**DOIN’ TIME DISABILITY DAY 2023**

**Marisa:** Hello, and welcome to International Day of People with Disability. The theme for today is health sovereignty. First up, we're going to be speaking with June Riemer, who is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, First People Disability Network. We spoke to June last year on International Day of Disability, and we had a really great conversation and story format, and we're going to be speaking with her very shortly.

And also I wanted to say that June is also a First Nations woman and she will tell us what land she's from when the time comes shortly. After that we're going to be speaking with Ros Sackley who has been an educator for most of her working life and has taught in the ACT in New South Wales in schools and she's also a First Nations woman and has had, and has vision loss.

Then after that, we will speak with Maryaka, who is the co-president of People with Disability Australia. So first off, I want to honour June and welcome her to the program. Hello, welcome.

**June:** Good morning and hello. First and foremost, I'd like to acknowledge that we're on many different countries here today, for those listening. I'm a Gumbaynggirr Dunghutti woman from the north coast of New South Wales.

**Marisa:** Lovely to have you back, June. I want to send out a cheerio to Kelly Cox as well who joined us last year at this time, and she's not well.

**June:** Yep. And I'd also like to acknowledge Ros. Ros is actually one of our founding members of our organisation back in the early 2000s that understood that we needed the representative body for mob living with disability and their families.

**Marisa:** Oh, that's awesome. Yeah, she's an amazing contributor and I'm hoping to interview her after you. So June, let's talk about health sovereignty. I mean, basically the focus that I'm having on today's show is really more about over policing of people with disability and the criminal justice system, particularly focusing on First Nations. But I suppose I just wanted to hear from you, what's close to your heart and what would you like to talk about? What's your passion?

**June:** Obviously, my passion is to change the narrative in regards to how First Nations people with disability are viewed across society and it's important to understand that the work of First Peoples is around social justice and the implementation of the human rights of people and their support.

**June:** It doesn't matter what avenue they're pursuing or where they find themselves. We need to understand that, our mob live with many differences, but more importantly, culture is, a part of who they are. We don't get this really well in Australia, per se in regards towards people living with disability.

I think it's important to understand that social inclusion versus the medical model of support. And that people come with many different issues in their life in pursuing health and well being, and what that looks like for individuals. Across the service systems, whether it's justice, education and that - we don't really understand disability well and what those needs may be for an individual to live a good life.

So our work is ongoing, and always the structural issues impact on us as an organisation trying to change how we think about, supporting the most vulnerable in our community.

**Marisa:** Absolutely, and in fact, there's just been so much going on, hasn't there, in terms of Aboriginal deaths in custody. There are so many complex issues faced by First Nations people with disability.

In the criminal justice system over representation and indefinite detention, and First Nations people with disability are increasingly over represented in all aspects of the criminal justice system including police and the courts. And the prisons! What do you think of that?

**June:** 100%. You’re on the point. And the problem is the system has not changed in decades around how they look at people living with differences. From the first port of call, which may be the police desk when, a person with disability is pulled up, whether it's psychosocial, intellectual or that, but there isn't those supports put in place.

What we've always talked about overall - we need a disability commissioner, but more importantly, we need more disability advocates in those first ports of call. To walk alongside those individuals. To support those that they're confronting them with, whether its allegations or whatever it looks like, to understand this person may need additional needs in understanding what's happening at that moment.

As we all know, there's a long history in Australia around systemic racism. Systemic misunderstanding our people with disability, unconscious bias. All of this language has an impact on our families over and over again. The systems are not built to incorporate people living with differences.

**June:** The support networks are not in place to support those also on the other side of the counter. To acknowledge who is standing in front of them and what additional needs they may have. We talk about it all the time, that there needs to be long term sustainable training, across all these different cohorts, to understand disability from a First Nations perspective.

We're seeing small changes, but they're not coming fast enough. So the consequences are, it's devastating consequences. As you said, the ongoing rate of deaths in custody, is just not good enough anymore. The country we live in. It can't be anymore. It can't be the status quo that a person with diabetes is dying in custody.

