

SPEAKER:

Belco arts acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land where we meet and work, the Ngunnawal people and the many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from across Australia who have now made Canberra their home. We celebrate and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of the ACT and Region

S2:

Ultimate Canberra in the 70s. That doesn't have a soul.

SPEAKER:

No, wrong.

BEN:

How funny is this, the 1930s Canberra to the twenty twenty one. Yeah. it's a very different experience.

SPEAKER:

That was Ben who I'm delighted to be interviewing today as part of the Connect Collective. A project that aims to acknowledge, celebrate and inform the community about the exciting and diverse hobbies and passions of people with disabilities. Thanks for joining us, everyone. This is Ben Zuru. Thank you for joining us, Ben.

BEN:

Thank you for having me on this wonderful podcast.

SPEAKER:

Thank you so much. Yeah. So, yeah, if you can just tell us a little bit about yourself, like how long you've lived in Canberra.

BEN:

I've lived in Canberra. I was born here in 1980 at the Old Canberra Hospital and then had to face the four years of my life on the Gold Coast because my father had worked in architecture. He was the draftsman, so he had some work on the Gold Coast and then he had to come back down here before work. And then I have been here ever since then.

SPEAKER:

Mm Yeah.

BEN:

The Scott city, every time I look up at Telstra Tower am now looking at what my dad worked on.

SPEAKER:

Oh wow. So It's incredible.

BEN:

It's a special memory.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, absolutely. It's such an icon of Canberra, but to you, it's like an extra special thing. Yeah.

BEN:

And also, my mum told the story of how she knew she has to take the functions of the people who eat and drive on that wrong road.

SPEAKER:

Nice lunch deliveries at the top of the Hill (LAUGHS) mountain we should say. So, want to get to know a little bit more about some of your passions in life now and what's something that in particular that you're passionate about?

BEN:

In motorsport.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, great.

BEN:

Yeah, of course I love it.

SPEAKER:

Yeah.

BEN:

It's such a good sport. But some people don't see it as a sport. Just not like running, but you are still working up for sweat because you're not only sitting down, but you're in a fireproof overalls plus the thermal underwear and environment cover, and in those huge hot boxes, you should be 30 degrees above the ambient temperature.

SPEAKER:

Oh my God.

BEN:

Of the day. So.

SPEAKER:

yeah, well,

BEN:

You can easily release so much of fluid, and that's why you see some of the drivers at the end of the day they're taking us thousands.

SPEAKER:

Yeah,

BEN:

Especially depending on where they go. So sometimes the foot could be 90 degrees centigrade.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, I guess if there is zooming around that track then it gets pretty hot.

BEN:

Yeah,

SPEAKER:

in the engine.

BEN:

Yeah, there's also braking the forces of a car that adds to the fire wall and stuff.

SPEAKER:

Yeah.

BEN:

Just trying to keep the drivers cool and and the vest, but sometimes it wouldn't work. And that just clogged up with the dry ice. And then it would just get literally wearing an electric blanket. So most homes on really hot days and this is all over the world. Yeah, just the same thing.

SPEAKER:

Do you like drive cars yourself or do you? You're a spectator of the motorsport?

BEN:

An appreciator and a spectator.

SPEAKER:

Have you been in a car? Have you been able to go for,

BEN:

So one of the due date, I said to my brother in law last Christmas that I want to just do one race in a car.

SPEAKER:

Not of yours,

BEN:

And just to see even if it is servo entrance sort of archaic category just to get the buzz. Because I always had that passion ever since I was 15 that I can clearly remember.

SPEAKER:

Yeah.

BEN:

That I started collecting my footsteps (LAUGHS).

SPEAKER:

Yes. What was the first thing that got you into motorsports, Do you remember?

BEN:

I guess it would be my the family members growing up because we did have a torn on the Gold Coast and there's a photo of me as a little baby on the old Surfers Paradise racetrack, watching Hootie Johnson and Peter Brook battle out in the Australian, Touring Car Championship there.

SPEAKER:

Right.

BEN:

That was really interesting.

SPEAKER:

Yeah,

BEN:

But I can't remember, but I can remember a photo of this.

SPEAKER:

Yeah.

BEN:

But over the trips I been to, I've been to Wakefield Park in Govan. That's quite a good venue because you get quite close to the cars and it's good viewing.

SPEAKER:

Yeah,

BEN:

The buffers I've been to quite a few times and the first time I went in was in 2003. The twenty four hour challenge.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, wow.

BEN:

So and I did not, well I had Marcus wipes every now and then, but I stayed up for the whole thing.

SPEAKER:

Oh my gosh, that's a long time to be away.

BEN:

Yeah, it is still really challenging, but I met people like Peter Brook and

SPEAKER:

oh, did you? Yeah,

BEN:

partner,

SPEAKER:

great, wow

BEN:

I don't think there would have been a huge one up there was hardly anyone warming up and I got his signature, this is to leave off and make the best of every opportunity.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, that's very good advice.

