, we have to be very careful about this, because... we're not always going to be there in this person's life. Maybe we're helping this person to do whatever they, whatever it is, helping them... put the clothes out in the line, and they can sit, sit back whilst we do that, and we're doing the task, and, you know, it's getting done. It's working towards, you know, you know, helping out the family. But what if, as a support worker, you stopped working with that person? You know, what if they relocated or whatever it is, you know that, then they're left with no skill. They're back to square one. So it's, I think it's something that we have to be mindful of. [Narelle] Yeah. When you take on a new client, how do you manage your perceptions and your beliefs

with that client? [Peter] I try to, like, I guess in certain instances, when you're taking on a new client, you're speaking to another support worker who may have worked at that person, and they have a perception of that, of that client, and they might tell you, oh, so and so can get a bit grumpy sometimes. So when that happens, you know, you might want to do this. And I always found that that was, that didn't really work to my advantage. Like it, it was nice to get a general idea, but it also, it also put this, I guess, perception in my head of who this person was, that they might not actually be, like that person. So I like to make my own perceptions, and when I meet the person, of course, I'll look into their condition so I know... what I'm getting myself into. But really it's just like a meet and greet, and is sort of feeling your way around and, and again, just building your rapport with that person, and trying to... not take any more information in and just be there, and build that rapport and... try and make that



a natural process and not be

influenced by outside... -[Peter] You know, outside.

-[Narelle] Yeah. [Narelle] and the hard

part must be, in some ways, again, like a support worker

that doesn't have a disability, might be thinking again, you know, or someone

new to support work, or they haven't,

they've got a vision impairment. They can't see, whereas, like for

me, I see shapes. For you, you can

read larger print. We're very capable people. I use, we both use

digital accessibility, assistive technology tools. -[Peter] Yeah.

-[Narelle] I use screen readers. [Narelle] You're using

magnifiers on your computer. The tools are there that we use. So how do we as

individual people... with these skills and

with this knowledge, break down the

perceptions of others? [Peter] That's a good question. So I sort of, saying like with the use

of assistive technology, how would that work towards

breaking down perception? [Narelle] Yeah. [Peter] Well, I guess

if people were to see... just how capable, say we're talking about a

vision impaired or blind person, you know, just watching somebody

who's been trained, and using their iPhone and how they can get around, how they can read messages, and how they can get to, you know pretty much... anywhere they want to get to, on the, on the internet. That's, that's an amazing thing, and they can do it faster than, than someone who is sighted, and Lots of and lots of different, in many cases. And a lot of the time, they've really upped the speech rate, so it sounds like, I often call it a chipmunk, but they're able to understand every word. So just seeing that alone, I would think that would sort of break the perception of someone who hasn't really had much experience in the blind and low vision community. -[Narelle] Yeah.

-[Peter] And... apart from that, I mean, you know, someone that I support who you also know is using... a wonderful technology like cochlear implants. -[Peter] Which...

-[Narelle] Yes. [Peter] You know, that technology, that's just amazing, because it is, it is training itself. It is training itself to learn what different sounds are in its environment. And it's, like, the way it was

described to me was that... at the very start it sounds like it's very robotic, and everything sort of sounds very similar, like, like a robot's voice. And then slowly, slowly, it starts becoming more human. Things become more, you know, identify. You can identify what those sounds are a lot, a lot better. You're hearing things that you've never heard before. And that's, just to see something like that too, that's... man that would, that would really break my perception if I had no experience with that kind of thing. [Narelle] Yeah. It's interesting, isn't it? I know for me, when I even, 'cause I do some of my own shopping obviously there's things I can't find. If you're looking at this huge grocery shelf, you know, shelf full of groceries in the, in the IGA or the Woolies or whatever, I've learned ways that I do it. You know, people say, well, what are you doing? And I say, well, I'm finding the product that I want, because I've got the tools on my phone to do it. So we can be independent. It's even the same for a person with an intellectual impairment, or, I've got a cousin with

