**BCA Inform: November, Shaping a Plan for Accessible Information and Communication**

On Tuesday 12th November, BCA Inform was held to discuss shaping a plan for accessible information and communication in line with the Federal Government’s work on developing an Associated Plan for Information and Communication. The session commenced with our much-loved guest speaker, Lauren Henley, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia, who provided an overview of her landmark case with the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

Lauren discussed lodging a complaint against the Australian Government for failing to provide minimum targets for audio description on television. The complaint alleged breaches under Articles 5, 9, and 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Lauren's complaint was upheld by the CRPD Committee, leading to the Australian Government's commitment to increase audio description on public broadcasters and work with commercial broadcasters to improve the provision of audio description.

Then the session moved to Jackson Reynalds-Ryan, BCA’s Senior Policy Officer, who discussed the role of the Committee on the CRPD in raising concerns about Australia's lack of response in areas such as information and communication accessibility. He highlighted the CRPD's recommendations for the Australian government to take actions including legally binding information and communication standards, and the development of public procurement criteria to ensure accessible technologies.

Jackson then discussed the development of an Associated Plan under the disability strategy, which was recommended by the UN and later formalized by the Disability Royal Commission. The plan aims to improve the accessibility of information and communications, encompassing a range of contexts and settings. Jackson then spoke about the Communications Accessibility Consultative Committee and BCA’s recent involvement with it.

Then attendees had the opportunity to share their thoughts and insights. The inclusion of web content accessibility guidelines in the Associated Plan was noted. It was agreed that the plan should be adaptable to improvements in technology and should include guidelines for Australian content. Attendees also noted the distinction between audio description on TV and the requirement to verbalize on-screen text, with emphasis on the importance of these topics being separate.

A broader approach to organizational operations was proposed, emphasizing the inclusion of communication and information alongside procurement practices. It was suggested that all operational aspects be evaluated for their impact on these areas. The need for forward-looking strategies in rapidly evolving fields, such as artificial intelligence was highlighted, with a recommendation for establishing processes to anticipate and mitigate potential challenges.

Finally, Lauren and Jackson discussed next steps and how members can stay active and get involved. They explained the progress of the Broadcasting Services Act amendments, with the Minister aiming to finalize the draft legislation by March next year. They emphasized the need for ongoing advocacy and community pressure to ensure the amendments are implemented. BCA members were also encouraged to respond to calls to action and contact Free TV Australia as well as share their experiences and successes to encourage others to take action.