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Impact Institute

Canberra Disability Expo

Saturday, 13 September 2025

Captioned by: Malinda Monks

MEL HARRISON: Good morning, everybody. First up on the stage for the Canberra disability expo we have the Rebus Theatre doing a performance of 'Stages of Empathy'. Rebus is a theatre company dedicated to creating spaces where people can come together as a community to explore their inherent creativity and the issues that are important to them. 'Stages of Empathy' is a forum theatre show developed by Rebus Theatre, currently touring throughout New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT.

This show is interactive and a powerful tool for exploring how we can be more inclusive of people living with disability. The performance is free for eligible workplaces and community organisations. So, please make your way over to the stage and join in on the theatre.

>> Hello. Hello everybody. My name is Sammy and I'm from Rebus Theatre. I really encourage everybody to come and sit in the audience and check out our spectacular show. We're about to start in about 10 seconds. This is a really cool opportunity for you to come and see a brand-new approach to having conversation around inclusivity and accessibility.

This show has toured all over Australia. We're about to have our 50th performance. We tour to community centres, arts organisations, workplaces, all kinds of places. Sometimes even theatres. And we really, really want to share with you this really powerful approach to having conversations about inclusivity in your workplace. It's really, really cool, so we would love people to just come and sit in the audience and check out our beautiful show. (APPLAUSE)

>> Do you enjoy watching free community theatre shows? Do you enjoy sitting on chairs? Do you enjoy receiving free fliers with QR codes? Do you enjoy having three coffee vendors in line of sight at all times? If so,

please come down and watch our show. Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

>> The countdown is on. Only 10 more seconds until we premiere our show for you. Come sit in the audience. It's very interactive. It's a lot of fun. Only five more seconds till show time. Come join us in the audience.

>> Would you like to come and watch a wonderful theatre performance? We're just about to start. There's lots of seats.

>> We're about to start a theatre performance on the stage. I want to let everyone know if anyone wants to come over it's really great.

>> Do you work for a community organisation? Are you a carer? Are you someone who doesn't fall into either of those categories and is attending the exhibit today? If so, please come down and watch our free interactive community theatre show. Hello. We are Rebus Theatre joining you from the stage. We'd love for our roving microphone to return to us so we can start the performance. So, if you're walking around with the microphone, please return to us. Thank you.

>> Hello. Okay, we're going to start our show now. So, my name is Sammy. I'm from Rebus Theatre. This is Josh, Jordan and Xander, also from Rebus Theatre, and we are here today to introduce you to a radical type of theatre. It's called forum theatre. We've performed this style of theatre in all sorts of contexts - schools, workplaces, community centres, even conferences like this one.

The show that we're about to show you is a really effective way to have a conversation with people and really get the conversation going around how do we be inclusive, how do we be accessible to people with disabilities and other marginalised groups. This show was funded by the Department of Social Services as part of a broader initiative to help people be more accessible and more inclusive in their community centres. What we're about to present to you today is just one scene from the show, so you can actually book the whole show for your community centre if you would like to or for any community organisation.

In this show, we're going to see characters making choices, lots and lots and lots of choices. And we'll see in this scene that sometimes the most well-meaning choices can have disastrous effects and that's what's so wonderful about this show, is that you will get an opportunity from the audience to come up on stage and make different choices and, together, we are going to workshop ideas and create a more inclusive world. So, without further ado, let's begin our show, 'Stages of Empathy'
(APPLAUSE)

>> Hey, Jordan. Waiting long? What's that you're working on?

>> I had a weird dream and I'm expressing it.

>> Oh, goodness, that must have been one hell of a dream. What even is that?

>> It's not finished yet.

>> Well, fingers crossed it looks better when it's displayed at the open day.

>> I'm really glad they let me back this year after, you know, what happened. I've been working really hard on this new collection.

>> Don't worry. I've got this. I'll give you all the support you need.

>> Hi. You must be Jordan.

>> Woah! No. Just no. That's him there.

>> Of course.

>> Well, that's great but is Alex avoiding me?

>> No, I'm Leigh. I'm new here.

>> Another new person. They're always changing the staff here. What is this meeting about?

>> We've got something really difficult to discuss. You know we've got our upcoming open day and we have been so excited to have your artwork displayed.

>> Obviously Jordan's artwork is really interesting.

>> It is, look, but after what happened last year, you know, the incident. The board really support Jordan and that's why we want to give him the opportunity of just exhibiting his work and that way he doesn't have to be here, he doesn't have to feel as if he...

>> No, Jordan wants to attend. You just need to meet his accessibility needs.

>> Right. You know we'd love to have Jordan there, it's just...

>> Look, if you can't meet his needs just say so and he won't come. Your organisation has a history of struggling with basic accessibility.

>> No. I want to come. Really, I do. It's just I have been working on this for months. It means a lot to me.

>> No. You misunderstand. We can absolutely meet his needs, I think.

>> You think? Well, Jordan needs space so let's start with a wider gallery and a quiet room away from high activity and no bright lights he's sensitive to.

>> I'm not.

>> No, you are. The lights were so bright last year. Remember that? You had a sensory overload. (Pen clicking) Can you stop doing that.

>> Sorry.

>> I've grown a lot since last year. I think I'm ready to deal with that sort of thing you know.

>> Look, I'm doing this for you Jordan. I'm here to help you. I support your needs and that's my job. Let me talk to Leigh. Anyway, as I was saying, make sure the foods don't have any strong smells. We find it very overwhelming having conflicting senses.

>> Look, I've got to go. My boss keeps calling me. Just to recap, wide open space, quiet room, low lighting, less smelly food. Am I missing anything?

>> I actually have a high --

>> No, that's it. Thank you.

>> Absolutely. We can do all that for you. It was so great to meet you both.

>> I think that went well, don't you?

>> No. You didn't even mention my noise sensitivity.

>> Okay, so that's the end of that scene. Big applause for our actors. (APPLAUSE) And now I have some questions for the audience. What did you think, watching that scene? What came up for you? Yeah.

>> Nobody really listened to what Jordan was saying. Everybody spoke for him, nobody listened to him.

>> It shows this awkwardness that organisations have where they want to be inclusive, the people who are supposed to do the jobs to support you have no proper training because you can see that the staff that they were talking to was new, didn't know if they would be able to meet the needs. So, at times it feels like they're ticking boxes to say they're doing something, but the thing is not even tailored for the people they're

supposed to help because the reality is the people who don't live with the conditions that need the support don't really know how to support it. They need to listen to the people who have the needs. I see that in my organisation a lot.

