**2nd Australian Universal Design Conference**

**Transcript of the Panel Session: The Economics of Inclusion**

**Minor edits by Jane Bringolf**

**Panel Members** were Ms Ro Coroneos, Lendlease; Ms Sally Coddington, Curb Cut Effect, The Hon Kelly Vincent MLC, South Australia, and Mr Paul Nunnari, Department of Premier and Cabinet (NSW).

MR PAUL NUNNARI:

Before I begin, I need to show this video because it's absolutely awesome. It’s the UK promotional video for the Paralympic Games – “Yes I Can” We are the Superheroes”.

So let's relate that to accessible events and the economics of inclusion. Paralympic Games start in Rio on the 7th. Can you imagine if the only accessible area at the Paralympics were just the venues? What a waste, what an absolute waste in regards to other business segments reliant on those Games to make money from that crowd. I trained very hard to get to three Paras, I'll give you a quick example when I was in Athens – not the most accessible place in the world. The Acropolis is on a big hill and there was no wheelchair access whatsoever. The word through the grapevine was that someone was keen to get wheelchair users and para athletes there as well. St the bottom of the hill were a series of market stalls. They made an awesome lift. Dirt was falling off the side of the rock, but it was pretty safe for the most part. But what was fundamental to the lift was the businesses below in the Acropolis precinct making money from every Paralympic athlete. It was really interesting to see a lot of the stores had at least one step to get into them and they'd made ‑ again not pretty - purpose‑built ramps where you could at least get in. The stores that you couldn't get in, the owners were standing outside waiting for you, inviting you to ask what you might want in regards to purchasing something. So I thought it's a really good example of how something like the Paralympics can really change the perception ‑ it's not about disability or inclusion, it's about making money.

Another good example came out of London in 2012 where there's an area in the West End of London that's all cobblestones and they knew that they'd get a lot of pedestrian traffic from Paralympians, their family and friends and supporters. But they knew cobblestones were a barrier for getting around. So they pulled up all the cobbles and then re-laid them flat so the wheeling surface was quite easy to get around. They did that for the pure purpose of people being able to access businesses equitably, with dignity, in that area. So two really good examples of how the economics of accessibility have worked really well. But they've worked really well in the context of the Paralympics, and the Paralympics embodies everything about accessibility inclusion, changing attitudes and so forth.

What I want to focus on is what we're doing within Australia, and the shift from not always making the case around the economics of access, but getting some really good facts and figures out there. I think a lot of people in the community think people with disability have no money and are pretty poor and when you go down to the UN list of OECD ‑ the OECD list, Australia rates 27th out of 27 in regards to people with disability living below the poverty line. So I think that's something that we need to look at and if that's a fact, we need to state it as a fact and obviously try to change it. But if it's not a fact, we need to state it as a fact also and change those attitudes out there.

I have the great privilege of working with a lot of massive events within Sydney, New Year's Eve, Australia Day, Mardi Gras. But one event that particularly draws a lot of attention in regards to visitation is Vivid Sydney. Vivid this year ran for 24 nights and brought in 2.8 million visitors and Vivid Sydney isn't about just showing lights in the middle of winter. The whole purpose of Vivid is that during that time of year it's a down time and businesses wanted more people spending money and staying in this city during that time of year. They focus on overnight stays and the visitor spend, and I can tell you that accessibility is a very high priority.

I want to talk about reputational risk as well for businesses. In my experience it's not so much about the economics in regards to accessibility, but it's also the reputational risk to businesses and organisations by not providing access. Stella Young, God bless her soul, she really shifted the paradigm around because of her use of social media, posting access failures. If you've got accessibility in place, use it because people with disability will come, and if you don't, well then we're going to let everyone know about it and showcase as worst practice, not best practice.

The UK Business Disability Forum, in partnership with the [Extra Costs Commission](http://www.extracosts.org/), recently coordinated an update on their walk-away pound research to help businesses justify investment in accessibility of their products and services. The Commission asked people with disability whether they had left a business or shop because of poor disability awareness or understanding. This isn't even just about physical access, it's about awareness. So 75% of people with disability and their families said they had done this and also 75% of people with disability and 76% of parents or carers.

Some comments were "I left all of the businesses ‑ I left the business not out of anger but because I couldn't sustain coping with their facilities and attitude, despite me trying to explain" and also “the bank suggested that I should find another bank because they could not address my disability issues. Either bank staff were untrained or they were poorly trained."

This is still quite prevalent today. The Commission asked those who had left the business how much they used to spend every month at the place they had left. These are in pounds, you can almost double it. So kind of high‑end retail, 40 pounds; restaurants, pubs, clubs 40 pounds; supermarkets, 200 pounds; energy, 84 pounds; phone or internet provider, 40 pounds; transport provider, 30 pounds; bank or building society, 600 pounds. That was just for people with disability and then there were other figures for parents and carers.

But anyway if we multiply these figures, we could estimate that 8.4 million adults have walked away from a business because of poor disability awareness or lack of access and to Sally's point, this in turn could equate to $1.8 billion or equivalent to $3.14 billion Australian dollars not a year, but every month. That's massive. And further to that, the Commission was also interested to know whether or not people with disability and their families had influenced other people. If we all go to a restaurant the four of us and it's not accessible, we'll move on ‑ yes, we'll move on. But we'll also tell our families and friends and at least 50% of those won't go to that business as well.

So to Kelly's point, can businesses afford to not be accessible? I think not. At Sydney Festival a couple of years ago they got a complaint in regard to accessibility on opening day. That complaint was first page in the Daily Telegraph here and they rang me up 9.30 in the morning and said "we've got a bad article in the telegraph, help us out, we need to resolve it first thing tomorrow morning so we get a better article". They definitely know they can't afford bad accessibility as well.

So the momentum is there, the NDIS, the strategy is driving that and through all the work we're doing we can definitely make it happen. What I love about the video I showed is that it transcends sport. It's about every facet of life and the message is yes we can, yes we want to, and yes we will. Thank you.