Carly Findlay: Hello. I'm Carly, and I will be hosting this event today, the "Learnings of Embedding Access in Creativity." Have a seat, come on, don't be afraid. You can sit in the front row, we will not pick on you, except for now. Firstly, I'd love, like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land of the Kulin nation, the Wurundjeri people, the Wurundjeri and the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin nations. We will pay our respects to elders past, present, and emerging, and I really thank them for making up and telling stories on this land for 80,000 years. Sovereignty was never ceded, this was stolen land. If there are any aboriginal people in the room today, I extend my friendship to you, as well. I'd also like to acknowledge disability elders past, present, and emerging, they have paved the way for equity for us today. Also, thank you to the Art Centre for hosting us. It's nice to be here, I really appreciate it, and I'm sure that my panellists do, too. I will introduce our wonderful panel. To my right, immediate right is Sarah Ward. Sarah is a cabaret artist… I'm gonna put on my glasses. I'm sorry, sometimes I forget that I need glasses. Talk amongst yourselves. Excellent. Sarah is a cabaret artist, she is an actor and writer, creator of cabaret character Yana Alana and Queen Kong. Sarah was awarded a Helpmann, and along with her creative team, have 11 Green Room Awards, the Adelaide Fringe Award, and the Melvin Fringe Award for cabaret. Sarah's passion is the creation of subversive political work that challenges gender stereotypes and the status quo through her larger than life stage creations. Outside of her own work, Sarah was the MC for Circus Oz and has worked with La Soiree, Finucane and Smith, Retro-Futuristmas, Yummy, Arena Theatre Company, Melbourne Works Theatre and The Women's Circus. Sarah was co-creator of cult-hip-hop cabaret act Sista She, which was popular in the early 2000s for creating feminist queer, hip-hop shows. Sarah is a columnist for the ‘Australian Education Union’ magazine. Welcome, Sarah.

Sarah Ward: Thank you.

Carly Findlay: Everyone clap--

Sarah Ward: I didn’t realise how long that was. Oh, yawn, yawn.

Carly Findlay: I think Bec's might be a bit longer.

Bec Matthews: Oh no. Paraphrase.

Carly Findlay: So Bec Matthews, to my far right, Bec is a percussionist, drummer, performer, teacher, musical director, composer, sound designer, and noisemaker. She's a graduate of Victorian College of the Arts, where she studied orchestral percussion. She toured as a permanent member of Circus Oz Ensemble, swinging in the air from Arnhem Land to New

York. Bec co-creates the multi award-winning act Yana Alana and Tha Paranas and has worked with the Melbourne theatre companies paddling Women's Circus. Melbourne Workers Theatre, Musica Viva, VCA, George Dreyfus, Anya Anastasia and Ruben K. Bec was the sound designer for Fanatoriums. These are very made up words here. Funatoriums, Circus Cabaret, Captain?

Bec Matthews: Captain Hooks.

Carly Findlay: Captain Hook's pirate party at the Sydney Opera House and was sound designer for the Frying Fruit Fly Circus award winning production Junk. Bec is currently a music director, sound designer and access coordinator for Queen Kong and the Homosapiens. Welcome Bec.

Carly Findlay: To my left is Emma J Hawkins. Emma is more than a triple threat performer, a little outside of the box with a bag of tricks, bigger than herself, performing since a tender age of 10. Her first memory of being on stage was chasing a boy with a frying pan. Since she's performed across Australia in many events, festivals and productions from Shakespeare to burlesque and all things in between. She has won over the hearts of children in the Big Bad Wolf as Heidi Hood, which taught internationally. She featured in the Malthouse play ‘The Real and Imagined History of the Elephant Man’, and she's been nominated for a Green Room Award. I'm paraphrasing now. She's a runaway with the circus of the tap dancing stilt walking acrobats. Emma has produced her own award winning productions including her one woman show, ’I am Not a Unicorn.’ She's been a keen advocate for fair representation for artists with a disability in Australia theatre, film and TV, a member of the newly formed performance with disability committee through equity. She's a proud member of the Equity Diversity Committee. She's also the ongoing bookkeeper for the Women's Circus. She's currently the treasurer of Victorian Actors Benevolent Trust, as well so she's very good with money. If you need your finance system--

Carly Findlay: See Emma. And me, I have got two, one and a half lines for my bio. You should be able to talk talk to it. I am the Access and Inclusion Coordinator at Melbourne Fringe, I'm here today in my role at Melbourne Fringe. I started in this role last year in January or February rather and I help artists make their shows accessible and also venues. Talk about make these their venues more accessible and communicate that they are, and I also help artists that identify as deaf and disabled to make art. I have produced this pretty amazing, if I say so myself, Producer’s Guide to Access, which there are some copies at the back of the room if you want to take some. Or download online, if you search Melbourne Fringe Producers Guide to Access, you'll find them. I also write outside of Fringe, and I speak and I organise events myself. So I'm passionate about making things accessible. We also have two Auslan interpreters

here today. We have Linda and Dave, who will be interpreting. If there is a need for offline interpreters, they will continue to interpret, and I'll come back in about 20 minutes to say, and then they can sit down and clock off if there's no need. Okay, oh, actually, the event is being filmed, so perhaps they will stay on for the whole time, yes? Dave, Linda, thumbs up. Yep.

Auslan interpreter: It's up to you--

Carly Findlay: Thank you, well, I think because of... And that was my next point, that the event is being filmed. So I think because of the event is being filmed, we wanna make it as accessible for everybody. So Linda and Dave will stay on. Last week in the session I was in our interpreters, who included Dave, didn't stay on for the whole session but thank you. All right, I'm gonna get into it now. I wanna talk about why we make art accessible. I wanna state that it shows everyone is welcome. It makes really good business sense to make your art accessible, it opens up to new audiences, it provides new ways to see art, and it allows people with disability or disabled people, as I often say, to participate as audience members, as well as being performers and art makers. And there's lots of ways to make your art accessible, including, but not limited to offline, audio description, wheelchair access, hearing loops, as well as participation and collaboration. There is this great survey that was done last year, the National Arts and Disability Strategy, and it was run by the Department of Communication and the Arts. And the research came out earlier this year, and it showed that 88% of people with disability agreed that going to arts events increases their sense of wellbeing and happiness, and 86% of people with disability agreed that going to art events made for a richer and more meaningful life. The report also showed some really great findings around the way artists with disability and who are deaf increase our economy. That was really great. It also had anecdotes from artists with disability and organisations that commented on the inaccessibility of venues. I'm gonna quote a couple now. While good arts progress... Oh, sorry. While good arts progress is being made in the upgrading of venues to ensure our audience access, there remains significant problems with workshop and rehearsal and performance spaces for artists. And there was also some comment on the need for leadership opportunities in the arts because there are very few. Artists and arts workers with disability have leadership experience and aspirations but don't always have the opportunity to lead, that was one person who submitted to the research. And the findings also stated that what makes arts accessible and inclusive for people with disability, some suggestions, aside from what I mentioned before, were that staff understand accessibility and disability. Info about accessibility provided before they get to the event, accessible venues and accessible transport, and that there are multiple ways to participate in the art. There are people with disability, that they also want people with disability

working, performing, or exhibiting at the event and to see other people with disability participating. And that people with disability can have input into adjustments or adaptations for them. Sorry, nothing about us without us. And finally, two really important anecdotes came from the report, arts are not optional extras. "They make life worth living," said one person with disability, "and I want to see accessibility to all events, "knowledge of disability, issues by event organisers, "staff, and other participants." Another person with disability. And these are just some of the results from that survey, and they show just how important arts and inclusion is. And they're an excellent case for access and inclusion. So to start with, so now I've set the scene now, I wanna start by talking about, asking the panel whether they have any further comments on that study.

Emma J Hawkins: I have to agree with this study. I think that is, as a bookkeeper, as well, it makes economic sense to have performances that are accessible, as well, because obviously, we're roughly 20% of the pie that you are missing out on, that means cash pumps on it. So I think, and it's a great experience for everyone. Arts should be available to everybody to come along, so I think that yeah. Accessibility is the key.

Bec Matthews: I would just, I guess thinking along the lines of assumptions, and when we started working with Asphyxia on Queen Kong, Asphyxia is a deaf performer and she said to us that, "People assume that deaf people don't enjoy music, "but we do, we love music," I guess adding onto that study, that idea about being aware of different ways in which... Of breaking down assumptions, I guess. So that accessibility, providing access in ways where you might not think, first up, that it would be desired, and yeah, the proof was in the pudding that people, their desire was 100% there.

Emma J Hawkins: And I guess, as a person, you wanna see your own people on stage, you wanna be represented. So, I mean, growing up as a young person, I didn't see anyone who looked like me on stage or film or TV, and I think that it would be great to see things like that.

