

Disability Done Different: Episode 14

Laura and Jordan O'Reilly on...Creating a fighting chance

Podcast transcript

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Hosts: Roland & Evie Naufal

Guest: Laura O'Reilly and Jordan O'Reilly

Start of Audio

Intro

Maia: This is Maia Thomas, the producer of the DSC Podcast. DSC is a team of 33 people across Australia, all working together to bring specialised training and consulting expertise to providers in the disability sector. A quick note on this episode, we enjoyed speaking with Laura and Jordan O'Reilly so much, we decided to release the recording as is, which means it's a long one but a great one. We hope you like it.

Evie: All right, here's what's going to happen now.

Roland: Hello, and welcome to our podcast.

Evie: We are DSC. Your turn, you're the boss.

Roland: Disability Done Different.

Start of Interview

- Evie:** My name is Evie Naufal. Today is my birthday. I'm super excited to be spending it with three of my favourite people - my dad Roland Naufal.
- Roland:** Yes, that's me, yes.
- Evie:** [Laughter]. And dynamic sister/brother duo Laura and Jordan O'Reily. Welcome, guys.
- Jordan:** That's us, welcome, thank you.
- Roland:** Welcome, Laura.
- Laura:** So excited to be here. Thank you for having us.
- Evie:** Laura and Jordan O'Reilly are the founders of Fighting Chance, an organisation that creates micro enterprises for people with disability.
- Laura:** Close.
- Evie:** Can you say it? [Laughter].
- Laura:** Fighting Chance, our vision is a fully inclusive society, and we use social enterprise as the vehicle to bring that society to fruition.
- Roland:** Hireup, in the industry, and if you haven't heard about Hireup in this sector, you've probably been looking under a rock, so Jordan, can you tell us a little bit about Hireup?
- Jordan:** Yes, so Hireup is an online provider. It gives Australians with disability the power to find, hire, and manage their very own support workers.
- Roland:** Hireup has won just about every award that there is to win. It's doing extraordinarily well. We'll talk during the program, during the podcast extensively about Hireup and let's talk a lot more about Fighting Chance. If we get a chance, Jigsaw, as well. Tell us a big about the genesis of both Fighting Chance and Hireup?
- Laura:** I think the heart of what we're doing, the start of the story, the reason that Jordan and I are sitting here is because we are siblings of... there were three kids in our family, I'm the eldest, Jordy the second, and we had a third brother called Shane. Shane was an amazing human being. He was funny, he was intelligent, he loved computers, he was the optimistic soul. He was just a phenomenal person. He also happened to have disability. He had cerebral palsy, which for him was a profound physical disability and a moderate intellectual disability.
- Growing up as siblings of a brother with disability, we have the great privilege and honour of going through life, seeing the world through his eyes, experiencing many of the challenges and the hurdles that he faced as a person with disability. It really

was Shane's lived experience and our experiences as his first followers and his biggest supporters in life that is the story of Fighting Chance and then later, of the creation of Hireup.

Jordan: I think the in addition to an amazing little brother, we also had really wonderful parents. We were born in Canberra; Shane was born a year – was a year younger than me when he was born. I think 28 weeks. It was that old cliché, the doctors said to our parents, “Shane will never walk, he'll never talk. He's not going to contribute much.” I think still people's advice and much older people than our parent's advice in those days were, “Well, that's okay, he can just be put away” type of thing. It's incredible to think that that was an attitude, literally in our lifetime.

I think our parents' reaction was incredible. Dad quit his job. He was working in press gallery in parliament house, he quit his job on the spot and decided that he wanted to spend his life proving the naysayers wrong and proving that we were going to have a wonderful life. That took us to the UK. We just had this amazing upbringing with a really committed and dedicated parents, who just spent their life thinking outside of the box.

There's this incredible photo, we'll publish it on our blog if people would like to see it, but it's Shane mowing the lawn in the UK and he's in this dodgy old contraption of a wheelchair that's extended up off of the ground. It looks like it was built in 1970 or something, it can't have been very safe. Dad and Shane went out and found this wheelchair, worked out how to connect this petrol-powered lawnmower to the front of the wheelchair.

Evie: That's a great photo.

Jordan: It's an amazing photo.

Roland: You've seen it?

Evie: Yes.

Jordan: It's Shane mowing the lawn. The look on Shane's face, the look of working out how he's going to – it would be incredibly hard to mow a lawn from sitting in a wheelchair. He would work that out. The photo is so important because it really illustrates the out of the box thinking that we were surrounded by our whole lives. Thinking about the difference between being a really active member in your own life, and really sitting on the side lines of your own life. Sometimes it's just a bit of lateral thinking and a bit of positivity and creativity in terms of, in that case, supporting Shane. That was just our whole upbringing, wasn't it?