>> Yes, absolutely. And why do we think that organisations struggle with these needs? Like, what pressures are organisations under that makes it harder for them to be inclusive? Financial. Yeah, finances, time, resources, yeah.

>> One of the things I tell people all the time is that you have to take the first step, that everything looks really difficult. Yes, you have financial pressures, you have time, you have lack of resources but you just need to take the first step and the more that all the people around you see those accommodations, the changes in culture, in procedures, the easier it is for people to become more inclusive in their actions. So, the lack of modelling, the lack of examples don't help other people become aware of what can be done.

>> Yeah, absolutely. And the good news, though, is now you and everyone else gets an opportunity to come on stage and model some better behaviours. So, basically what we're going to do now is we're going to play the scene again from the beginning and everybody in the audience, when something happens in the scene that makes you feel really uncomfortable or makes you think that you can make a better decision, I want you to put your hand in the air and say "stop". Can we practise that together? One, two, three. Stop! One more time. One, two, three. Stop! Let's do it one more time so that everybody in the expo can hear and they can come watch our show. One, two, three. Stop!

Beautiful.

And so what's going to happen is when you stay "stop", we'll have you come up on stage, replace one of our characters and we'll work together to achieve a more positive outcome. So, I know it's a very small and awkward kind of setting but I really do encourage people to take this opportunity to come on stage, make different choices and show us how we can make a more inclusive world because the thing with this style of theatre, like with life, is if we don't make different choices and we don't say "stop", sometimes the same behaviour just repeats over and over again. So, without further ado, 'Stages of Empathy', take two.
(APPLAUSE)

>> Hey, Jordan. Waiting long? What's that you're working on?

>> I had a weird dream --

>> Stop!

>> Hi. What's your name?

>> My name's Alice.

>> Thank you so much for coming up. Which character would you like to replace?

>> I would like to replace him. Hello.

>> Hi.

>> Can I help you?

>> Yeah, yeah. Just in a bit though. I'm just waiting for the - what's it called - person for the meeting to show up.

>> I'm so sorry. What's your name? Jordan.

>> Jordan. My name's Alice.

>> Hi, Alice.

>> Jordan, who are you waiting for? Can you remember his name?

>> Well, Alex is normally the one I talk to but I'm not sure, they haven't said.

>> Alex. Okay. I'll try and find out what's keeping Alex. In the meantime, I see you're working on something.

>> Yeah. Just a bit of art for the open day.

>> Fabulous! Are you a good artist?

>> Some people like my art.

>> Would you mind if I had a look at it?

>> Maybe later. It's not really ready yet.

>> Sure. Sure. I'll go and try and find Alex, Jordan. Just relax. I'm sorry you've been waiting. Bye.

>> Thank you for that. How do you think you went?

>> I was trying to reassure Jordan. I don't know if I succeeded. And I tried to be interested in him and tried to respect him instead of just seeing him as something else here at my workplace that's I have to deal with if you know what I mean, which is all very well but people are under a lot of pressure at work. They have to meet targets, they have to justify expenditure and so it is a difficult situation.

>> Absolutely.

>> And thank you.

>> Yeah, no, thank you, Alice. So a question for the audience - what did Alice do to reach a more positive outcome? What specific things did Alice do?

>> She approached Jordan like a human rather than trying to snatch his work out from his hands and assume. She didn't make any assumptions. I'm not sure where Alice has gone but she spoke to Jordan with kindness.

>> Lovely. Yeah. How many of us make assumptions?

>> All the time. The normal way our brains work is try to assess something quick and you're going to make assumptions even when you don't want to. So, what you have to do is you have stop and you evaluate

what you first think, like is this correct? Is this what is really happening here? And then you do the action. It is impossible - like, it is really hard to not have assumptions at all ever because it happens at times. It's just the way that the brain is going to do, but how you act, you know, how you take those assumptions and confront them against reality, how you're going to deal with it, that's what makes a difference.

>> Yeah, beautiful. Sometimes you just need to slow down, you know, just look at what's actually going on here and what do people actually need? Yeah, that's lovely. Thank you.

Let's keep going with the scene and this time our arts worker is about to enter the room. So, let's see if somebody wants to say "stop" and perhaps replace our arts worker.

>> Hi.

>> You must be Jordan.

>> Woah. No, just no. That's him there.

>> Of course.

>> Well, that's great but who are you anyway? I normally deal with Alex. Is he avoiding me?

>> I'm Leigh. I'm new here.

>> Did you say "stop" ? Okay. Continue.

>> I'm Leigh. I'm new here.

>> Another new person. They're always changing the staff here. What's this meeting about?

>> We've got something difficult to discuss. You know we've got an upcoming open day and we've been so excited to have your artwork displayed.

>> Obviously Jordan's artwork is really interesting.

>> It is but, look, after what happened last year you know - the incident - look, we'd love to have Jordan there and the - oh, yay.

>> Was it too unbearable. Wonderful. Thank you (APPLAUSE)

>> I think there is two things I want to raise. One is what is your character's name?

>> Sam.

>> Okay. Because I don't remember. Sam, are you playing a neurodivergent person?

>> Pardon.

>> Are you playing a neurodivergent person? Because you are advocating for Jordan but also you cut the person off and said, "I'm not interested in hearing what you have to say," which can happen when you

really focus on something, like stop the pleasantries. I just want to go to the meat of it.

For me, it is not a problem, but I know for some people it can be a bit jarring, especially someone who doesn't know you. And the other part is your character Leigh, Leigh comes, talks to Sam, thinks he's Jordan but then when Sam corrects Leigh, Leigh still talks to Sam about Jordan like Jordan isn't there, which is a bit like oh. I think the main thing would be that I would replace Leigh because I think you need to acknowledge Jordan as a person, like someone said, and let him take the lead. I would probably interrupt Sam a bit to say, "Okay, does Jordan want you to speak for them?" And allow Jordan to express what they want.

>> Do you want to show us?

>> Can I see what you have written?

>> I have nothing written.

>> Hi. I'm Leigh. I'm here to replace Alex because I was told you're waiting for him.

>> Yep.

>> Who are you?

>> I'm Sam. I'm Jordan's support worker.

>> Oh. Hi, Jordan.

>> Hi.

>> So we actually have some news about the exhibition this year.

>> Yep.

>> We wanted to actually check with Jordan because after what happened last year, we want to know what we could do to better support Jordan in the pace and also give him the option to attend in person again with some accommodations or if Jordan prefers not to come and just present the artwork, that is also open for them.

>> Thanks. I'd really like to come back this year, make up for last year you know, yeah.

>> That sounds great. Would you be able to list and I'm happy to take notes but I'll follow up in an email, what are the accommodation - what do we need to do to make this a good experience for you, Jordan?