**Marisa:** That's exactly right.

**June:** The lack of knowledge around the needs of individuals that need other supports in their life. We know from the Disability Royal Commission, most of our institutions that are incarcerating people with disability are not accessible.

So we hear about grown men having to be in support nappies all day long because there's not an accessible toilet. We hear of inmates being paid vouchers to be personal carers inside, supporting those living with disability. The structures need to be rebuilt, rethought about, but education from the starting point needs to be implemented across many areas.

We need disability advocates in the courtroom. At so many levels, starting points, we need people representing them, walk alongside those that may not be able to navigate a system that was never designed for them.

**Marisa:** Exactly, and it's pretty important at this point to even say to listeners, and I'm sure you would agree with this, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 14 times more likely to be imprisoned with significant, portions reporting disability, including psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.

**June:** 100%. What we need to understand from the beginning, First Nations communities have always been inclusive about looking after their own. There's many narratives around why that's happened. But we've always been an inclusive society.

So what we know and understand is we have high statistics of undiagnosed disability or particularly psychosocial or other, intellectual disability. The incarceration rates of this cohort is higher than ever because their interaction of not understanding the basic rules of society creates for them, untold barriers, and people not understanding.

**June:** So again, I'll go back to that ableism and racism.They're seen as a bad Black person first, rather than a person that has additional needs.

**Marisa:** That's exactly right. And obviously colonisation and transgenerational trauma significantly impact First Nations people with disability as well.

**June:** Yes, and we need to also change how we think about people with disability and that's in general. We are the only country in the world that locks up 10 year olds, it's just not good enough anymore. And we have so many strong advocates, across the disability rights space that are saying why this is not appropriate. We're setting them up for life.

But we know a lot of it, particularly our children are undiagnosed. And the reason they're undiagnosed is because the parents are afraid to step forward into a system that, one, takes our children away, but two, incarcerates our community rather than intervention and other programs that can support, the issues around living with differences.

**Marisa:** Absolutely. June, thank you so much for coming onto the program. I'm going to be interviewing Roslyn next, and then I'm hopefully going to be crossing over to Maryaka, who is the co-president of People with Disability Australia, to speak with her about disability in general. Are there any final comments that you wanted to make? How can we actually improve the justice system to be more understanding?

**June:** I think everyone needs to open their hearts and understand that, as a collective, we all walk differently on this earth and we need to open our hearts and understand where people may be coming from. And really listen. We're not doing enough listening.

Days like International Day of People with Disability, hopefully the sector, the government, non government cohorts, really think about what it means to the barriers that we create in society, for all our people with disability to be included. And justice is just another barrier that impacts on First Nations people.

**Marisa:** Absolutely. June, thank you so much for coming on to the program. It's really important on this International Day of Disability to hear voices that are often taken out of mainstream media. Thanks so much.

**June:** Thank you and appreciate your time too.

**Marisa:** Take care.

**June:** Bye.

**Marisa:** Bye bye. And that was June Riemer who is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, First Peoples Disability Network, speaking about First Nations people and the criminal justice system.

*(Short music clip plays as soundbites from various disabled voices are heard)*

**Speaker 1:** Disabled people are worth it. Every bloody penny. I'm okay with spending money on the supports that we need.

**Speaker 2:** There’s more than 400,000 people who should be on the DSP, but are on Jobseeker instead.

**Speaker 3:** I’ve got a life to live. I've got commitment, life, everybody I can to shine.

**Speaker 4:** The only way to provide meaningful support is stronger grassroots movements. These institutions are never gonna be our savior.

**Speaker 5:** If everyone was the same, it would be a boring old world we'd live in.

**Speaker 6:** We need to do a lot of work in this country around shifting community attitudes towards people that don't fit the white, able, straight, cisgendered person.

