Bethany Atkinson-Quinton: Hello, thank you so much for coming. Welcome to Provocations and Postcards from the future. This is presented by Express Media in partnership with Arts Centre Melbourne. And we're so excited to present this talk series as part of the inaugural Future Echoes Festival for 2019. Before we begin, I acknowledge that we gather today on stolen lands, we gather on the lands of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. I acknowledge that these are the first storytellers of this land and that these lands having witnessed a story shared for many, many thousands of years, which far exceeds Australia's 230 years.

Bethany Atkinson-Quinton: I pay my respects to elder's past and present and extend that respect to any First Nations people that are joining us today. Always was and always will be Aboriginal land. My name is Beth and I'm the creative producer at Express Media. And if you do not know what Express Media is, we are an organisation that supports young writers and editors. We work with people from the ages of 12 to 30 and we're so excited to be joining this festival this year. So welcome to day two. Today all of the artists are responding to the theme of a world of welcome beyond access. We have a hashtag for anyone that's interested in using the hashtag, it is hashtag feature echoes fest. So feel free to spread the love. But right now I would love to introduce to you the disabled, QBIPOC collective based on Kulin lands. It consists of Pauline Vetuna, Hannah Morphy-Walsh, CB Mako and Gemma Mahadeo. So I'll leave it to all of you, please make them feel very welcome.

Gemma Mahadeo: Thank you Bethany, Express Media and Arts Centre, Melbourne for this platform. We're a newly formed collective of disabled, queer BIPOC writers and today we are going to share with you the provocations regarding the future of access. Before we begin, here are a couple of definitions of terms that might come up a lot as we speak. Firstly, for those who don't know, BIPOC, B-I-P-O-C, is an acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Our collective is comprised of disabled, queer BIPOC. Secondly, ableism is discrimination against social prejudice against stigmatisation of people with disabilities. This can manifest in a number of ways, for example, as inaccessible spaces, inaccessible transport, cultural attitudes towards disability, discriminatory laws, denigrating language, neglect, verbal abuse, physical violence and so forth.

Gemma Mahadeo: At its core, ableism is based on the belief either conscious or unconscious, that people with disabilities are not important, are abnormal, are burdens and are inferior. We're all going to speak for around seven minutes about an area of access that is personally important to us. And necessary for you to think about then we will close by sharing with you a glimpse of the future of access that we are working so hard to create, and that we invite you to create with us. And now my colleague, Hannah will begin.

Hannah Morphy-W: Thank you, Gemma. Because I have a terrible memory I'm going to be reading from my phone. I am, know about of the [inaudible] tribe. Through my grandmother, I have blood ties to both the Wurundjeri and the Boon Wurrung peoples of this city, and the responsibility to them and to other people of the greater Kulin Nations. This is the land of the Eastern Kulin in case you are on that. We ask standing or sitting, well, there are none of us standing, on land that has known them for hundreds of generations. As a person of country, it is my duty to earn the right to belong here, by looking out for this land and for the generations it has carried and will carry. As family, it is my duty to extend the offer protection to them where possible in the ways I know-how. And I hope that this as all things is an extension of that duty, of care.

Hannah Morphy-W: I believe that access, goes down to the fundamentals of communication, like not behavioural or kind of a scripted communication, but effective communication. Like access is first asking people what they want and then asking how you can help them achieve that. An accessible community is one that is willing to accept that ideas are not tied to any one behaviour. And from disability culture, I hope people are more willing to take the time to be understood and to work with each person that they engage towards an action that in time will lead to the best possible outcome between them.

Hannah Morphy-W: Earlier on in my career, in Arts admin, I apologise, I learned the value of de-escalation, which is the practice of entering an emotionally charged situation with the intent of resolving tension through a process of coming to a mutual understanding. I'm not naturally good at it, no one is. Deescalation relies on active communication and re-centring. Not just yourself, but the other person. And I felt that completely different way to how it was written down, but we'll go with it. You are required to put aside your own thoughts and feelings in order to bring about action. And the reason I'm telling you about this is because disabled and deaf people often practice de-escalation in the course of keeping our families together, keeping our lives together and even keeping our lives.