>> Just... The thing is if it could be a lot quieter than last year, I can probably deal with the other things. Just if it's quiet.

>> Quiet. Is light sensitivity a problem?

>> A bit but I think I can manage it. I'm a lot better than last year.

>> Okay. We could also discuss solutions, right, because there is two options. Would you like to be there for the whole time or just the opening of the exhibition?

>> I'm not really sure, sorry. As long as I can talk to people about the artwork, I don't really mind.

>> Yes. Sam, you seem like you want to add something.

>> I'm just concerned about the bright lights and stuff that is going to be there because Jordan - they were too bright last year and he had a sensory overload so I'm a bit concerned about the bright lights for him.

>> I have a question. We can definitely check with the room if we can have some of the lights lowered or check which lights - if we can just turn some on, but I know we are going to have to have some spotlighting on the artwork themselves so people can see them. I haven't been able to go to the room but I can check that and get back to you to see what the options and solutions are. If there is no option to dim the lights in the area, I see you have sunglasses on, would you be willing to maybe wear sunglasses if - I'm not saying you have to, it is depending how the situation is. I think that either way - would you be comfortable to at least bring them because in case how much we dim the lights doesn't work, you could have some sort of reprieve. Would that be a good, sort of, backup plan for you?

>> Yeah, that would help a lot.

>> We can also look into not having background music because I know that would help a lot. How about we also make two different plans, one for the opening because I think that's when you have more interest to seeing people but if you find there is too many people on the opening

night, you can actually - we can actually - you can choose to come later doing the normal exhibition hours when there is less people. We can make two plans and see what works best for you and maybe you want to be there more than once. You mentioned the noise a lot so my concern is that if the opening night has lot of people in the crowd, I know there is always a bigger, sort of, background noise. So, I was wondering have you - like, there is some ear plugs as well that we could try to get for you which dims background noise. We could look into something like that.

>> Maybe just in case, but I really don't like the feeling of things in my ears.

>> That's fair enough.

>> I suggest we have a quiet space that Jordan could go to.

>> Yes. That can also be arranged because we definitely have side rooms so we can have somewhere with water and anything else you may need, you can decompress and, if you need to, take a break.

>> Okay. Let's start with that (APPLAUSE) Thank you. How do you think you went?

>> I don't know if it was successful. I think that what I did was trying to anticipate ways to deal with the things that they raised but, again, like I don't have - I didn't have lot of information. I think that you have to raise the different possibilities that you can because that's what you do, the risk management, you figure out okay, I need to get the facts straight and see what works for them. There is also a degree of uncertainty. I

think that discussing those things with the person first would help them also be prepared because they have time to go back and think, "Oh, those different situations could happen," and they can work with the support worker, for example, to make plans for the different situations and give them flexibility to make sure that Jordan has a good experience.

>> Yeah. Really collaborating with the support worker and with Jordan.

>> Anyone has any suggestions because I obviously could have missed something that could be useful.

>> Firstly, just so brave. Thank you for getting up. It is always hard especially on a stage. I thought what you did so well was redirect the conversation. You were speaking to Jordan rather than speaking over him or just to Sam and then Jordan felt part of the conversation and you were coming up with different possibilities and solutions. So, yeah, great. One thing in this scene is that there seems to be a power dynamic in terms of height so maybe sitting down together, that's one suggestion that could --

>> What I didn't know - I thought about it but I was like if you're in a meeting room or something it would make more sense but the other part is I also didn't know if Jordan would be happy if I came too close because they don't know me but I think that sitting down would have been better, you're right. I know not everyone likes to keep eye contact especially with people they don't know. I also didn't want to make them feel like I was invading and requiring more than they were expecting to give as well but I like the suggestion.

>> Which I think ties back to what you said beautifully in the audience of

never making assumptions and we do that constantly as humans and we catch ourselves do it but how do we pause and either ask for permission or ask for consent, is that okay if I do that - that checking in. You did so well.

>> I am going to take a leaf out of your book and I'm going to ask Jordan how he felt.

>> It was a lot nicer to have someone talking directly to me and not feel like Sam was so much in the way. And it's good. Still it is a bit stressful but mostly just because of thinking about what happened last year and meeting someone new, but I think it was a lot better, like getting to talk about the things that we can do to make it better. It's kind of like - sort of less personal, just more about the solutions you know. It's like practical, I guess. Yeah. That was helpful. I liked it.

>> What's your name?

>> Clarissa.

>> Big round of applause for Clarissa. Thank you (APPLAUSE) Well, thank you very much everybody who got involved, came up on stage. There were only two of you but thank you. And everybody who participated from the audience.

So, this show, 'Stages of Empathy', we're actually touring it right now. So if anybody knows any community groups or organisations that would benefit from watching this show, there's fliers on all the seats down here. You can contact us at Rebus Theatre.com and book in a free show. We're funded until the end of the year to do the show absolutely free. We will come to the organisations. We'll provide everything and we'll put on a fantastic show. Thank you very much everybody.

>> Thank you.

>> We're Rebus Theatre and have a beautiful day. Thank you.

MEL HARRISON: Thank you so much for that. I think it is really good to see how theatre can be inclusive for people with disability because often theatre isn't, so it's actually nice to see that it is inclusive and you can change the narrative of a story at any point to make it inclusive. So, well done and thank you and have a great day.

>> Thank you.

...

MEL HARRISON: Hello everybody. Please make your way to the stage where I'm about to welcome on to the stage Jade Louise Evans, who is a local actor, emerging screen writer and disability advocate. Her acting credits include 'Last King of the Cross' and 'Austin' and in her 2024, her original screenplay Last One Awake was recognised by ATOM. Beyond her screenwork, Jade draws from her lived experience as a disabled creative to encourage others to explore their own artistry. As a career path or simply as a form of self-expression. She believes that storytelling has the power to move not only individuals but whole industries and she is dedicated to the film industry, seeing disability not as an afterthought but as a powerful part of that storytelling. So, please put your hands together for Jade. (APPLAUSE)

JADE LOUISE EVANS: Thank you. Thank you, Mel. So I quit acting when I was 14 years old. I'd spent nine of my formative years doing everything - acting, singing, advanced band - but not dance, oddly enough. From five years old, when people asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I'd say I wanted to go to NIDA, which was probably thanks to my great-grandmother who was a working actor. I was obsessed with her. I would sing with her on the phone every week and I had my first performance about the same age, here at Canberra Theatre with my school.