**Ayan:** 3CR. Stay tuned, stay radical.

**Speaker 7:** You being disabled doesn't make you a burden or a stressor on a relationship. That's just what capitalism is teaching us. It's teaching us that if we're not well, we're not successful. No, It's totally not the case.

**Speaker 8:** You’re listening to 3CR's International Day of People with Disability Broadcast.

**Speaker 9:** Many refugees who still don't have the right to work are feeling the impacts of the cost of living crisis, leaving them unable to put food on the table for their families, let alone afford rent, healthcare and other essentials. Give To ASRC's end of year appeal and help shine a light of hope for refugees and people seeking asylum this festive season, donate today at ASRC.org.au/donate. A 3CR supporter.

**Marisa:** Next up, we're going to be speaking with Ros Sackley and she's going to be introducing herself in a second and talking about what land she's from. She's a proud First Nations woman from the central west of New South Wales, but currently resides on the central coast. She's got total vision loss through meningitis as an infant.

Ros has been an educator for most of her working life and has taught in the ACT and New South Wales in the primary and senior secondary TAFE and university sectors. She's participated in various Indigenous disability research projects, predominantly with Dr Sharon Kerr.

She's been involved in various disability organisations over many years and has served as an Indigenous representative on numerous committees, has established a micro business in 2015 and specialises in braille and audio production, but is pleased to collaborate in various projects.

Ros is extremely interested in numerous human rights issues, including employment, education, housing, health of people with disability, and wider issues concerning refugees and asylum seekers.

Interests also include use, development, distribution and accessibility of technology, environmental concerns and animal welfare In every sense. Loves reading, writing, and greatly believes in lateral thinking in relation to finding solutions to perceived problems. Ros I want to welcome you to the program. It's so lovely to have you.

**Ros:** Oh, thank you, Marisa.

**Marisa:** I wanted to read out your bio in full, and I'll tell you why, because a lot of the time people with disability - and I think particularly people with disability with vision loss - I think that vision loss is often considered by many people the worst disability that there is. And I wanted to read it out to you, read out the bio that you sent me in, to honour you. So I hope that's okay.

**Ros:** That's fine, yep.

**Marisa:** And it's so great to have you on the show. You've been a really great mentor for me. And actually June Riemer acknowledged you on air as being a founding member of a committee.

**Ros:** Oh, really?

**Marisa:** Yeah.

**Ros:** Thank you.

**Marisa:** So, Ros, tell us a bit about yourself. Tell us about what land you're from and also if you could talk a little bit about your story. The theme for Disability Day is health sovereignty and I'm going to be focusing quite a lot on First Nations people in the criminal justice system.

**Ros:** Yes. I’m Ngiyampa and Wiradjuri and most of my immediate family live at Menindee at present. And you'll know Menindee because they had those horrific fish kills in 2020. And another recent one as well. It's on the Darling River, Menindee. I remember going there when I was tiny and swimming in that beautiful, clear, clean water, but you wouldn't go in it now.

It's got too much algae. And really, the river hasn't been respected. So a lot of the ecosystem of the river has been completely damaged. So that's why the fish kills took place. But I've got a lot of aunties and cousins there still. I live on the Central Coast, but try to get out as quickly as I can. I'm not sure if I'll get there this Christmas, but I'll certainly make it next year.

**Marisa:** Oh, that's awesome, Ros. Ros, there's a little clicking sound there. Do you, are you aware, can you hear that?

**Ros:** Is it better?

**Marisa:** Yeah, thank you so much. Yeah, that's lovely of you.

**Ros:** No worries.

**Marisa:** So let's talk about you. I mean you're a Stolen Generation, a member of the Stolen Generation. Can you talk a bit about that? A bit about your story?

**Ros:** Yes, well I was about 18 months old when I got meningitis and I was at Lake Cargellico at that stage, at Murrin Bridge Aboriginal Mission. And because of policies and illness and whatever, I was taken from my community there. But I've always been lucky, I've always known where my family is.I've been very lucky in that way because, there's a lot of people that were removed never found their families or found them too late. In that kind of respect, I have been lucky.