Laura: Yes, and also then the notion that's absolutely represented in that photo, which is that your ability doesn't define you, what's important are the systems and structures that you put around. You can take Shane who's sitting on the couch, wasn't able to

walk, for example, but you put him in a specially adapted chair, I say adapted loosely. It was my dad with a belt and some scissors and some glue and stuff.

Evie: [Laughter].

Laura: But you put him in an adapted wheelchair, and you strap on the mower to his legs and then suddenly, this person is empowered to be able to contribute and to do chores and to be an active member of our family. That was just one example. Our whole life our parents were like, how will we manipulate in this environment? How are we putting the systems and the tools around Shane to enable him to fully participate?

Jordan: That was Shane's really great gift, because he was so determined. He knew his ability better than anyone. It was really just a case – I guess we really didn't realise that at the time. It's that famous quote, you can only connect the dots looking backwards, but really, for us, that was our whole upbringing, it was incredibly positive, wonderful experience, we were very bonded as a family.

Roland: What did it create? What did you create?

Laura: So, the journey for us really began in 2011, we were both university students at the time, our brother Shane had just made the transition to post-school. We saw in Shane's life the lack of opportunity that was available to him, particularly around that he wanted to work, he wanted to live independently, he wanted to be fully participating socially in society. We were seeing the barriers that existed to him achieving those goals. 2011, we decided to jump in and launch a not-for-profit organisation called Fighting Chance. We were super naïve. Our goals were just to create opportunities for Shane in those key spaces.

We didn't really understand what we were taking on, sitting in our mum's garage at the start. Over the years, Fighting Chance has evolved today. Fighting Chance is a not-for-profit organisation whose vision is a fully inclusive world. The tool that we use to enable inclusion for everybody is social enterprise. We believe very passionately in the power of commerce, of business, of business for good, to create opportunities for people with disability to fully participate in society. Fighting Chance's methodology is we work with the community to identify gaps, so that might be, for example, a lack of employment opportunities.

We then go away and build a business model around solving that problem. We believe really passionately that businesses create opportunity, that people with disability don't need charity, they need a chance. That businesses do that. We create a business that is sustainable, that trades, that earns its own money, but that in doing that process, it can solve the challenge. Then we try to get that business up on its feet and to succeed.

Roland: That's great, a great model.

Laura: One example of that, like I mentioned, the challenge of unemployment. That was a massive challenge that we were hearing about from the community in 2011/2012. We looked into the post-school system, the TTW programs, now SLES into DES, we really noticed that there was a lack of opportunity for people to gain practical work experience. If you haven't had a job, it's really hard to get a job.

We built a business in the information management industry, providing very commercially based services to 100 corporate and government entities, but we used that commercial work to create work-based training, award wage employment, and then support people then to transition to mainstream employment. The key thing to know about Fighting Chance is, yes, our methodologies around using social enterprise and, yes. I think the world we hope to see is a world in which there are lots of businesses doing innovative sustainable things that include people with disability.

Evie: One of the things that I find really interesting about the work that you do with Fighting Chance is it's all about employment, but you do have one program or one stream, I'm not sure how you want to refer to it, that does work with people with particularly complex support needs. Can you tell us a little bit about that one?

Laura: Yes, so the first social enterprise that we created under the Fighting Chance umbrella was Avenue. Avenue was very directly a response to Shane's experience. Shane had profound physical disability. He needed lots of quite complex supports during the day, but he also wanted to be working. The mainstream employment wasn't necessarily going to be the right fit for him. He was an entrepreneur himself, he wanted to be creating his own approach to work that enabled him to have that flexibility. Avenue was a co-working space, designed for people with profound and severe disability.

We provided within the co-working place, all the accessibility, all of the assistance that people need to get through the day healthily and happily, but that in that space, that cohort are then supported to work. We use the sharing economy. We use platforms, like Mad Pause and Air Tasker, we used entrepreneurship, people who have got their own business ideas that they want to pursue.

We have some little microenterprises of our own to support everybody to work in a way that is meaningful for them, but in a really flexible customized manner, so that the vision of Avenue is that there would be in the future, no person, not one single person who comes out of school is told, "You cannot work", in the way that Shane was. Rather than the conversation be, okay, well, what's the vision for you? Do you want to setup your own business? Do you want to work flexibly in the sharing economy? How do we adapt work for you? That's what Avenue does.

Jordan: The key insight behind Avenue in those early days, I was just starting into green occupational therapy. Really, realising and talking to Lauren, really talking and sitting with Shane and talking to Shane a lot about the idea that occupation is essential to our wellbeing, to our sense of ourselves, our self-esteem. Our sense of

identity, our physical and emotional mental financial wellbeing. It's the first question you get asked at the backyard barbeque.