I loved it and I had one teacher who pushed me towards everything performing arts. I was on stage every single year after that but by the time high school rolled around, I'd lost a lot of the fire that my great-grandmother had put under me. Things at home weren't great. I'd been bullied a lot at primary school and naively hoped things would get better at high school, which they didn't. Then I had my injury. I slipped while attempting to ice skate at a family friend's birthday party. All I really remember is my mum coming to me and trying to calm me down and giving me ice for my knee. I had my first knee reconstruction about a year later, when I was 12 years old. I did one more year of drama after that and even got to work with Bell Shakespeare when I was 14, but at that time I struggled to attend school a lot and eventually I felt so badly about myself that I quit entirely and quit going to school entirely.

I did a year of home schooling, which I failed, and all I could see was the "noes", the way that my peers had suddenly started to treat me differently now that I couldn't participate. When I was 15, I had my second knee reconstruction on the same leg. I was told by my surgeon only then that my knee had been messed up since I was born and he was surprised that no-one had noticed. I spent months in a wheelchair and eventually ended up finding drama not fun anymore. I was listening to every bad thought that my brain could come up with, that I wasn't cut out for this, that my body wasn't reliable enough so why should I bother trying?

The same year I had stopped working, which I had been doing since I was 12, because I'd started to experience unexplainable and a lot of the time unbearable back pain and at 18 I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, smalls nodes and pirnosis. This coupled with a bunch of surgery complications, nerve damage and a sizable amount of poor choices I made as a teenager, I wasn't really doing anything. I spent a year at home trying to figure out what to do with myself now that I couldn't do the things I used to do anymore. I got kicked out of home and had to make that choice a lot faster so I got a government job, which was very Canberra of me, and I pushed the limits of my body until I had to quit.

I took a break. I tried again, but even the Department of Health couldn't offer the accommodations I needed. I couldn't get work anymore. No-one wanted to work with me anymore. And I didn't know how to change people's perception of me. So, at 23, I'd been struggling to get work in the field I'd worked in since I was 12, and I was pushing aside all the creative parts of myself that I knew existed. I was miserable. Sorry, I really need some water so I'm going to grab some water. I'm dying! I can speak again. That's nice.

I don't know for sure what changed my mind but my mind was changed. I sat with myself and went through every bad thought that I'd used to push myself out of this industry and realised most of them weren't very logical. I can't do this, who would want to watch me? Who would want to read my scripts? Who would want to watch me speak publicly? It didn't matter because until people started to view me the way I wanted to be viewed, why not do what I wanted to do? And in this case

I had a chance to do something about it. I signed up for an online class with a well-known acting coach and spent several months working with him over Zoom and suddenly someone was in may corner who was honest but not mean to me, someone well respected was looking at me and saying I was ready to do something with this.

I got my first job a month after I signed with an agent. I was in Melbourne the night I found out, Canberra the next and Sydney the night after to shoot. I was exhausted, running on adrenalin and pretty much willing to do anything. That was a mistake, a mistake I'd make more than once. The first time I stepped on a real set, I was asked to walk across a dolly track. And if you don't know is what that is, it's essentially a tiny train track with a camera that costs more than you'll make in 10 years running along it as fast as humanly possible towards you. And I did that. I did every single thing I was asked that day and I was praised for being agreeable, directable, a joy to work with.

I have a permanent scar on the back of my leg because I was bleeding most of that shoot and even I didn't notice that that was happening. I didn't tell anyone on that shoot that I was disabled. I didn't tell my agent that I was disabled. I've been on sets where I have said I'm disabled and I've been sunburnt to nearly third-degree burns. I think I still have a scar from that as well. This industry can take advantage of you in ways you don't expect and I think being prepared and able to speak up for yourself is half the battle.

Even if you're not an actor, I believe that your creativity can shift perspectives so I'm going to talk about a few things that you'll come across if you do decide to pursue acting or any similar sort of thing in this industry. We go on our phone, we Google "how to be an actor", we read the first article that pops. We go back to the search bar. "How do we an actor, disabled, Australia". Your results tend to get a little smaller the more things you add. But I found three things on nearly every list and the first one was training, learning to be an actor. You know makes sense, of course. But if you're anything like me, four years full-time across town or in another State is not so easy. I spent a year of my life half online, half in person, pushing myself until I broke, much like I did with government. This made me a more confident actor but if it had been anyone else I wouldn't have suggested that.

I think the main thing I learned in my training was to be patient with myself because there is no shortcut to being good or being confident or speaking well. Water does help though. The Internet's your friend with this. There are great teachers online that you can go to who will treat you with respect and give you opportunities you could never have in person. Some of the most valuable training I had was online and in books. You can also decide training isn't for you. Plenty of well-loved actors aren't trained at all and most of their joy that we get from them comes from their experience, who they are as people.

The second thing you'll come across is networking, which for me is a very scary word that, I don't like very much. But I've found sometimes even when you do go out of your way to do it and you find an event and go, "I could go to that," it's upstairs and you can't get in, or you can't talk to anyone there because there's no-one to interpret for you, or everyone already knows each other, which can be even worse. Some of the coolest, most connected people I know I know from actually working and being on set and being a nice person to work with, or my writing jobs which I do from home. If you have social media, you can network. Both local and global groups and websites are at your disposal to find people like you who want to do things that you want to do, who want to work with you on projects that you care about.

The third thing you'll find in your "how to be a disabled actor

Australia" search will bring us to the "why" and what I am mostly here to speak about, and that thing is being your own advocate, which I'm sure we've all heard before and can be a very tiring thing to hear. But you are not alone in this industry. There are plenty of people who want to speak for you and particularly I want to mention our union that works every single day to protect us, to help us, to implement better practices for us, to listen to us, so joining that union and protecting yourself is so important.

Your agent should also be on your side and if they are not, they are not the right agent for you. There are plenty of people who will respect you and treat you the way you deserve to be treated. So, yeah, be your own advocate. Speak up for yourself. But you don't have to do it alone and you shouldn't have to do it alone.

So, why do I care so much about you becoming an actor or a writer or a director? Well, something that probably stuck with me when I was about 15/16, was actually my little sister's face the first time she saw someone who was deaf on TV and she was probably 10 years old and I showed her a horror movie called Hush which she definitely should not have been watching. And the actor also isn't actually deaf but I'll never forget the look on her little face the first time she felt she saw herself on TV.

In Australia specifically, most disabled characters we see on screen are students, which is interesting considering children's TV is notoriously the worst for disabled representation. Disabled kids are more likely to see themselves in content not made for them. More and more, we see young people drawn to social media and sometimes you'll notice them going back to the same people over and over. There's so much humanity online, so much human nature. We watch podcasts and house tours and get ready with me and to an extent I think it's because traditional media struggles to show real life in a way that we relate to. We don't see ourselves on TV or in movies and magazines the way we do on Instagram or TikTok and half the problem is kids thinking that that is real. Kids deserve to see themselves in narrative. This can be a safe space for children to feel seen and be seen doing more than just going to school.

