**M-Enabling Australasia 2013 Conference**

**Day 2 – Lost in (cyber) space: How do we connect people with M-Enabling services: 15:30 – 16:45pm**

TERESA CORBIN: Alright. We're gonna get started, because as soon as we start talking, then there'll be more incentive for people to come in. That's why I'm talking – because I'm less important than the rest of the panel, at least for this session. As you know, I've been asking everybody about their favourite apps. The 'Gadget Guy' does have a favourite app. It's called Walk and Email?

PETER BLASINA: Email 'n Walk.

TERESA CORBIN: I'll get him to explain it. Thank you for coming today.

PETER BLASINA: My pleasure. Email 'n Walk – I downloaded the app because, embarrassingly on several occasions – I'm sure you've seen people do this – they're walking along and texting or emailing, and they walk into things. After my fourth tree and seventh pole, I decided to load the app, which activates a camera at the front of the smartphone or tablet, and that means you can walk and see what's in front of you. I'm used to having a lapel microphone – sorry.

(LAUGHTER)

It's very rare that I stand at a podium. Can we get things under way? We really have saved the best till last today. This panel is fabulous, let me tell you. But they expect lots of questions. Can I start with an explanation of why I'm here? As you might have noticed, I quietly represent Telstra as a technology ambassador.

(LAUGHTER)

What that means is – thanks, Bert. What that means is that I travel around the country and I have done for the last several years, and I take a variety of things – a variety of information – to ensure that the digital divide is, I guess, shortened in as many ways as possible. So I do events which involve seniors, I go into schools and talk about cyber safety, and do a range of business presentations. It really has been a tremendous ride. I think – one of the things we discovered along the way is matching students with seniors. What happened with that was the most remarkable dynamic in the room. Initially, I started taking a variety of technologies, but mostly mobile phones, but with the advent of tablets, we at Telstra put together a wonderful course that ran over 2.5 hours where – we called it the Magical Mystery Tour of the Internet. What we did was bring students in to work with the seniors. Suddenly you had the dynamic of changing the way that older people and younger people interact. Because the students became the teachers and the seniors became the students. That changed everything. It's been wonderful, taking that message of technology out and getting all the hugs from the nannas at the end of the event. It's really wonderful.

It's part of a range of things that Telstra does. In fact, we've looked around the world at this kind of project, and really no other telecommunications company devotes as much money, time and effort into taking the message about technology out into the market. So it's unique from a Telstra perspective. Look, enough about me. We've got a fabulous panel here, and I'm going to pass over to Jemma Toohey.

JEMMA TOOHEY: Hello. I'm vertically challenged. Can you see me?

(LAUGHTER)

My name's Jemma Toohey. I'm from the Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau. We had the great pleasure of running a program called Know Your Gizmo about 18 months ago. I have a photo here depicting a lovely young African woman with three – I'll call middle‑aged – Australian women, leaning very intently over their laptops. We had some very interesting – and similar to what you've spoken about already, Peter – issues in our community where we had older people expressing their concerns about and understanding use of new technologies. On the other side of the page, we had a group of younger people from Albury High School that wanted to do volunteer work, but they wanted something that would really engage them in the community and use the skills that they had. We were very lucky and successful with the Australian consumer – the ACCAN grant scheme. They provided us with some funding to run a pilot project. The objective for the program was to train the students in skills needed for volunteering and communicating with older people. So we needed to give them a bit of a boundary around what the definition of "volunteering" was, and also how we expected them to work with the older people. The older people would then work for eight weeks with the school students, and they would learn how to get the best from their gizmos. The activities that the student did during the period was pretty much sit side by side with them helping them to use whatever gizmo they already had more effectively. They brought things along like mobile phones, iPads, laptops, cameras, GPS and iPods. Some of the skills that the students helped the older participants with – things as simple as using touch‑screen, new applications, setting up email accounts, emailing and sending photos, setting up contact lists, organising photos and photo editing, and managing files. The outcomes – 14 students training skills required during volunteering and communicating with older people. In one term of eight weeks, we had 48 participants attend at least some session. Some remain on a waiting list. They work together over an 8‑week period for about an hour each week. The outcomes for the students – 100% of the students felt great about volunteering. They would volunteer again in this type of project, and they would recommend it to other students. 100% of students felt that their efforts were appreciated. Some of the statements that the students made were, "Helping people save their money was a good thing. Just connecting with people and helping them with their problems. The pride you receive from helping people with their everyday objects. Got to meet different people and help you learn how to teach and be patient." "Overall, had a great time." In terms of the outcomes for the older participants, 100% of participants said they had learned what they wanted to learn, and that they were using their gizmos more effectively. Some of their comments:

"The students coped very well with a lack of knowledge and endless questions. They were friendly, pleasant, tolerant, and very knowledgeable about the iPad." "Didn't matter if you didn't know anything – you were made welcome." "A great opportunity for oldies." "Camaraderie was excellent." "Because of the students, I am more confident with gizmos than before. A big thank you."