Hannah Morphy-W: The built build around us includes credibly hostile to disabled people, especially people with sensory processing disabilities and executive dysfunction. City living requires a certain ability to process and to prioritise an endless stream of visual, tactile and auditory information, as well as taking up intellectual space in navigating and operating day today. Functioning in this environment is predicated on the idea that we all have equal access to those stimuli, and that we'll persist them in the same way. It seems we share height, weight, skin colour and codes of behaviour and relies on the idea that divergence from these norms is destructive. But that isn't the word you use, the word you use is suspicious.

Hannah Morphy-W: How do we treat people that make us uncomfortable? I put to you, that we have until now, endangered them through our actions and through neglect. The thing that I am often praised for and probably will be again when this keynote ends, which is having a non-normative communication style is the exact thing that places people like me in conflict with neuro-typical society. If we cannot process demands and questions quickly enough, people become frustrated with us. Eye contact is a universal, is not a universal norm. But in this society, if I cannot meet your gaze, my quality of access is reduced. I will be assumed to be disengaged, which can lead to poor outcomes. And if I do not find the right words in the right way, at the right time, I could then find myself alone when I'm most in need. But then it is when I'm most in need that I am least likely to find the right words.

Hannah Morphy-W: An accessible society isn't a society that will seek to teach me the words or how to use them. But one that seeks to meet me in understanding what I am trying to communicate with and without these words. An accessible future is one that offers me the chance to do the same to others. Would you think about things we face in meeting our own needs by allowing us to address them? And on that note, I would like to hand on to my colleague.

Pauline Vetuna: Thank you, Hannah. I'm going to be reading off a script too because we are all really tired today. We've all had very little sleep and so bear with me. I'm a black migrant settler who has lived upon stolen, unceded Kulin lands since I was a baby. I pay my respects to all elders, past and present and any members of the Kulin Nation who are here today. My people are indigenous to Papua New Guinea. The [inaudible] people of East New Britain. I've been disabled since childhood, according to the social model of disability, and I would encourage everyone to look up what that means.

Pauline Vetuna: I'm queer and homosexuality in Papua New Guinea is unlawful. I'm a wheelchair user and my island is not accessible to me. I don't have the financial resources or other resources at the moment, that would allow me to go there. I'm a citizen and fluent English speaker though, which allows me access here, that people who are not English speaking citizens or permanent residents don't have. I was assigned female at birth and I have no qualms being perceived as a woman.

Pauline Vetuna: So my privileges run parallel to severe structural barriers to education and work, structural barriers to housing, anti-blackness and daily ableism. Ableism on multiple levels is directly connected to the other three things in my life that I just named. These things cannot be separated. The reason I just started all of this was to highlight something that can't be ignored when we talk access but often is. I'm talking about intersectionality. I need to define what this is because in Australia, in a white dominated disability spaces, I've seen disability advocates define the term without acknowledging its roots in critical race theory, or citing the black woman, Kimberly Crenshaw, who coined the term, two acts that are unintentionally racist.

Pauline Vetuna: It's a problem in a nation like Australia, a colony of settlers with a black indigenous population experiencing ongoing state and settler violence as well as much higher rates of disability than the majority population. Intersectionality first described black women's experience of both racism and sexism and how it was different to that of both black men and white women. Its meaning today encompasses other forms of structural oppression. Different kinds of oppression can be experienced by a person at the same time, making that person more vulnerable in society.

Pauline Vetuna: So you'll hear disability, described as an intersection, and it is when it's experienced at the same time as another form of oppression. But what I want people to remember, especially people who operate in the disability sector, is that trying to separate intersectionality from race is unintentionally often racist. It contributes to a long history of erasure of the scholarship of black women. And it also leads to the erasure of disabled black women and BIPOC in dialogues about intersectionality, about disability and access for all people. In the accessible future, this doesn't happen anymore. And I want to state clearly too, that the erasure of disabled by BIPOC, happens in spaces for BIPOC as well. Because these spaces are dominated by non-disabled ambulatory people most of the time. It happens in spaces for queer and trans people as well, where disabled queer BIPOC are pushed to the margins of the margins, including spaces for queer and trans people of colour.