There's so much evidence that kids seeing themselves on screen does wonders for their self-esteem and helps normalise disabilities for children that haven't been exposed to it. Mental illness and memory-related illnesses are the most likely disability to be shown on screen, followed by physical disabilities, then we see a stark decline in the number of characters with sight or hearing impairments and stroke and other head injuries even less. So, why do we focus so much on mental illness? Well, usually it's because just about anyone can play those roles and they don't have to make room for someone disabled on set. With this in mind, it's interesting to note that most disabled characters we see on screen have no job which I believe is directly linked to the perception in the workforce that kept me out of a job I've been working since I was 12 years old. Disabled characters in Australia were more likely to be a criminal than to have a job so what can we do? Well, there's a push for more disability representation on the other side of the camera too; particularly in leadership roles.

We have a tiny industry here in Australia and we produce a small number of projects compared to other countries. If we have more power to make these decisions, we can make these changes ourselves. Because what are we used to seeing? Disability is still used as a hurdle on screen, something to overcome or you're an inspirational superhero to make not-disabled people feel good about whatever's going on in their life. Sometimes we're comedic, sometimes not in a good way, yet disabled actors are so drastically under-represented in comedy, which is insane because we're funny, we are funny, and I guess that leads into the fear of it. Who can write that? Who can tell that joke? Who can tell that story? And that's where your experience comes in.

This value I'll bring up, even if this isn't for you, maybe informing someone on how to tell your story is, or how to live with your condition. Consulting is an option I don't hear many people talk about. So, you've done the work, you've got yourself a job but people are still doubting you. They want you to jump through hoops to prove that you're capable when you're sitting across from them saying, "I can do this." Don't let it deter you. Sometimes you may feel like you're pitching yourself as a low cost rather than a skilled worker, but the more of us who do it the easier it becomes. The more we begin to hear "yes", there are people in this industry who care, who want to make it a better, more accessible place. I've had the pleasure of working with Michael Theo and Dylan Alcott and I can tell you if a company or a play or anything, if they want to include you, they will. I have seen it. I have seen so many accommodations made for people that they want.

I've heard from countless people in my life that they could never do this because it's scary, and it can be, but I think above all else it is important to remember that your experience is valuable. What makes you like a musician more than another? Or a painting? It's the lived experience, the person, their vulnerability. Sure, there may be artificial factors but have you ever seen someone really cry when they meet someone that's had an impact on them? More than words, more than paint or vocal chords or athletic ability, you have an opportunity not just in this industry but as a person, as an artist, to bring people in on your point of view.

Your experience drinking water is different than mine and if you're one of those people thinking, "Oh, god, not me. I can't paint or right or perform," you don't have to. You really don't have to. But if any of what I've said has made you feel anything, then maybe you should. I truly believe that it's worth it and the more of us there are telling our stories, supporting each other, creating safe environments, the more you'll start to see yourself in your surroundings and better surroundings. By creating, we encourage understanding, community and inclusivity. The big thing people always say about this probably sums it up - and I can't speak better than that - and it's "nothing about us without us". So, why without you? Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

MEL HARRISON: Thank you so much, Jade. I couldn't agree with Jade's words any more than you said. I think it is important. Not all of us are creative in the artist world but we are creative in just our storytelling and sharing stories and just being inclusive, like with each other. So, absolutely agree with you and put your hands together again for Jade. (APPLAUSE)

..

>> Hi, everyone. My name is Stacey and I have the absolute privilege of being the coordinator and choreographer for the incredible Legs Dream Team. For the past 19 years we have been based at the Legs Performing Arts Studio leg in Hume where our mission has always been to create a space that celebrates diversity, inclusion and the joy of movement. Our class is specifically designed to support students with a wide range of additional needs and we welcome anyone aged 13 years and over. Right now our team includes compassionate performers ranging from 15 to 45 years old. Each bring their own unique energy, talent and spirit to the stage. This year has been nothing short of amazing. We've already

competed in eight competitions with two more to come later on this month and in January we're heading to Queensland to take part in the National Showcase finals, a huge milestone for our team and a testament to their dedication and love of performing.

The Dream Team doesn't just dance, they light up the stage. They work tirelessly to perfect their routines and their greatest joy is sharing that hard work with audiences who laugh and smile and cheer them on. Every performance is a celebration of courage, creativity and connection and if you're sitting in the audience tonight and thinking - sorry today - "could I be part of something like this?" The answer is absolutely "yes". We're always accepting new students and we'd love to welcome more passionate performers into our Dream Team family. Whether you have danced before or are just curious to give it a go, there's a place for you here. Our studio is a safe supportive space where everyone is encouraged to shine and we truly believe the more voices and bodies we have moving together the stronger our message of inclusion becomes. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to showcase what we love to do. Your support means the world to us and we hope you enjoy every moment as much as we do. (APPLAUSE).

(MUSIC PLAYS).

>> In this world you are small, foul-smelling and weak. You are losers, children, and always will be.

Just because you find that life's not fair
It doesn't mean that you just have to grin and bear it
If you always take it on the chin and wear it
Nothing will change

Even if you're little you can do a lot

(MUSIC PLAYS).

>> Never will be ignored.

>> We'll draw pictures on the board.

(Children sing)

(APPLAUSE)

(MUSIC PLAYS).
Appetite for destruction
A girl's gutta eat, yeah
Devil on my shoulder
And it won't be quiet
Yeah, yeah
The sun shines a little more brightly
The sun shines a little more brightly
When you take things a little more lightly...

(MUSIC PLAYS).
Life is sweeter when we are...
On a path of destruction
I think I'm on one
Set it up

Go berserk
Tonight I light it up like fireworks
Paint this town red, red, red
I don't want my life ruled by some queen
Look into my eyes
See the fire in me
Burn it down
Till all they're seeing now is
Red, red, red, red, red
Up all night
Right left right
Never question orders
Or we'll pay the price
Protect the Queen's borders
Remember what she said
It's either off with their heads
Or it's off with our heads
Get the girl
Get the girl
She's painting our whole world
She's painting our whole world
Red
I don't want my life ruled by some queen
Look into my eyes
Burn it down
Till all they're seeing now is
Red, red, red
Woah, woah
Off with their head

Red
Woah, woah
Off with their head
Red
Woah
Off with their head
Woah
Off with their head, red

(APPLAUSE)

>> Everybody give it up for the Dream Team.