So our future actions – a very simple project has grown. We've created a zipped file whereby we can send all of the documents to whomever sends us requests via email. Since that time, the program has evolved to at least – I'll give you a quick idea – four different schools in Albury and Wodonga. Yarrawonga, Western Victoria, the Wimmera, Tamworth, the Hunter, Bathurst, Volunteering Victoria, Coffs Harbour, and Volunteering ACT. So from 5 to 20 participants, all engaged in that way. From my perspective, I totally agree with Peter – you would walk into the room and the dynamic and the presence that you felt, and the engagement between the parties either side, was amazing. Getting of wisdom for the older people, and the getting of respect for the younger people, was amazing. It was an absolute turnaround, and just a wonderful thing to be a part of. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

PETER BLASINA: As you can see, I'm trying to keep the format as flexible as possible because I really want to get as many questions from the floor that we can from this so that we can really extend the information that we can get out of the panellists. It was funny, as I was thinking about this – if we could provide each of the candidates we're targeting with the information today with an R 22D2, I think our problem would be over. Gunela Astbrink is going to come up here and here's your slide activator. It's all yours.

GUNELA ASTBRINK: Thank you. Good afternoon, and thank you very much for the opportunity of speaking today. It's been a fantastic two days, and ACCAN's done a great job. I'd like to particularly say thank you to Wayne Hawkins, part of the ACCAN organising committee, for this.

My main area of work is policy and research. I was fortunate, together with Will Tibben, to receive funding for a project on accessibility criteria and public procurement. That's not what I'm going to be talking about today. My professional background is actually as a library and information professional. Way back in the 1980s, I set up one of the first disability information databases. This was in South Australia. Actually, yesterday, I had the pleasure of meeting and reconnecting with ideas which provides key disability information services. This is information about disability services available, and the key resource. So information provision is close to my heart. I'm talking about information provision in a very broad sense – this is talking about lost in cyber space, and the paths to effective information provision. So that's more or less what I'm going to cover. Most people, when asked, state that the importance of getting accurate, current information is really, really up there. But these days, most people rely on a search engine, and this has become ubiquitous, often, in how we get information. We just take for granted – Google is the obvious one, but there are other search engines as well. We are inundate would information. Some of it might be useless. Some of it is advertising. But some is what we want. It's a matter of getting the right information when we want it. Sometimes, what is it we actually need? Is it information from a search engine like Google? Does that really provide everything that is what we want? Do we check the origin of the information? Is it commercial? Is it government? Is it someone on a personal crusade? Academics rely on well‑resourced and structured bibliographic online databases. Assistive technology information is provided by organisations like the Independent Living Centres. There's a lot of background work in collecting and organising that information in these particular cases. We heard today about GARI, and what a great resource that is for mobile phone information. All of these rely on ever‑changing information and input from many sources. Often, that information needs prompting to get the updates. I'm really looking at a policy perspective of information about products and services out there.

I'm going to take a case study of the Newell Network. Over the last two days, we've heard about people with complex communication needs and the different ways and the barriers to getting products and services that meet their needs. The Newell Network was designed because there was a need for information on telecommunications solutions, for people with complex communication needs, or little or no speech. Funding was provided to Novita Children's Services to set up the Newell Network, and Rob Garrett and Tony N Nguyen are the key people. And there was great support from ACCAN, ACE and Telstra to do this work. The key features were community participation in the design, and there was a Web reference group, and that comprised people – users, service providers and that group worked together, mainly remotely, to develop the key components for the Newell Network. The Newell Network is a way to find...

(PHONE RINGS)

GUNELA ASTBRINK: Is that my cue, is it?

(LAUGHTER)

Hello?

PETER BLASINA: No, you've got a minute.

GUNELA ASTBRINK: Thank you. OK. That'll be fine. Often, people with complex communication needs can't just use an out‑of‑the‑box solution. Sometimes things have to be brought together. So you have several different devices working together to get the right solution. So it was a matter of how best to get the information out to people who needed that. And so, an online forum for information exchange was the way the Newell Network was designed. To do that, a forum was set up, people had the opportunity to put questions on the forum and get their peers or other experts to provide information. That has been going now for a year or so – probably a little bit longer. It was a learning experience involved with that process. Some of those relate to expert uses and the way expert users are familiar with how to use an online forum like this, and there's a screen shot of a home page. We'll see a photo there of Darryl Sellwood. Daryl was actually on the Web reference group, as were a number of important people in this room. There was a process – I'm not sure how I'm going with time here.

PETER BLASINA: I was about to crash‑tackle you.

