

## **Edited Transcript Final Session**

Australian Universal Design Conference 2014

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Day 2

### **About This Document**

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**Universal Design: embracing the whole mosaic that forms society, Ireland's story**

**Dr Ger Craddock**

**Chief Officer**

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**Synopsis:** *In this second presentation, Dr Craddock outlines some of the challenges and successes of the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design in Ireland. He explains the establishment of the Centre and its position within the government framework. He highlights the work they have carried out since its inception seven years ago and some of the key documents that have helped inform their work. Much of the Centre's work has been engaging with stakeholders to develop many standards and guidelines, promotional material, educational packages, and award programs. The Centre covers the three key areas of design: the built environment, product development, and information and communication technology. Universal design in education is also closely linked. Their website contains many useful publications, guidelines and standards <http://www.universaldesign.ie/>. Dr Craddock's presentation is followed by a panel session and a call for a similar centre to be set up in Australia. The presentation begins with a video of students undertaking a design challenge.*

Video plays on the Design Challenge in Ireland.

*Not overstating it by saying life changing. Felt deeply impacted by working with James.*

*This innovative thinking should start in primary school right through secondary school and into third level.*

*What I had to do was to find a way in which disabled people and designers could work together and we were trying to show designers it's beyond disability, it's about age, it's about size and it's about a range of abilities and disabilities. I then thought what would happen if we only gave designers 24 hours and not five months to come up with a solution.*

*We walked down Abbott Street, there were obstacles everywhere, from bikes, bins, poles, people. Everything was in the way. Even well-intentioned interfaces failed.*

*The ticket system itself has an audio button on it, but there's no way of knowing where to push that button. Some of us tried walking with a stick and it's very, very difficult to do.*

*Being a blind person, in a different way from cycle person. I'm interested in seeing how other people understand universal design.*

*Western society in the next 10, 20 years will have a lot of people over the ages of 50, 60 and 70. They need to lead independent lives that means suddenly you need to have society universally designed.*

*It's about everybody, designing for all. It saves money and makes money.*

*What we're looking at within the umbrella universal design is how all people can easily navigate through products or services or the built environment itself.*

*Our idea is inspired by this workshop and through the design process go through a kind of foot switch, we come to an intersection, you'll see this*

*element which is varied in pavement and it lights up and basically works the pedestrian or guides them across.*

*I'm really tall, I think about people with mobility problems, I'd be guilty of overlooking short people sometimes. Nick doesn't have many disabilities or accessibility problems, but Nick's wife does. We designed a part that can attach to the back of one of the bikes. Nick can pedal a bike. There's motor assistance, there is no extra effort. Also the part can be used for parents who have children, people with groceries.*

*Very inclusive and has facilities for people with disabilities, families, people have light, sound, have Braille on it, it vibrates so it can be understood by people of all abilities.*

*I'm really excited about the strong competition that I'm seeing and these teams are very, very dedicated to this process and many of them have stayed up through the night.*

*We came up with something that will be mounted on top, without actually being lost, you go to one of the bollard, you get a major landmark instantly. It will help people navigate.*

*I'll be disappointed if I don't see it in the year 2012.*

*Getting the People's Choice Award, I think it really says something about hearing from the audience.*

*It should be addressing people's needs, not judges' needs. For me it's the most important thing.*

*Nothing thing I thought was fantastic was how the people came out and said what they needed and said what they felt and said what they wanted. It is wonderful they communicate and we are lesser for not understanding their feelings.*

*Absolutely. You see the excitement and appreciation in their eyes, they've stopped being invisible.*

DR GERALD CRADDOCK: That video shows what we've done in collaboration with the Helen Hamlin College of Design in London. So great fun, but it was also getting the top designers in Ireland to be part of the design challenge (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DLJLekIMDY>). We did another one in 2010, but we did it with final-year students in design colleges, and first year masters students and we're doing that on an annual basis.

We're on a journey where the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability is a landmark. This is where universal design is clearly defined and put the challenge to all of us, but specifically for state parties "to undertake and promote research and development of universally designed goods, services, equipment and facilities".