an intellectual impairment, I think, she's wonderful. And she's the most fairly independent person out there. And, however, she can come across as grumpy, because she can be quite abrupt. And what people don't realise is, if you've got an intellectual impairment, you're autistic on the spectrum, there's so many reasons why people can be abrupt, or don't look at you square in the face. There's tons of reasons. And I think that's part of what people have to... think about when they meet a new person. Why can't that person look at you squarely in the face? Maybe it's because like you, you need to have your head in a different position to see them. [Peter] Exactly. Exactly. And I guess when you're looking at people... who have intellectual impairments or, or have autism, I mean, I've, I've... was in a fortunate position recently to... have started working with a few more people... who have autism some of them have vision impairment, some of them don't. And it's a condition that I've been trying to learn about... very quickly, so I can become effective at my, my role. And I fell into the trap of thinking, this person's rude. You know, they're not not

answering my questions. They're not asking me any questions. But you know, I guess that can just be... part of the condition. And, and as I started supporting this particular person, I saw that, you know, they were, they were connecting me, connecting with me on another level. It wasn't that they were being rude. It's just that the way that they... perceive their world is, is different to how I perceive it. So every now and again, this person would turn to me and, and just pick up something that I actually missed. So they would say something like, oh, did you see that, you know, that beautiful butterfly that flew across us. And so they're very much there. They're very much in the world, but... again, perceptions can differ a little bit, and that's, that's not a bad thing. [Narelle] Yeah, I know. I used to fall into that trap. I've got two sons with autism. And I had to always remember give them one instruction, when they were younger, it's like you gave them two, the first one was forgotten. Immediately, they would do the second. They would never do the first. And you really had

to break things down. Pick your shirts up. Put your shirts in the  
dirty clothes basket. Two separate instructions. And they had to learn  
how to manage that, but they've got to  
start somewhere. [Peter] Yeah, and that,  
that actual, that direct way of speaking  
was, was difficult for me, because I felt like  
I was being rude. But like you, like you said, it's, it's what you have to do, because it's  
too much  
information. It's just, they're going to, they're  
going to miss something. And, yeah, it probably won't work out  
to, to, the best way, I guess. [Narelle] Yeah. That's it. One of the other  
things I find interesting is, like NDIS documents. A lot of documents we  
as people with disability get... are very, very  
full of information, and they can be  
really overwhelming when you're  
having to listen to it, or, in your case,  
you're using magnifiers. How do you handle that? [Peter] I don't read  
every single word. That's, that's for sure. You know, maybe there's, you know,  
suggestions that, that you would have  
that you could use digital, you know, accessibility

in some way, to, to get to the  
information faster. But... you know, I, I'll  
have a quick read, but I'll usually ask  
somebody to assist me. You know, what is this  
document all about? Because, um, I guess that's  
just the way that I manage. Like I've... I'm, I always tell  
my wife, I'm, uh, if anything breaks in the  
household or anything like that, I'm not the guy to fix it, but I'm, I'm the person to  
find  
out who can, who can fix it, who can do that job, and, and I guess that's what I do. I  
sort of outsource, because  
I just don't have enough, I don't wanna... blow smoke or  
anything like that, but I don't have enough  
time, you know, I'm trying to... trying to run my  
business the best I can, and then also everything that  
happens with running a family, having, having children  
and that whole thing, so. [Narelle] Yeah, that's right,  
you are a dad, aren't you? [Peter] I am, yeah. [Narelle] Yeah, which is lovely. I think  
for me, I am so reliant on  
documents being accessible, that screen readers  
can read them. And I can do anything as long as

the screen reader can read it. If a screen reader can't read it, I can't do it. And that's where I have to pay people to do it. And I think that's like, even business cards. People hand you business cards, and you think, I can't read it. I've got to pay someone to read it. And it gets it comes back into perceptions. It's an interesting subject that we could talk about for quite a while. [Peter] Yeah. [Narelle] And one of the things I'm thinking about is, Peter, what advice could you give people as a takeaway, in regards to perceptions and beliefs, and people with disability? [Peter] Well, it's that, it's like, it's almost like a cliché, right? But it's so true, just don't judge a book by its cover. And approach... any... opportunity where you get to meet somebody... with a disability or support somebody with a disability. Approach it in the most humble way possible, because you may have read a little bit about the condition, but... you know, that, that's just one thing. You know, someone's... vision impairment might not even be their primary condition. You know, maybe it is an