"So, what do you do with yourself?" It's just not acceptable for a whole part of our community, a whole segment of the population to just say that you're essentially not going to work. Laura and I just looked at it and went, Shane absolutely can work, it's just about creating the environment. When I look at Avenue now, Avenue, as Laura said, it was the first enterprise that Fighting Chance launched. It's been through lots of iterations, but it's absolutely heading in the right direction, that is saying, let's build a workplace for everyone.

Roland: Let's talk a bit about Hireup, too, Jordan, because it's not very often that Hireup gets their cab up off the rank, is it?

Jordan: Not in my life anymore because...

Laura: In my life, it's always off the rank. [Laughter].

Roland: Tell us.

Jordan: As Laura said, we launched Fighting Chance in 2011 and we worked really well together in that business until about 2014, when this idea just wouldn't quite in my head, and it was the idea for Hireup. We, as a family, has that experience, familiar to many people with disabilities, which is that dreadful feeling of being there at 7:00am in the morning and waiting for a knock on the door. Not knowing who was knocking. It would be a support worker that would have been assigned to support Shane. You'd have this feeling, for me, as a person supporting maybe on that day, maybe going and opening the door and just meeting a total stranger and just feeling your heart sink.

You've got about five or ten seconds to work out, is this person for real? Then you're introducing them to your brother. Then I just remember walking out of the room and Shane would say, "Good morning, how's it going?" This person wouldn't understand Shane's speech. We'd just ignore him. This huge sense of disempowerment. A lot of people describe it as feeling like a lottery in terms of getting support in that sort of way. Laura and I really experienced this through Shane's eyes.

It felt disempowering for us, let alone for Shane. Really, it was that experience. I then went out and started working as a support worker. I was that stranger going and knocking on people's doors, not knowing who I was there to support and often times, being sent into the wrong environment, being sent to someone I couldn't support.

Culturally, in the wrong environment, maybe out of my depth in terms of how to best support someone. It was really those two experiences taken together on both sides, feeling and experiencing the challenge on both sides of the fence, feeling this sense of disempowerment and inefficiency in the traditional system. It was with those

insights that in 2014, we stepped out and we said, let's have a go at building Hireup. Let's use this amazing...

Evie: [Laughter]. Except it wasn't called Hireup when you started.

Jordan: I don't want to talk about that.

Evie: [Laughter].

Jordan: We had a very embarrassing name to start with, but that was – I shouldn't have ever told Evie that, but that's secret.

Roland: That was my next question, which I'll get in quickly, but who's the brander in the family, because you've got Avenue, Fighting Chance, Hireup, and Jigsaw.

Evie: That's exactly what I said, I was like, do you have another microenterprise based on not making shit names for the disability sector?

Roland: Yes.

Laura: That is Jordy. Jordy – if everything falls apart with Hireup, Jordy has a career in marketing, I think.

Roland: He does.

Laura: All of those names are his.

Roland: They're great names, except for the first one.

Evie: Which shall remain secret.

Roland: We have to tell them.

Evie: [Laughter].

Jordan: I won't tell them.

Evie: [Laughter].

Jordan: It's really important to say that Fighting Chance is a not-for-profit organisation and under it, it builds great social enterprises. One of those is Avenue, one of those is Jigsaw. It's a not-for-profit and sits to one side. Hireup is then a separate organisation. It's a for-purpose for-profit organisation. They're very separate organisation. The link between them is Laura and I and our ideas for a better sector and for new innovations. They run as separate, very separate organisation. Separate governance structures and all the rest of it.

Roland: I want to take this a lot further, but, Laura, you talked about Shane making contributions, so I've looked at lot at aging well and one of the key things about

aging badly is when you stop making a contribution and you no longer feel valued in society. I think the social role valorisation and all of that stuff in disability had a pretty good handle on that. Do you reckon Shane understood the contribution he's made towards changing the face of Australian disability services? Did he get that moment?

Jordan: He was pretty unimpressed by us, wasn't he?

Evie: [Laughter].

Laura: He just... so, Shane was attending a day program type model. We knew that the work was the big missing piece for him. We wanted that. We said, we'll build this and one day we said to him, mate, you can start work. Here's your desk. He was like, "I'll think about it. I'm not really sure if I'm interested in this."

Evie: This is the beginning of Fighting Chance?

Laura: Yes, the very early days of Fighting Chance.

Evie: What was it back then?

Jordan: Well, it really started as this insight, that we'd go and pick Shane up and he'd be sitting in his wheelchair, half-asleep in the corner.