(LAUGHTER)

GUNELA ASTBRINK: OK. I think there are a number of interesting issues and, we can talk about them in the panel, because that is some of the findings and learnings we've had from the Newell Network. So thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

PETER BLASINA: I'm going to have to get more bolshy about this, aren't I? Actually, before you come up, Phia, getting lost in cyber space can happen to even the best of us. One of the things that troubled me about cyber space in the past week – I've done a huge amount of radio interviews about the recycle bins in London that can pick up your Mac address, and more than 4 million per week are being picked up and you're being tracked wherever you're carrying your digital device. Cyber space is kind of impinging everywhere. Phia, that's not to say that... you're lost in cyber space, but here's your controller. I warn you – you have five minutes.

PHIA DAMSMA: Yeah, if I can get my presentation up, that would be good.

They're putting it up. OK. Well, I can start without the slides. It doesn't matter. My name is Phia and I am from Sonokids Australia. We're on the Gold Coast. In Queensland, as you may know. We develop accessible, educational software for young children with different disabilities – in particular, supporting children who are blind or have low vision. We use universal design, as we've been hearing about this morning or this afternoon, and we have – we think it's very important to have early access to technology, regardless of disability. In this day and age, everybody is expected in schools and everything from a very young age to be skilled users of technology. It happens that, if you have a disability and in particular if you're a young child who's blind, there are different reasons why you lag behind. It's not because you're not clever enough – it's because you don't get access to the technology. We have, in the past – I don't know why my presentation isn't up. Oh. Well, that's too bad. We have, in the past, created the All Abilities ePlayground, which is an environment for children of all abilities. The royal institute of deaf and blind children contacted us and said that they used it to teach keyboarding skills to children who were blind or have low vision. In fact, they used some of the games that were in there. We didn't really mean for them to do that, but it was interesting to get this feedback. They asked us if we could please develop something for young children, because there's nothing out there. So we did. We didn't actually get any funding – we are not for profit. We worked on it for two years just because we thought we had to do it. We think it will make a big change. So we worked on Ballyland. That's not like Bollywood, but it's Ballyland, because the five main characters are balls. It's a program teaching skills to young children who are blind. It teaches, say, foundation keyboarding skills. In Ballyland, you can do anything on a keyboard – you can hit three keys at a time, you can do lots of things – nothing will go wrong. All that happens is that the keys will produce sounds, songs, stories, and not randomly – there's a big concept behind it, but the children wouldn't know that. They just love playing it. It's an introduction to keyboarding and to computers, and I think today – I've seen a lot of people. I admire those who are blind or have severe vision impairment – how skilled they are using their mobile technology. But I can assure you that's not easy. It doesn't come very easy. You have to be taught well, especially if you're very young and have no experience at all. You would have to be taught how to do it. That's why we develop technology programs to teach technology skills. Oh, look, there's my presentation, just in time.

(LAUGHTER)

I'm almost finished now.

(LAUGHTER)

It doesn't respond – can you show the next slide?

PETER BLASINA: Point up that way.

GUNELA ASTBRINK: There's a nice picture of a young girl, Eleanor. She holds the keyboard to her ear. She is blind, has severe low vision. She has learning disabilities. She shows exactly what Ballyland is for. You can hold it to your ear. She was wondering whether the sound was coming from the keyboard or from the computer. In the meantime, she's pressing all sorts of keys, but she actually learned a lot of different keys. She liked the sneezing sound. There's all sorts of human sounds like coughing and sneezing and burping, which they really like. They will easily remember which key it was that produced the burp.

(LAUGHTER)

Then later, the teacher can say, "By the way, that burp – that's the error key. That's how it works." It's a safe environment, because you have to build an application or a program for young children that parents allow the children to use. You may think you have a wonderful program, but if the parents are fearful that the child might delete their bank details or "destroy" the computer, as a lot of people are afraid of, they won't allow a child who's blind on their computer, even though perhaps a much younger sibling who has no vision impairment is allowed to learn and play on a computer. That's why it's very important to have a program where you can play and explore, independently, because then you learn so much. It's working! So that's the final slide – Ballyland and Ballyland.com – we hope it will be used a lot. Any key goes there's a level you can go where you can press any key and nothing will go wrong. You learn a lot. There's a 5 Different Key games – it introduces the left and right arrow keys, the space bar, enter and delete keys. They're very important for children who will use screen reader software later, or have to learn to navigate computers and technology by way of a keyboard. I was going to say that those who are using mobile technology in general would prefer to have a tactile keyboard connected to it. If you are blind, to have a virtual keyboard or touch‑screen keyboard is so difficult, especially if you have never even used a tactile keyboard before. How are you supposed to know what it is? You don't know the concept, you don't have an overview. You have to build the concept of a keyboard one key at a time. That's what Ballyland is all about. It empowers, it enables children to develop digital skills and to become the consumers of the future. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

PETER BLASINA: I'm not sure, when you registered, if you read the fine print, but it involved you taking an oath that, if the technology didn't work during the 'Gadget Guy' segment, it didn't go out of the room, OK?