Sarah Ward: I'm thinking about the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, in particular, how inaccessible the venues are there, because they're all older, too, and how that really limits people's audience access, but also performer access. So, yeah, and then I think about how those festivals also, in regards to economic access, because when you come to these bigger venues that often do have lifts and certain access points required, the tickets are 50, 70, 80, 100 more. But a Fringe Festival is where I know I can afford a ticket. So it would be great if those Fringe Festivals were a bit more accessible and they thought a bit more about that.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, we're gonna talk a bit more about the lack of access for performers later on in this session, so thanks so much for raising that, Sarah. The first thing I wanna discuss is that embedding access, so this session today is about embedding access. Embedding access is very different to providing access, or maybe a little bit different. I'm gonna show some videos of Sarah, Bec, and Emma's performances soon, but I wanna tough on what embedding accessibility means. It's different to providing access as an add on, and we're aware of interpreter on the edge of the stage, as we've got now. We're aware of closed captioning and wheelchair spaces, but what happens when access becomes part of the performance? When an offline interpreter interacts with the actor and becomes a character. When projected captions become part of the art design or the set design, it's a step beyond just providing access, and I think that artists and directors are just coming to terms with providing access. So these artists we've got on stage today really show that embedding access can be done and that with the right consultation and the time that it's taken, it can be done. So we've got two videos now, we've got, the first one is from Queen Kong last year.

Sarah Ward: Yeah, it's difficult because there's, we started with the concept of having three episodes and we staged episode two first because it's a bit of a sci-fi thing to do, and also, just a bit of a finger up to convention, which I really love. So it's called "The Legend of Queen Kong, Episode Two, "Queen Kong in Outer Space," so it's a very long title, so, no one's gonna remember it. But yeah, should we go to that now? I'm just gonna sit and watch, is that all right?

[Video plays]

Video Audio: Hello, humans, I am the motherboard, the conduit of communication, the central processor. I hold information and allow for communication between all systems and lifeforms. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, we pay respects to their elders, both past and present. We celebrate their strong, ongoing culture, the oldest living culture on Planet Earth. The following story is a modern mythology. A queer tale, an abstract adventure. If any of our audience who are deaf or hard of hearing find themselves lost or confused, don't worry, nobody else understands, either. Welcome to the "The Legend of Queen Kong, "Episode Two, Queen Kong in Outer Space."

Bec Matthews: Thanks so much.

Carly Findlay: I wanna discuss this with Sarah and Bec now when Sarah gets back on stage. So tell us about the embedded access in your show.

Sarah Ward: You wanna start?

Bec Matthews: Sure, so we... The show took a bit of, quite a lot of time, and that has been a good thing. There's been a few sort of different draughts of it along the way, and we kept changing how we're going to go about it. We knew from the beginning that we wanted to make the show accessible, and Asphyxia is a friend of ours. That's who you just saw onscreen as the Motherboard. So it was great having that direct conversation with her. I think a big moment of us deciding how far we wanted to go with access was listening to Jess Thom. She was being interviewed on Richard Watt's programme--

Sarah Ward: "Smart Arts."

Bec Matthews: "Smart Arts," and she said about... That we always think about, in the arts, that we're so open and inviting and progressive, yet we, the door is not really open for a lot of people. And we've talked about it a lot before, about financial access, it's sort of taking that further. So we wanted, at first, Asphyxia came on board as a consultant because we'd had conversations with her before. She's said, "when I come and see and show "and it's interpreted, that's great, "but then I don't know where to look, "and I'm not watching the actor." She then moved into, so that was another thing to deal with. So there's lots of emails backwards and forwards, and then flying her down, having conversations. And then as we went deeper, we decided we can't do this show without having Asphyxia in it, because the access becomes such a big part of the show, and in fact, influencing the story was we, as a group of hearing people, we can't put this show on ourselves, it's not right. Well, it's not just that it's not right. That show doesn't exist, that show can't exist, so--

Sarah Ward: We did a version of it, didn't we, at the Adelaide Cabaret Festival, where it wasn't accessible at all, and it was about, me and my journey with my alter egos, that was the crux of it. And then we always wanted to make it accessible, but we didn't have the commission funds to do that yet, and--

Bec Matthews: Time.

Sarah Ward: Or the time, and then Dan Clarke, who's such a hero for artists and their dreams and visions and accessibility, said, "Well, why don't we go for some funding within the Arts Centre?" And then we got money and we got a little bit of funding here and there, including a friend,, a dear friend of ours, who became our philanthropist. So that's the thing, is it requires an incredible amount of money. But Selene Bateman was also on our side from Auspicious Arts, and she is a great contact for artists, and she was helping us with budgeting, but also, a programme, can you remember the name of it, we might have to send it because Selene worked something out where we could--

Bec Matthews: There's, I don't know if you know the name of it, but there is, oh, actually, one of our interpreters may know. There is a fund,

Sarah Ward: A fund.

Bec Matthews: So we were able to access—Yeah EAF, that's it. So we were able to access money, because in order to work with Asphyxia, every time we were working on translating songs, or she'd need an interpreter, obviously, and so that becomes, you're basically talking about two people's wages now. So we were able because we were employing her for, I think it was over 105 hours, we were able to access funding to help pay for the interpreter.

Carly Findlay: That's through the... The federal government to fund the social services.

Bec Matthews: Yes, yeah--

Carly Findlay: Employment Assistance Fund.

Bec Matthews: That's the one, that's the one. So, which is a really great initiative because it meant, in some ways, I guess we were in a position where we didn't have the funds to employ someone that was also going to require... When you're talking about it becoming two wages. So that was a really great resource for us, but what's fantastic about that, too, is that it is linked to, you have to be employed for a certain amount of time. So I think that's actually a good thing about that fund, is because it's encouraging, it's encouraging employment, and it's--

Sarah Ward: And collaboration.

Bec Matthews: And collaboration, and so for us, by embedding access, the idea was that we wanted it to enrich the show for everyone. So it shouldn't be that, they acts on their way. That means the deaf community can now come to our show, but we're like... But if we think about how we communicate, surely that is going to be better for everyone, and it's gonna be better for us as artists. And I think also, as an artist, you can be in your own bubble. So also, having put in a situation where you have to think about something from someone else's perspective, again, that can hopefully only make the art better. So it's--

Sarah Ward: I think it did.

Bec Matthews: A total win-win situation.

Sarah Ward: From Adelaide, we went into a process then of integrating Asphyxia, and then we quickly realised that the dramaturgy of the show centred around me and my process with my alter egos was not going to work

dramaturgically anymore. So we created a character for Asphyxia that you saw then on the screen called the Motherboard. So she's our information person, but also a really funny character. It's a heightened version of her, which is a little bit of sass and kind of, what's the Motherboard sort of vibe? It is --

Bec Matthews: Well, it's interesting, because, and she's the conduit of communication and all this information, but sometimes she can't be bothered--

Sarah Ward: That's it.

Bec Mathews: So I'm not like, "Oh, I'm not mean at that thing, "that scientific thing over there." And she really enjoyed that character. But I guess another point of access was that, so we wanted her in the show, but Asphyxia also has chronic fatigue. So that's another good thing that you're working with, as far as, I guess it's another disability in many regards. It's something that's gonna have an impact on--

Sarah Ward: She had to keep lying down during the process. And then we slowly realised she wouldn't be able to physically be in the show, so then we wanted her in the show, so we filmed her instead--

Bec Matthews: Because there was always gonna be projections, but maybe she would have only, she would have been half and half in the projections--

Sarah Ward: Yeah, and so we discovered that through the process that her chronic fatigue was... She was hoping to be better, but she wasn't. And that's fine, it's just, it's about, the one thing that I learned, and it's something that I've always struggled with is patience. And Bec is brilliant with patience, and that's why she became so great at, you taught yourself how to caption and how to use Qlab, and there were over 5,500 cues in Qlab. Yeah,

Bec Matthews: Not all operated, like timed, so.

Sarah Ward: Timed, yeah. So in some ways, what ended up happening is that Bec has, in some ways, become someone that people, a resource for people to come to and say, "How did you that? "How did you teach yourself that "and how can I quickly get that knowledge "to create, to work in that way?" So that was a really, I think one of the best overcomes--

Bec Matthews: Yeah, I actually got a whole new skills set out of it. So again, I guess that's that thing about the win-win, is that by being forced to think about things in a different way, you then have to find different ways to deliver those things. And so yeah, it's been, for me, a fantastic professional development, along with technology.

Sarah Ward: I don't know if we're talking too long, but I just really quickly want to talk about the language of Auslan, and how, how educated I was. I'm gonna really embarrassingly confess this and say I didn't actually know that Auslan was a sign language. I thought Auslan was just interpreting English. So then I learned that Auslan was sign language with its own sentence structures, and words that we don't even use in English, like "papa". So we did a beginner's course with Magic Hands, Bec, myself, and Selene, and then--

Bec Matthews And Jen.

Sarah Ward: And Jen, our guitarist.

Sarah Ward: And then the others did a little beginner's course of their own so that we could talk to people in the foyer and introduce them and talk, introduce ourselves and talk. And--

Bec Matthews: But also so we could change the script with consultation with Asphyxia, because--

Sarah Ward: It really changed.