Pauline Vetuna: There is no space currently that genuinely and consistently welcomes people who experience all of these things at the same time, either in the arts, in literary spaces or beyond. So now the reason I keep using the term spaces and I'm very specific with that term is that as a writer and an artist and a curator, who is non-ambulatory, wheelchair user, I'm with restricted use of my upper body and only one wheelchair at the moment, because I can't afford a new on at the moment, there are so few physical spaces, sorry, I'm allowed to be in. In every moment I have to think about physical space and accessible toilets. At the built physical environment, shuns people like me from existing and public and private spheres, by design.

Pauline Vetuna: So in spaces are created by non-disabled, BIPOC and non-disabled queer folks who would argue they are my community. They continue this segregation of disabled people by not thinking about either physical or non-physical access. While space is created by white people with disabilities, maybe physically accessible but still highly unsafe for BIPOC with disabilities. In the accessible future, nothing is built without consulting queer and trans BIPOC with disabilities. BIPOC spaces genuinely include BIPOC disabled people, and queer spaces do the same.

Pauline Vetuna: So how is this future built? Now there are many things that need to happen and be addressed to create that world of welcome. Well, we don't have much time today, so let me just plant one seed, allyship. Non-disabled people, you have to step up as allies, learn about the social model and other models of disability. About structural and cultural labelism, about disability justice, look up that term and it's a specific thing. About different kinds of disabilities and neurodiversity, why disabled people. And I'm talking about those engaged at a high level of advocacy, or who have the capacity to do so.

Pauline Vetuna: Learn about whiteness, read books like Decolonising solidarity and white fragility. Learn about how you benefit from it and by extension, the marginalisation of disabled BIPOC. Your allyship to First Nations people, and also to black people and people of colour, should extend to your disabled BIPOC comrades first and foremost, taking the work of disabled BIPOC without appropriating it. BIPOC, queer and trans people, your words about community and inclusion of queer BIPOC with disabilities mean little without tangible and consistent action and the ongoing practice of allyship, which is listening, making space for people who are even more marginalised than you, people on the margins of the margins.

Pauline Vetuna: Now, I spent my youth involved in some grassroots community-based arts projects in outer suburbs, through which I was able to explore making art through different mediums, primarily writing, not as a career, but purely for the purposes of connection and my own healing from PTSD and other traumas, while living on the poverty line. It was part of my recovery. A process that came to a head this year. And I'm extremely grateful for that. These spaces were physically accessible, at least and not outcome focused. But I still create spaces where I was welcome as a disabled person, queer person, black person, person with indigenous heritage from elsewhere. All of these things are ones that would allow me to flourish as a human writer and an artist.

Pauline Vetuna: My focus now that I'm well enough to exist fully in public is this, community engaged creative practice, creating spaces for all disabled BIPOC, especially disabled, queer and trans-BIPOC, to pursue justice, tell us stories, create our art and find healing and solidarity and community. This is actually the work of the future. Allyship is solidarity. Solidarity builds community and community that Centres the needs of its most marginalised members, automatically creates a world of welcome for everyone. Thank you and I'll pass the mic to Gemma.

Gemma Mahadeo: Thanks so much, Pauline. I'm a queer, disabled, non-binary person of colour and a migrant complicit in the Anglo invasion narrative by being and existing on stolen Kulin lands. My mother is Filipino-Spanish and my father is Indo-Guyanese. I'm a British citizen and a permanent resident. Look at me. I mean, really look at me. When we think of disability, this body is not one that immediately comes to mind. A few months ago, I was on a packed tram occupying one of the disabled folding seats. A white woman with a problem got on and glared at me constantly through the journey, as did another white woman who got on wearing immune boots.

Gemma Mahadeo: They both had access to disabled sitting across from me. Disability is not always visible. I tried to ignore their glares but of course, the thought going through my head was, "I do not deserve this seat. I'm not disabled enough." I was actually commuting to my psychiatrist's office. Forgive me, I should give a content warning that I will be describing some fairly graphic psychiatric treatment. So if you need to duck out at any time, please feel free to look after yourself that that way.