**Marisa:** Were you adopted out or were you placed in a home?

**Ros:** I was taken to a nursery for blind babies.

**Marisa:** Oh.

**Ros:** And then I I don't remember much about it, of course. Only little glimpses of stuff, and then I was at [inaudible] Vision Impaired School and North Rocks.

**Marisa:** Oh, wow, okay.

**Ros:** Which was the Royal Institute, which is now NextSense. And, Yes, so all that's gone.

**Marisa:** My goodness, Ros, so you were taken away.

**Ros:** Yeah.

**Marisa:** And you were put in the school for the blind.

**Ros:** Yep.

**Marisa:** And with no family and how old were you when you, who took care of you?

**Ros:** I don't know. As you got older, when you reached about, adolescence I was very lucky. I mustn't have been too naughty. Because I made a lot of friends along the way. And I had some foster families later on. And a lot of things are a bit blurry, but I still have lifelong friends from then. And so I really value their friendship. And of course, later on through work I made more friends in uni as well. So it's hard to know how these things fit together sometimes, but it's just amazing that they do fit together.

**Marisa:** Tell us about your braille. You believe in braille literacy. Talk to us about braille.

**Ros:** Oh yes.

**Marisa:** I'm not necessarily talking about what braille is, 'cause I think everybody knows that you can Google it, but tell us about what braille means to you.

**Ros:** Literally braille is literacy. And especially for deafblind people and you can tell if when kids are growing up, if they're only using audio, they don't always know how things are spelt. If they're not taught properly to go back and check. If there's a word that they don't understand, it's just if someone chooses the wrong word on the spellcheck, they could get themselves in... their work won't look as good.

**Marisa:** That's it.

**Ros:** But, braille is literacy to blind people.

**Marisa:** It really is. And you're an educator, you've taught in quite a few schools too, haven't you?

**Ros:** Yes. Some of that was quite horrific, but I'm glad I did it. Because I've learned a lot and made lots of friends as well.

**Marisa:** You really have, despite the fact that you were... ah, it's just, it begs belief, honestly, Ros. I won't talk about it too much because we don't want, I don't want to make it too... it's just, it begs belief that you were put in the school and taken away from your family.

**Ros:** Yeah, I went home as often as I could. They came to get me, my father would come and pick me up, and then later on. But I lost him in, oh, I was working by the time I lost him. But when I was small, yes, they did used to come and get me, and we always travelled by train. And that's still my favourite transport, trains.

**Marisa:** Yeah, I love trains too, actually. And you've also got a BrailleSense 6?

**Ros:** I do, yes.

**Marisa:** I love my BrailleSense 6. In fact, I'm using it now. It's so wonderful to be able to, on International Day of Disability, interview somebody who's got vision loss like myself. It just makes me feel better. Ros, tell us about what you think are some of the complex issues faced by First Nations people with disability in the criminal justice system. What are your thoughts on that, particularly with youth?

**Ros:** Yeah. I really believe that a lot of people are in the wrong place at the wrong time. And I don't know what percentage, but that a lot of them shouldn't be there. And I believe there's not enough education in prisons. And I'm not even sure about the rehab, or what type of employment they can get into for later. I remember years ago, the prisoners at Parramatta, they used to sorry, this is a bit off topic, but they did a lot of braille production.

**Marisa:** Did they?

**Ros:** Yes.

**Marisa:** We need to go and get a program going, Ros.

**Ros:** Sorry?

**Marisa:** We need to get a program done in the prisons there.

**Ros:** Oh, we certainly do. And we intend to try and do something about it because it can't keep going the way it is. It's just horrific. Some people are lucky that they have been able to channel their painting and get education through and write and paint. But I don't know, it doesn't happen for everyone.