Bec Matthews: Not like the actual sentence structure. There was one scene that we had to keep the English. To make the joke work, the Auslan and the English were working in opposition to each other, otherwise the joke wouldn't have worked. But the actual structure of the show about what came first changed in order to work with Auslan sentence structure, off topic first, and it improved our communication with each other.

Sarah Ward: Oh my gosh, in the car, I'd be like, "Bec, wait, stop, topic." So yeah, it's a really amazing impetus. It was an amazing impetus for us to change the sense of the show. So dramaturgically, we were in a place that we were really happy with because instead of, because sci-fi encourages you to, or encouraged me to be more abstract. But then Asphyxia encouraged me to be a little bit--

Emma J Hawkins: More precise.

Sarah Ward: Yeah, more precise, so then--

Bec Matthews: So then you can have the abstract.

Sarah Ward: Exactly, all of a sudden the abstract, there was an in for people because I think a lot of the feedback from Adelaide was, "I didn't really know what was happening, but it was fun," whereas this one, they were like, "God, I really got that in." So it really, learning Auslan--

Bec Matthews: A little bit.

Sarah Ward: A little bit, but learning how the language works and working in collaboration with Asphyxia, and always having her challenge us, because she's really a great communicator, Asphyxia.

Bec Matthews: She's direct.

Sarah Ward: Really direct. And I think that's how Auslan works a bit as a language, as well, it's very direct. Asphyxia doesn't say "sorry" 1,000 times in a sentence, like me, so yeah. It was just such a pleasure to work with her and also with Kirri and Ilana Charnelle Gelbart. Ilana did the voiceovers, and we worked really closely with her, too, and she worked with Asphyxia on the translations of the songs, in particular, which often were quite difficult because there's a lot of pun and irony. So they had to really unpack that, and sometimes they weren't singing exactly what we were saying lyrically, which is why we also had the captions, and then Asphyxia said, "you should also have "the bass vibrations." We had them under the chair, so people could feel the music, as well. And then in a filming of the work, Bec created, what do you call those on your iPad?

Bec Matthews: Teleprompt.

Sarah Ward: The Teleprompt, yeah, so we had Ilana actually Auslan prompting, but we also had the script in Auslan come up, not in English--

Bec Mathews: Yeah, so I learned what Asphyxia signs were and so that I could time the scroll of the Teleprompt because it wasn't going with the English, it was going with what her Auslan was, yeah.

Sarah Ward: We learned a lot.

Carly Findlay: Great.

Sarah Ward: We're still learning.

Carly Findlay: It's so good. We're doing a course with Magic Hands at the moment through Melbourne Fringe, and we have just employed Anna Seymour, who's an amazing artist and a dancer, and so we're learning how to communicate better with both Anna and our Fringe artists and audiences, and it's really fun, it's good and educative.

Bec Matthews: I just wanted to add because I realised we probably should have said, we also employed a stage manager who's from Fringe, Christa Jonathan, who, she signs, and in the end, we didn't have Asphyxia with us. We were all looking for a stage manager who could sign so as they

could communicate with Asphyxia, but then once she wasn't on screen, we were like, "Hold on, let's just do this anyway," because it's like, people don't think about it unless they see it. So for us, it was really important to employ Christa, so as that other people would think about it, and so, as moving forward, we had that relationship if there were deaf people onstage with us, and it meant there was someone else. The more people in the room who could speak Auslan, that the better the communication was with the audience, as well. And also, for us, it meant we could keep going further with trying to learn the language, as well.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, it's so great, Christa's fantastic. Emma, we've got your video...

Emma J Hawkins: Sure.

Carly Findlay: From 'Take Up Thy Bed and Walk' now. We'll watch that, it goes for about five minutes.

Emma J Hawkins: Get comfy.

Carly Findlay: Get comfy.

[Video plays]

Video Audio: Jesus said unto him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." And immediately, the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.

Video Audio: I have absolutely no words to describe how I feel.

Video Audio: Ah.

Video Audio: Fuck, fuck, fuckety fuck.

♪ I'm Spasticus I'm Spasticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus Autisticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus I'm Spasticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus Autisticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus I'm Spasticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus Autisticus ♪ ♪ I whittle when I fiddle ♪ ♪ Because my noodle is a riddle ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus I'm Spasticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus Autisticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus I'm Spasticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus Autisticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus I'm Spasticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus Autisticus ♪ ♪ I dribble when I nibble ♪ ♪ And I quibble when I scribble ♪ ♪ Hello to you, I lived a normal life ♪ ♪ You may not comprehend my name or understand ♪ ♪ As I go past your window ♪ ♪ Give me lucky looks ♪ ♪ You can beat my pappy ♪ ♪ But you'll never read my books ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus I'm Spasticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus Autisticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus I'm Spasticus ♪ ♪ I'm Spasticus Autisticus ♪

Carly Findlay: Thank you so much--

Carly Findlay: And I think amazing too, Emma, I thought you'd break into song and dance there.

Emma J Hawkins: That was a good few year, That was about 2013, I think, when we created that show.

Emma J Hawkins: That show was created with Gaelle Mellis and Ingrid Voorendt who were very much about celebrating artists with a disability, particularly women. So that show had five women in it, and four of them had a disability, and we also had an Auslan interpreter who was also a performer, so she was embedded in the show right from the start, which was quite incredible. So we were all about creating the access from the beginning, so even in the creative development, we were learning sign language and we were interpreting the songs, and we were doing all the audio description way back from the start, which made it a bit of a lengthy process. So it took four years to get that show up and running in the end, but it was definitely worth it because I feel like it was integrated into the show so well, and not just a tack on measure. So we had Kyra Kimpton who had a visual impairment, who was one of the performers. We had Jo Dunbar, who now lives in Melbourne, and she's a deaf dancer and myself. And also we had Michelle Ryan, who is now the artistic director of Restless Dance Company. And Gerry Shearim who was our Auslan interpreter, so that was the five of us. And the storyline was talking about how women with a disability back in the day were institutionalised, so that's why you might have seen us in the white nightgowns in the beds. So we talked about how women with a disability were obviously put into institutions back in the day, and it was about subverting the stereotypes. And that's how we claimed the "Spasticus Autisticus" song back for disability people, that it isn't a slur on the word, that it's just about reclaiming the word as our word, and like a rock anthem. So we had that at the end of the show, and interestingly, some people did get that, that we were reclaiming it for ourselves and some people also didn't get the fact that we were reclaiming, and perhaps took offence that we were using that song, so it was a little bit controversial at the time, interestingly.

Carly Findlay: Thank you.

Carly Findlay: It was amazing, I hadn't seen it before, and--

Emma J Hawkins: Yeah, unfortunately you didn’t show up because it inevitably with these things, it's financial and time, and also we burnt out in the end. That's something we don't talk about necessarily in the disability arts sector. And maybe in the mainstream art sector, too. The fact that creating work can take a lot out of people, and the burnout factor is quite high sometimes. So unfortunately, it didn't get to tour, because I think it was

just such a great piece of theatre. At the time, back in 2013, there wasn't anybody doing integrated accessibility into shows, so...

Carly Findlay: Yeah, and it was fantastic, thank you. I wanna move on now to allyship, and Sarah and Bec have told me that you both don't identify as disabled, but felt it really important to make your show accessible. I think that there's an idea that people won't come if you make it accessible, or I don't know anyone that is disabled or deaf. So why did you wanna be really great allies, and make your show accessible?

Sarah Ward: Because we're really political by nature, in the sense that we're always looking at how we can work toward equality across all sectors and all people. We thought what is the only point that is inaccessible currently, particularly if we perform it here at the Art Centre. And that is that people who are deaf or hard of hearing just would not have access to it. And we thought in particular about queer, deaf and hard of hearing people because this show is about celebrating difference and diversity particularly around gender identity, sexuality and the artists involved... Obviously, Bec and I are together, you can talk about your own identity, but I am a cis woman but I identify as queer, or bisexual. And then we have Cerise Howard who is a trans performer and writer and teacher. And Jen and Joe who are both queer and out I won't talk on on their identity, they can talk to themselves at some point. But yeah, and we all got together and we created the show which was looking at identity and looking at our relationship with ourselves, each other and the earth yet, we were thinking, Oh gosh, we just performed this at the Adelaide Cabaret Festival. And it's...

Bec Matthews: I'm gonna interrupt you here because the idea was always to get the access. So it wasn't that we did it, we performed the show and went, Oh, this isn't... We did a draft that was more about getting the song content together. It was because like Emma was just saying, it takes time to do these things. And ideally, it would have, if I could turn back time, I'd probably would have had Asphyxia with us even earlier, like come in when we're writing some songs, even earlier. But I just wanted to be clear

Bec Matthews: Sure yeah that even though we did it but the draft was more about let's get the songs together, let's see which songs live in this show. And then let's take it back into the rehearsal room. Let's pull that script right apart and rewrite it based on... So all the script completely changed. The song stayed the same. But the script completely changed. But sorry to interrupt...