(LAUGHTER)

Brad? It must be hard for you. Brad's from Vodafone – standing next to me. BRAD: I think I'll be OK. Thanks to ACCAN for inviting Vodafone along today to talk. Peter and I have had a chat earlier about smartphones and about how amazing it is that it's only been since 2009, really, that smartphones have been on the shelves in Australia, and you look at the take‑up and the way in which smartphones and tablets have become part of our everyday lives. When I was asked to talk about lost in cyber space and how people connect to serves, I thought that it may be a good idea to focus on mobiles and tablets, given that, in Australia, Vodafone is a mobile‑only business. But also to look at what some of the foundations from around the world have done, partnering with not‑for‑profit organisations and charities to develop smartphone apps that provide over‑the‑top services to consumers. You may have seen some of these apps already, so I apologise if some of the information has already been provided. But the apps I'm going to talk about have been developed either by the Vodafone foundation or Vodafone foundations overseas have funded particular charities and not‑for‑profit organisations to develop those apps.

The first one is Wheelmap, which I think is a fantastic application which was born out in Germany, which allows for information to be uploaded on the app to show accessible space – wheelchair ramps and those sorts of things. It also allows for users to contribute information as well. If you're a user and you're aware of a particular wheelchair‑accessible area that's not included, you can upload that to the application and you can add to the library of information.

The second one – I think I skipped over a slide, but that's OK... that's alright, my notes are wrong, so I wasn't paying attention. This one is Big Launcher. This overlays an accessible screen, makes the buttons larger, makes it much simpler to see. This one was developed, again, in conjunction with one of the Vodafone foundation organisations around the world.

Speech Assist is an application originally designed in the Czech Republic, which was designed to help people who have difficulty communicating. You can press a button and there are particular individual words, or you can type a word in, or it reads it out in a very clear way. People in the office last week were very annoyed with me – I was testing out the new Huawei tab and was also testing out the Speech Assist app, and lots of people were getting annoyed at hearing an American voice asking them questions if they could have a coffee or those sorts of things. The last one, which someone's already mentioned, is the GARI accessible finder, which is an application which provides users' information about the different sorts of accessibility functions on mobile applications and what is best suited for their needs. I suppose the reason why all of these sorts of ideas and information is applicable to Vodafone – and this is where the blatant plug comes in – is that the Vodafone Foundation in Australia runs an activity called App Aid. That matches not‑for‑profit organisations who have a charity status with app developers to take an application from an idea to a prototype. The prototypes are judged, and the winners are awarded funding to take the application from prototype stage to be able to upload it to where it's able to be downloaded commercially on the App Store. Last year, we provided two successful winners – St Johns – their First Responder app, and OzHarvest. We're opening applications in a few weeks’ time. I had a chat with a number of people yesterday who had an idea for an app or there was a particular service they thought a particular group in the community needs to be connected to. But all they had was an idea – no skills, or they're not overly digitally literate. I will put my hand up and say I am not at all digitally literate – I'm new to the telco space. That app is about connecting those charities with people with those skills to try and take something from an idea to something where you can actually connect people to services that they need. So have a look out for that. Thank you.

PETER BLASINA: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

PETER BLASINA: Thanks, Brad. Bert Ciavarra? Bert is from Telstra. This is all your space. Don't let anything break down.

BERT CIAVARRA: OK. Thank you. I'm from Telstra and I'm here to help. I've now got the magic stick, so I can talk. Thank you very much.

(PHONE RINGS)

PETER BLASINA: Sorry.

(LAUGHTER)

Thank you, Bert. That was wonderful.

(LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE)

It's all yours.

BERT CIAVARRA: Thank you. It's great to see so many people still here. Right at the end the, the last speaker on the second day of a conference. It's just terrific to see a lot of people still here. Usually there are a few less, I would suggest. Just a little bit about me, for those of you who don't know me. From the people that I've met – I think I've met a lot of you – in some way or other during my tenure in the company looking after disability programs. I sit in Telstra in the Chief Sustainability Office in the Digital Inclusion team. Jill Riseley, who spoke here yesterday on the podium, is our general manager. Under that banner comes Disability Programs, which I look after, Digital Literacy programs for older people, which my colleague Will, who's somewhere in the audience, looks after. And we've got a Cyber Safety manager, and a Low Income group as well. We do a lot of things in the disability, digital literacy space with the Digital Inclusion team. My role includes Disability Action Planning, and I'm in the process at the moment of developing our sixth Disability Action Plan. They're a 3‑year plan. We've been in the business for a very long time doing disability action plans. My role also includes engagement with stakeholders. We do that through a disability forum. A disability program consumer advisory group. I get involve would the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, with their accessibility committee. The communications alliance often has codes of practice and standards and guidelines that involve disability, and I usually get involved in those in some way or another. I also get involved with other advocacy groups other than our disability forum – more recently, our members were service providers in the sector.