Gemma Mahadeo: So yeah, commuting to my psychiatrist's office. And earlier this year, I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. And while not a complete surprise, it made abled life difficult in ways I couldn't predict. I'm still in the very early stages when it comes to learning about my triggers and symptoms and a lot of my past psychological distress retrospectively makes sense. So I'm still on this tram, terrified trying not to show it. It gets more and more packed as peak hour times tend to do. An old man knowingly shields me from the judging looks of the women I mentioned before, and I surreptitiously sneak a tablet of one of my anti-anxiety medications, Diazepam, to my mouth and crush it between my teeth like it were a Pez confection. Anyone remember those?

Gemma Mahadeo: The good thing about Diazepam is that it works nearly immediately. If you take it just as a panic attack is starting, it stops escalating. By the way, I took some before coming on stage. So trying to help normalise that. I constantly wonder when I am in public spaces about how many other people are doing the same thing that I'm doing, pretending to hold it together. To pass as functional and productive. Some standard, no doubt fueled by Western imperialism and patriarchal power structures, but more urgently by capitalism's dominance in the societies that we function in.

Gemma Mahadeo: At the beginning, I offered you to look at this body which does not present as physically disabled. Though if you come to know me, the disability starts to become very obvious finding it difficult to make it on time to events, pulling all nighters to meet deadlines in the midst of a major depressive episode because you can't take stronger anti-anxiety medication after being scheduled to work at the very last minute to cover work shifts over recently resigned colleague who gave no warning. Ending up at the Royal Melbourne emergency ward for assessment by mental health triage on what seems like a perfectly normal weekday evening, because you can't cope with this stress and your supposed partner is selective about when they emotionally support you, but won't tell you why. Shielding your friends from the constant ache of hating existence, because your brain doesn't make enough of the chemicals needed for you to answer, "Good, thanks and how are you?" And really properly mean it.

Gemma Mahadeo:	I'm incredibly fortunate that my part-time employer does make provisions for me so that now I can take the anti-anxiety medication, Clonazepam, that comes with fairly debilitating side effects, meaning, it is better for me to not be mobile, to be just at home and resting. It's great for deleting acute distress feelings, but it also means I need to get up slowly, and often present as drunk. Often when I've disclosed my chronic illnesses, the other two being major depressive disorder and premenstrual dysmorphic disorder, and exacerbations, caused by being behind with freelance work, there's an expectation that this is temporary, it will die down you'll be able to function again and that that non-urgent piece of work is submitted. This simply isn't true.
Gemma Mahadeo:	It's been unusual that for me personally, 2019 has been nothing but a year of consistent pile on of exacerbations. Moving house, then PTSD symptoms coming out full force seeking treatment for PMDD, which so far has addressed the mood symptoms, but not excessive menstruation and its associated gender dysphoria. My first depressive episode for this year was brought on by activists' stress. The episode started to improve to learning very, very recently that a good friend nearly succeeded in ending their life. Having to be strategic about when I schedule inpatient admission for voluntary electroconvulsive therapy once my medications stop working, and having outpatient maintenance, ECT, disrupt my working life as little as possible.
Gemma Mahadeo:	Next week, I will be having a meeting with my bosses about a lot of the stuff I've just told you. My two antidepressants have reached maximum levels and allow me to function or look like I'm functioning. But I do not enjoy life as those with adequate levels of neurochemicals do. I'll have to disclose that my depression has got to the stage where I'll need to become an inpatient as soon as this current school term finishes, and have and CT. A course usually means a minimum of two weeks of three treatments, before reducing to what is known as maintenance ECT, twice a week, then once a week, then once a fortnight. And then discontinuing once your mental health is stable enough to not need it at all.
Gemma Mahadeo:	In the context of my job, this means I could forget a lot of details about the professional relationships I've cultivated, many of which I enjoy. Memory loss is one of the major side effects of ECT. Sometimes it can affect short term memory. This is why I'm an incessant note taker and documenter. I can and I do a lot of things to jog my memory as some of it comes back. I constantly improve my techniques on how to get these memories back. But it takes patience from others involved in those memories too, and not everyone is patient. In an ideal world, my bosses will tell me that I have a job to come back to, they will be patient and explain to those at work next year, that I might seem a little different, but it doesn't mean I care less. But I am still scared and ashamed.