Sarah Ward: No you're right.

Bec Matthews: Just want to make that clear.

Sarah Ward: Yeah. And then to work with Asphyxia, because, the provocation she said was that, as we said before, that she actually doesn't go to much theatre anymore. And she knows a lot of different out of hearing people that don't even bother looking at programmes or websites because they're like, well, it's not for me, so why would I bother? That made me really feel sad, angry, but also complicit. Because every one of my cabarets, I haven't had accessibility for deaf or hard of hearing people. And I know that would have loved them. Those shows is Yana. She's got a wicked sense of humour, and that's what we do you know. So when she said that, when she goes to a rock show to a theatre show, and she has to go like this. And look at the Auslan interpreter here, and the actions happening over here that she finds that, it's like watching tennis, and she can often miss something. And also, she's an incredible lip reader. So she would probably also like to be watching the performer. So in the end, she was really happy with the result, wasn't she?

Bec Matthews: Yeah. But I guess other than this, the idea of allyship and about would anyone come? There was the thing that we kept saying, is that if we just make this show accessible, we could make the show accessible, and we'd feel really good about it. But if no one comes, what's the point? So, from the beginning, I guess part of this whole idea about embedding access to the marketing as well. So was that people have to know what was happening. And I guess ongoing from that, we will never perform as Queen Kong the band, without at least having an interpreter on stage with us. Oh, sorry, the band's Queen King and Homosapiens. So even if it's not the show, if we've invited an audience in, we can't then say, "Oh, but not this one." So it's about, it's part of that. Otherwise, all we did is made ourselves feel good. We didn't actually provide access because we made one show accessible, and then we moved on. But to me, that's not access.

Carly Findlay: And I think it is so important to promote your show and market your show, as it says, as an accessible show, and from the start and in our Fringe Producers Guide to Access, we've got a lot of tips in there, around making sure both work with the online interpreter as well in advance in the rehearsal room, but also working with them in the promotion of the show. So making a video with an interpreter or a deaf person or hard of hearing person to show that you're inclusive from the start. Telling the communities that your show is, inclusive and accessible, because it's not only about making the physical accessibility prominent, it's about making people feel welcome and comfortable to come. And also taking feedback when you don't do such a great job in accessibility, as well. I wanna talk now to Emma and I guess I'm in the same boat we both identify as disabled. And one of the hard things I have, and particularly on my book tour, whereas I said before, outside of Fringe, I work as a freelance artist, and I didn't have the luxury and when

I say luxury, I say a tongue in cheek of turning up and talking. Because I had to not only talk about my book, but do the access. And I expected that the bookstores and the publishers would do that. But it was on me, because I knew and they didn't know and other authors don't even consider it. So that was a really big learning curve for the publishers in the bookstores. And so Emma as a disabled artist, sometimes it can be more onerous to educate in the access what we need or what our audience needs.

Emma J Hawkins: Yeah, absolutely. Because access is also for performers being on stage and backstage as well. And you'd be surprised how many theatres even the big ones aren't accessible backstage. So yeah, it's pretty interesting that they can fit a 20 foot gorilla into a really big theatre, but having a disabled person on stage, not so much so. I've known people that have to go through the foyer of the theatre, they have to get put up on a lift and then get on the stage. And this is all in front of the audience. So I mean, it kind of breaks the fourth wall. Absolutely to start with. So there's crazy stuff like that, that happens. And I've been in big theatres where there's a fire door and the fire doors are way too heavy for me to open. So if I miss my cue, I'm like, stuck by this fire door, not being able to get on stage. So it's just crazy things like that. Try to manage it.

Carly Findlay: I think there's an idea that disabled people and deaf and hard of hearing people can be in the audience, if that, if access is provided, but never on stage.

Emma J Hawkins: Oh yes absolutely.

Carly Findlay: Yeah I was presenting at Melbourne Uni a few weeks ago. And I was talking all about my work as an access inclusion coordinator and writer and speaker. And I looked around and I noticed that they would never have a person in a wheelchair presenting on, in lecture form, unless I were standing at the back of the room because there was no way

Emma J Hawkins: Absolutely and sometimes you can't get on stage with a wheelchair at all.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, you're right.

Emma J Hawkins: For speaking events like that.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, there's an--

Emma J Hawkins: And casting. I've been to auditions where it's in a room upstairs. So if you were in a wheelchair, there's no way you could audition for that role. So you just cut out from the picture because you can't actually access

the casting to get the audition to get the role. So it's like you're stopped right at the start.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, yeah. I think there's an idea that we can't lead. And I think Bec and Sarah really show that deaf people, Asphyxia has led in your performance and Emma--

Emma J Hawkins: I think you are artist in your own right. You're professionals and you're good at what you do. There's still this stigma out here that disabled artists aren't actually very good at what we do that we're somehow lower than everybody else. I don't think that's true at all. I think all types of artists should be able to be on stage.

Carly Findlay: Yeah. And also, that's why we need allies as well to help do the work.

Emma J Hawkins: Yeah, we're all about diversity. We don't wanna cut the normal people out. We don't wanna take over completely. There's space for everyone right?

Carly Findlay: I wanna talk about the importance of embedding access from the start and not just as an add on. And I see artists that really are excited about providing access, but then when they hear how much it costs, so an Auslan interpreter is between $70 and $120 dollars an hour and generally you need two, for a minimum booking of two hours and audio descriptions can be about $1200 dollars a show.Relaxed performances are around $150 dollars a consultation plus the show. So it costs and you have to budget for that. When you embed it from the start, when you think of access as the same as communication, marketing as the same as venue hirer as the same as fees for your artists and crew, then I think that shows that you're really committed. So why is it so important to embed it from the start and not as an add on? Not as an afterthought?

Bec Matthews: I would say one of the factors is time, because if you don't think about it from the beginning, you're not gonna give yourself enough time because it's funny, we had people say to us, and then why don't more people do this. I mean, it's easy, it wasn't easy, like it was great, but it required money and it required time. So I think even like on a purely practical level, you can't decide at the last minute you're gonna do that. It's just not gonna work but also... To make the app better. That's not a very great, it's not a good sentence. But so is not two different things going on stage at the same time. There is one thing and everything is moving your story forward. For me that's why I think it's important.

Carly Findlay: I wanna read a quote on this topic from Julie McNamara or Julie Marcus as automakers some of you might know, Julie's a friend of mine and she's a performer from the UK. She is an Honorary Fellow at VCA Theatre. She's also the Artistic Director of Vital Xposure. She came out

here to Australia this year for about three months and she did a lecture at Melbourne Uni. And she said this really great thing, which I wanted to talk about today, which is related to embedding access from the start. "In the UK we spell disability with a capital D" says McNamara. "We've reclaimed disability because all about "how we do things our own way." She describes the appalling way that lip service is paid to audience members with a disability, whether it's through the use of clunky subtitle or interpreters virtually hidden in the wings, they've got somebody at the side, or a bit of a test there. Sorry, a bit of a test of the stage text. The hideous lights of many productions are a particular kind of hell for people like Mac who have an acquired brain injury. “It's so clunky, so uncomfortable, so awkward” laments Mac “Your brain if you're deaf is constantly playing catch up.” “There's an assumption that the person is the problem because they bring disabilities with them.” “That something about them doesn't work, but it's the system that's failing.” And that's why Mac talks about disability led theatre in terms of access aesthetics. Not only does she aim to put extraordinary marginalised stories centre stage, she strives for an inclusive aesthetic that integrates accessibility at the heart of her work. So her work means that she's got captions on the screen as part of the set and she talks a lot in a lecture about the importance of slow and she works with a woman who has a cognitive disability and this woman pulled her up on the idea that there's nothing wrong with being slow. So she wants to take note of being slow in her movements in her speech so that everybody can understand. And that was a really great thing to hear from Julie. If you Google Julie Mac or Uni Melbourne, you can find some really great stuff that she's done butI thought that quote was or that excerpt from that article was really pertinent to what we are discussing today. Emma, do you have anything on embedding access from start?

Emma J Hawkins: I just think I'm not only can it be part of the creativity as well, so that you actually learn new things from being able to put access in so early on. I know I learned so much. I didn't really know much about tactile tours when I first started doing ‘Take Up Thy Bed and Walk’ in that so that people can come and feel the set and touch the set pieces and things like that. So even I'm learning and they shaped how the whole show was discovered. I just think it just allowed to great flexibility and how you make a piece of work. And that everybody can then watch the show. If you're elderly, you might get something out of that too. If you can't see, it just opens it up to everybody. In such a great way.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, I agree. And I think that when you embed access for performance, and for audience members, it can make every like the idea of seeing yourself like you were saying before, it can make the audience or other actors or performers more comfortable in asking for what they need as well, because they feel very awkward about asking for a chair. But then

if the chair is provided to someone else, then they'll be more comfortable.