We engage with those groups on an ongoing basis.

They help us to contribute to the development and accessing of accessible services. My colleagues, Megan and Rachael, earlier talked about the EasyTouch and EasyCall range they've developed in partnership with Telstra. A lot of the sorts of features in there were through the disability forum and other means, we advocated for them to include in those products. I also look at disability‑related complaints, look for root causes so we can eliminate the root causes or components. That's from the telecommunications industry ombudsman, where they have some reference to disability. There's a Human Rights Commission – we're a large company, so we sometimes get complaints from within the Human Rights Commission. We do learn from those – we make sure they don't come back. There's risk management and compliance in the disability space as well that I look after. Part of that is to make sure that all of the products and services that we develop, and also exit – when we exit a product, and any business improvements – actually have the minimal amount of disability impact. And where possible, a positive impact on people with disability and their customers.

I manage our disability equipment program. All the policy aspects of that and, more often than not, I get involved in the operational aspects of that as well. There's a disability training awareness course for employees that we have, and also we've got a lot of material on disability on our website. All the information that we have on our website with our accessible products and services, we encourage organisations that have websites and have communication media to their constituents and members to link to that database and where they want, I can provide them with information as well. I'll just end here, because like Peter said, we really want to open up to the floor the sorts of questions you'd like answered by us. Just generally, I guess I see my role in the company as promoting a good customer service experience and that that good customer service experience includes people with disability. I'll leave it there. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

PETER BLASINA: Actually, before I go to the floor, can I just ask Bert a question. How do you ensure that consumers and advocacy groups know that there are solutions available and they can be brought in at a particular cost, and what are the outcomes, then, for the end user?

BERT CIAVARRA: Peter, I'd actually include service providers and academic institutions as well, in that, as well as advocacy groups. They do make meaningful contributions to the sorts of things that we do. I mention the disability forum and other stakeholder engagement activities that we do. What that does is it's opened a collaboration with people who represent end users. We've got the technology, but we don't have all the smarts. There are lots of different disabilities out there that people have – combinations, complex disability, more simple disabilities like my glasses and maybe not hearing that well. We can communicate and we partner with and collaborate with organisations that represent that range of people with disability, and also their service providers, et cetera. We collaborate with organisations such as ACCAN, and bringing this forum to light with ACCAN was one of the best things I've done for many, many, many years. That's another way that advocacy groups could contribute to the equation. We've developed a lot of partnerships with disability groups and service providers, and all of my thunder along those lines has been stolen by previous speakers. Able Australia, who we're partnering with, and Claire – hi, Claire – presented on the partnership we have with Able Australia. Harriet Korner from independent living centre NSW talked about what they're doing, and their independent partnership with Telstra and the Telstra Foundation in that particular case, about developing digital literacy material that can be used Australia‑wide for people with complex communication needs and people who are deaf/blind. You, Peter, spoke about the connected seniors program. That's a wonderful program that I've seen in action, and it's terrific, and there are DVDs and there's materials available. We're including community groups in that – older people's networks and, as you said, the schools as well. We use community groups to test accessibility features of phones. We've done that in the past. We reintroduced many years ago a Braille teletype writer that I've got some help from Claire, once again, to develop. And also all the features of the phones that our ZTE colleagues mentioned earlier. So there's a whole lot of things that community groups can contribute to, and we embrace that and welcome that.

PETER BLASINA: OK. Let's take some questions from the floor.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Question to Peter and Jemma, but firstly, a word to Bert, and I'm sure I'm speaking on behalf of very many people here when I just convey our gratitude and thanks to him for the... especially the part he's played in preparing this program and making it happen. But more generally for the work that he does in disability over a long time, has done over a long time and we hope will continue to do over a long time. It is very, very much appreciated, Bert, so keep it going!

(APPLAUSE)

BERT CIAVARRA: Oh, shucks! Thanks, mate!

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I'll expect the envelope in the mail!

To Jemma and Peter, I was interested, much interested in everybody's presentations today. In your case, I'm particularly keen to know something about the gender dynamic of what you were doing. How do the numbers of boys and girls stack up? And the numbers among older people of men and women, and did you make any effort to pair like with like? And how did that kind of work go? Did you notice any kind of agenda ‑ any principles sticking out about whether older women worked better with young boys, or vice versa? Did gender play any part in what happened?

JEMMA TOOHEY: I would actually agree that there certainly was the gender mix to a degree. I would say 50% of the participants from the student background were male and females, so it was a fairly even split. But the majority of the older participants, probably 80%, were women. If a couple came in, a young male tended to move to the pair, like a married couple or partners, whatever. The same with the younger women. It tended to be if there was a either a couple or a couple of women, they would merge towards them. But it evolved. Every week was different, I have to say. Some of the lessons learned were people actually worked better with the same person each week. But often just couldn't occur because the whole group ‑ some would come one week and some wouldn't come the other in terms of the participants. But I must say in particular, the young men, and I have one particular young man in mind, the pride he had from the older gentleman shaking his hand still makes me feel quite emotional at the end of each session. His chest puffed out. He wasn't necessary the biggest personality, but this older gentleman gave him so much respect and confident, it was obvious, physically as he left each day, so I think that was fantastic. Does that answer your question?