Gemma Mahadeo:	In an ideal world, flexibility of deadlines, being able to work from home, not fearing losing your job after disclosing disruptive health treatments would be the new normal to those with any kind of disability, but particularly given what I'm discussing in regards to invisible illnesses. Not having to pressure yourself to present as healthy until it becomes obvious that certain illnesses mean you start to unravel. And you can be read as unreliable, incompetent, not nice, not friendly, not committed. Acknowledgment that some negative life events are just so hard to bounce back from if comparing to others without mood disorders.
Gemma Mahadeo:	I'm tired of feeling that I'm overreacting for being this way, for being me, a queer, disabled, non-binary person of colour. Would treatment of me be altered if I were white and male presenting? I was not made this way. Abuse and trauma are responsible for many of the mood disorders I now have. But this does not matter. What does, is that I am allowed to process grief, heal in my own time. I know this doesn't fit with the capitalist models of production. Yet when allowed, acceptance, support and encouragement over my mood disorders, it is easier for me to start to feel better and to cope better. Ironically, I do become more productive and work more efficiently.
Gemma Mahadeo:	A few weeks ago, Femmecraft on Instagram was giving away badges. I'm wearing mine today, it says I have an invisible disability, please offer me a seat and a pixelated heart. I'm working on wearing it without shame so that others after me, can with similar things boldly or again in my ideal world, they wouldn't need to wear them at all. I now warmly invite you to listen to Cubbie.
Cubbie:	That's good. Well, hi, my name is Cubbie. I'm hard of hearing. So I've got a short discussion today. But before that, I just want to acknowledge as a migrant and a person of colour. I acknowledge I am an uninvited guest who lives on these stolen unceded lands of the Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. I pay my respects to the elders past, present and emerging and all those who are with us this afternoon. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land. I'm here to discuss with you the future access of my favourite topic and advocacy on digital libraries.
Cubbie:	So at age four, I was already wearing eyeglasses. My parents gave me a tape recorder. So I could listen to the text repeatedly rather than reading books over and over again. So especially when I was preparing for exams. So my question to the audience today is, how do you read? Do you read with a printed book? Or an ebook? Or do you listen with an audiobook? Or perhaps even a combination of two? Or the trifactor of the three, hard copy, ebook and audiobook? Do you buy books? Or do you check your library first and then buy the book?
Cubbie:	So I'm a person of colour, disabled, hard of hearing. I'm wearing hearing devices right now. I've got mental health issues as well and I take medication just to get

through the day. I'm also a non-binary person and a queer. So this is what Pauline mentioned earlier, called intersectionality, I'm all of these, at every moment, quote unquote, from Sara Ahmed's a brilliant feminist, queer feminist read her book. So presently, we've got stats about Melbourne, so one in five in Melbourne lives in a suburb in which at least half of the population was born overseas. 2016 census says a quarter of all Australians were born overseas. And by 2050 Melbourne will be home to 8 million people.

Cubbie: So we disabled, Q, BIPOC live among the population with you, especially as the NDIS or the National Disability Insurance Scheme continues to roll out across the state. So in the future, where houses would probably be smaller or you keep moving because you're renting. So the question is, how do you move with all your books? What if you have a very limited physical bookshelf? So the current libraries and their curators, the librarians, the current publishers, they need to expand libraries digital collection, especially books written by BIPOC authors. For example, Ellen Van Neerven and Anita Heiss' books are only on ebooks on the Melbourne library, digital collection, but not on audiobook. But Kim Scott and Alexis Wright's books are both in audiobook and ebook, go figure.