Roland: Doing nothing.

Laura: Can I tell a story about that? I have a really powerful story, for me.

Jordan: Yes, cool.

Laura: I was studying in the UK at the time, this was probably maybe 2009, I was studying in the UK. I was home for the English summer, the Australian winter, but it was one of those days, I remember it so clearly. It was one of those Sydney days with the blue, blue, blue sky. I was worry about my studies and I was worried about things that people in their early 20s were worried about. My mum said, could I take Shane's overnight bag, at the time it was his respite bag to drop off to him at his day program. I was like, sure. I'd known, I'd heard that Shane had finished school, that he was at this day program, but I hadn't really engaged very much with it. I jumped in the car and drove to the address where the program was. I remember pulling up and it was this warehouse setting, very industrial setting. Trucks driving passed. I remember getting out and looking and going, is this – checking the address. Why would Shane be here?

It's like an industrial area. It was the right address. I walked into this building and I remember walking through a big roller door, you know designed for trucks. Into this warehouse environment. It was white walls, quite an empty space. There were a group of staff sitting to my left, I remember. On my right, Shane was just sitting in his chair, just sitting there. I remember going over to him and being like, mate, it's

lunchtime, what's happening here, what are you doing? He was like, "Waiting, we're doing art this afternoon." I remember thinking, but you don't like art. I don't understand what's happening here.

I left his overnight bag and I remember walking away, as I was walking out, looking back and seeing him just sitting in this empty space, and just realising that if we don't do something that he's just going to sit in this program and none of his potential as a person is going to be seized and released. We knew, the Shane I knew at home, he'd come home and then he'd be on the computer. He had a website that he was building and running, giving anti-virus advice. He had all of these computer skills. He had all of these goals and ambitions for himself. Just this really strong sense of, he's not going to achieve any of that if this is the future for him.

Roland: A life spent waiting for something to happen. We hear about that a lot.

Jordan: Just a system that was really letting down an incredible young man. It's like the insight for us. Laura was in the UK at that point, I had moved back to Australia with mom and Shane and dad really suddenly passed away in 2007. Life became really hard really quickly in the UK far for our family and mum's friends and support structures, so we'd moved back to Australia. Laura was finishing her study. I was much more connected with Shane at that point in our sibling relationship, as I was working out my own life. What did I want to do?

Really, just remember seeing, for Shane, all of his options closing and shutting down, and without my dad's presence really supporting him, really just... especially in Australia, this was the time of the shutout report. I never forget reading that, it's like seared into my memory. This idea of a broken, underfunded, inefficient, fragmented system. That quote that people with disabilities live desperate and lonely lives of exclusion and isolation.

Roland: Yes, spot on.

Jordan: That they struggle to be seen, they struggle to be noticed and they struggle to be heard. It was very difficult to process that. As Laura said, experience like that, where you just see the system in real time just letting people down. Then you've got Shane who would be coming home in the afternoon and he'd be driving into his room and he'd be flicking this little sign on his door saying, "Come in, we're open for business." He'd be running, as Laura said, this little website, trying to work out how to make money on the internet. He'd be printing off fliers with a photo of him saying, "Shane, the computer man."

Kind of be forest field shops and you cut the bottom of those posters with your number on call me if you want help with your computer. He was, again, showing us, that he was desperate to work. He was going to work it out. He was just having to spend a whole bunch of his time in a system that just didn't suit him in the slightest. For us, that, for me, was the insight into it. It really just all started with how do we do better for Shane, how do we build the adapted wheelchair contraption

to really let Shane express his potential. That's where I think the fire was really lit for Laura and I wanting to do better and wanting to do better with Shane.

Roland: We get a bit bothered that there's not a lot of innovation in the sector and certainly, Hireup and the work that you're doing with Fighting Chance, you've become the posterchildren, the poster boy and girl of the sector. Everybody talks about Hireup and we talk about innovation. Laura, I wanted to ask you in particular, if you're posterchildren, how come you let Jordan hog so much of the camera?

Laura: [Laughter]. It's a good question. Firstly, I must say, you say that and sometimes I meet people, even yesterday, that at an event, someone came up to me and said that they use Hireup. It never fails to blow me away. We spent so many years with this idea, not really making the progress that we wanted to be making. It was so hard at the beginning. For people to be using Hireup now, for people to know about it, it never ceases to absolutely blow me away. In terms of the limelight hog over here, no, Jordy is from the beginning, from the very first moment of Hireup's existence as an idea, Jordy was the driving force behind it. I'm so proud of what he is doing and what he's done. He deserves all of the positive recognition that he gets.

Roland: I'm sure that's not true.

Laura: Okay, now I can be real about it. [Laughter].