(APPLAUSE)

MEL HARRISON: Hello everybody. For people that were watching the Dream Team, they do have a disco next week on 20 September from 4 to 7pm so come over and grab a flier.

...

BRYAN CAREY: Hello. Good afternoon. Thank you very much for that nice warm welcome to the disability expo. I hope that some of the people visiting today will be interested in being creative. I hope there are some people that want to do that with music and they want to do that with visuals. Well, what I'll be doing is demonstrating the AS-VC system which I've developed which allows you to use sound, music and visuals all combined together to then play very creative presentations.

Now, I'm going to be using just a simple hand gesture for the presentation tonight. So, I'll put that in front of the laptop screen and I'll move my hand forwards and backwards to make different pitches change for the music but they'll also change the visuals at the same time. This is very new and different and well suited to people who are disabled. So, if you have a limit on the amount of mobility that you have, this system is great.

Today, it's set up for my disability, so it works well by me moving my left arm. But I can also use it with my right arm. So, I can do exercises which will then help the move and give me some exercise to do but it makes it a lot more fun. Now, I hope that everyone is going to enjoy the presentation. It's going to involve some very fast-moving images so if you have a problem looking at fast-moving images and animations, please take precautions to make sure you won't be affected by the images. The present will be quite short, so obviously I'm only going for a short amount of time but if you're affected by strong quick-moving visuals, yeah, be careful about the presentation today.

Now, what I'm doing is quite new and different, so if you're interested in knowing more or getting involved, I'm still doing lots of testing, I'm going to be doing workshops covering different aspects of the development of the system. You'll be able to then go to asvc.info and there you can either get in touch with me or add your name to the mailing list and be able to find out more about it. All right, I don't think you want me standing up here talking for the whole afternoon. You actually want me to do something creative with the system because that's what it's designed for. I know a few people will say, "I can't wait." Fingers crossed, new technology, I hope it works without a problem and I'll see you at the end of the presentation.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(Using hand gestures to manipulate sound and visuals)

(APPLAUSE)

Thanks for the applause. I hope everyone enjoyed that short sample of the AS-VC system. It's just a glimpse of something that's gonna come in the future and those sorts of entertainment are certainly something you'll see more of in the future, so, yeah, it was great to show that to you today. Have a great afternoon, everyone. Bye.

MEL HARRISON: Thank you so much for that, Bryan. I think it is really interesting. I am really curious how you came up with this whole concept in the first place.

BRYAN CAREY: I've worked in music and multimedia and really I just wanted something that was going to be good for my needs and for the things that I wanted to do because I worked with a physiotherapist who had some games on the iPad but they didn't involve music and I love music. So, that's the secret. You've got to do something that you really do love. Whatever that may be - art, visuals, music, it could even be just going on a holiday. If you're disabled, do what you love. That's the big message.

MEL HARRISON: Absolutely. Couldn't agree with you more. Please put your hands together for Bryan. (APPLAUSE)

...

MEL HARRISON: Hello everybody. At the stage now we have Lauren from the NDIS who is going do an NDIS update about making connection. So, please come to the stage to hear the NDIS update from Lauren.

LAUREN: Thank you very much. Can everyone hear me okay? Today I'm going to give you a bit of information about making connections. So I'm going to talk a bit about the participant journey, how we support people with disability, I'm going to talk about community connections, the types of community connections and a bit of further information.

Wait, I've got to get myself sorted with the clicker thing. I always have trouble. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the Country on which we meet today and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. I would like to pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and I'd like to extend that acknowledgment and respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

So, I've just got a bit of a privacy statement. So, during the session, only unclassified information such as details published on the NDIA website or general matters not containing personal information or particular agency information may be discussed and I probably won't take questions on the stage but if you do have any questions, especially if it's something that's relating to yourself or someone you support, we'd be happy to answer those questions. We're just up at booth 55 and 56 in the back corner. So, we can sort that out there.

The participant journey - so this diagram shows the steps in the NDIS participant journey for people aged 9 to 64 years. So, the participant journey outlines the different steps that people will experience applying for the NDIS and once they've joined the NDIS. So, this presentation is about making connections which is the first step in the participant journey. So, let's talk about how we support people with disability.

So, making connections means that we connect people with disability to supports in their local community. A person with a disability doesn't have to be eligible for the no, I didn't to get support through Community Connections. So, the NDIS can help people with disability, their families and carers to find support in their community by providing connections to information, mainstream and community supports and peer support.

These are supports and services provided by other government services and community groups including education, healthcare and support from family and friends. We can help people find supports that suit them or develop a plan to help them make the most of their mainstream and community supports. When people connect with a local area coordinator, we call this Community Connections. When they connect with an early childhood partner, which is for people under 9, we call that Early Connections. NDIS local area coordinators and early childhood partners can help all people with disability including NDIS participants, their families and carers. Local area coordinators and early childhood partners help people find the supports they need to be more independent and to do more of the things that they enjoy in their local area.

NDIS partners will help people connect with supports in their community even if they're not eligible for the NDIS. So, for example, mainstream supports which are the supports that are available from other government-funded services like health, mental health and education and community supports, so those are the supports that are available through community organisations such as peer-to-peer community support groups, religious groups or supports from local councils.

So, this section includes information on how to obtain Community Connections, the types of information that's required and how they might benefit a person with disability. If you wanted more information about Early Connections, for people under 9, you can look at our Website or to the booth and we can have a chat to you about that. The NDIS can provide support to all people with disability even if they aren't an NDIS participant. If they're aged between 9 and 64, we can connect them to information and supports available in their community and we call this Community Connections. If they need support for a child younger than 9, we can provide Early Connections instead and so there's information, like I said, on the website.

In terms of supports and services outside the NDIS, there are many supports and services outside the NDIS that all Australians can use, whether they've got a disability or not. And they're often referred to as community and mainstream supports. So, Community Connections help people with disability find the supports that they need in their local community. Community Connections are available for people with disability aged 9 to 64 even if they're not eligible for the NDIS. If a person with disability is aged over 65, we'll provide them with information on their local aged care services.

So, what is a Community Connections plan? NDIS partners can work with the person to develop a Community Connections plan if they want one. So, the Community Connections plan is a summary of all of the information the person discusses with their NDIS partner. It's different to an NDIS plan because it does not include funding to purchase supports. To create the plan, the NDIS partner will ask about the person's living situation, their informal supports, goals, whether the person already accesses other services and the kind of supports that the person's looking for.

So, Community Connections plans are not mandatory to get support from the NDIS or to apply to the NDIS. And when we say informal supports, we mean the help and support that someone gets from friends, family and the community and they're called "informal" because they're not paid and not part of a formal agreement. They're the usual things that friends and family do with us and for us.

