Video Transcript: Local Government Inclusion Advisory Group

[Belle] My name is Belle.

[Sisaleo] Sisaleo Philavong

[Jayson] Jayson Hanrahan.

[Ayla] My name is Ayla.

[Dylan] Dylan Totos,

[Abby] Abby,

[Martin] Martin Sawtell.

[Ayla] We are a group of people living with a disability.

[Martin] We are providing specialist expert knowledge-

[Sisaleo] supporting local councils, government and general community at large in understanding disability access and inclusion.

[Abby] I was so excited to think I'm going to be a part of helping people truly understand what it means to have a disability and how we want to be seen.

[Dylan]It's made up of a group of very diverse range of people, each one kind of bringing a different perspective.

[Jayson] The differences in our disabilities has really contributed to a truly positive and a really effective group.

[Merindah] Hi, I'm Merindah. I'm the senior policy officer for disability inclusion here at the LGA.

[Liz] And I'm Liz. I work at the LGA as well. LGA training manager.

[Merindah] So this group came about because councils needed to do their disability access and inclusion plans. And so they wanted for it to be more than a check the box we've got a plan.

[Liz] Our society is ready to know more. We're ready.

[Title] We’re Ready.

[Jayson] Exclusion really comes in a lot of different forms, not having accessible communications in certain circumstances, right through to refusals of entry. It's happened many, many times over my life, whether it be through direct exclusion due to my disability or the fact that I actually do use dog guide.

[Abby] The people that make the policy and procedures thinking that they're doing it in the best interests, but maybe not necessarily really having that perspective from a person with a disability.

[Belle] And it means that in order for programs or spaces to become accessible, there's expensive and time-consuming retrofitting and often things just kind of ad hoc or not quite right.

[Ayla] Growing up with a profound hearing loss, I have struggled to overcome lots of mental, social and physical barriers, particularly in education and learning.

[Belle] You know, it's not always intentional, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't have a significant impact on the people that experience those exclusions over and over again.

[Jayson] Certainly in my lifetime has stopped me from doing things that I would otherwise do, purely for the fear of being confronted and told, “You're not welcome here, or no you can't do that.”

[Dylan] And so it becomes a personal battle to actually fight this idea of being excluded within yourself. And then also, once you've done that, learning how to actually fight the system of exclusion in place.

[Martin] We should be at a point where we are understanding how to engage effectively and equitably with disabled people.

[Sisaleo] We are just like everybody else. We have the same needs and we want to participate.

[Dylan] Like there's no adversaries really, but there is a lot of problems to solve. And the best way to do that is to get the relevant people into the room.

[Title] Get the relevant people into the room.

[Scott] My name is Scott Loechel. I'm the operations manager for the Local Government Functional Support Group, and I would consider myself an emergency management and incident management specialist.

[Pepper] My name is Pepper, and I'm the library services manager at Light Regional Council.

[Sally] My name is Sally. I work for the South Australian Electoral Commission, and my role is the community engagement officer.

[Scott] In the Emergency Management world, the time for conversation is before the incidents occur. So having those conversations before the emergencies with groups such as the Disability Advisory Group that can only add value.

[Sisaleo] The actual people who have brought the issues to us are really receptive towards what we are trying to actually do, and it's an actual partnership. We cannot do these things without their support.

[Sally] I gained a lot of insight. The services that we were providing needed to be of higher standard.

[Belle] I had found a venue that had the little access symbol and I thought that I could vote there, but the voting area was up a few steps. I ended up having to vote in an area that was a thoroughfare for other people, so I didn't have the same privacy as able-bodied people or non-disabled people. Being able to raise that in a way that was welcome and respected and taken on board, it was such a positive experience for me, out of something that had been a negative.

[Sally] I really thank you, Belle, for being so honest because that really stayed with me, and when I’m planning my work, and developing things, I always remember what you said, and those barriers that were there, and how we can alleviate those, and create a positive experience for you, but also the broader community.

[Dylan] With that, many eyes and experiences and perspectives, the easier it is to spot those problems and to come up with unique solutions for those problems.

[Pepper] One of the takeaways that I got was it doesn't have to cost a lot of money. It might be time or it might be some resources, but we can start small and keep developing.

[Ayla] Oh you know it is absolutely fantastic some of the innovative, creative ways that there are for access. But that missing link sometimes, and I always talk about this missing link, is the experience of you belong, we want you here, you matter.

[Pepper] Yep. Because that's what we want our customers to have. You know, we've got the disability access and inclusion plans, and what you don't want it to become is a tick and flick. You want to make it so that you're doing it because it creates a positive experience for the customer, not just because the government says you have to.

[Ayla] Yeah absolutely.

[Abby] Sometimes I think places will just say, “Yep I ticked that box. I'm disability confident.” But I believe total engagement is actively having conversations with people with disability.

[Scott] During an emergency, you should talk to the person that operates that thing because they're the expert at it. And, you know, it just strikes me that this is the sort of example where if you want to understand disability inclusion or you want to include that in your planning, why wouldn't you just engage with the experts who live it every day?

[Jayson] No one knows better than we do how elements of the built infrastructure, elements of exclusion, discrimination and lack of awareness actually impact those with disability. And it surprises me sometimes just more broadly, how often we sort of assume we know what people might want or need, as opposed to saying, well, let's just go ask them. You know let's just be open and honest and have a direct conversation, go 'What's going to work, what isn't?'

[Martin] And to understand that just because one disabled person says one thing there are actually a multitude of voices and perspectives. So my requirements are totally different to other disabled people.

[Scott] So it's not always about the individual things, it's about, well, the principle is, at least engage and have a conversation.

[Martin] Yeah, we're not that scary.

[Title] Will you be part of the solution?

[Jayson] For anyone in government looking to or considering setting up a group like this, my message is pretty straight and simple. Just do it.

[Merindah] Let's be brave in learning from each other.

[liz] Genuiness I think, is the key. It's all about being genuine, and people can tell whether you're genuine or whether you're not.

[Martin] Be prepared to get it wrong, to not be perfect.

[Abby] And maybe be willing to sort of take a little bit of criticism. But it's constructive.

[Liz] We wanted to do it right from the very beginning, and I don't think that's - I don't think that's really possible. As we proceeded and listened, we adjusted, we were nimble, and that's why it's worked.

[Martin] If you've learned from doing it wrong, then great.

[Ayla] It's about making those everyday steps through for the rest of our lives and making that consistent commitment to access and inclusion.

[Jayson] The knowledge, the wisdom, the contribution that people with disabilities can make. It's an untapped resource and the time is now to to do something about it.

[Title]

We thank:

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[Title]

The Local Government Disability Inclusion

Advisory Group is an initiative of the

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[Title]

Contact the LGA at:

www.lga.sa.gov.au

lgasa@lga.sa.gov.au

08 8224 2000

[Title]

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www.purpleorange.org.au

admin@purpleorange.org.au

08 8373 8388