Roland: My co-director, Vanessa Toy and I, we had this situation where I've done a lot of the front-person, front man stuff, I get out there, I do a lot of stuff. Every now and then, someone will come up to us and say, "What do you do, Vanessa?" Or, "You work there too, Vanessa?" You can see her shoulders slump and it's like, okay, I am the frontman, she understands that, but every now and then, you think, well, I've put a lot of work into this too, sunshine. No?

Laura: Well, to a degree. I think it's when you've put so much into something, you really want to be on the journey the whole way through, but we've put our hearts and souls together into two things, into Fighting Chance and into Hireup. They reached a point where the success of both of those things required each of us to one to take one and the other to take the other. That was 100 percent the right decision. I love the work that I'm doing at Fighting Chance. I mainly am extremely just so proud, and I just watch in awe at not just Jordy, but all the team at Hireup. It's an amazing team effort, what the guys are doing, I'm very proud.

Jordan: Just at thought on that, it's been... the process of development has been so condensed, especially the journey with Hireup. It's only really been four years now since we first launched the platform, and in those early days, when Laura and I were working together side-by-side, sitting next to one another, we started out just sitting in the garage, literally, never to one another on a little table. Thinking about these ideas and talking about how we could make them happen. Even before that, with our little brother Shane, it was the three of us together, working this stuff out.

As we got closer to launching Hireup and Hireup becoming a thing, we got mentors and friends would tell us, this is going to really be a challenging experience because this is going to take you in two different directions. Rightly so, they are very different organisations, not relate at all. People said, this is going to be a challenge for you guys, and in your relationship. In those early days, those naïve days, when we didn't know what the journey was going to look like, we'd say, "Yes, we'll work it out", but it has been a real challenge in terms of getting, for me, personally, getting a huge amount of my energy and inspiration and ideas from being with Laura, I'm very close to Laura. Over the last couple of years as the organisations have grown, having that separate. It's been a really interesting challenge, personally, professionally, and all of those things. I think, and I'm coming to the realisation that it's also a journey. There are going to be points at which in the life cycle of the organisations that we're not going to get to work so closely, as we are now, but really, we're committed to working together.

Roland: It's interesting. Part of what we wanted to do was to explore with you the nature of a small family business that is no longer small but is still a family business. Obviously, Evie and I are a daughter and father, and Vanessa is my partner. Sometimes it gets quite tense in our family business, but there's also a creative tension that sits there, as well. Where Evie's first response to me on almost every issue is no. Then we have to work from there. It's probably good to have somebody holding me back a bit and saying no. It pisses me off.

Evie: We're getting a knowing look from Laura. [Laughter].

Roland: Yes. Creative tensions, does that happen in your business, as well?

Laura: I think what was really powerful about our working relationship at the beginning was that we were quite different. I think I characterise myself as a very, yes, let's do it, let's shoot for the stars, don't worry about logistics, it'll be fine, let's just do it. Jordy was always much more, great, but you know, but what's the plan?

Evie: That sounds familiar. [Laughter].

Laura: Have we thought about the risks here? That worked terrifically at the beginning when we were just sitting in our mum's garage or for the first few years when it was a very small team of two or three of us and a handful of people that we were supporting. I think that has continued to be the case. These days, I think Jordy very much is the visionary leader, the apex of the Hireup machine and has a really strong vision for where we're going. I think that dynamic has changed.

Jordan: It's interesting the different roles you have to play and certainly, with Fighting Chance, these were the days. Laura was really the prime mover of all the work that we've done. I was really under her wing. Really, in that position of first follower. That worked really well. Then the challenge of having to step out and to try something from myself and to be in more of that leadership position and be more of that – find more of that vision and more of that yes spirit and navigating the chance

in that relationship was really interesting. We're still working through that. We're still working out how we work best together and how we hang onto all the magic while working through all the challenges of now running two very significant organisations.

Evie: Recently, Hireup was named one of the fastest growing tech companies in Australia. Is that right?

Jordan: Yes, that's right.

Evie: What's it like having one of the fastest growing tech companies in Australia without Shane the computer man?

Jordan: This, for me, I don't like to be contrary, but for me, personally, I don't know for Laura. It was a really strange experience because we were just chipping away at Hireup and it's starting to grow faster and faster and bigger and bigger. When you're in it, you don't really get a sense of the relative speed of the growth and the rest of it. Deloit reached out to us and said we'd been nominated for the tech fast 50, which is Australia's premiere leading ranking of technical businesses and their growth. We were really pleased to be a part of that. Just crack on with the work.