**Marisa:** It doesn't.

**Ros:** And music. I remember I used to teach at Eora College and at Chippendale and they had a program to go into prisons. And at one stage I used to go in with a colleague and we used to do jewelry making.

**Marisa:** Wow.

**Ros:** And it wasn't specifically Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander program, but look, I'll help anyone if they're in that situation, if I can bring any light to their situation.

**Marisa:** Ros, also just a final question, because I've got to go on to my next interview soon, but just in regards to ableism and racism. Has that impacted on your life? I just wanted to ask you how that has impacted on your life, with your lived experience.

**Ros:** Of course it affects anyone with disability. But it's my belief that it depends on your own philosophies to get through things, and thank heavens, I do think about things, do sort things out, and try to help others as well in advocacy.

Yes, but ableism, it can be very damaging to some people, and especially if they've got other disability. I'm very lucky. I'm only blind. I don't have intellectual disability or anything like that. I'm very lucky in that kind of sense. But of course it does have an effect. You have to be really careful not to internalise this stuff.

**Marisa:** It's very true. And because ableism, how would you define ableism?

**Ros:** It's using power. It's really a control thing as well. "You won't know as much as I do”, and this kind of thing, about a certain subject. Or, it is trying to get points. It's trying to throw the power back to themselves. The big thing about it is they don't respect people with disabilities.

**Marisa:** And lived experience is paramount. With First Nations and disability as well.

**Ros:** That's right, yeah. I don't know, but it's very damaging to some people.

**Marisa:** And the business, you have a small business? Do you want to talk about that?

**Ros:** Yes, I've got a micro business. It's braille and audio production. I do have a part time job as well to supplement that. Because it comes in waves. You won't have anything and then everything will happen. But you have to pay your rent and stuff. I do have both, yes.

**Marisa:** And you do commercial businesses as well? If someone, like an organisation wants something brailled, you do that for them?

**Ros:** Yes. Oh, certainly, yeah. Yep, and I've done some interesting projects over the years.

**Marisa:** So do you want to tell us a point of contact? Because it is terribly important not only to have peer support, but also particularly women, to have business with people with disability.

**Ros:** Yeah. I just give my mobile out or?

**Marisa:** Whatever you feel. Mobile, email?

**Ros:** Yeah, I think mobile's easier. It's 0417 494 237.

**Marisa:** It makes me so happy to be able to have someone read out their number for a business, particularly in braille production, because braille literacy is really important.

**Ros:** Yeah. It is. It's totally important. Thank you, Marisa.

**Marisa:** Thank you. And thank you so much for coming on to the program. And I'll send you a link.

**Ros:** Oh, okay. Please do a lot of editing.

(Both laughing)

**Marisa:** No way. This was authentic. This is authentic. Absolutely. Down to the headphones. All right, Ros. Thanks a lot. (More laughter)

**Ros:** Thank you very much. Bye bye.

**Marisa:** Take care. Bye bye. And that was Ros Sackley speaking about mainly Stolen Generation. And what happens in prisons is very much interconnected, but she's very special. It's all in regards to, also speaking about her vision impairment and the braille.

(Palestinian music begins as soundbites play over them )

**Speaker 1:** Because the Palestinian fight isn't just the Palestinians fight, it's all our fight. Because it's a fight not just about land, it's about a fight for freedom.

**Speaker 2:** Everybody should be standing here today. Saying free Palestine.

**Speaker 3:** Solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters. On behalf of the Gumbaynggirr Nation, my people, who've never ceded their sovereignty.

**Speaker 4:** We should be recognising Palestine as a state and recognising the rights of Palestinians.

**Ayan:** 3CR. Stay tuned, stay radical.

**Speaker 5:** Everybody else is going to, and they're going to get it wrong.

**Speaker 6:** 3CR's International Day of People With Disability broadcast.

(My Blood is Palestinian (Dami Falasteeni) plays)

**Speaker 7:** What's taking place in Palestine is horrendous. The people of Gaza, who have survived ethnic cleansing, three wars and a 16 year siege, are now facing the biggest attacks ever mounted against them.