Taking a systems view, the whole social aspect gives us wicked problems. They're not straightforward or tame problems. They're not just complex problems, which often is the case in business or in technology. But when we're talking about social problems, they must be looked at from a complex and wicked perspective where we are not quite sure of what the problem is, or the solution. But there should be a way of using design thinking as part of the solution, but this needs the active participation by all stakeholders.

We need to use a global common language. While it is not the sexiest term in the world, 'universal design' has been clearly defined in the UN Convention to which 147 countries are signatories. It is a legal instrument in those countries and it is to our advantage to use the same term globally when we want to talk about inclusion and designing for inclusion. It allows us to develop research, standards and processes that can be shared and applied across the world. For example, I could not have flown from Dublin to Sydney via London and Singapore if each country had used different terminology and followed differing standards.

So going back to today's title "Universal Design embracing the whole mosaic that forms society", and our own story about Ireland and where this comes from. *Design for the Real World* by Victor Papanek is the definitive text about design, particularly designing for and with people of all creeds, cultures, abilities. He talks about, "seeing the whole mosaic that forms society", instead of the individual pieces we call minorities. He was quite optimistic back in 1983 when he wrote this. 31 years later I think we're still working on it.

Wolfgang Preiser - in the 2nd edition of the *Universal Design Handbook* talks about the difference between soft and hard technologies – the intangibles and the tangible. He says we need to be gathering clear, defined data and language, taxonomies, et cetera, particularly if we want to engage. Also, in Europe, *Achieving Full Participation Through Universal Design* was published by the European Council of Ministers, and is underpinned by the UN Convention.

The *World Disability Report* talks about moving from the culture of accessibility, which is critical to start with, but once accepted and engrained, it becomes easier to raise standards and attain a higher level of universal design. So it's a continuum of improvements – a journey.

Our Centre is within the government structure, we're within the Department of Justice, which is quite unusual, but it's also clearly stating a commitment about Ireland putting up a clear flag that this is about justice, equality, and a clear message for us as a nation. But it is also selling our message internationally. And the Centre itself is based within the National Disability Authority.

We work in three core areas: built environment; information and communication technology; and products and services. My main thrust for this conference is around the built environment. But we engage across all sectors - the education sector, professional bodies, with the Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland, also the Institute for Design in Ireland, which also incorporates architects and landscape architects, industrial designers, graphic designers, et cetera.

The people themselves, people with disability, of different ages, sizes, abilities, and the general public; representatives from industry and standards are critical; and then of course all our different government departments that we work across.

Areas we cover within the Centre are: standards development, education, professional development and awareness. So I will concentrate more on education in this talk. We are doing more on promotion and we created the video you saw at the beginning of the talk (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DLJLekIMDY>) showing the Design Challenge in 2009. It has gone viral on YouTube. So creating awareness about what we're doing is crucial.

What were the key ingredients, for setting up our Centre as unique in the globe in having a statutory Centre for Excellence in Universal Design? Critical in the wording is *for* excellence rather than *of* excellence. So we're on the westerly periphery of Europe, a tiny dot, less than 4% of the EU in size. In the early 80s or 90s our Government was looking at the key issues for people with disabilities. It was a landmark period in Ireland for people with disabilities, their advocates, supporters, families, et cetera, because before that it was all very piecemeal and very much a deficit model around disability.

When the publication *Strategy for Equality* was published in 1995, there were 402 recommendations. I was co-chair covering the topic of technology at that stage looking at assistive technology as one of the pillars of that work back in the early 90s.

Moving the disability story forward to a social model and looking at rights-based legislation. We went through a decade of policy and infrastructure change in Ireland. We had the Employment Equality Act; the National Disability Authority Act, which set up my parent body; the Equal Status Act; the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004; Disability Act, which was the setting up of the Centre; and Citizens Information Act 2006, looking specifically at advocacy. You can see from that one document a raft of policy legislation, but specifically it was illegal to discriminate against a worker or job applicant with disability. Discrimination is in context of the worker being able to do a core job. Employers must reasonably accommodate disability - if cost is not disproportionate. Making premises accessible is a core element of that.

Part of the rollout was setting up a national disability strategy, the agenda for change, and included in that was the new Disability Act, the Education Act, six sectoral plans across government departments and the funding for high support needs as part of that. So you can see that not only did we write the legislation, but we implemented and put funding behind it, significant funding on an annual basis to get disability accessibility as a core of our government departments and setting up the key agencies to actually implement it.