Then the award thing came around and we found out that we'd won. We'd come number one, which was the first time in history, in the history of the competition that a for-purpose business, not least a business working in the disability sector, but a for-purpose business that's focused on a social mission that's using technology to that end had won. The growth over the three years to 2017 had been seven and a half thousand percent. It's grown twice as fast as the next competitor or the next entrant in the competition. It was wonderful to have been part of this competition.

It was wonderful to have been given that recognition, but I remember, and we went along with the award and it was all very busy. I remember waking up the next morning and just being so sad. I was just so sad. I was just lying there. I remember really clearly. I wrote something to share with people but trying to put my finger on why I felt that way. It was just the irony of, I don't have a technical background, I wasn't into computers growing up, nor was Laura, Shane absolutely was.

Just the irony that because of his life, and because of his example, we had come across an insight and built an organisation that, and a technical organisation that was doing that well and he wasn't there to be a part of it. I went in the next morning and the team had gathered. There were probably about 60 of us in the team at that point, the team had gathered just to reflect on it. I went to say a couple of words and I just burst into tears in front of the team, which was quite embarrassing, now that I think about it. It's just the irony of building something that Shane would have absolutely loved to have been a part of and his life inspired. The real story for that... sorry.

Roland: No, you're good.

Jordan: When we were in England, I remember, I would have been, could have been 12 years' old. I was walking up to the shops with Shane, so he was in a wheelchair and I was pushing him along. We were just chatting away. I remember his sitting there saying, he was telling me, he couldn't work out what he was going to do in the future. He wasn't sure whether he wanted to be an AA man, which in Australia man is an NRMA roadside assistant, or a computer man and run a computer shop. I just remember, even at that age, at 12, being filled with a sense of dread of like, this is going to be difficult for Shane to work and to realise his ambitions.

I thought, I never forget thinking, that's okay, maybe we'll be able to do something together. Maybe we'll build some sort of computer business together with Laura and we can get it done that way and that will be awesome. It's just this funny memory and it really came back to me when we were reflecting on that Deloit experience of the fast 50, that was just really ironic that Shane has inspired this but wasn't there to be a part of it.

Roland: You said a second ago, Jordan, you don't like to be contrary, but sure you know about contrarians and disruptors and very much what you're doing is built on saying, "I'm not happy with the current system." Contrarians – do you know about contrarians?

Jordan: Not a lot.

Roland: I suspect you like to be contrary. I suspect you saying you don't like to be contrary is a mask for the fact that you do. You do like to see things differently. You do like to contradict the way you think things are being done. The story of Hireup is very much the story of the disruptor. You've told us about how you came to exist. The question becomes, when do you become ordinary? When does Hireup become something that is just an industry standard that's no longer good enough?

Laura: I would say that I don't think we ever... we were not very much of the disability sector before we started working in it. I'd never worked for another provider. I had only recently arrived in Australia, didn't really understand the system. I don't think we ever intended to set out to be Contrarian to disrupt. That was never intentional. What we were trying to do was that we saw gaps and challenges in Shane's life, we saw what we considered to be quite obvious ways to fix them. We just wanted to make that work. I feel uncomfortable when other providers say, "We're watching Hireup and it's a bit threatening to us." It makes me a bit uncomfortable; we don't want to be threatening to anybody. We want to be collaborative. We want to work in partnership with others. I think we want to share our leanings. I think we are working towards a day when Hireup is absolutely average and that the standard in the sector is technology and innovation and...

Roland: There are two questions I want to get out of what you're saying, Laura. One is that you don't want to threaten the existing sector, I've spent 30 years in the existing sector, and I grew up in the business wanting to help people. I had studied social work and our job as charities and not-for-profits is to support and assist and help

people do stuff. That is no longer an appropriate model. The model is the model that you are talking about, providing a foundation.

I saw Jay talking about building a garden rather than making friendships for his son. It's creating the opportunities for people to live valued lives. Most of the industry don't get that. They're still operating from the model, the charitable model of we need to assist you. You are disruptors, whether you like it or not. It's a long question, but can you support them to change, or do we need to threaten them to change?

Laura: The future that I think we should work towards in the disability sector is the... devolution might be the wrong word, but the specialisation of service provision. I think in the past, under a block funded model, there were a handful of very big providers, all doing the same government programs, being all things to all people. I think the future that we should be aspiring to is lots of different providers doing what they do exceptionally well.

Evie: Here-here.

Laura: Hireup does its thing, it works for the people who want to choose their own support workers, and it works for that cohort. There is still space in the market for other providers, maybe the more traditional providers to do, for example, the very high support needs. For example, or things that Hireup can't do. Hireup is not trying to be all things to all people at all. I think Hireup does what it does. We know that traditional providers have struggled to do the one-to-one support because of the inefficiency of scale. That's fine. I think I hope what will happen is that providers will then go, all right, we'll leave that bit to Hireup and to others like Hireup, we will focus on being exceptional at this thing that we do.