intellectual impairment as well. Maybe it's autism,  
or maybe they, they've got an  
eccentric personality, or a difficult personality,  
or whatever it might, might be, go into that situation and, and use it as a  
learning opportunity. And really, I find... in my experience, if you're  
showing an interest in somebody, and you wanna find out different  
things about their lives, what they're interested in,  
how they, whatever it is, just showing interest in  
what they, what they value, then you're going to  
end up building a rapport, and you're going to find  
out a lot more about them, and that, that connection and that support is is going  
to be so much more effective, every time. So that's the  
advice I would give. [Narelle] I think one  
of the other things that I don't think you  
said about yourself, is you treat people as if they well, we are people first. The  
disability is part of us. It is not our whole. And that's the way  
you treat people. And, you know, I've heard that  
anecdotally from so many people. Peter, you don't  
look at the person. You don't look at the

person as a disability. They're a person first, disability second. [Peter] Absolutely. And... you know, I may have

been a support worker for, you know, 10 plus years, but I'm not the expert

in somebody's life. And I'm certainly

not perfect or better... than anybody, you know? And I, every time I

speak to somebody, I... that's what I'd like to get

across, that you and I... we're the same, and we're on the same level, and you may have your

own experiences and... whatever it is that have... that have made you

the person you are, and the reasons why you're

so good at these things. But, you know, we're still... you know, none

of us are perfect, and we're just trying our best

to live the best lives we can. [Narelle] Yeah. That's it. Peter, how can people

get in contact with you to find out more about... how you're running your

business, if they want, if a person with disability

wants to start their business? And how you even

set up your programs? Anything, even about

the programs that you run. Because, as I said, I

do know the Zoom ones... are pretty popular. [Peter] Thank you.

There's a few different ways. So you can contact

me directly by email, which is Peter\_Archer, A-R-C-H-E-R, \_beyondvision, B-E-Y-O-N-D, V-I-S-I-O-N, @outlook.com. Can also follow me on Facebook, where you'll find

Narelle as well, with her, you know, amazing

Facebook group, Blind Ones. Thank you so much for

allowing me to post on that. So to find me, you

type in Peter Archer, BeyondVision, one word. And I also have a website, which is

[www.PeterArcherBeyondVision.com](http://www.PeterArcherBeyondVision.com), where you'll find everything

that I've done in the past. I have a whole list of outings that I put together for the last

10 years all across Brisbane, that you can have a look at. There's pricing

there, everything. If you're concerned about how

much money in your plan, you could have a look at,

you know, one of those outings, and say, yeah, I'd like to go

to Montville Chocolate Factory, and this is how much it's going

to cost me for the whole day. If I do it as a group activity,

that's going to be cheaper. That might be something

worth looking into. And, yeah, just, just reach out, because I'm going to

get back to you. I'm not... you know, I'm not one

of those giant businesses where you're not going

to hear back from me. I'm, I'm a one man

show, and, um, and I will get back to

you as soon as I can with as much  
information as I can. And feel free to  
ask me anything, whether how I run a business  
as a vision impaired person, or whatever questions  
you might have, I'm more than happy  
to answer them. [Narelle] Yeah, thanks, Peter. And I think that's what  
people need to remember. People with disability  
do run businesses. People with hearing impairment,  
people that are autistic, cognitive issues,  
short-term memory, arthritic. Doesn't matter what it is, people in wheelchairs. Look at  
Dylan Alcott, He will. We're all out there.  
We're running businesses. We're living our lives  
just like everyone, and we are people first,  
disability second. So look, thank you, Peter. I really appreciate  
you coming on. [Peter] Thank you  
so much having me. [Narelle] If you wanna... find out more about  
the Digital Access Show, please contact us. We have... obviously, we're on YouTube,  
we're on Amazon,  
we're on Apple podcast, we're on Spotify. Like, subscribe, share, review, Google  
review. And we've had some  
amazing guests last year, and this year we've started

off with two interesting people that are doing... different things,

both with disability, and disability doesn't let them... it's not a barrier for them. So it's an important thing. If you've got a perception

about people based on beliefs, check the beliefs, because your beliefs may

be creating your barriers. I'm Narelle, and

we'll see you next time. Bye, bye. [Peter] Bye guys. [music playing]