You can see the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), was the champion for this. It went right to the top of Irish Government, and there was a specific cabinet committee on social inclusion, all part of the National Disability Strategy.

Sectoral plans were developed and legal requirements were made to back all this up. So it wasn't just write the plan, there were legal requirements behind them. Part 3 of the Disability Act requires all public bodies to ensure people with disabilities can use mainstream public services, and within that there was a code of practice developed which is a statutory instrument.

We worked with the Department of Environment, on revising and updating Part M for access and use. So this document moved from just accessibility in 2000 to access and use in 2010, and again universal design is a key core element of the new Part M. All our buses are now fully accessible and all our bus stops in Dublin are fully accessible as part of that. All our government building are fully accessible.

Also in public procurement is crucial. I think this is probably the hidden agenda item: how can we

use public procurement as a key, because it is the State, it is the Federal Government, it is the city fathers, who are probably the biggest customers for services of any industry out there. So how do we incorporate universal design as a key component of that?

I talked about the virtuous cycle of systems change - vision, skills, incentives, resources and actions. If you get these right you end up with success. Let's go through them one by one. If you don't have a vision, people are confused. If you don't have the skillset, people become anxious. If you don't have the incentives, people are slow to change. If you don't have the resources you'll be very frustrated. And of course action plans - if you don't have a clear plan, you will have many false steps.

We will be launching *Universal Design Homes for Ireland* at the end of September, beginning of October. *Universal Design Buildings Guidelines* is a landmark publication, 10 booklets, over 900 pages, over 85 pages specifically on toilets. I didn't know we knew that much about toilets.

We challenged the design community, the quality design of the materials produced, how they're packaged, and this has won us several awards competing with the best in design in Ireland. So, we need to be in there with the best competing with them in the work we produce to make sure it's not half-hearted design - it has to be quality, good design. WE engage with key industries and the Irish Design Institute and now have an award for universal design – it overarches all the other designs.

In terms of stakeholder engagement, the Student Centre in Dublin is a good case study. From start to finish we interviewed the architects, the student union, and other stakeholders. The students funded this student centre - 50 million. They put a levy on all students for 10 years. It looks as clean as it was the day it was opened. There's no graffiti, there's nothing. It's owned by the students and they take pride in their work. They put their money where their mouth is, so this highlights the importance of engagement with key stakeholders.

The winner in 2014 was a house. A lot of people were saying universal design, but it's an ordinary house. It's not an ordinary house. For the first time in 15 years this family slept solidly in the one house. Up to that time they were farming out their younger kids, a teenager with a significant disability who would need to be changed three or four times a night, and who would wake up screaming. The design of the house, the lighting, and the acoustics were greatly improved. The family were heavily involved with the architects in choosing the materials and how the house was actually designed.

Rather than "either/or", we're looking at "and" and "both" in universal design. I think that's a crucial element about universal design that we need to be using the word "and". It's not them or us, it is about all of us: it's the ands. However, at times we don't know what our own needs and wants are, never mind considering other people's needs and wants.

We talk about enabling a philosophy but it also takes education. We need to acknowledge that inclusion is an important issue on different social levels. And we need change in government and industry to reduce exclusion in society. But we are also looking at promoting creativity in education as a key priority, which is I think on all governments' agenda. So we're developing a

universal design module for High school students and seeing significant behavioural change, that's a whole other discussion. But they have developed respect for themselves. Teachers are saying we're actually able to teach for the first time in 20 years of teaching, rather than being there as a crowd controller.

Innovation has just been kick-started by the EU and by a global consortium. They are talking about the quadruple helix of innovation, so if we use the word "innovation", we need to be very careful what we're talking about. They're now talking about government, academia, industry and citizen and they talk about the inverse innovation where it now talks about the end user being core, which is I think a huge opportunity for us to be engaging in these conversations and particularly when they're talking about moving beyond the knowledge society to the new wisdom society.

To finish, "a policy is a temporary creed liable to be changed, but while it holds good it has to be pursued with apostolic zeal". Thank you for your attention. (Applause)