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MAGAZINE

THIS EDITION:

ACCESS ALL AREAS

WEB ACCESSIBILITY: *WHY IT MATTERS*

HUMAN RIGHTS IN A *DIGITAL ERA*

TELSTRA'S TIM O'LEARY ON BEING A RESPONSIBLE CORPORATE *PLUS MUCH MORE*

OUR CEO:
TERESA CORBIN

Welcome to the Autumn edition of ACCAN Magazine, which is devoted to accessibility issues. Telecommunications technologies are developing at a rapid pace and our cover story this month traces the history of web accessibility and reviews three new smartphones for accessibility features (page 6). We are also delighted to have launched Media Access Australia's ACCAN Grants Scheme project, which includes a review of social media accessibility and some brilliant Guides across eight social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Skype, blogging and more.

Our Policy in Focus feature is about why we believe access to telecommunications should be viewed in a human rights context (page 10). You can also learn all about how to make a captioning complaint if what you see on your television screen isn't up to scratch (page 9) and our Grants in Focus story looks at a project being conducted by the University of Wollongong which focuses on government public procurement policies (page 11).

We see technology as a great enabler for everyone. But what's really exciting about the digital age we live in is that advances being made in accessibility with smartphones and broadband offer the potential for people with disability to participate, communicate and interact with the world in a whole new way.

COVER IMAGE

Lauren, a musician and actor, is an albino and has a visual impairment. Her favourite device is her iPhone because of its in-built accessibility features. Her favourite app is Google Maps, which she says makes it much easier for her to get around her home town of Sydney. Lauren stays connected with friends and family through email and texting.
Photo by Richard Van Der Male

ACCAN OUR STORY

ACCAN is the peak organisation representing all consumers on communications issues including telecommunications, broadband and emerging new services. Our mission is to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of communications services for all Australians.

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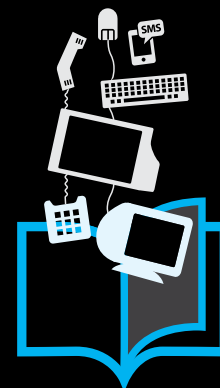**DEPUTY EDITOR**
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OPEN SESAME: WHY WEB ACCESS MATTERS

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LATEST NEWS

ACCAN votes 'no' on revised TCP code

ACCAN has voted 'no' on the revised Telecommunications Consumer Protection (TCP) Code submitted to the Australian Communications & Media Authority (ACMA) for registration in February. The TCP Code is a voluntary set of rules administered by the industry body, Communications Alliance, which prescribes how telcos should treat their customers in relation to sales, customer service, billing, faults and complaint handling. The ACMA told the industry over five months ago, following its Reconnecting the Customer inquiry, that the revised TCP Code must address five key problem areas for telecommunications consumers or face direct regulation.

ACCAN's decision to vote 'no' to the Code's publication was not one taken lightly after 18 months of working together with industry to improve it. ACCAN Chief Executive Officer Teresa Corbin said "Despite mutual goodwill and a great deal of effort from all those involved, ultimately, our role is to represent all Australian telecommunications customers. We don't believe this Code is going to be strong enough to transform the customer experience, produce clear advertising or prevent bill shock."

ACCAN believes the revised Code does not meet the ACMA's requirements for advertising pre-sale information and expenditure management. Of all areas identified by the ACMA, none have been addressed by industry in full. For example, Communications Alliance has proposed that it set up its own compliance and monitoring arm to be an independent watchdog. ACCAN remains unconvinced that an industry-run compliance body would be able to ensure service providers follow the basic rules after years of rising consumer complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

ACCC tells consumers – know your rights: repair, replace, refund!

In April, the ACCC launched an awareness campaign to inform people of their rights when purchasing goods or services. The Repair, Replace, Refund campaign aims to explain the consumer guarantees that apply to all goods and services bought or leased new, second hand, in stores and online.