Emma J Hawkins: Yeah, one of the performance in the show had a problem that she was really scared, she might go to the toilet, be desperate to go to the toilet during the show. So we actually just worked out a bit where we're like, if this happens, you do this gesture, and then we just had this moment in the show that we could stop the show and she could go to the toilet. Like, you don't make anything wrong. Everything's okay. That's just how it works. It never happened, so it was great. But we just had this backup plan in case she needs the toilet.

Carly Findlay: Yeah. I wanna talk a little bit now from leading on leading off from what Julie Mac said, and the aesthetics of access what one thing I found really lovely with your performance, Sarah and Bec was the Zine that came with your performance. So there's a Zine on everybody's seats that you can have a look at. The Zine…. Emma there is one down there.

Emma J Hawkins: Yeah I've had a read of it earlier.

Carly Findlay: Ok great. The Zine was art in itself and I've seen some relaxed performance or accessibility information attached to performances or performance information. And it hasn't looked great. And that's fine. As you said, it takes a lot of work and it's a lot of money to produce collateral and things so I was really impressed with this. It incorporated Asphyxia's artwork as well did it?

Bec Matthews: It's actually not Asphyxia's artwork. No.

Sarah Ward: It's Manouri Peiris's who worked with us right from the beginning. But Asphyxia was a part of consultation on the Zine. And I think everybody wanted it to be visually exciting, because why should it be droll? Why should it be boring? Access can be exciting and fun. And I also think, if we had the money, we would have been able to put Braille inside it too, which is the dream.

Bec Matthews: We talked about it.

Sarah Ward: That's the dream. So next time we do it, and Deb's here too our friend who was gonna help us out on that. But unfortunately, we just didn't have the money or the time to make that happen. But that is something we'd like to do next time.

Carly Findlay: You could get one of those Braille printers and you could print them. It'll take ages though. You'd need to employ another person.

Bec Matthews: And I guess it's going back to that thing about the access should be great. I think it can be done in a way that is useful for everyone. So the information in that Zine is essentially what wouldn't be needed to be provided for relaxed performance. So we were really lucky at the Arts Centre supported us and we had regular meetings and we could because we're still learning so to have assistance in what to put in there. But then okay, so let's do that. But let's not just have it for the relaxed performance. Let's have it there all the time. And everyone can have access to that and just find another entry point to the show.

Sarah Ward: Yeah, I do wanna thank the Arts Centre at this point, because we did have big we, had quite a few meetings, and the access team here are incredible, and made it happen, and back and forth with us. But I think it's also useful, this is the thing is that somebody like me now I suffer from quite a lot of anxiety. I have chronic anxiety. So for me being able to sit and read, and get a sense of the show, and what it's that means something to me that makes my show more relaxed. So we made sure that these were accessible for every show, not just for... So this not just for the relaxed performance.

Carly Findlay: And I know now I just got an email today actually from Fringe artist who is looking at making their show accessible, and I will send them your example of information. Emma, do you have anything to say on the aesthetics of access?

Emma J Hawkins: Like Bec said, it doesn't have to be boring and dry it can be exciting and like, we had lots of bass in our music so would like we had a thumping rock anthem our show. I just thought it didn't have to be droll, and so access is exciting and I just like the pipe dream that all shows everywhere are accessible. I mean imagine what that would look like. It would be incredible, wouldn't it?

Carly Findlay: Yeah, I saw Sarah Sarah Houbolt's show last year 'KooKoo the Bird Girl' which was Northcote Town Hall and Sarah was part of the Darebin Speakeasy, also a Your Platform Programme. And she had all the warnings for her show, and I think I'm not sure whether all the shows were Auslan interpreted. But the warning was like it contains power tool usage, because she used a power tool in the show on her crotch. So the warning was quite alarming but useful. So when I was researching all of your shows, and for this, I was looking at the reviews because sometimes and I've found it as well for my own work, particularly with my book. Sometimes people don't get access or they don't get disability and some of the reviewers can be ableist or I guess discriminatory or just not clued in to the purpose or the benefit of access. All of the reviews were amazing for your show and they all commented on access. I'm gonna read two of these now. I'm gonna read one of Queen Kong, TimeOut said that "the major theme is not just of inclusion "but the boundless

potential of humanity, "and its great capacity for change." "The presence of live Auslan interpreter on stage, "as well as an access consultant in the credits proves "that it's isn't merely lip service, that the creative team "are walking the walk." And of Take Up Thy Bed & Walk, Glam Adelaide said, "this performance is generous, inviting, "moving, touching, heartwarming and extremely inclusive." “Aside from an Auslan interpreter, there were screens on which text appeared there was recorded dialogue and the music had plenty of bass, which could be felt by those who could not hear.” So I thought that the reviews were great. And I really worry that we have a range of reviewers who aren't disabled who aren't in the access inclusion space that are reviewing our work, but it's also important to get critical reviews. What do you say about reviews and access and inclusion?

Sarah Ward: Yeah I’m just trying to think...

Bec Matthews: You got thoughts?

Sarah Ward: I'm just yeah, still thinking.

Bec Matthews: Well, I mean it's interesting because for us, a point of a moment that was really clear that made us wanna add the access was actually a reviewer, Richard Watts, interviewing someone so there's so that I guess there are people that I would... I think Richard is a good advocate is an ally. And he's an example of someone that from what I can see is trying to gather more knowledge he wrote an article about relaxing performances for Arts Hub. So I guess you just hope there's more people--

Emma J Hawkins: I think it depends on the reviewer too... Richard Watts is obviously a king supporter already. But I just thinking that whether it would, it was more for the audience members actually within reviewers. I remember when I did Take Up Thy Bed & Walk, because I'm quite well known as a cabaret light entertainment type person. So when I did something a bit more heavy hitting politically, some people found that a bit more difficult to take from me, because I was getting a bit more serious. And that was when I started owning the word disabled artists and I identified as that for myself. So I'm interesting that somehow people don't always come along for the ride with you when you're trying to re-identify yourself as an artist, but I think there's power in the words then owning being an artist with a disability.

Sarah Ward: Just to add to that, I think we've got a problem with reviewers because everybody thinks they are a reviewer and bloggers can do it--

Emma J Hawkins: And anyone can be.

Sarah Ward: And anyone can, you can review even on Facebook now. You can say, “I didn't think this was very great.” In fact, I did that for my friends in Edinburgh for their show ‘Casting Off’ is it? Yeah, great show. Really age inclusive and exciting physical theatre work. You know Deb? Deb Button?

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Sarah Ward: Yeah, and Spencer, Sharon. So they did this show and I said, "Oh God, I love this show, "This is all women and feminism and body positivity." And so I said, "five stars Yana Alana," and they actually printed it and put it on all their posters. So I think we have to start, because the system isn't working for us we have to make it work for us now. So if it's broken, let's go with it. Let's find people that can review and just make up something if you need to, I don't know, I really think it's broken now, there's only, one or two or maybe three places that the Herald Sun, The Australian, The Guardian.

Carly Findlay: You’ve got heaps of reviews there’s like a whole page of reviews.

Sarah Ward: One of those, yeah.

Carly Findlay: They're all good.

Sarah Ward: I hate it when you get stars.

Bec Matthews: But at least I think people forget that it's an actual it's a skill. Even though everyone can have an opinion, an actual solid review.

Emma J Hawkins: Maybe the thing is that the more access is embedded into shows it will become something normal that isn't strange for reviewers.

Carly Findlay: And not to comment on?

Emma J Hawkins: Yeah, perhaps or weirded out by, I don't know. Maybe their brains have to work too hard. I don't know. Do you know to mean they just don't know what it's like. It's not experiential for them. They haven't had experience with someone with a disability. So they're like, why should I have to watch someone Auslan interpret or something like that? I don't understand these people Carly, I don't understand.

Carly Findlay: The reviewers?

Emma J Hawkins: Yeah, those ones.

Carly Findlay: Yeah. I'm gonna do a wrap up soon with questions around what's next from us. But I want some questions from you in the audience now. If we

can someone have the mic so it picks up as well, if we can give up one of the mics, please. Thank you, we've got lots, gosh.

Carly Findlay: It's good. Okay, at the back.

Audience Member: Hi, thanks. Talking about embedding access from the start. If an able bodied performer or producer wanted to do a collaborative work with people or artists with disabilities. Is there agencies or organisations where you can access people or artists with disabilities to work and collaborate together to embed access from the start?

Emma J Hawkins: There's probably a couple of places you can go to. There's Arts Access, which is an organisation here in Victoria, who would know artists with a disability. The Equity Now has the performer with a disability committee so you can talk to MEAA.

Audience Member: Great.

Emma J Hawkins: I say there's an agent called is my agent called ICACM. That's their abbreviation, and they have artists with a disability. Yes, so there's a few different, Deaf Australia… Carly probably knows a few good ones too.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, and I also think it's about getting out and seeing the work, and I get all of my work. I'm not a performer, I sometimes perform, but I'm not, that's not my main work. But I get all of my writing work my speaking opportunities through word of mouth, and it's generally through people who have come and seen me, come to see me speak before, who have asked me.