**Speaker 8:** This will only stop if governments like ours demand that it stop. Here are some ways that you can keep yourself informed and involved.

**Speaker 9:** Listen in to Palestine Remembered every Saturday morning at 9:30am or listen to the podcast.

**Speaker 10** Join the APAN mailing list at apan.org.au for updates, news about actions you can get involved in, and where you can donate to provide humanitarian assistance.

**Speaker 11:** Listen to other news and current affairs programs on 3CR that also cover Palestine.

**Speaker 12:** The oppression of the Palestinian people has been going on for 75 years. It has to stop. You can be part of making that happen by staying informed and active. APAN is a proud supporter of 3CR.

**Marisa:** Next up, we are going to be speaking with Maryaka, who is the Co-Vice President of People with Disability Australia, the peak body representing disabled Australians. She is a retired Paralympian, having won medals in swimming, and a strong advocate for disability and human rights. Maryaka, welcome to the program.

**Maryaka:** Thank you for having me, Marisa.

**Marisa:** And I wanted to actually issue a very special thank you to Anastasia from People with Disability Australia for organising your interview.

**Maryaka:** (Inaudible) ... a way to help with speaking like this that are so important to our members and people with a disability around Australia.

**Marisa:** Indeed. So you identify as a woman with a disability, you're not First Nations, but it's still good to have you to talk about disability. And you wanted to talk about your role in advocacy as well for people in the criminal justice system. Yes?

**Maryaka:** Yes. So PWDA, being a peak body along with First Peoples Disability Network, really strongly do advocate around the rights of First Nations people in all areas, including in the justice system. So I'm able to speak to our organisation's work and statement at a national and international level on that issue.

**Marisa:** Absolutely. So let's have a discussion then on the complex issues faced by First Nations people with disability in the criminal justice system. Tell us about your work in that area.

**Maryaka:** So we work really on the basis of nothing about us without us. It applies to people with disability and in this case people with disability who are of a First Nations background.

And some things that come to mind for me straight away on this topic, is a really alarming statistic that nearly half of all deaths in custody since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody have involved First People with psychosocial or cognitive disabilities.

And that really just underscores the urgent need to address this particular crisis. It's one of the biggest human rights issues in the country right now.

**Marisa:** So would you say that socioeconomic factors and community disadvantage, can we talk about how that plays a role in the increased likelihood of First Nations people with disability as being caught up in the justice system?

**Maryaka:** Yes, there are a lot of socioeconomic factors. FPDN, which is First People with a Disability Network, have exposed that people in detention are often punished instead of receiving the critical disability relief. Especially for those with cognitive impairments or psychosocial disabilities.

So you start to see that when you have people with a disability interacting with the justice system, and with people who are from a First Nations background interacting with the justice system, individually, those groups are more likely to be interacting with the justice system at all levels.

And running into challenges of when you combine the two, that presents this more pressing situation. One of the things that our organisation has a position on is supporting FPDN's call to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to fall in line with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of a Child recommendation.

We recognise the disproportionate impact on First Nations children, including those with disabilities, and it continues to perpetuate the cycles of injustice and disadvantage.

**Marisa:** Tell us a little bit about if you like, the philosophy in terms of the work and some of the things that you do with disability in particular.

**Maryaka:** Not me personally, but the entire organisation work with people, and in particular closely with our colleagues at First People with a Disability Network. One of the biggest concerns is misrepresentation of behaviours caused by disability as a criminal offence, and it's a significant concern, and that's compounded by racial profiling for First Nations people.

**Maryaka:** There's a really pressing need for law enforcement and judicial systems to be better educated about disability related behaviors to prevent that kind of wrongful accusation and conviction, that can start that cycle where you end up in the justice system.

And then when it's because of a disability related behavior, such as someone who might be on the autistic spectrum and is stressed by the interaction, not making eye contact, it's a behavior that's related to the disability, not intended to be rude to a police person, for example.