When you buy a mobile phone, the supplier and manufacturer provide a range of guarantees. For example, they guarantee your phone will be of acceptable quality – safe, durable and free from defects, acceptable in appearance and finish and perform as expected or that spare parts and repair facilities will be available for a reasonable time. If you have a problem with a mobile phone handset contact the business you bought it from. If they do not resolve the problem, contact your state or territory consumer protection agency or the ACCC. You can find out more about your rights at **www.accc.gov.au**

THUMBS UP OR DOWN

BIG UP

☺ To the ACMA who have included captions for people who are Deaf or hearing impaired on their online videos.

☺ Launch of new indigenous disability group: First People's Disability Network. Email: damiang@bwp.org.au

WAY DOWN

☹ To ABC News 24 for cutting an Auslan interpreter out of shot during an important emergency news update on the recent NSW floods.

NBN to enhance tele-services for children with a disability

The Australian Government recently launched the Remote Hearing and Vision Services for Children Initiative, announcing that they will fund $4.9 million over three years. The initiative will support services to about 125 children, in addition to the 100 children already supported by Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children's Teleschool. Delivery of these new services will soon be put out to competitive tender.

For about a decade, the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children has used videoconferencing to provide a remote educational program, now called 'Teleschool', which offers one-on-one help for families and children. Now, the NBN brings the promise of improved availability, reliability and connection speeds; increased access to in-home support; more frequent, consistent contact for families; a greater range of support options for families; and a decreased sense of isolation. For more information on the Initiative, visit **www.fahcsia.gov.au**. For more information on Teleschool, visit **www.ridbc.org.au**.

Captioning app for accessible theatre

Have you ever gone to a play or musical and struggled to hear what the actors were saying? You're not alone! Many people who have a hearing impairment, are Deaf or from a non-English-speaking background can't fully enjoy the theatre experience. Luckily, captions (like the subtitles you'd see on a foreign movie, but with extra information about sound and music) are making the move from TV and film to the stage.

Previously, theatre captions were only available in an 'open' format (that is, visible to everyone in the theatre). But in a great use of emerging technology, theatre captions are now also available 'closed' (seen only by individual audience members). A new app, GoTheatrical!, lets you view real-time, accurate captions on your smartphone or tablet while you watch the performers live on stage. You just download the app, check out which performances are captioned, buy your ticket and you're ready for that curtain to rise! For information about downloading the app, and to find captioned performances near you, visit **www.theatrecaptioning.com.au**.

Crunching the Numbers:

79%

Australian households with access to the internet at home.

62%

Percentage of people with a disability with access to the internet at home.

21 OF 29

Australia's ranking amongst OECD countries in employment participation rates for people with a disability.

31%

Australians are aware of the National Relay Service, which people with a disability can use to make phone calls.

3,641,559

Total number of minutes of calls made through the National Relay Service (NRS) in 2009-10.

TIM O'LEARY

CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER, TELSTRA

You've recently been appointed Chief Sustainability Officer at Telstra, what's involved in that role?

My role is to help bring the "social and the environmental" into the heart of Telstra in a way that creates value – value for our customers, value for our people and value to the communities in which we work.

Can you tell us how your work might facilitate greater access to communications technology?

Telstra has a proud of heritage of facilitating access. Last year alone we provided monthly concessions on home telephones for more than 1.2 million low-income households, 184,000 phone cards through community agencies and directly assisted around 3000 customers each month who were experiencing financial hardship. We are very much focussed around the challenge of digital inclusion – that is, ensuring all Australians can enjoy the everyday benefits of being connected.

How do you work with the community on issues of accessibility?

We work closely with community stakeholders on issues of access through our Low Income Management Assessment Committee (which oversees many of our broader access programs) as well as specialist disability and indigenous stakeholders through our Disability Action Plan and our Reconciliation Action Plan.

What difference do you see between corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility?

Generally speaking, corporate philanthropy is more concerned with basic giving, for example, providing a donation to help rebuild a community after a natural disaster. Corporate social responsibility tends to be a broader framework for the consideration of corporate responsibility, that is, how the business operates day to day, particularly in the context of changing social and environmental expectations of corporates.

How does the telco industry compare to other industries when it comes to sustainability?