Cubbie: Already, there is a long queue on audiobooks of BIPOC authors on Melbourne library collection. One BIPOC author told me their publisher doesn't do digital. Seriously? So to the audience, as future editors, the future publishers and the future literary agents, please make your BIPOC authors' books accessible. Your contracts, the futures contracts that you would create, should include the trifactor, of print, ebook and audiobook. As future curators and librarians of digital libraries, please prioritise diverse authors' books uploaded onto the library's collection. We need to decolonise the digital spaces in libraries' digital collections. And as we continue to advocate the hashtag, we need diverse books in public libraries digital collection.

Cubbie: As a carer of a disabled child as well, I don't have the privilege to leave the house all the time to physically go to a library or have a weekend retreat to have all these books and read them for two days away from family. And as the population ages, one's eyesight or hearing becomes more difficult, like myself, accessibility is important too. So when you exclude the future aging population, who are digitally literate, it's a bad combination of what you call ableism and ageism. Randa Abdel-Fattah, one of my favourite authors wrote that Australia needs to redress its continuing wrongs and give way to new identities, new imaginings of nation and new ways of living with each other.

Cubbie: And finally, I can quote, one of also, my favourite authors just google her Angela Davis, amazing advocate. When asked, "Do you think we should remain optimistic of the future?" Angela Davis' reply was, "Optimism is absolutely necessary. Even if it's only the optimism of the will. It is in the collectives or collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism." So as disabled, QBIPOC, our collective, accessibility, decolonisation and intersectionality cannot be separated in the future. Thank you very much.

Pauline Vetuna: Some quick closing comments on behalf of the collective. So you've heard four different but related provocations regarding the future of access. When the four of us first formed our collective, it was out of sheer necessity. And it was a group chat. And the common ground we share being queer BIPOC writers, being disabled, living with mental health disabilities and trying to function and thrive in a world that is often hostile to us. Where advocacy and so-called activism is simply a necessity, we have to do it, we have to do it for ourselves. We have to do it for our children. We have to do it for our families and friends and communities.

Pauline Vetuna: So we found each other now. And we've come together now and are working at a compassionately and sustainably slow pace to build a collective and space within which we and eventually other disabled queer BIPOC writers and artists, we hope, can find community, accessible resources and the support we need as disabled people to flourish as creatives and shape the world around us to be welcoming of us. And by extension all people. That includes learning to be allies to one another and our different disabilities too.

Pauline Vetuna: We don't by any means represent all experiences of disability. And part of building together is the four of us doing work to listen and continuously learn about different disabilities as well. Learning how to be allies to others. The three of us who are settlers have a responsibility to our First Nation's colleague and friend to prioritize the doing of allyship with First Nations people. The two of us who are not black have a responsibility to check anti-blackness. The three of us who aren't parents have a responsibility to be allies to our colleague and friend who is, and so forth and so forth. The future is accessible and this is how it will be built. We are simply a part of a bigger movement. And we invite you to join us in this project. Thank you.

Bethany Atkinson-Quinton: So the disabled QBIPOC, collected we have Pauline, Hannah and Gemma and Cubbie, yeah thank you that was, yeah, amazing. We really appreciate it. Coming up next we have our very first postcard from the future that is coming from Ana Maria Gomides, who's a proud woman of colour. She's Afro-Brazilian goddess, a chronically ill warrior princess, a queer icon and [inaudible] so watch yourself. She was blessed by the ancestors with the gift of storytelling as well as the perfect booty but was once described as dancing like a brown girl who grew up with no friends. Moral of the story being you can't have it all. Please make very welcome Anna Maria.

Ana Maria Gomides: Thank you guys, as a fellow person of colour who is also disabled, that was awesome, and I'm really excited to see what you come up with next. I'd also like to acknowledge that my blackness and indigeneity doesn't change the fact that

I'm settler here in Nom. And to pay my respects to the elders of the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and any other First Nations folks here with us today. Okay.

Ana Maria Gomides: I thought it'd be cute to have an actual postcard and my friend Frankie bought this for me from Columbia and it says somos tiernos which means we're tender. Okay. Nom Friday 25th of October 2019. Dear self, just kidding. Hi, bitch. What up? How are you feeling? Was the anxiety worth it yesterday? Performing at the Arts Centre, huh? Pretty big deal. But that wasn't it, right? We get just as nervous about reading at small gatherings in tiny garages, 10 Studios. And [inaudible], we do this shit every time. Pun intended too, because girl, how much water came out of your ass yesterday? I mean when our appetite is gone and our throat is all closed up, what else are we going to shit?