BEN:

And I met Golf Chandra, he was really tall.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, (LAUGHS).

BEN:

And then also met Great Titania and he was really short.

SPEAKER:

Yeah,(LAUGHS) all types can fit into the car.

BEN:

Yeah. I even met Greg Williams I had a chance to meet him in 2014, but I forgot to take a photo with him. In 2020 when he was there for our traditional looks like I've a photo from the Greg lias.(LAUGHS) I think that's so funny.

SPEAKER:

But you got your photos.

BEN:

Yes, I did. Yeah. So as part of my the Facebook profile.

SPEAKER:

Oh, cool.

BEN:

Of my photo bombing (LAUGHS).

SPEAKER:

That's awesome. Do you know a lot about cars yourself as well? Like in terms of like?

BEN:

Yes. I can even still, what make and model When was the Dodge ram driving around? And one says, Oh, that's not a Dodge ram, OK? That is because I just tow above the headlights or the tail. Just a little glimpse.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, got a photographic memory for cars, yeah, that's amazing. Um, I guess I also wanted to talk to you a little bit about your work in disability because you mentioned to me that you are an advisory group.

BEN:

Yes.

SPEAKER:

And then quite active in the disability community.

BEN:

Yes, I am

SPEAKER:

Sharing your experience. So yeah, do you want to tell me a little bit about the groups that you're part of?

BEN:

The Disability Reference Group is basically to advise the government on the problems that have caused that. I've personally experienced from large say it could be a government vaccine programme of help. It wasn't really rolled out effectively to people with disabilities, especially people who live not in the industry but who may live alone?

SPEAKER:

Yeah,

BEN:

and who still need access to the vaccine and I was supposed to be in phase one, be? And then obviously it all got pear shaped.

SPEAKER:

Yeah

BEN:

Both the federal and the state and territory governments. Yeah, I didn't really. But then I was on the best way of how to go forward.

SPEAKER:

That's great.

BEN:

Like, I even seen that only fairly recently and not on your kicking CPR app. You have to get your digital vaccine certificate. So when you travel into state, obviously they are not to the W.I. at the moment or quite like,

SPEAKER:

Yeah (LAUGHS).

BEN:

But all of that I asked about, would we need one? And then I said, No, not internally here in Cambridge, because we are pretty highly the vaccinated, but still, I think, went ahead and done that. Well, just to make sure that and apparently I've been working on that for a few months.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, right that's good.

BEN:

When we got rolled out people saying, Oh, how quickly is this one compared to the New South Wales app?

SPEAKER:

Yeah.

BEN:

Because, I think all the other states and territories need to copy what Canberra has done there to make it easier to use for everyone.

SPEAKER:

Yeah. It's a pretty good app, isn't it? It's quite accessible and easy to read.

BEN:

Yeah, but you know what, New South Wales, the one we've got to kick in and kick out.

SPEAKER:

Oh dear.

BEN:

Apparently, yes. Oh, that's really complicated, isn't it? When you think that even people who are not as smart as smart phones still have us. The smart phone and are able to learn if shown by breaking it

down into a state rather than what some tech kids were doing just got real. And then you just lost me at first one.

SPEAKER:

You can repeat that? Yeah. Well, I'm sure like the advisory group you're on, like, it sounds like you're able to give a lot of really useful information.

BEN:

Yes.

SPEAKER:

From your lived experience.

BEN:

Yes. And it's really unfortunate, even though it's a page which you just feel so passionate about it there to make things a lot more. Um, how can I say it? The searching of people just you can do anything I able-bodied person can do.

SPEAKER:

Exactly, yeah. And you also mentioned earlier to me that you're part of a morning tea group.

BEN:

Yes. It's called the disability morning. The Tea.

SPEAKER:

Yeah,

BEN:

and it's run by Mary Green, who used to be run by Natasha Skidmore, but she left for GH, the new enforcement opportunities. Yeah, but the group is still going on. And it's a part of it from the beginning and even why

SPEAKER:

I notice the shoe laces. So I've got some rainbow shoe laces going on here very quickly. And on the side. Yeah, very cool.

BEN:

Sometimes, of course, I come on the title page longer. Oh

SPEAKER:

Yeah, nothing. Yeah, they're great.

BEN:

Yeah. So and then I put those, especially the for the first meeting that I attended. Yeah,

SPEAKER:

How many people are in the group at the moment.

BEN:

Just under the tent?

SPEAKER:

Yeah

BEN:

It's not a small group then. Yeah. So yeah, we do often go to the yoga.