**Maryaka:** Then, this wasn't even a reason that we needed for that individual to be in the justice system. And that started a cycle for the rest of their life, that could change with better education and prevent that from happening.

**Marisa:** You are absolutely right. Can you tell us talk to us about ableism in terms of your own lived experience? You've obviously, you would have experienced ableism in your life. Can you talk to us about that?

**Maryaka:** I'm a woman with a disability. I use a wheelchair for mobility. It's a bright pink electric one. The pink elephant in the room knows (inaudible). And, ableism, people probably think when you relate to a wheelchair, it's going to be stairs, but there's a lot of attitude in there, ableism, that isn't, I think, even intentional.

That as a society, to work on things. Such as, I was working in an employment agency for disabled people to help disabled people find work, and wondered why the boss was hovering over my shoulder all day. And it was because she presumed I couldn't carry the box of brochures I was organising through the printer and get them to a function.

Just asking that question and trusting the disabled person is the expert in their own life. I can never prove it, but a number of jobs when you get to the final three candidates and you didn't have the need to mention that you happen to be sitting in a wheelchair.

**Maryaka:** And then somehow the other candidates are always more experienced than me. You can't (inaudible), but over time you start to feel it. Also just living as a person, trying to go about your life on the street. Walking through the shops. You get "how brave and wonderful you are for being out and about".

And I don't think anyone goes up to able bodied, non-disabled people and congratulates them for doing their grocery shopping. My highlight in terms of that, as an example, was coming back from the Paralympics. My face was all over the front of every paper in that supermarket. And a lady said, congratulations, and I was about to say thank you.

It was a wonderful trip because I was legitimately at the supermarket buying food because after being away at the Paralympics for a few months, I was going to be hungry. It was for being out and about. "It's good to see you leaving the house.". So about community expectations of abilities of people with disabilities, if our standard is so low, that people think it's amazing we left the house.

**Maryaka:** Imagine what we've got to go before you can be welcome into community events. And the employment sector, for example. And also, if anyone who feels that way suddenly acquires a disability, what that will feel like to them? The representation of people with disabilities actively participating in the community, doing jobs. Living our normal lives, just like everybody else.

**Marisa:** Absolutely, and it's really interesting that you should say that because As a person with vision loss, I actually did a lot of forest blockading and I hitchhiked around various parts of Australia by myself. One time, I was actually on a tram and I dropped a bag of potatoes because I was shopping and this woman helped me pick them up.

I told her I was going to be hitchhiking around Australia in trucks, which I did do. And then she went to the Blind Institute and told them what I was doing and they were furious. They went and told my family and it was just like this domino effect saying, "Oh my goodness, a blind person doing that.”. I mean, that's ableism, isn't it?

**Maryaka:** It is. And every single person in that chain of events thought they were helping you when in fact you were, you are the expert in whether you are capable of doing that. I travel all over the world by myself as a powered wheelchair user and I'm the one who's able to judge whether I can do that safely just as you are, right?

What's really disturbing on your behalf, that you were let subjected to that level of people checking, are you okay? Because it's not seen as normal. Too many members of society. Given that it is the International Day of Disability, the take home message I have for non-disabled people is, if you can't see disability in your workplace or in your community, look around and think about why not.

Is there a garbage bin parked in the accessible parking spot? Are attitudes like this happening so people don't feel welcome and included? Are we addressing the systemic barriers to participating? Yes, maybe someone hasn't got a work history, but if no one ever gives them it, how can they get a foot in the door?

And opening that and paying disabled people for our skills and experience. We're really often underemployed and things way below our skill set, too. Not given the chance to shine because of attitudes like what you experienced on that trip.

**Marisa:** Maryaka, it's been really refreshing talking to you and I felt that it was really important to talk about the disability aspect as well.