Ana Maria Gomides: And how many times did we piss? I mean we already have to go about 200 times on a good day. We should see if there's a Guinness World Record prize for that because we truly are the best at pissing. And when we're stressed we're like an untrained puppy. And then there's that thought loop when it's two minutes to go on stage, what if I need to piss when I'm up there? Which of course ends up becoming a, what do they call it? Manifestation. Did anyone comment? Did you crack that stupid joke? Don't mind me I'm just doing pumps of cocaine there, haha hilarious. But seriously, baby girl did we eat yesterday? We know we got to try to eat, through the nausea. We're already shaky at the best of times popping Valiums and beta-blockers isn't going to help if we don't fill up that tum.

Ana Maria Gomides: Did people notice the shaking? The ones up close probably did. Reading from a thing that's pretty much vibrating is hard work. Did they think about a newborn deer walking for the first time when you saw us trying to stand up straight on those jelly legs? If they couldn't see the anxiety, they probably heard it in your voice. We fucked up the actual reading, didn't we? But remember that video of Patti Smith, fucking up while she was performing at the Nobel Prize thing? And she goes all deep voice and drolly accent, "I'm so sorry, I'm so nervous. Can we start again?" And she's shaking so hard, when we were like, "Oh my God, she's human."

Ana Maria Gomides: The woman has been singing for decades. Yes, we're likening ourself to Patti Smith, on it. Also, yes, we did just continental white person. We should have asked for a chair a little bit, we know it helps. Thank you Express Media. Sing the necessary for three a presentation but funny, it's an accessibility requirement. We're sick accept that already. Also try to make those specialists appointments today, putting them off isn't going to make the illnesses go away.

Ana Maria Gomides: Did we remember to practise self-compassion, self-validation? Change of perspective? No? Okay, let's try it now. All things considered, we're doing all right. So we're up since three in the morning. We got to see the sunrise. Shitting water all day is pretty much just a poor man's colonic and jelly legs a bonus workout. Last week we couldn't leave the house at all but we did it yesterday. Why? Because we are boss ass bitch. That's right. Put on some Lizzo look in the mirror and say it with us, "I'm a boss ass bitch." And we got to do it all over again before the reading tomorrow so, [inaudible] baby, take care.

Bethany Atkinson-Quinton: Please give it up for Ana Maria. Thank you so much. Up next we have Brianna Bullen with her postcards from the future. Brianna Bullen is a Deakin University PhD Creative Writing candidate writing about memory in science fiction. Please make Brianna feel very welcome.

Brianna Bullen: Hi. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the stolen lands on which we are meeting today, the Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung people of the East Kulin Nations. It was and always will be Aboriginal land and it was never ceded. Okay. Content warnings for apocalyptic imagery and sensory overload. You can't break from the tubes can't slow down the high-velocity pace within this grid. But you can exist within it at whatever pace you so desire as the world passes you by. You read this as an instruction manual buried deep in the settings of your cubicle, the passage of time is relative. And now I've made it relatively stress free, it says in glowing green Comic Sans on the wall.

Brianna Bullen: This makes you dizzy. You orbit the planet now, in streaks of light, mostly isolated from each other outside of a computer network, and connected entry and exit points in your cubicles. These you use for food, medication and oxygen supply, distributed from larger workstations deeper within. Veins cut through the moving body of the structure. The atmosphere around you is crafted like a protective bubble letting you breathe. Each cubicle is designed on the inside to meet the accessibility needs of the person within or so it says on paper. Your sentence ring only made of metal and plastics and beating hearts instead of us and rock.