Emma J Hawkins: Finding maybe a good fit, because you don't always it's about finding someone that you like their work, and what they're doing is as well as a producer.

Carly Findlay: And I get a lot of queries on my from my Facebook page to, ask for castings or promote a show. And one of the things that I always request is, can you make this information accessible. There's no point in sending me a picture that I then have to image describe. So image description is where you put what's happening in the image in your text caption so that people with screen readers or people that have sensory conditions can read them. And so if they send it in an inaccessible format, then it's a lot of work for me. So make it really clear and accessible for us to promote. There are a number of casting agencies that I've heard, but again, I think that they're somewhat inaccessible. And also that it's really great when disabled people get paid. So make sure your event is a paid thing.

Emma J Hawkins: Yeah, you'd be surprised how many times we get asked to do things for absolutely no money.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, that's a good question.

Emma J Hawkins: That's the arts in general. Thank you.

Audience Member: Thanks.

Carly Findlay: Who else had a question there was some more?

Carly Findlay: There's one over here.

Audience Member: Hi, I'm just curious about you mentioned right at the start about leadership and needing leadership skills. In a perfect world, what would that be?

Carly Findlay: I think it's about leadership opportunities, because I think we have leadership skills. We're proving that today. But I think that there is an assumption that disabled people don't have leadership skills, and that we can't act in leadership roles.

Emma J Hawkins: And also there aren't… Well, in the major art company's era. I don't believe there are any leaders with a disability that I'm aware of, as well.

Carly Findlay: Oh no. Arts Access Victoria!? Has the lovely Caroline Bowditch --

Emma J Hawkins: I'm just thinking of the big thea--- Yeah, big theatre companies, I guess I'm thinking of.

Carly Findlay: But it's about giving opportunities like mentorships and paid opportunities and ways to work up the ladder. At Melbourne Fringe we've employed, they've employed me, which is great, but again that you know that's an entry level position. And we've employed Anna Seymour and there's also opportunities for mentorships through for artists in Fringe Festival. And that was through the Victorian Government Creative Victoria's Talent Matters programme, which might have been through the other arm of the Victorian Government, the Disability Employment arm. And that put that gave two people or a years or two years' worth of employment to a producer that is disabled and I know that there's other opportunities that have gone to other arts organisations like Writers Victoria, running the Publishability programme. But there just needs to be spots and paid spots, not just at the entry level. The Disability Leadership Institute talks a lot about this. That's not an arts organisation but a disability led leadership organisation. They talk about how it needs to be more than just entry level.

Emma J Hawkins: And I think maybe more consultancy work, paid consultancy work.

Carly Findlay: And I think for me, even though I work at Fringe, I did that for two and a half days a week and the rest of my time is freelancing and the places that I work at hire me as a consultant and I used to work in government for a very long time. And I feel like I'de equate that work to what I did in the government, I'd be earning and working at a much higher level than I did when I was in the government doing this consultancy work.

Audience Member: So is there paid consultancy work in other countries, for disabled people where you could follow that model?

Carly Findlay: Yeah, I think so, there's some great disability led organisations and people. I think you just have to really get online and follow people. I share a lot of people through my own social media through Carly Findlay on Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and the Disability Visibility Project shares a lot of people as well and Disability Leadership Institute. Yeah, but it is about you researching and following along and becoming interested and involved in the community and getting out and seeing the art as well.

Emma J Hawkins: And making connections with people that perhaps you wanna work with and knock on doors. If you can make the door handles. Go through the door. Climbing a window, go through the backdoor, whatever you could do.

Carly Findlay: Any comments from you two?

Sarah Ward: Yeah, I think there's some exciting things happening in the UK.

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Bec Matthews: And I mean, that's not so…. I did some research because we wanted to go to the UK and I came across, I'd already we've made some connections with the, Royal Theatre, Glasgow, sorry I can't. My brain can't find the name of the theatre but in Glasgow, and there is a course there. It's a theatre course for deaf and hard of hearing people. So it looks awesome. I wanna go there, I wanna go and meet the artists and see their productions. It just looks fantastic. So it's, of course very much like what you would see VCA or NIDA, but it's all around training, like rigorously training deaf performers. I guess it's that thing about saying yes, these people are the leaders and they are talented and but it's not an add on that….

Carly Findlay: Yeah, I know that, Caroline Bowditch was saying at Creative State a couple of weeks ago that in the UK, there's quotas. And if you apply for a grant, you have to put access on your grant so that the government gives them money to make their shows accessible. I think that and we really stressed today how much it costs to make your show accessible. I

did a show last year and event and Emma was the emcee, I did a fashion parade at Melbourne Fashion Week. And the most of the money went to--

Emma J Hawkins: To access

Carly Findlay: To access. Paying the Auslan interpreters and also paying all the performers and models and Emma. Yeah, it's really important. So we need the funders to get behind us and see it not as a project but a core funding. Does that answer your question?

Carly Findlay: Yeah, great. Thank you. We've got a question up here at the front, we'll just wait for the microphone. Oh, no, for the access, we need a microphone.

Audience Member: You mentioned it sort of more at the start. And then also just then it reminded me again, in terms of ticket prices, and people being able to come and see shows, obviously needs to be made more accessible financially, but then the cost of putting on a show fits super independent people, and the costs that entails. So for example, I'm doing a Fringe show, and we're gonna have two Auslan interpreted performances, and that's one of the more expensive parts of the budget. And because of that, we had to increase the ticket prices in order to cover our sort of minimum if we wanna breakeven 30%. Do you have any advice on, I don't know what's too expensive or I don't know the best way to go about it. Or from going right from the get gowe want it include these things, but then obviously making it accessible to the people who we wanna come and see the show. And I know that people with disabilities often can earn less money and artists can earn less money.

Bec Matthews: That's why I think those things are like two for one nights, that's so if you make sure, it means that it's not accessible financially every night, but making sure that there is a night where people on a low income, can come.

Carly Findlay: And there's companion cards that you can add to your booking so someone that has a support person can bring along that support person for free.

Emma J Hawkins: I think Sarah mentioned earlier but marketing to the right areas, making sure that you get the deaf community to know about your show and things like that.

Carly Findlay: And also you might make the ticket sales back, you might make those Auslan costs or whatever other accessibility provision back on ticket sales if you market to the right people and people come. It's a little bit different, I guess, but when I did my book tour, I've live streamed a

number of them and recorded a number of them. So for those who were bed bound or couldn't get there, they could see that later or listen to it later. And I haven't had the time to transcribe, but I will do soon and upload them all. And I also worked with the Wheeler Centre and Writers Victoria and my publisher for the Melbourne launch in providing six tickets for free, I think. Yeah, so six, yeah. And that included the book in there as well. And now for people who couldn't financially afford to come because I said, I want people to be able to come and also be confident in asking for that ticket as well.

Audience Member: Yeah, our venue producer, the group called Camp Conscious and so we didn't even think of this thing they suggested for us to hold some free tickets per night or a pay as you feel pays you can, or pays you feel or something like this and then also having a separate section on Fringe that's like a low ticket income price. So I think that's the conversation they were gonna have with ticketing, but that also might be a conversation that you would then have with them in terms of the actual ticket options that you can list on your event or... Yeah, that's not really a question, sorry.

Bec Matthews: I think financial access is a big thing. And I think one of the things I've noticed is that a lot of places that concession price is $4.00 dollars cheaper. Yes, and that was set by someone who's never needed concession.

Audience Member: Yeah.

Bec Matthews: Because they've got no idea of the value, what someone else drops on taking their mates out for dinner is someone else's weekly income. So, when there is a concession price, we feel strongly that it should be a significant.

Sarah Ward: $10 to $15 dollars cheaper and also--

Sarah Ward: We did this thing at Fringe which works really well for us because we were in the Lithuanian Club in the main space. So I think there was about a 250 seater or 300 seater if you open the top, so we did this thing where we had a preview on the Tuesday where we only charged something like $10 or $15 bucks. And then we had a Wednesday, which was like, we know, we're not gonna get many people in there anyway. So let's make it accessible for people. And we did pretty much the same price, but we called it something. Do you know what I mean? Like we gave it a title, and then we sold it to the Fringe great idea. And then we're like, cool. And then we sold so many tickets, so many more than we would have added at a higher price. So it worked really well for us for the festival for the people and financially it really works. So you think about our tricky little ways that you can make it accessible financially.

Audience Member: Was that like a discount code or something you had for that Wednesday show?

Sarah Ward: No, we just made the price. We made the price in the programme.

Bec Matthews: It's like having something like a Tight Ass Tuesday.

Sarah Ward: Yeah.

Carly Findlay: And the Fringe Festival also runs discounts. I'm not sure what they are this year, but there's Fringe Dweller, which is like if you become a member and then there was this last year they had the Take Five Bank of Melbourne. No Bank of Australia sorry, scheme where I think the bank paid $5 dollars. And then the audience member got $5 dollars off,

Audience Member: Yeah I remember that.