**Marisa:** I have spent almost the entire show talking about First Nations and the criminal justice system, but it's always good to look at the disability and ableism as well as part of health sovereignty in the International Day of Disability. Any final comments before we finish?

**Maryaka:** When it comes to First Nations people interacting with the justice system, it's at every level, from with police in the actual courts, and when you're then potentially incarcerated.

And it's very alarming that First People with a Disability Network and PWDA are finding that there are failures in the (inaudible). Lack of screening, insufficient access to services, and this is what alarms me, when people have their freedom taken away, and it was potentially because of a lack of understanding by the people making that decision.

The behavior was because of disability, with no criminal intent. That we then don't have accesses to NDIS, Medicare, the PBS, aren't getting to First Nations people with a disability in detention. And if we're having a conversation around that issue, really, so it's worth while highlighting, we need to be addressing people's basic human rights while we're in detention.

**Marisa:** Absolutely. So there's an urgent need, isn't there, to shift from managing First Peoples with disabilities through policing and incarceration to providing essential community based services. And those services should be Aboriginal owned and operated.

**Maryaka:** I would say that would be best facilitated by representatives who are First Nations people with disabilities and advocates and design that as a co design system at all steps of the justice system.

And instead of looking straight towards, incarceration, look towards things that do provide rehabilitation and better access to be part of the community. Because otherwise you end up perpetuating this intergenerational cycle of trauma that is caused by interactions with the justice system.

**Marisa:** Maryaka, thank you so much for coming on to the program. Just a final thing, what sort of wheelchair do you have? Is it one of the electric ones?

**Marisa:** Yes, it's a powered wheelchair.

**Marisa:** Those, bright pink you said.

**Maryaka:** Yes, if I'm going out, it's part of my fashion, it's a fashion accessory to me, so I like bright cheery colours.

**Marisa:** I had a friend who uses, used a wheelchair, she's now passed away, and I used to actually go onto a skateboard and I used to hang onto the back of her chair and she would guide me as I skated down the street to the train station.

**Maryaka:** It's really practical, I have a lot of friends who do it.

**Marisa:** Very practical.

**Maryaka:** Or teammates on the Paralympic team and whether it's on a skateboard or a hand on their shoulder, really a group of people with disabilities can all work together to yeah, make that up.

**Marisa:** Absolutely. Thanks so much for coming on Maryaka. It was really lovely to have you breath of fresh air. Thanks a lot.

**Maryaka:** Thank you. Good luck with the rest of the show for International Day of People With Disabilities.

**Marisa:** I'll send you a link. Thanks.

**Maryaka:** Okay, bye.

**Marisa:** Bye. And that was Maryaka. who is co-vice president of People with Disability Australia, the peak body representing disabled Australians.

You just heard three interviews on this International Day of Disability show, theme being health sovereignty. I wanted to thank June and Ros and also Maryaka for coming onto the show. They were marvellous contributors to looking at First Nations people and the criminal justice system and also stolen generation.

And we also looked at ableism. In conclusion, I'd really like to say that First Peoples Disability Network has published a number of submissions on the institutional racism and ableism in the criminal justice system, and they've demonstrated that First Nations people often encounter the justice system with a history of unsupported, disability related needs and June actually talked about this quite a lot in her first interview.

So we're nearing the end of our show and once again I wanted to thank and also congratulate all our contributors today. It was specifically important also and enlightening to hear about all the lived experiences in regards to racism and ableism. So it's goodbye from Marisa and: it's Disability Day every day.

(Music begins to play as soundbites begin)

**Speaker 1:** Every form of discrimination that exists in our community is magnified and utilised by prisons to cause greater division and disarm solidarity.

**Speaker 2:** We've got to really put a lens of perspective on this and know that there are children being incarcerated as young as 10 years old.

**Speaker 3:** Police and prisons! They're doing exactly what this colony wants them to.

**Speaker 4:** Who do we defend? Police! And who else? Prisons! Pull em down!

**Speaker 5:** Stay tuned, stay radical.