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Absolutely does, thank you.

PETER BLASINA: OK. More questions? Over here. Just down the front. Actually, Jemma, we noticed a similar thing and the teachers told us that often the boys that were a problem at school really shone in the session. They garnered a great deal of self‑esteem.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: My question is actually for Brad. Given the huge range of different handsets and devices that there are in the marketplace. What tips can you give to community groups when they're releasing their apps? How do they keep across the cross‑performing and cross‑functional? Any tips or tricks with that?

BRAD KITSCHKE: I think it's a really good point and I think it's part of the industry. I think telcos is a very vendor driven industry these days. So very much the carriers ‑ in some respects are dictated to by the particular hand set carriers. Networks are based on the release of a new device rather than the other way around. So it is actually quite difficult. I think better engagement, perhaps, with peak bodies such as ACCAN, could seek out organisations like AMTA to engage with some of the groups that are interested and perhaps provide a formal connection to some of the community groups that the Mobile Manufacturers Forum could perhaps link in with some of the organisations and perhaps that way we could better understand the needs of those groups in those developments. The evolution of technology is so quick at the moment that novices like myself find it hard to keep up. So I empathise with community organisations who are developing apps are going in to that space who have trouble keeping up as well.

BERT CIAVARRA: All of the organisations that we work with, we encourage them to make information that we know is available to all of the constituents. There's obviously access to the GARI database for accessible mobile hand sets, and also the new portal that ACCAN just started up would be a way for people to find out what the latest features are and which phones might be the most useful. So they're different ways you can do it.

PETER BLASINA: And can I just add that with the life of a smartphone being about five or six months, and really, the top part of its life is the three months after it goes on sale and then it is downhill from there, it's really hard to move the technology in to this space because by the time you're ready for it, it's off the market. You know, the particular smartphone is gone. Same with tablets. And in fact, between now and Christmas, I've seen already 12 new smartphones and 15 new tablets that will hit the market in literally the next three months.

Any other questions? Up the back there.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Hi. Our consultancy focuses on user experience and accessible design research, so I'm just going to out myself. But one of the things we're talking about in terms of multiple devices and the cost of things. We look at browser interoperability and different companies, operating systems and all of the cost, functional testing and technical testing. Why do you think that accessibility design, or accessible design and research is so often considered such a huge cost when the others are just considered a part of the process?

PETER BLASINA: Who would like to take that question? Bert? Brad?

BRAD KITSCHKE: I'll make a comment which is one of the things that we try to steal back in to the business in Vodafone and it is probably similar in other places is that customers with accessibility needs are... you're our customers. So we have an obligation to attempt to make sure that we understand your needs and provide products and services that actually meet those needs. So it's important for us to have relationships with organisations like ACCAN who push us along the way when we need to. But you're right ‑ in many respects, it is a difficulty. We've just recently undertaken a consultancy with the Australian Network on Disability to actually go around and review all of our touch points ‑ so our stores, our website and also do some calls to our call centre, both in Tasmania and our offshore call centres as well to actually benchmark them and make sure that the service and all of our touch points are aware of the particular requirements that we have to fulfil for customers with accessibility needs. But also that we're actually ensuring that we're best practice. And I think that you're right that making sure that those sorts of things on the agenda in any organisation can be quite difficult.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: But why?

BRAD KITSCHKE: I think to be honest, it's a very difficult thing sometimes to push, commercially. I think you actual will you have to really make time to actually understand particular needs and really push it to the fore. We're doing that in Vodafone and I know that Telstra do some fantastic work. I think you're 100% correct when you say that some of those things often are very, very hard to push. And I think that there may actually be a space. And ACCAN was talking earlier this week about some requirements in terms of accessibility and that's something that I think we should explore between industry and ACCAN.

BERT CIAVARRA: Brad, you mentioned AND and we are a member of the same organisation and we're getting them to do some accessibility checking as well of our touch points, our stores and maybe even some other things as well. And we're picking that up as part of our six disability action plan. But one of the things that's happened in the last five or six years is that there's been a huge proliferation of phones, of mobile devices especially, and I think they've gone really, really fast. And it's hard to get a grip on which ones, other than the ones that were mentioned by ZTE that actually had a significant input in to the development of the accessibility features. So you've got a whole range of products out there. We know what the accessibility features are of the phones from the GARI database and whatever other database you get. But as far as testing goes ‑ unless you specifically get the phone tested, you don't really know the end‑user result. And we've started doing that now. So through Media Access Australia, we've just started to try to get a sense of which phones might actually be the most accessible or have the most accessible features. And we're working on that. But it has been a challenge, especially with so many phones coming in to the market and also the demographic that our marketing people are actually targeting. And I'm sure yours would do the same. I can remember when we set up a marketing group and it was younger people. It was families but people with disability was always a challenge. We developed the phones, but it is still a challenge to actually target those specifically and especially with all the accessible features of phones.