SPEAKER:

Right, Yeah,

BEN:

That's really interesting.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, I've. Tried that before, actually, I watched a YouTube video, you can check your guns. Yeah, that's good. Yeah,

BEN:

Just really helps if you're not comfortable on the floor. Yeah, exactly. So thing and not everyone can get on the phone. Exactly. Get off and down. Easy, but that's I think sometimes if you were to walk on, not the skinniest fella, you know? Yeah. For me

SPEAKER:

It's yeah, it's hard. I mean, I find it difficult to get up and down from the floor as well, so I go all the way. It's all started chair yoga chapter in Canberra. So the next question I've got fewer around aspirations for your passions. If your passion in motorsports could become your career or your job, would you want to do that?

BEN:

Well, I know I'd probably get into more stages when I'm getting into my Middle Ages. Yeah, so all depends on how the situation arises. Yeah, obviously. And

SPEAKER:

And what to do. Yeah,

BEN:

Depending on what is or even whether how old the Canberra rally here and just being part of the some sort of team to help out. Yeah, it was the thing I know as a V8. Yeah, that would be coming here in 2020 to free the possibility.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, right?

BEN:

Exhibition Park.

SPEAKER:

Because have they come here before?

BEN:

I was here in 2000 to 2003, racing in the streets of in between the old and new That's one of the treasurer's department.

SPEAKER:

Yeah. Did you go to say the sedan?

BEN:

Yes, I did. Yeah, the very first one, but I was outside and I know some people inside were saying, you

going to pay money to come in and say this and this other writing was going like, we are tax payers for this. Yeah. A. The Canberra thing. Sometimes that happens. Yeah. Yeah, it's a thing that campus is nothing to do. Yeah, to see

SPEAKER:

I know completely wrong,

BEN:

Talk to some people, talk to most people and I was doing something here in the Canberra and the Sydney. I say, Oh, what did you do it all? Go out and buy time off? Yeah, I know I can remember I was. It came up on Instagram, I think, from the ABC, the Canberra talking about Canberra in the seventies. That doesn't have a soul.

SPEAKER:

No (LAUGHS).

BEN:

How funny is, you know, 1930s Canberra to the twenty twenty one? Yeah. Yeah, I like the different experience. Exactly. There's so much to do.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, I love Canberra. Yeah,

BEN:

It's not just in this city, but in the The Nikely National Park, Uganda champion below tracking station. Mainly,

SPEAKER:

Yeah, The imagination park,

BEN:

And say all the animas here in.

S[EAKER:

Yeah, Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't already talked about?

BEN:

I'm afraid I haven't talked about my disability.

SPEAKER:

Yes, If you'd like to.

BEN:

It's called 18 humaneness syndrome. Yes, that's a fairly rare syndrome. So I have the 17th chromosome and then goes straight to 19th. What type of 19th chromosome? So the things like my muscle tone speak in the parliament, I do have am used to suffer from that, especially in the younger age. I used to really stutter a lot. But I found if I talk about it sexually, it keeps it going and, It just got the functioning followed, so that has an impact. I had a problem with the kidneys in the past. But I grew out of that and many people with my disability that don't have speak at all.

SPEAKER:

Right? Yeah.

BEN:

So and I'm very fortunate that I have this syndrome. So I feel very lucky and I only got diagnosed in 1998.

SPEAKER:

Oh, wow.

BEN:

Because I finally done the TSA before I had the part of really the syndrome course because I don't eat the frozen stuff. Just go. Yeah, well, put down there for him. He doesn't have that, but he's got some sort of, syndromes that I couldn't work it out for so long. And you have so many blood tests everywhere and you should try to get out of my heels of my foot stuff. And yeah, and then I had that the fear of the needles. But it doesn't stop me from doing the stuff I love.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, absolutely.

BEN:

What I want to do and I believe in independent life.

SPEAKER:

One final question, actually, if there was one thing that you wish people knew more about disability generally, is there something that you would like to?

BEN:

Don't? bully us, don't put us down, don't say that we cannot do that. OK, even if we wanted to have a relationship for saying that people disability don't need sex to be happy. That's what I have heard once on the thing for, really?

SPEAKER:

Yeah.

BEN:

People with disabilities are like anyone else.

SPEAKER:

Exactly. Yeah,

BEN:

I have the wants and the needs.

SPEAKER:

Yeah. There's a lot of judgment isn't there? about what people with disability are and aren't. And yeah, a lot of that isn't true at all. Well, thank you so much for sharing so generously with us today.

BEN:

Thank you. Yeah.

SPEAKER:

Thanks, Ben.

RUTH O' BRIEN:

This project is supported by the Act government as part of the 2021 Art Day celebrations. Thank you to the lovely staff at Belconnen Arts Centre for making this project possible. And thank you to the

Office for Disability. This project has been put together as part of the 2021 celebrations for International Day of People with Disabilities. My name is Ruth O'Brien. Thank you for joining us.