Jordan: Or we'll partner with Hireup. There's so much opportunity for collaboration in this space. I think, Roland, the idea of disruption has never sat well with me. Never. I don't think it's the right idea in this sector. A lot of people say to us, "I've heard about this, Hireup, this is the Uber of the disability sector." You go...

Evie: Or the Tinder. [Laughter].

Jordan: We're definitely not the Uber.

Evie: But maybe the Tinder.

Jordan: Well, then people say, "No, you're right, this is more like the Tinder of the disability..." You go, no, go back to Uber. This is neither of those things. What is happening is, people understand these new models where these peer-to-peer models, where power is via the system, it's redistributed, more to the people who are looking for the service. We have such a limited vocabulary around this sort of stuff. Hireup is not the Uber of the disability sector, Hireup is the Hireup of the disability sector. We are so different in so many ways to these ideas.

Not least the fact that we don't want Hireup to be... we don't want to disrupt the sector, Hireup might be right for five or ten percent of the sector. That's an enormous amount of people. I think by being very clear on all of this, as Laura was saying, by being very clear on who we are and what we do and what we're trying to do well, has meant that we have grown really well because of that laser focus.

Roland: You don't want to disrupt a sector that you...

Evie: I'm with you, keep going.

Roland: You don't want to disrupt a sector that you absolutely said would have had Shane sitting in a corner for the rest of his life, you were just too nice to get in there and kick some...?

Jordan: I think this is about evolution and it's about revolution and it's about us all coming together. This is not about disrupting.

Evie: I think this is semantics.

Jordan: The challenge I have with the word is just the connotation and the Uberisation. That's the way that we use the term disruption. It's not the right mindset for us as a sector. We have to think about absolutely evolving what we do. We have to think that there are going to be – and Hireup is only one example. There are lots of green shoots of innovation. There are going to be heaps and heaps more of it. Bring it on is what I say. To your original question, Roland, what happens when Hireup because average? Bring it on. Laura and I are here to anyone who's listening who might be interested, it's like one of the things that really... people say, don't take any of this stuff personally.

It's hard not to take it personally when you hear there might be CEOs of organisations that are criticizing Hireup who have never picked up the phone, who have never sent an email. Come along, come see what we're doing. Come and understand the depths of what we're doing and what we're creating. If we can help the sector, more broadly, Laura and I are committed to the evolution of this sector and are really embracing this opportunity of the NDIS for people like our brother and for generations to come and the point for us is that we're here to – sure, Hireup is going to challenge some models in the sector, but if it's right for five to ten person of the market, there's a huge percent of the market that need to evolve what they're doing too. I hope Hireup can be an example and maybe a leading light in that.

Laura: I think for me, the thing about disruption, again, in the Uber context, it's like Uber is coming in, it's intentionally trying to put all of these cab companies out of business and take their business and be the only thing that exists in that form of transport. That is not what we are trying to do. We are trying to, as Jordy said with Hireup, it works well with the people that it works for. We are keen to own – for Hireup to be successful in that space. We, the future that we believe in is a sector where there are tons of great stuff happening. People with disability have true choice in control.

Hireup might be right for this part of their life, but they'll use this provider for this part, and this provider for this part because they're getting world-class quality from everybody.

Roland: I think we agree with the future idea. I just don't think we're quite as sweet as you are about where you sit within the industry.

Jordan: That's fine. We'll let other people describe Hireup in the terms that makes sense to them. Certainly, if people are feeling disrupted by Hireup, then that's what...

Evie: Yes, I think some providers are deeply challenged by Hireup because you've – I remember three/four/five years ago when we went to providers and talked about NDIS and choice and control, people immediately jumped to, well, that's means that people will have to be able to choose their own workers and that is going to be so difficult to do. They think about reliability, turnover, attracting staff and all the rest of it. For Hireup to have come along and be like, we fixed it. I think it's deeply challenging to people.

Roland: I want to take it somewhere else for a second and talk about the industry itself. To see if you understand it in the way that I'm trying to come to grips with it after this period of time of working in it. I'm thinking of it as a pyramid and at the top of the pyramid, a very small percentage of people get paid very well. Typically, the allied health sector, the fees that they get paid are much, much higher, but then down the bottom of the pyramid, which is a huge sway, then I would have thought it was 80/85 percent of poorly paid hands-on workers, and there are very little in the middle. You've got a very little bit at the top of the pyramid getting paid well, a huge sway at the bottom that are getting paid very ordinarily.