Carly Findlay: But it didn't' take away from the box office fee that an artist would get. So I'm not sure this year you'll to have a look when the programme launches. But there's those options. And when you promote your show to your audience, let them know about these discounts as well.

Audience Member: Thank you.

Carly Findlay: Any other questions?

Carly Findlay: One here and one at the back.

Audience Member: Thank you. I wasn't sure if it was going to get past further back or not. I just wanted to ask a question in regards to reviewers. We just touched on it before and for marketing to people with disabilities. There's a whole lot of different communities and sub communities within that big banner, obviously, do you have any recommendations of people that we could approach within that community that could, review a show at a dress rehearsal or a preview for them?

Carly Findlay: Yeah, great question. I get heaps of review requests through my blog and email and I often can't do them. So I will pass them on to people I run a group called Disabled Writers, or Australian Disabled Writers, and I always send that only if people wanna do them or not. And you could send them to Quippings, Quippings is the disability performance troupe in Melbourne. I'm a member of Quippings, although I haven't done a show for a long time. Send them to Arts Access Victoria, as well. If you include the ticket. One of the things that I have found is that some disabled people aren't really familiar about where to connect with review publications. So if you know of places that you would like the show

review in, you could ask, could you review this show and then maybe say if you wanna do it on your blog or Arts Hub or through TimeOut, but I would say or even a Facebook post, if you're happy with that. And I do a bunch of reviews around the Comedy Festival, and I'm mostly put them on my Instagram now, because that's where people see you review. I don't write for any particular website. So if you're happy with their own Facebook page, that could be good. Any other suggestions?

Emma J Hawkins: Richard Watts is always a big supporter of disability art. Or any cool art, really. He's always open to things.

Sarah Ward: We felt very much like we didn't wanna care that much about what the mainstream reviewers thought. So we put a big whiteboard out the front, in the foyer.

Emma J Hawkins: That's nice, yeah.

Sarah Ward: We were encouraging people to write their own reviews, particularly hopefully from the deaf and hard of hearing community because we thought they're the ones we're gonna post about. Who cares what Cameron Woodhead thinks.

Bec Matthews: Actually, to a point that was also for us for our own--

Emma J Hawkins: Feedback.

Bec Matthews: And yeah, because that was one of the things, we're like, we gotta be prepared for the onslaught of, "oh, that didn't work." And because that was for us as artists, we wanted that as well to help progress the work.

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Bec Matthews: Well, interestingly, I think maybe it's that thing about the only people who had positive feedback, wrote up there, and drew pictures and--

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Bec Matthews: Oh, yeah.

Bec Matthews: Oh yeah, because we really actively sought feedback. So there was conversations around native Auslan speakers as opposed to learning Auslan later in life. So that was things for us to think about. And what did you have something else you're thinking in particular that you wanna make?

Bec Matthews: Yep, yeah.

Carly Findlay: There was a question up the back, on the right.

Audience Member: Hello, thank you so much for what you shared today. I found it really, really interesting and insightful. I run a co-founded a small production company, based in Gadigal land up in Sydney. And I just wanna add on to that question about reviewers. We found earlier on in our practice that a lot of the reviewers were mis-categorising and misinterpreting our work, and because all of our artists a female identifying black and brown identifying, indigenous women, we found that really problematic and as a result to protect our performers we stopped inviting people from outside to review and asked our community to review in their own words. And so I was wondering, in terms of embedding access, is there anything that either of you, any of you have used to protect your performers from potential critique or criticism or from misunderstanding from people who come and view your work?

Carly Findlay: That's a really great question. Yeah, I don't know, as a performer in my occasional performing in Quippings or other things, we have never discussed that. But as a writer, I get reviews of my book. And I would say the most the one stars are the most ableist like someone wrote the other day that “My Life’s Story", it's a memoir, it makes them feel better about their own health. Early on when I first published the book in January, there was a person on Goodreads that said, they thought that my face was airbrushed and that I wasn't a true representation of myself. And my agent said generally she would say never to respond to the reviews, but in this case, I set them straight and I said I was very clear with the photographer about what I wanted and the publisher and this isn't airbrushed and my face was good on that day and all that. And I mean, I shouldn't even had to. But it's interesting. And I think you have to talk to your performers around, not reading the reviews or only reading the good ones. And also that Brené Brown quote, also, Eleanor Roosevelt, maybe if you're not in the arena, getting your ass kicked, I don't want your feedback.

Emma J Hawkins: So tricky. I've just been thinking about that question. When you identify something, and you label yourself as that and then your show gets labelled with that as well, it comes with this weighty context to it. So I do understand where you're coming from. But it's difficult because who reviews the reviewers? Nobody does. So basically, it's really tricky that you'll get the right type of person to your show, and will understand what you're trying to say. And the context that it's coming in. So yeah.

Carly Findlay: I think if it's from your own community.

Emma J Hawkins: Maybe, yeah.

Carly Findlay: Or the community you're trying to target that's a really great thing. I have actually gone back to people I got a tweet this morning, actually from someone in England, who wrote something really nice about my book. And I just messaged him and said, "hey, if you want to, "could you consider putting that on Goodreads, you know?"

Sarah Ward: Yeah, I can relate to this for as a queer feminist artist, and I think that some of the reviews as soon as you start reading them, you go, "ah, okay, cis-white man." Yeah, and then you got to read it. And then you look at the bottom and you're like, yep, you didn't understand or you can't understand. And so then that helps take the three stars with a grain of salt. But you use those things so that you can get the word out there. So then it is really hard when a major paper gives you three to… actually I prefer two or one. I really would three hurts so much more.

Sarah Ward: Three is like….

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Sarah Ward: Three is like, I don't care, you know what I mean? And which is the worst when you creating really political accessible work, and it's just like, you wanna go, well what would you know? And then, but it's like at the end of the day, that's the one that goes nationwide. That's the one that everybody reads. And then all of his time and work and effort and they don't care.

Bec Matthews: But I would add to that, I guess, is what you're saying about you're getting reviews from within your community. And I have heard of other companies doing that. But I think people who read reviews a lot are also aware that's a review from someone so that you're reading, like if you read enough reviews, you're reading it with that lens on that you say you might go "ah, he hated it. "I'm gonna love it." I'm definitely gonna say that because you start to, you read enough reviews, you start to know--

Emma J Hawkins: It's true.

Bec Matthews: Where people's line is.

Sarah Ward: I think reviewing from within the communities is where it's at the moment.

Bec Matthews: Yeah.

Carly Findlay: Yeah.

Carly Findlay: I'm gonna wrap up questions now. If there's any others maybe ask at the end. That was really great. But I wanna show you a performance I went

to see that was amazing and I can't stop thinking about it and we'll get the video playing in a minute. But I was in Perth and I was a speaker at the Perth Festival earlier this year. And the producer said to me, "Hey, Carly, we know you're Melbourne Fringe, "you should come and see our performance." Which is one of the key performances of the festival called 'The Nature of Why'. Caroline Bowditch from Arts Access directed this choreographed this actually, and someone from Goldfrapp is involved as well. And so I attended this and I was asking all of, my publisher was with me and a couple of other speakers and I said, "Do you wanna come to the orchestra tomorrow?" And they're like, "no, it'd be so boring. And then anyway, so it was really hard to have to give the tickets away. And I found two friends to come. And they were so amazed and it was so incredible. And I went back to my publisher said, "you missed out" and they were very sad because I showed them the video on Facebook afterwards. Jess Walton came with me. Jess is an amazing writer she wrote the episode of Get Krack!n the disability episode. And Emma was in that as well. So Jess wrote this really great piece for Witness online and she said, at one point a dancer held my hand and we moved together. They didn't realise I had a prosthetic leg. But as they felt me struggle with my balance, they adjusted their movements and their movements became smaller, gentler, slower, that generosity Croggon describes "that fluid sense of exchange made it possible for two strangers to come together and dance and to find ways to move together. It was like a conversation between two bodies and it was beautiful." When they let go of my hand and move toward another person, I found myself still dancing euphoric with joy and wonder. So we're gonna watch the 'Nature of Why' now. It was incredible. And it really shows how access can be embedded.

[Video plays]

Video Audio: When you explain a lie. You have to be in some framework that you allow something to be true.

Carly Findlay: So that was really participatory. So we're all on the stage with those performers with the musicians and the dancers in come back on now. And it was so incredible. We just felt like a real part of it. And there were chairs on the stage for what to sit down, which was useful for me and other people it was really wonderful. And I think that, that's a really great example of what can be done. I wanna wrap up now and talk about what's next. And we've covered a lot of the stuff already, in that it's really important to budget for access, and to promote access and to consult on access. So what do you think is next? What would you like to see these people in the room do?