Brianna Bullen: Below your feet when the simulation cuts out the world ravaged by fire, steam and tides, what landmasses are left and naked with drought and deforestation, cracked with the sun, you're circulating because Earth could one day be viable again or so they say. But, when? There's no one on the computer network to answer your questions. If you hit send on anything that negative phrasing or ambivalent turn, it bounces back, discomfort flagged. You can't bend, can't descent, can't mobilise, can't share visions of a better future. The frequently asked questions say, "This is to prevent hostile communication and stress," smiley face. The numerous systems outages makes you think that someone could be trying to hack the system, but it always reboots. You check it only for the whisper of a change.

Brianna Bullen: Neon Lights and bodies bypass from outside make your head spin, flicker and smear as if they were trees being passed in a train carriage, too much stimulation, too much all the time. This has been accommodated for. You press a button and reality cuts out for you. Replaced by a serene forest screensaver that doesn't quite capture the way light bleeds through branches, how it should warm your cheeks as an external blush. The nutrition packs have gotten more advanced, your protein groove, despite the coin texture tastes just like Cadbury's marble chocolate, because of childhood rocked with possibilities before was revealed to be limited edition.

Brianna Bullen: The structure containing these millions of people is being pulled down to the husk of the earth by gravity a little more each year. The structure was never meant to be permanent. But the inertia, this is good enough. There can't be any better, is doubt any ambition beyond continuation of the same. One day your console blasts with the message sent for everyone. The first expression of alarm you've seen since being in the tube, the cubicle. It invigorates. The only hope is to send a message, a messenger, a body at a time backwards when certain conditions align with a sudden reversal, which will rip us whole through space time. Used to being buoyed by time, you volunteer. They send you like a postcard timed and dated with a spaceship Samp. Okay.

Bethany Atkinson-Quinton: Thank you so much. Please give it up one more time, Brianna, amazing. All right. Last but very not least, we have Ahmed Yussuf, who is a writer and journalist. He co-edited growing up African in Australia in the first non-fiction anthology of African diaspora stories in Australia. It's out now through Black and you should totally read it it's very good. Ahmed.

Ahmed Yussuf: Oh, sorry. Hi. I feel like I did my postcard wrong. Okay, who has access and what bodies are able to access space? How do we move beyond it? I've been reading this quote unquote in Rankine's Collection Citizen. She says, at the front door the bell is a small round disc. They firmly press. When the door finally opens. The woman standing there yells at the top of her lungs, "Get away from my house. What are you doing in my yard?" You managed to tell her you have an appointment. "You have an appointment?" she spits back. Then she pauses. Everything pauses. Oh, she says, followed by, oh.

Ahmed Yussuf: Access is not just about entering spaces where literary events are happening. Access is about moving in the world. Rankine in this situation writes about a person walking to see their therapist, only to be shouted out like a criminal. Whatever safety or trust that space could have represented was taken away with this outburst. Access is about not fearing where your body enters. Access to a home that is not violent. Access to a school that is not hostile. Access to a workplace that is respectful. Access to public transport where you're not left anxious by stares. Access to a health system where doctors take your pain seriously. Access to darkened streets where women are comfortable and safe. Access to a body that doesn't already hate itself.

Ahmed Yussuf: I cannot see access the source from the bodies who access spaces and how they feel when they access them. There's so many inaccessible spaces that doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of ableism and accessibility. The architecture of our world is not random. There are choices and people responsible for the lack of access. Access is more than mantra expansive of space. More than a distance between the space and your home. Access is a culture. Thank you.

Bethany Atkinson-Quinton: Thank you so much, Ahmed, that was incredible. Access is a culture, powerful one. That's pretty much it, nearly it. But we want to say a huge thank you to the wonderful Lynn for the amazing as an interpretation. But yeah, I just want to say my sincere thank you to each and every artist that has performed today, it's been such a privilege and pleasure to listen to your words. You're very wise and insightful it's been bloody great. If you do want to hear more about Express Media, our programs, check out our website, expressmedia.org.au. But before you go, don't go, get a postcard. Just one more time. Your big frog is our incredible visual artist who's created these visual postcards for today. Yeah, that just looks absolutely amazing. And yeah, please take one home. And yeah, please stick around because coming up next, the Emerging Writers' Festival have an incredible conversation series, and it's also free and it's also great. Awesome. Thank you, you've been awesome. Nothing else from me. Okay, bye.