The telco industry has a remarkable opportunity to be a leader in sustainability. Not only are the new communications technologies essential to a low-carbon future, they also present remarkable opportunities to create a more inclusive society. One simple example is the transformative impact of the new communication technologies on the lives of those Australians who experience various forms of disability.

About Tim:

Tim O'Leary joined Telstra in 2011 as Chief Sustainability Officer. In this role he has executive responsibility for strategic community and reputational initiatives, corporate responsibility, Telstra's environment strategy and employee sustainability.

WAYNE HAWKINS,
ACCAN DISABILITY POLICY ADVISOR

You've been advocating for some time for an audio description trial to take place on Australian television. Now it looks like it's going to happen?

Yes, Senator Stephen Conroy made an announcement in late February that an audio description (AD) trial will commence on ABC1 television in August 2012. ACCAN, Blind Citizens Australia, Media Access Australia and Vision Australia have been campaigning on this issue for a long time, so it is great news and as someone who is blind, I am looking forward to taking part in the trial.

What is audio description, exactly, and how does it work?

Audio description provides a narrative soundtrack that runs alongside the regular audio and describes actions and non-verbal cues that are occurring on screen so that people who are blind or vision-impaired can fully enjoy programs on television.

The Government has hired a specialist consultancy to help people with a visual impairment participate in the trial by identifying digital televisions and set-top boxes capable of receiving audio description and the steps involved in activating this functionality.

Why is it important?

Television is of course a visual medium and most people don't realise just how much of the narrative of drama programs and even news and current affair programs comes from non-verbal communication. My personal pet peeve is at the end of *Australian Story*, a program I really enjoy, has text only on the screen at the end of the program about what has happened to the person the story has been about. It's really frustrating not being able to find out. But the good news is that this is exactly the sort of information I will now be able to receive through the AD. It is great that blind or vision-impaired Australians will soon be able to enjoy prime-time television without missing any of the action.

How will the trial work?

The trial will involve the broadcast of drama, documentary and other content with audio description on ABC1 for 14 hours per week during prime time over a 13-week period commencing in August 2012. The trial will be accessible to any viewer of the ABC's digital ABC1 service who has an appropriate receiver.

What will happen when the trial ends?

The trial is intended to generate a greater understanding of the technical and consumer issues associated with establishing and delivering audio description services. The ABC will provide a report to the government on the audio description trial in the second half of 2012.

We see this trial on the ABC as an important first step in raising awareness of the need for AD among television executives from all networks and the wider community. We're confident that a comprehensive trial of the technology will quickly translate into a permanent audio description service on the ABC and hopeful AD will soon be available on all television channels.

OPEN SESAME:
WHY WEB ACCESS MATTERS

**Story by Wayne Hawkins
ACCAN Disability Policy Advisor**

Web accessibility is to the world wide web what "Open Sesame" was to Ali Baba's cave – accessibility can provide the riches of information, services and products that the world wide web has to offer.

Most of us can remember the world before the internet but it's hard to imagine life without it these days. Where did we find the time to book flights over the phone? Get to the bank? Or keep up with the news? Remember writing actual letters and sending them in the post? Many of us take for granted that these activities are done via the internet. The web has brought the world into our offices, living rooms and pockets.

Recent developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have made significant changes to the lives of many people with disability. People who are blind can now use computers with the help of screen-reading software that converts text to speech. People who are Deaf or hearing impaired can view online video with captions. People with motor disabilities who are unable to use a mouse can access the web through specialised assistive technologies.

However, for some of us, using the web is still more complicated than for the average user. Much of the web has not been designed with all abilities in mind. Complicated navigation systems, unlabelled graphics, uncaptioned audio and multimedia content has left many Australians unable to access all the benefits that the web has to offer. So, for many people with disability the full potential of the web continues to be underutilised.