PETER BLASINA: Can I just mention really quickly ‑ the hardware is 50% of the equation. The software is also a critical element. And the software is changing really rapidly. You've got strawberry shortcake one minute and jelly bean the next. And it is difficult. And we've noticed it because we've developed apps where you get a very quick transition in the operating system on the mobile devices ‑ Android and IOS in particular. But then there's Windows. But the software is a critical issue to consider. And it's not just a hardware issue.

BERT CIAVARRA: Can I just make one further comment on that. Just on exactly that ‑ the apps and the new phones and Frank won't mind me using this as an anecdote. I've tried to provide Frank and Vision Australia with some phones in the past to test for accessibility features, especially with software that you can download or apps that you can download on to the phone. And we tested it. And one of them had the ice‑cream sandwich operating system in. And I tried to give Frank another one, which was also an ice‑cream sandwich. And he said ‑ don't give me an ice‑cream sandwich ‑ I want a jelly bean. It's come to that. The operating system actually does enable a lot of the accessibility features and we're moving in to that Android platform that actually have a lot better opportunity for accessibility features.

GUNELA ASTBRINK: We heard yesterday about the Raku Raku phone in Japan and we heard a lot of statistics over the past couple of days about increasing the ageing population. Not only in Japan now but throughout many countries in the world and we know that there are companies who are really moving forward and already have. We've heard a lot about the Apple iPhone and we have Raku Raku. And there's more and more happening and I suppose the question for both of you is ‑ how do you see that is going to make a difference in your own markets as to including accessibility right from the start?

BRAD KITSCHKE: I think applications actually play a huge role. I think while there are a lot of smartphones out there, I think the way and the ability to actually customise and create and load applications on to a phone which interface with the functions of the phone to provide services or a particular way of interfacing for particular groups of people with particular needs is the real opportunity rather than actually developing specific devices. I think there is a huge opportunity to use your Android or your iPhone smartphone and actually customise those phones with particular applications which interface with the phone and provide the particular usability that someone who is perhaps vision impaired or has a hearing issue, perhaps needs to work with. So I think that's the big opportunity is the over‑the‑top service with applications.

BERT CIAVARRA: Well...

PHIA DAMSMA: I think it is important that Andrew mentioned that I really hope that for the developers of apps, there will be a standard. Because I think it is brilliant now that everybody can create very useful as but they all have completely different navigation systems and it is hard enough to learn to use one. But if there are ten where swiping up means faster but in the next it is going slower, but in the next one it is completely different. As long as there are no guidelines for develop, I don't think that you, as the service provider or the Telecom industry, should rely on accessibility in the way of apps that are provided by developers. I think it should be in the phone and in the design from the start.

BRAD KITSCHKE: As I said before, again, we're very much a vendor‑driven industry as well. So I think that that is actually where there needs to be... where the loop needs to be closed in that sense. Which means that we need to be talking to representatives of those companies who are making the phones. Because we don't... Vodafone doesn't make the Samsung or the Nokia, etc. And so we probably need to close the loop with the manufacturers.

BERT CIAVARRA: And they were here in this forum and I think they heard a fair bit. So we are certainly going to be taking things up with our suppliers and our manufacturers. But this is just another reason why this is such a great opportunity at this forum.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Can you hear me? Thank you for your presentation. What I wanted to put to you and see what you can do with your powers, particularly through Vodafone and Telstra is in regard to the hand sets and the hardware and the design and manufacturing. My issue is not in relation to the interface and the accessibility software of apps. It is actually about the actual phone. And there's a real need for the phone to have a default to be able to take two SIM cards. One for work and one for personal use. I know some in the business are selling phones and selling their products, but how many people here have got two phones ‑ one for work and one for personal use? Put up your hands! How convenient to have one phone, two SIM cards with a simple switch on the phone to switch between one to the other using the same thing so you can be billed to your personal one for personal phone calls and be billed on the personal SIM card. Would that be a good product development for everybody?

BERT CIAVARRA: There are... sorry, there are phones.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Yeah, there are. Are there smartphones available?

BERT CIAVARRA: I haven't seen any.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: There are some cheaper phones that will take two SIM cards. But what I'm putting to you is that it is in the quick uptake of smartphones and Pete just said he saw 10 smartphones and 15 tablets between now and September. Do any of them have twin SIM cards? For someone like me, a difficulty in some aspect to use a phone, but to actually juggle two phones, I'm sure there's a big market out there for smartphones with two SIM cards.