What information do you need to provide for a Community Connections plan? You only need to provide as much information as you're willing to share. It does help to make the most out of a Community Connections plan if you can share as much information as you feel comfortable sharing. So, if a person with a disability doesn't want to give us personal information, we cannot create a Community Connections plan but we can still give them information that's relevant to them. If a person with disability doesn't want a Community Connections plan they can still talk to a local area coordinator to get information and advice.

Now we're going to jump on to that one, connections to relevant information. So, we can help people with disability find practical information that's relevant to them depending on a person's situation. This could include information about different disabilities and conditions, accessibility in the community, their rights and organisations that can help them to advocate for their rights, as well as supports and services that they might find helpful.

Mainstream and community supports and services that are outside of the NDIS are generally available to everyone. Mainstream supports are the supports from other government-funded services like health, mental health and education. Community supports are services that people can get through community organisations like religious groups and supports from local councils. And local area coordinators have strong connections in their local community and they can help people connect with mainstream and community supports in their local area.

I think I've missed a slide. Okay. I think I have missed a slide. I think it was about peer support. If you want to hear more about peer support, feel free to come up to our booth, 55 and 56. But now we're going to talk about if a person needs more support. While a person with disability is connecting with their community they may decide they want to apply to the NDIS so their local area coordinator can support them to gather information and evidence to help work out if the NDIS is right for them and they'll support them in applying to the NDIS.

So, we've got a lot of resources on our NDIS website. We've got some more resources on making connections, some booklets and fact sheets, information about how we check your identity, we've got a fact sheet on Community Connections and making connections. There's quite a lot of information on our website and I do have a little post-card up the back at our booth where you can scan the QR code and it will take you directly to that spot on the website, because I know it's sometimes a little bit difficult to find that. We also have this booklet. It is called the Participant Journey. The first slide we looked at with the different steps in the participant journey, it's outlined there in a little bit extra detail. So, that's available on our website. We don't have any hard copies, but it's kind of a helpful, sort of, tool and it's got additional information summary about each step in the journey. And that brings us to the end. Thank you very much. (APPLAUSE)

...

MEL HARRISON: Hello everybody. Please make your way to the stage where the second-last performance of the day, or speaker of the day for the Canberra Disability Expo is Melanie Dowelling and Melanie is a queer woman living with multiple significant difficult disabilities navigating the complexities of chronic physical illness, impaired mobility and neurodivergence with resilience and insight. Melanie brings over 30 years of frontline and systemic experience in case management, advocacy and trauma-informed care across the community, health sector, government and private sectors supporting people that face homelessness, violence, financial hardships and structural inequality. Melanie's also an artist and a writer who uses creativity as a route for her resilience or resistance, healing and amplifying the voices of people with disability. So, please put your hands together for Melanie. (APPLAUSE)

MELANIE DOWLING: Thank you. Thank you. So I'm here today, firstly I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, past, present and future, and acknowledge the Elders past, present and emerging and all Indigenous people who are here today. And I just want to say that it always was and it always will be.

So, I wrote this talk when I was told multiple times, "You don't look disabled." And I believe, well, you don't look ignorant but who am I to judge?! The thing is about disability, sometimes I don't need this prop, sometimes I don't need this aid, sometimes I don't need air conditioning in perimenopause. That's very, very unlikely. Sometimes I might look like everybody else, but as a woman who was born with quite neuro-spicy and neurodiverse behaviours, I have never felt like anyone else and those who know me have never said that I was normal. I don't think I've ever heard "normal" other than from a doctor who refuses to diagnosis women's problems.

As a child - I have bipolar - or it has me sometimes - with bipolar, I had lot of imaginary friends I thought everyone else could see and hear. That's not necessarily true. It is quite disturbing walking around talking to friends on your own. As a four-year-old it is acceptable behaviour. I turned 50 and it's not so acceptable now. I've decided that I don't care. Once I got past the idea that I had to look or be a certain way to be "normal" and normal is what a group of people decides is normal, so who knows what that could be on any day, I decided that I would then punish myself by thinking that I wasn't sick enough when I was hallucinating, I wasn't sick enough when I needed medication, I wasn't sick enough when I could barely walk, I wasn't sick enough when rheumatoid arthritis was diagnosed and I then became a feeling like an imposter in my own life. I couldn't pass as normal. Certainly not heterosexual in my group of people. To everyone else I looked - I'm not sure what a gay person is supposed to look like but I had that - and I feel like from a young age when I walked in to the doctor, the doctor would cringe and take a step back. In fact, lot of people cringe and take a step back. So, much so that in my delightful teenage years, I used to dress in black - I mean big surprise because I'm almost there now - and I used to hiss at people whilst wearing a cloak and white make-up. This has the desired effect of people leaving me alone. I'm trying very hard not to swear, it's something I'm not great at but I'm aware of the fact that not everybody likes to colour their words as much as me.

So, there I am, I went to the School Without Walls, it actually had walls, I should say that. We weren't poor and standing in a field. The School without Walls taught me that I was not the only weirdo in the world. The public service when I used to work in it taught me that I was nowhere near the only weirdo in the world and - there's a bird. Everyone saw that bird, right? Okay, good, because that's another thing I find that I have to do. I have in the audience - I won't point them out because I think that's scary for them - I have three people in the audience who are my loved ones and I have often said, "Did you see that? Did you hear that?" Because when I start hearing voices, sometimes it's real, sometimes it's not. The worst thing is we moved into an apartment - now, for the first six months we had no neighbours in this apartment. Now, I have neighbours and some of them watch TV. I mean horrendous right. How dare they! So I'm constantly saying, "Did you hear that? Was that you?" The other funny thing about my - as opposed to my physical health, my mental health - is that I have this thing called echolalia, I don't know if I'm thinking that right, I have memory problem those I'll tell you this all again in about 15 minutes.

I have this thing where I'll say a word and then I hear, "Lalia, lalia," as I'm mid-way through a conversation and I'm like... (Hums circus music) There is a saying, "Not my circus, not my monkeys". These are all my monkeys and the problem is no-one wants to come to the circus. When I finally saw, at 45 I'd like to point out I was finally diagnosed with bipolar, despite every single sign possible glowing, you know me talking to the walls, and he said to me, "Whilst I could diagnose you - he said this to my partner as well, he said, "Whilst I could diagnose you with autism and ADHD, we need to look at what is the primary factor." So I had to divide all of my mental health into what was the first thing that mattered," and I like that that bird is still there - I like to - I'd like to think that bipolar was the one they were most worried about me losing the plot. People do not like it when you're manic and running around in your knickers even where we live, they're not a fan. I mean, I didn't but there's always a risk, you just never know.