As a person who uses a screen reader to access the web, I know those websites that are inaccessible are not designed to annoy me; they are inaccessible because the web designer or content author did not consider how a blind user would use their website. Consequently, the web can sometimes be more of a rabbit-warren than a super-highway. For example, website registration Captcha boxes, which ask users to enter numbers or letters from a blurred or choppy image, are increasingly used to protect against automated software registration. A person who is blind can't 'read' the text in this image so the Captcha box can prevent people registering for a service. Websites that present information via audio files without providing the information as text exclude Deaf and hearing-impaired users. Websites that have scrolling text make it difficult for people with low literacy or cognitive disabilities to understand the information that is being presented.

The biggest misunderstanding about implementing web accessibility is that it only helps a small portion of the community. In fact, it makes the web more usable for all users. Easily recognised icons, graphics

with text descriptions, captioned video, easy-to-use navigation tools and straightforward presentation improve the web experience for everyone.

How is it that such a ubiquitous medium can emerge without providing access for significant numbers of people? In the world of real estate it's all about location, location, location. In the world of accessibility it's all about awareness, awareness, awareness. The explosion of web content over the past 15 years has been driven by the desire to make information, products and services available to the widest audience possible. It makes sense then to design web content to be accessible and usable for all people, whatever the user's hardware, software, language, or their physical or mental ability.

SO WHAT IS WEB ACCESSIBILITY?

The world wide web was developed in 1991 by Tim Verners-Lee. Within a few years the availability of information, services and products on the web exploded. This rapid development of web content created a number of operability issues and accessibility for different technologies, software and equipment needs were not addressed in most mainstream web development.

The first web accessibility guidelines were developed by Professor Greg Vanderheiden in 1995. The current guidelines, developed by the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, are known as WCAG 2.0 and were released in 2008. The Guidelines provide a standard reference of accessibility best-practice for websites, web software and website tools.

WHAT ARE THE WEB ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES?

The current WCAG 2.0 guidelines are divided into three levels of accessibility: 'A', 'AA' and 'AAA'. Each of these classifications provides a different level of accessibility with 'A' being the most basic and 'AAA' offering the greatest levels of accessibility. Here are some examples from the current guidelines:

1. **Provide a text alternative to all graphics and images presented on screen,**

2. **Provide synchronised captions for video content**

3. **Make all tasks on a site possible using a keyboard.**

For full information about these guidelines go to **http://www.w3.org/**

SOCIAL MEDIA

New research and guides released last month by Dr Scott Hollier from Media Access Australia (MAA) aim to make Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter more accessible for people with a disability - to ensure one in five Australians aren't left behind as social media use becomes more popular.

MAA secured funding for the project via the ACCAN Grants Scheme. Dr Hollier then conducted an eight-month qualitative study among people who are blind or vision-impaired, Deaf or hearing-impaired and people with mobility impairments and found there was a strong desire among those who weren't already using social media for tools to teach them how.

Dr Hollier says social media creators are slowly starting to develop tools so that everyone can access sites.

"Facebook now has a phone app that is very accessible for people with vision impairments, for example – whereas three years ago getting to the content was virtually impossible to," says Dr Hollier.

Dr Hollier says social media growth has exploded in Australia since he last conducted a Social Media Access Review in 2009. Facebook for example has ten million users in Australia and 1.9 million users a month access Twitter.

"We used to get questions from people like 'Should I be using Facebook or MySpace?'" he says.

Now the questions are a lot more specific, like 'How can I access Facebook and how can I use Twitter?'"

To this end, and through funding provided by the ACCAN Grants Scheme, Dr Hollier is today launching a series of user guides for people with disability for various applications including Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, blogging and Skype.

The SOCIABILITY Guides will be distributed to disability organisations around Australia and are also available via **www.accan.org.au/socialmediaguides**

"We expect these guides to be very popular. Our research has found that people with disability are keen to use social media to engage, participate and share funny videos of cats – just like everyone else!"

"It's vitally important, with the speed at which technology is moving, that people with disability aren't left behind." **ED**

WHERE DO WE STAND IN AUSTRALIA?

There is a growing awareness in Australia about the economic and social benefits of having web content that is accessible for all. Many TAFE web design courses now cover web accessibility authoring and development. Australia's first tertiary backed professional Web Accessibility Certificate program was recently developed by the University of South Australia and Media Access Australia.