BERT CIAVARRA: The point is well made. I'm certainly one of the people who has two phones because... well, I have a personal one and a work one so the point is well made and we'll certainly take it up.

GUNELA ASTBRINK: I can add, I think it's a good point. I know in Hong Kong, a lot of people have duel sim card phones because they may do a lot of calling in to mainland China, but also within Hong Kong. And it is just a standard procedure that there are dual SIM cards there. So the application would be different here in Australia, but it would make a lot of sense.

PETER BLASINA: It's a good point. It is getting quite difficult even for able‑bodied people to remove a SIM card.

We're heading towards last questions. No more? Oh, OK. Last question. Hang on, wait for the microphone. You all look exhausted! Information overload!

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I've just got a really quick question to ask. From a mobile app development point of view, there are tools that are coming out that enable developers to create apps from one platform that can go cross‑platform. And this is the techie thing like app‑cellerator. How does that tie in with accessibility? Do we need to build in the accessibility in to programs and apps to ensure that developers have accessibility firmly on their radar across‑the‑board?

PETER BLASINA: OK, can I answer that? Unfortunately, the cross‑platform apps we've found to date and we've been trying to produce a number of different apps within the business, so I have a business that sits behind the gadget guy called The Gadget Group. And it is buggy. It's not 100%. Migrating one app that you might develop in IOS across to Android has not been successful and going the other way is even worse. So we've been frustrated because the... a lot of functionality that's built in to IOS isn't available on Android at this stage. It's coming. You can see that they're heading in that direction. But really, you've got to develop natively as in IOS if you want them to work properly and efficiently and not be buggy and collapsing. So that's our experience. I can only give you our experience. But it hasn't been a wonderful experience to date. It may change in the future but... we'll now have the last question.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: A quick comment rather than a question. The other option where it would work would be to make it a browser interface rather than a native app and a quite a lot could be done with that and that way it works across anything from your desktop to your tablet to your phone. And it can't always be done, I know, but for situations where it works, if you do it...

PETER BLASINA: The problem with browser‑based apps is that the ceiling is very low in terms of functionality. You are limited to very basic functionality. If you're trying to do something different and exciting and vibrant, it's not going to happen in a browser‑based app. OK, have you got a question.

EUAN RAMSEY‑STEWART: It's more a comment than anything else. Your work over in Europe, it's all about standardisation and my comment here is that what I'm hearing amongst the whole conference is that there are no standards. Basically, I think the community needs to get involved and start creating standards for this... for mobile applications and that the telcos should be getting involved at the very start of this. And step up beyond the mark, go past the area where ACCAN has to tell you that you need to do this or get the Australian Disability Network to tell you to do this. Go beyond it. Set the bench mark for the rest of the world and let's create the standards. Let's do it here.

(APPLAUSE)

PETER BLASINA: Actually, that's an extremely valid point. Because you only get to accept... I mean, in the case of video, there are so many different standards. With algorithms. You isolate it to just a single standard. So for example, the television and movie industry is moving towards a single standard for ultra‑high definition. Not the 24 standards that exist for just high definition. So I'm sure that you guys have got a better example than mine.

PHIA DAMSMA: I just thought that maybe the app challenge that was announced earlier could be used to set the standard in the challenge itself.

GUNELA ASTBRINK: Thanks for mentioning Cost 219. It was operational for about 20 years and a European Commission project on telecommunications and disability are looking at a very, very wide cross section of issues. Standards, I agree, are very important and having sat on codes committee, I know the complexity of developing them. So one has to be very careful about fining the right level of standards so they're not too prescriptive but not too general either. And certainly with such a huge lead changing market and also the technology is moving so quickly, we need to be very, very careful in how it is done. But I agree that there needs to be some standards or guidelines so that it's not reinventing the wheel all the time and having to go back and check with consumers if it is OK, but to have some general starting points. That certainly would help. I think that would help any developer.

EUAN RAMSEY‑STEWART: John Gill?

PETER BLASINA: Can I make the point on that with standards, that my experience is that someone has gone rogue so the industry has decided that micro‑USB would be the charging port on all phones. And all the manufacturers agreed except Apple. So there's always someone who runs rogue on standards. It's very rare that you get 100%... I know, it's money. It's very rare that you get 100% across the line, but even if we could get 90% of the industry agreeing on a standard, then we'd be a long way down the track.

OK, can we end on that note. Standards, I think that's a good place to end.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you very much to the esteemed panel. And can I just say before I get crass‑tackled. Can I just say a special thank you...

(Bell rings)

TERESA CORBIN: I just had to do that!

PETER BLASINA: To Xavier, he's just been immensely patient with me. So I haven't been the best facilitator... that's what I am, aren't I! So thank you very much for coming to this session. I think it's been a valuable session. I think ending on standards was wonderful. And thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

TERESA CORBIN: And thank you to you too, Pete. We're really pleased to have you, even if you don't think you've been the best facilitator, we think you've been fine.