I also have a wicked sense of humour. I think I'm hilarious so if I'm not making you laugh, I feel sorry. I'm really sorry because I am actually hilarious and I've got it written down on my phone. So, what has happened over the years has been a lot of physical pain, chronic pain, and I am sarcastic by nature and I am - I was born in the '70s and a female so I was not diagnosed with anything of any use until, as I said, I was 45. At 45, it became apparent that things had worsened. There's a number of times in your life when you have neurological diagnoses or not diagnoses, just stuff happening, that make a huge change.

First one is generally puberty. So, you hit puberty and all of the crazy of puberty joins the, "Hello, you have bipolar." In my teenage years, everyone was a little bit strange and they all did a lot of drugs, so it was kind of hard to tell. The next thing that made a huge difference to my life is perimenopause. It arrived with its joint friend of mine, rheumatoid arthritis, and I went from being - well, firstly, I was always pretty overweight then I lost that then I went to having zero mobility one day. We were on my first holiday. I was going on a cruise ship. It was so exciting. I don't know why I thought that because I didn't think about COVID but this was only a couple of years ago. All fine, all dandy, caught the train up, got out of the hotel, could not stand. I had to sit down and wait for the taxi to come to get us to the terminal. And then that's it, I spent most of that trip when I didn't catch COVID, I spent most of that trip in a wheelchair. And even then, I didn't get diagnosed. It took time for - and a full-body scan which the worst thing about being diagnosed with physical stuff is it's usually painful. It's one of those things that you have to sit still for a long time in a box, you have to have MRIs. These things are usually painful. But there was a light on the horizon because they gave me this medication. It was amazing. It's supposed to do all sorts of wonderful things and it would have were I not allergic to it.

But I have learned that the hardest thing is not asking for help, the hardest thing is when you look around at all the organisations and you are just so overwhelmed. I have worked in community services. I worked in women's refuges, I worked for Centrelink, that probably contributed to some of my stress, I worked for social services and all of that time knowing all of that stuff and those services that are available, I still could not easily access those services, I still had a very hard time accessing DSP and then I was still in the middle of an NDIS application and I helped construct some of these documents. So, accessibility, not looking like I'm disabled to some people unless I have these props which I don't need all the time. Sometimes I'm bouncing along fine, other times I can barely get out of bed.

Unlike a lot of people, I will just push myself until - well actually we probably all do this - we push ourselves and we push ourselves and we do whatever it takes to get stuff done then we're like, "We'll recover later." Then we have a flare-up and then that flare-up gets longer and then, as my dad says, move it or lose it, so you lose a bit of condition. You lose a bit of that other stuff. You lose concentration. The medication that they have me on is really bad for that anyway but you lose focus and you start to lose hope and that's what happened to me. I left the public service at 40 and I had lost hope. I honestly - my doctor had said that I was permanently incapacitated and I took that and ran with it, saying that was it, I was useless, I was done and it was fine. This year, I've had a really big change on that because I think that no-one's ever done. We have life-long learning. There is something that everyone can learn from everyone else, and I really believe that the key to everything - in fact, the only real disability is a choice and that choice is ignorance.

If you are ignorant, you're more disabled than I could ever be or anyone else or any other measurement, because you're making a choice not to learn, not to share, not to grow, not to look at all of the skills and assets we can have. Financially, yeah, I probably can't afford a boat ride any time soon. I drop things a lot. That happens. So, I guess I just - we all pass on these messages of hope. I'm not going to pass on a message of hope. I'm going to say to you it is a good day when you wake up.

Sometimes you might not feel that though and that's okay too, but if you're gonna keep going, keep going. Don't just lie there like I did because now I've got to undo all that as well. Keep going. Thank you very much (APPLAUSE) If anybody has any questions, I have a few but you know, feel free.

MEL HARRISON: Thank you for that, Melanie. I completely agree that it is about just resilience of keep going and, you know, just finding out what's actually out there to have conversations around things and you don't know what you don't know until you know.

MELANIE DOWLING: I agree. I have a small business that, I don't sell to the public, I get someone else to do the peoply stuff. It's called "I failed finger painting" because in kindergarten we have a great time, we think we're great artists, it's only when someone tells you you're not, you can't draw or you're not doing it the right way it becomes a problem. Keep failing finger painting but enjoy it while you're doing it.

MEL HARRISON: Keep believing. Please put your hands together for Melanie. (APPLAUSE)

MELANIE DOWLING: The best thing about my memory, I'm not going to remember what I said. I knew I was miked! I knew that would happen. No-one ran screaming it's okay. And the bird was real. It's good to check.

...

(Jazz music)

(APPLAUSE)

>> Thank you. Hello. As we were kindly introduced, we're the Ozimops trio. Very happy to be playing for you guys here today on Ngunnawal and Ngambri country. This is Joel on the flute, my name is Jeremy and this is Ben on guitar. We are chuffed to be playing here because all of us live with disability or work with people with disability. I have cerebral palsy and I proudly live as a person with disability while playing this big instrument and having to carry many things around. No easy feat but very worth it. Joel has a variety of chronic conditions. He was listing them to me before and I'm not growing to dare say some of their names. Not because they're rude or anything but because I think I'll mess it up. He was recently firmed as neurodivergent as well and Ben works in the disability sector mostly with children with disability. Disability is a big part of our lives and we are glad to be here playing and sharing some of that through this medium of music today. The first song was a wonderful tune by Roy Hargrave and we're going to go into another tune now called 'The Saga of Harrison Crabfeathers'.

(Jazz music)

(APPLAUSE)

>> Thank you. We have world premiere up for you soon as well.

This is a new tune I have written and sprung on these guys yesterday. A couple of weeks ago I had chickenpox for the first time, so this tune is called 'Varicella', after the virus for chickenpox. Wish us luck.

(Jazz music)

(APPLAUSE)

>> Thank you. There we go. World premiere. We've got one more tune. We're going to finish in three minutes. This one is a bit more of a familiar one so hopefully you guys spot the tune.

('You're Still the One' by Shania Twain)

(APPLAUSE)

>> Very good. Thank you. We have been Ozimops. Joel on flute, myself on base and Ben on guitar. Chronic conditions, cerebral palsy, works with disability. That's it.

(APPLAUSE)

>> Thank you so much for that beautiful musical performance. We wouldn't have even know it was a world premiere of that second-last song there. You guys, just amazing. So, thank you for coming along. That was our last act for the day so there's half an hour left of the expo. So, get around to any last exhibitors you'd like to see and thank you for joining us.

(End of transcript)