Additionally, as part of Australia's obligation under both national and international legislative instruments, government websites and web content must be accessible to people with disability. In 2010 the Federal Government initiated a National Transition Strategy to ensure that all Government (Federal, State and Territory) websites are WCAG 2.0 'A' compliant by end of 2012 and 'AA' compliant by end of 2014.

There are no broad regulations mandating web accessibility for Australian websites and web content. However, Section 24 of the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) requires providers of goods and services to make them available to all Australians including those with disability.

This was tested for web content and websites in a landmark legal case in 2000 when the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) was found to have discriminated against Bruce Maguire by not making its website accessible for him as a Braille user.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR WEB CONTENT IS ACCESSIBLE?

The WCAG 2.0 guidelines provide the essential information for making web content accessible and there are a number of open-source tools that can measure some basic accessibility compliance features. Media Access Australia has a number of resources on their website that can provide feedback on site's accessibility. **WH**

SMARTPHONE ACCESSIBILITY TEST

Surf the web, answer a work email or transfer some funds. We do it all on our smartphones without a second's thought. Can these devices offer blind consumers the same portable lifestyle? To answer this, we set up accessibility tools on the latest Blackberry, Android and iPhone and tested for their functionality.

BLACKBERRY STORM2

There is no voice-led interface for this or any BlackBerry smartphone. The in-built accessibility features are not suited to blind consumers. You can buy an app developed with BlackBerry ($449USD) but only if you're American.

Verdict: Forget BlackBerry.

SAMSUNG GALAXY SII:

With the free app, screen-reading works but not everything is announced, making it a frustrating and sometimes mystifying affair. The typing system worked but was haphazard. An accessibility app ($99AU) worked better but ruined the phone experience and didn't address many issues.

Verdict: Watch this space. Android is usable but needs a re-design.

IPHONE 4S:

Turn on. That's all you need to do to activate accessible features which come preinstalled. Screen announcements are logical and navigation techniques are easily learned. Typing was easy and common sense, although a little slow. Siri, with her simple English voice commands, also greatly enhances its accessibility.

Verdict: This is the only real choice. Accessibility comes free and it works. **RVDM**

HOW TO MAKE A CAPTIONING COMPLAINT

TV captions – who needs them? A surprisingly large number of us, it seems.

Are you one of the 30 percent of Australians who sometimes or always use the captions when you watch TV?

If so, you are part of a growing number of people who want to see that text at the bottom of the screen that displays what someone is saying and also other sound effects.

Survey research by The Australia Institute has shown that it's not just TV viewers who are Deaf or hard of hearing who use captions. In fact, the percentage of people who say they sometimes use captions (30%) is higher than the 18.7% of the population who have a hearing impairment.

Many people are using captions while watching TV in noisy places, like the gym or an office – or there are those who want to watch TV late at night without disturbing others in the household.

Surprisingly, the 18-24 year-olds were the group that most often reported using captions "sometimes" – perhaps because they are used to having the TV on while doing something else.

When are captions supposed to be provided on television?

All Australian free-to-air TV broadcasters must caption programs shown between 6pm and 10:30pm on their primary channel (i.e. channels Seven, Nine, Ten, ABC1 and SBS1). News and current affairs programs must have captions at all times.

Multi channels are the extra channels that you get when you have a digital television or digital set-top box i.e. 7mate, GO!, ABC2, SBS2 etc. Programs on those multi channels are only required to have captions if a program was previously screened on the primary channel with captions. For example, if Channel 7 broadcast an episode of *American Dad* with captions it must include captions when it shows the same episode on 7mate.

Poor caption quality

You can make a complaint whenever captions are missing or if they are so bad you can't read or understand them.

How to make a captioning complaint

You must lodge a complaint to the broadcaster within 30 days of the program being shown on television. You can't make a complaint by phone or TTY (text telephone), you can only complain by mail, fax or online.

