# ACCANect 2018

**Session 12: 2:00 – 2:10pm**

**Accessible Telecoms Project: Nationwide Disability Telecommunications Information and Referral Service**

**Interviewer: Julie McCrossin, MC**

**Interviewees:**

**Wayne Hawkins, Director of Inclusion, ACCAN**

**Helen Abric, Operations Manager, IDEAS**

**ACCAN has recently embarked on a two year project to provide advice and assistance with the ever changing telecommunications environment and recent mainstreaming of accessible features for smartphones, tablets and various other technologies. In this session Julie McCrossin will interview Wayne Hawkins and Helen Abric about how using appropriate technologies can help to ensure that everyone can access the connected world.**

JULIE McCROSSIN: I'd like to welcome Wayne Hawkins, the Director

of Inclusion at ACCAN. If he could stand on one side of me and also

Helen Abric, and my apologies if I have the incorrect pronunciation,

operations manager with IDEAS who are outside. Would you give

them both a round of applause as they approach. (APPLAUSE) If

you could just come a little bit further in my direction. If you turn

around I'm going to swap sides and Helen, if I could ask you to

stand on my right if that's okay. Guys, what this is, is an interview

about the Accessible Telecoms Project, a national disability

information and referral service. Helen, before I come to Wayne,

remind us, what is IDEAS? What's it all about, what's it purpose?

HELEN ABRIC: Ideas stands for information on disability, education,

awareness services, that's why we say IDEAS it's a lot quicker.

We're an information service for people with disability from zero to

our older-aged Australians. We have been an information service

for over 30 years. We've got an 1800 number which is national.

We have several large databases on - our biggest would be services

and supports, suppliers of equipment and accessible accommodation

and we also house mini resources, fact sheets, Podcasts. On any

project to do with disability, and we're unique because we don't

have any type of disability or any age limit.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Are you a Wallabies or All Blacks supporter?

HELEN ABRIC: Sorry, All Blacks!

JULIE McCROSSIN: And I have to do a job with her, but there you

go. Wayne, remind people what your job is at ACCAN?

WAYNE HAWKINS: I'm the newly-appointed Director of Inclusion.

Previously I was the disability policy adviser with ACCAN. So my

role as the Director of Inclusion is to oversee the Accessible

Telecoms Project and the disability policy area at ACCAN.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Give us a sense of the fundamental purpose of

the project?

WAYNE HAWKINS: How much time do I have?

JULIE McCROSSIN: Actually about 6 minutes.

WAYNE HAWKINS: At the first ACCAN conference that I went to,

which was eight years ago, and I think it was the first ACCAN

conference, the second day of the conference was a consumer day

so we spoke to consumers and members about their issues and the

number one take away from that for me was that consumers with

disability and people who represented people with disability found it

really difficult to get information about telecommunications products

and services that would suit them. That's been something that

we've been working on since that time and it continues to be a big

issue for people with disability to get the information about

communications products and services that suit their needs. There's

been quite a push by government to move people away from

reliance on specialised equipment towards mainstream technology

and obviously times have changed and mainstream technology does

provide a lot of accessible features. But again, the information

about those products is not readily available. So ACCAN's been

funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency for two years to

implement what's called the nationwide disability

telecommunications information and referral service, which we have

changed to accessible Telecoms. We're partnering with IDEAS and

what we're going to be doing is providing information about the

accessible features on mainstream and assistive telecommunications

products suitable for people with disabilities. It's also going to

provide information about referrals for training, set-up, ongoing

support and where people can obtain the equipment that they need.

So it's going to be a one-stop service providing essential information

and it's very in theme with this conference. It's going to provide

consumers with disability the confidence they need to get connected

and stay connected.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Could I ask you - this is obviously an interesting

and varied audience - how can we make a contribution to your

project? What can people do to help?

WAYNE HAWKINS: Well we've just got - there's two people here...

I'm not sure if Andrew is here, but Andre Milano has come on board.

He's going to being the Project Officer.

JULIE McCROSSIN: We want to be able to identify him with an

algorithm. I've got him now. Andrew's right at the back in

a distinctive checked shirt. You don't exist unless you're amplified.

>> There's other people from IDEAS down the back, Andrew

Proctor, you have to have the first five letters to work on this

project.

WAYNE HAWKINS: If anyone has any questions, or you think that

you have information that would be useful to be made available, it'll

be through IDEAS. They'll be providing the information through

their service. If you have any information about accessible

telecommunications products and services, or training support,

equipment provision, see one of us in the next two days and give us

your card, because that's going to be the success of this project is if

we have all of the information that we can get to provide the most

support for people with disability to be connected.

JULIE McCROSSIN: And could I ask you, just in a nutshell what will

the role of IDEAS be?

HELEN ABRIC: As I said we've got a great team and Andrew down

the back in the checkered shirt is going to be training information

officers on the resources available and on our website at the

moment if you look on the ideas' website there's a button that says

"coming soon", that will be the accessible Telecoms diamond and

when you click on that you will see any records of services and

supports and there'll be facts sheets and Podcasts and any

resources that ACCAN are getting ready for us now that will be in

accessible formats for people.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Really just finally Wayne, the information you

gather in your research and work will almost immediately be

transferred in to an organisation that can disseminate it to people

with disabilities?

WAYNE HAWKINS: Yes, the caveat is that this is a sneak preview of

the Accessible Telecoms Project. It doesn't go live until November

1, so don't go clicking on any icons and wondering why it's not

there, because it's not going to be live until 1 November.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Thank you so much. Could you give them both

please a warm round of applause. Thank you. (APPLAUSE)