Sarah Ward: I just wanted to talk a little bit about my hopefully it's not too glass half empty, which I always am. But what a shame, that there isn't more

funding. Is the answer to go to philanthropic to go to philanthropist to maybe hit up some ethical corporate companies? Maybe, because when I think about the cost of what we created, it's not sustainable. And we certainly wouldn't continue to get funding from the Australian Council over and over. We aren't artists with disabilities. So I think the funding even though we work closely with Asphyxia and she's embedded into the show, the work the money, there's so little. In the Australia Council now. I think, Arts South Australia there's more money for art, coming from the local government there and Creative Victoria, I mean, think about how many people just put in an application, it's really quite overwhelming and very difficult to get a grant. So I think sometimes you can have lucky said these great ideals and then you start looking at the budgets and we had with Selene, we probably had about 15 budget meetings where we have to keep going back in reducing fees, reducing this, reducing expectations and that was fine because we knew that what we were gonna create in the end was something we would be really proud of. But I think the money and then once you've created it and it's there to go, you have to be then market it and you have to have while you're creating the next work and generating income. As a freelance artist work out how to sell it to producers, and then the costs of the show like you said, I'm worried that our shows, that's it.

Sarah Ward: I think that might be it.

Emma J Hawkins: And that's inevitably what happened with Take Up Thy Bed & Walk.

Sarah Ward: That's it.

Emma J Hawkins: We just ran out of energy as well as money, because it took four years to get it off the ground. And that was in South Australia. So you are actually right there was more money to support us over in South Australia. And then by the time we burnt out we weren't able to tour it nationally yet.

Sarah Ward: I guess what I'm saying in some ways is I need answers too. I wanna know how to make this,

Bec Matthews: Okay, I'm gonna be more positive.

Sarah Ward: This is what I know, I always do this--

Bec Matthews: So sometimes I know time is money, but when there's a lack of money, just give yourself more time. And then you can, like I learned jobs that needed to happen. So as we didn't have to pay someone else to do it. So just time to do that.

Carly Findlay: I also said to you know, a few Fringe artists, if you thinking about the Fringe Festival, maybe don't apply this year, see and maybe get your budget ready for next year, get your plan, it's gonna be the same application process.

Emma J Hawkins: There's no harm in doing creative developments to start with too because that's where you learn a lot of stuff. So don't necessarily push for doing a show straight away.

Sarah Ward: Straight away, yeah.

Bec Matthews: Even for us, like we didn't have to perform this big show all the time. It's like, having, a portfolio of work that you're doing and that some of them and I guess also like our particular access required a certain amount of technology. But there's a whole different way. Lots and lots of ways that you can provide accessibility. So I guess, just because we're saying it cost money, whatever, if you can do that first step, then that's the first step. So that's gonna be better than no step.

Carly Findlay: You don't have to provide all forms of access in the guide that we've got from Melbourne Fringe that there's a lot of ways to provide access, you don't have to do everything. And often some forms of access don't work with other forms of access. Like if you're making a relaxed performance and dimming the lights, then perhaps you can't see the Auslan interpreters.

Bec Matthews: Our Zine, we actually talked about it wasn't what you would normally experience a full relaxed performance to be because that would have provided, would have taken away that effects just saying so we had to be really clear about what the access was.

Emma J Hawkins: Perhaps get good partnerships with people from the disability sector. I mean, we're quite happy to ask us questions, what would work for you? How can we make this show better for all types of people?

Carly Findlay: When I did Access to Fashion last year, I did GoFundMe, which was great. We raised a lot of money. And then just through word of mouth, I had two companies approached me going, "can we give you money?" I'm like, "yes, please." And they were companies that would great. One of them was a disability specific employment company, and the other one was around accessibility. And so that funded the hairdresser's fees. The one of them, the jobs one, they said they wanted to pay someone's fees and we said, okay, you can pay for the hairdressers on the day. And the other one paid for the Auslan interpreting and the live streaming. So that was great that people just wanted to give us money. And again, that will companies not government, because the government grants take ages.

Bec Matthews: Oh, yeah.

Carly Findlay: I also think from a glass half empty, and I'm not unappreciative of those here today, but look at all the empty chairs. And that for me, really disappoints me, I find that people think that our access or disability isn't for them, but it's for everybody. There's a likelihood that 90% of the population will become disabled in their lives. And so you have 20% of the population is already disabled or deaf. And you need to think about that and think about who your market is. And as I was saying before, when I was doing my book tour, one of my publisher, publicists in another state said, "they've never seen anyone have so many "wheelchair users at their event." And that was clear that I helped that happen, helped make that happen. Because I reached out to the community. We also had in Brisbane, we had six people with the same skin condition as mine in the room, which was amazing because that there's like a one in a million skin condition. So that was incredible to have all those people and it was because I reached out, it was because I made it accessible for people. You've gotta do that.

Sarah Ward: I'm assuming it was Asphyxia said to us about having captions as well. It was because she said quite a lot of the community don't know Auslan because they go deaf by an accident or over time. A lot of musicians go deaf. So having that caption having those two access points meant that we could provide it. Because people don't... People think about disability often is from birth that it's seen as acquired...

Carly Findlay: I think also it'd be great if you could tell your colleagues about this event it's being recorded, show them force it down their throats. I mean, not physically but tell them how important it is, because it is disappointing to see more than half the chairs empty today.

Emma J Hawkins: And as an artist I always go when I'm in a show, professionally or I go to see shows are there gonna be shows that are accessible. I always make it a point to ask all the time. And if there 'isn't why isn't there? There should be one. You kinda gotta force the point home sometimes.

Carly Findlay: Yeah, I've even asked people to find a different venue for me because it's not accessible. And they've said, oh, there's a toilet 300 metres down the road. So do you wanna go to the toilet 300 metres down the road?

Bec Matthews: And the other thing actually, is to think about where the accessible seats are sometimes with wheelchairs or places like that is totally blocked sightlines. And so you know what, technically ticking a box of being accessible and what actually is….

Emma J Hawkins: It's a very good point. It's often the case, accessibility, it's not very... Or the disabled toilets is used for storage, which is a pretty common story. Things like that.

Carly Findlay: And also think about your performers, like who you might work with and making the space accessible, inclusive and safe as well. Inclusivity and accessibility isn't just about physical access. It's about the language you use and the amount that you pay people or whether you do at all, and also just inviting us to work with you.

Sarah Ward: I'm a great admirer of Crusader Hillis and Rowland because Hares & Hyenas they worked really hard to make sure that there was accessibility there and they're always open and willing to learn and they never get offended. I noticed when you know somebody gives them feedback that difficult or challenging. They're like, "yeah, we'll take it on, we'll do better." I think they're great. I love them.

Carly Findlay: So great.

Sarah Ward: Interestingly, actually, our connection to the disability community is more through the queer community than through the general arts community. So this is the interesting overlap that happens in.

Carly Findlay: Is there anything else you wanna say before we close up?

Sarah Ward: I wanna again, sounds like... I wanna thank the Arts Centre again, for the grant within the Arts Centre that allowed us to do this because without that it wouldn't have happened, and the great support that we had from the producers and the access team, and for putting this on and allowing us to be on the stage as allies. And I'd like to thank you for all the preparation that you did. It was really amazing. And Emma, thanks.

Carly Findlay: It's great. Yeah, and thank you to the Arts Centre again, and thank you to you for coming. And thanks to Fringe for partnering and I'm from Fringe, but it was really great to be able to work on this as part of my day job. Just a reminder as well, there are some of the producer guides to access. And this is like not just for Fringe artists, it's for every, I think every organisation in the arts. I think it's really useful. I know I made it, but I think it's really useful.

Emma J Hawkins: Are you reviewing your own work? It's very good.

Carly Findlay: However way you can and tell you tell your friends, tell your colleagues, you can get it online and send it around. Yeah, we'll be really grateful if you could do that. And I hope to see you at some Fringe shows this year, the programme launches in August, not April, and the festival is on from the 12th to 29th of September.

Sarah Ward: Have you got any shows coming up Emma?

Emma J Hawkins: I'm currently don't have any shows coming up. But I am a bookkeeper and I run my own company called Small Fortunes Bookkeeping, if anyone needs any bookkeeping.

Sarah Ward: And your book?

Carly Findlay: I've got a book out it's called "Say Hello" but I'm talking at the Emerging Writers' Festival this week and I have to talk about self-care which and then I have to rush to this other thing, which is ridiculous because it's not reflective of self-care at all.

Emma J Hawkins: That's not self-care at all!

Carly Findlay: I'm talking at Progress after that. And I have a book out and it's called "Say Hello" and also "Growing up African in Australia."

Emma J Hawkins: And what about you Sarah, what are you doing?

Carly Findlay: What are you doing?

Sarah Ward: Oh gosh, what am I doing? I'm going to the Venice Biennale with "Shit", the play. So I'm excited. Bec's working with Fruit Fly Circus. So we've all got bits and pieces happening in our lives.

Carly Findlay: Great, thank you.

Carly Findlay: Thanks so much.

Sarah Ward: Thank you.

Carly Findlay: Oh, thanks to our Auslan interpreters, Dave and Linda.