To complain using an online form go to: **www.freetv.com.au**

To make a complaint by mail or fax contact the TV station directly. A full list of contact details can be found on ACCAN's website. **JG**

HUMAN RIGHTS
IN A DIGITAL ERA

The United Nations recently reviewed Australia's human rights record in a process known as the Universal Periodic Review. After seeing how we compared to the rest of the world the Federal Government created a list of actions in order to improve the state of human rights in Australia and these have been released as a draft National Human Rights Action Plan.

A surprisingly large number of the 220 actions proposed to improve Australia's human rights record rely implicitly on access to essential communications services.

For example, action 28 requires the Attorney General's Department to maintain the Access to Justice website. It seems obvious, but the Australian public needs to have access to affordable internet services in order to use the site. Similarly, other actions in the Plan reference other important Government websites.

Another dozen proposed actions rely on community access to Freecall or Local Rate numbers (1800, 13 or 1300), which can be expensive to call from a mobile phone. Item 103 of the Plan, access to 1800RESPECT, is directly affected by this matter. This service aims to assist people who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing domestic and family violence. Until reforms are implemented to ensure that services really are free calls from mobile phones, the Government won't be able to achieve the improvements it desires.

Action 162 outlines a range of measures that will increase the availability of critical emergency services for people with a disability. But we believe the Plan could go even further to ensure that people who are Deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired have equivalent access to emergency services.

ACCAN has argued that the Plan should implement an all-of-government public procurement policy (see page 10), improve relay services for non-English speakers and gauge who can afford and access key ICT like the internet.

The United Nations has already recognised the importance of the internet for achieving human rights goals. There is even a growing world view that access to the internet itself should be considered a fundamental human right. Ultimately our human rights are guaranteed through access to affordable communications services.

You can read the full submission ACCAN made to the Attorney-General's Department at **www.accan.org.au/submissions**

DEAF SOCIETY
OF NSW

COLIN ALLEN
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, DEAF SOCIETY OF NSW

Tell us about the Deaf Society of NSW (DSNSW)

The Deaf Society of NSW is a leading service provider for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people in NSW. We are a bilingual, bicultural, community-centred organisation. We provide services in community development; interpreting between Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and English; Auslan translation, education and training; client support; employment; advocacy and information.

What is the DSNSW's main goal and yours as Director of Services?

The vision of the Deaf Society of NSW is equity for Deaf people and our goal is to increase opportunities for Deaf people, working for better access to services across NSW. My role as Director of Services is to ensure we achieve that goal and make our vision a reality.

What are the telecommunications challenges/issues that DSNSW clients and members face?

These days, the National Relay Service's TTY Relay Service, which the Australian Deaf community fought hard to get, is almost ancient in relation to telecommunications needs. Now the majority of Deaf community members have discovered that we can make phone calls in our own language – Auslan – we are seeking a permanent Video Relay Service. A Video Relay Service allows Deaf people to communicate

with the rest of the Australian community by making 'phone calls' using video. It's a much quicker, more comfortable and more accessible way of making phone calls for most Deaf people than having to use an English text-based relay service.

You are also current President of the World Federation of the Deaf. Are the telecommunications issues for Deaf people worldwide similar to that in Australia? Is Australia ahead or behind other countries in terms of access to telecommunications for Deaf people?

Some countries are more advanced but we're well ahead of others. The Australian Government provides the NRS, which many other countries lack, which is commendable. On the other hand, the Australian Government has not provided improvements to telecommunications which community members clearly want, such as a Video Relay Service.

Why is DSNSW a member of ACCAN?

The Deaf Society of NSW believes this type of work, led by consumer organisations, achieves what the community actually needs. It is important for us as a service provider to learn what the community wants in the area of telecommunications and our membership of ACCAN helps us to do that.

Colin Allen photograph by Ms Eva Hammar

AND MEET A
NEW MEMBER

Able Australia provides high quality services to people living with multiple disabilities, including deafblindness. One of the many services offered is Ablelink which uses state-of-the-art adaptive technologies including the use of iPads with braille displays to develop communication skills. All services are individually designed to meet the interests and needs of participants and their families.