I know Hireup is trying to address a small part of that, but why are we missing the middle section of the industry and, Jordan, you and I did talk about this a couple of years ago, that Hireup in a sense provides a pair of hands to support a person to do the things they need to do. It doesn't provide an approach. It doesn't provide specialist skills. It doesn't provide specialist programming. Essentially, we could still use Hireup to have Shane sit in the corner of our house or a community centre for the rest of his life. Where can Hireup go? Does it need to be Hireup? How can we add value? How can we create programs? Schedules, approaches? Specialist skills on top of what Hireup is doing.

Jordan: I think that's a really interesting question. I'd love to hear Laura's views on that. The one thing I would say just with the approach we've taken with Hireup. Number one, is that we built it as an employment model. We were one of the first businesses in the world at that point to use the available technology, so this was technology that people were starting to get their heads around in other parts of their life with an employment-base model. Everyone's advice at that time in 2014, Uber was only just emerging and was still a bit of a darling.

Everyone's advice was, no, you build these as contractor marketplaces, but for Laura and I, we looked at each other and said, that didn't feel right to us. It felt like, especially for me as a uni student, I was studying occupational therapy. I was working as a support worker. I didn't necessarily want to go out and start my own business. I wanted to be part of something bigger. I wanted to be part of a community. I wanted to not have to worry about all the admin and super tax and that sort of thing. The more we looked at it, the more we realised, Hireup is about facilitating relationships. Success with Hireup is a long-term relationship.

We're actually seeing, it's amazing the data that we're starting to see on the longer-term relationships and the outcomes of relationships when you have consistency over the person that's supporting you. That, to Laura and I, felt like employment. The additional benefits of being able to build an employment-based model that we could provide training and we could start thinking about career pathways. We could do all of these things.

Roland: You could start to build from it.

Jordan: We could start to build from that point.

Roland: You were just too busy doing the employment bit?

Jordan: Well, that's where the idea started. As I say, for me, that's probably the thing that I'm most proud of. To be honest with you, Laura was a huge advocate for this. I was saying, I'm not sure how we do this, how we structure this. Laura said, we'd be brave, and we'd really invest in the people who ultimately make Hireup work. If we get that piece right, if we can prove – but that was a huge question. Don't get us wrong, there was no playbook for that, there was no model for that.

Roland: Laura, what you wanted to do was create a relationship-based business.

Laura: Absolutely. I think we wanted a couple of things. We wanted to make it really easy for support workers to be able to use Hireup. At the time, I was in my mid-20s, the idea of getting an AB and setting up your own business. Having to do your own tax return, I was like, oh, my goodness. I don't want to do that. Unless we ask our support workers to have to do that. I also think to Jordy's point, we also, we believe I our people, the support worker that we have the privilege of working with, that I have the privilege of working with every day are some of the most extraordinary people. We wanted to make sure we were paying award wage and above award wage.

We want to pay people superannuation, we wanted to take care of the tax piece for people. We wanted to be able to train and upskill and offer people pathways to different types of employment, long-term careers in this industry that we cared so much about. We believed very deeply in that. We said, well, sorry naysayers, we're taking a risk, we're doing it this way and that's how it's going to be. It's amazing now that it works.

Roland: It works.

Laura: Yes, and everyone is like, obviously. It wasn't obvious at the time.

Jordan: It works really well. It's really important to say that as Laura and I said at the start, the more models, the better. Some of the other models that don't look like Hireup are still working really well. They're serving a really great purpose. I think have really interesting pathways for development. Roland, to your question, developing out new and interesting skillsets in the middle of what entry level support work is maybe through to the absolutely specialist roles at the top of that pyramid. I think the more models, the better. I guess the point for us was just that we were very specific in what we wanted to do with Hireup.

We wanted to build an employment-based platform that really worked out, how do we get all the settings right to increase the longevity of relationships and how do we treat workers as employees and as part of our community that we're trying to build. I guess that, to the other part of your question then is, we've got some really exciting stuff coming down the line in terms of how we're starting to think about career pathways. How we're thinking about building and training and upskilling our workers that want to go on that journey. How do we offer more permanency in our contracts, all of these sorts of things is what preoccupies me and my time?

I'm really excited where we can take it and the way we can develop really value-based roles in the sector and new roles and new ways of thinking about it, so that people like our brother Shane, it's just not an option to be sitting in the corner of the house, but actually it's who do you want to be as a person with disability? What do you want to become and how does the support worker and how does that pair of hands help get you there? Really, that's what we're trying to do.

Laura: I think the other part of your question about how can we build on Hireup to add more program structures? I think the team at Hireup are laser-focused on what they're doing.

Roland: They should be.

Laura: They know what they do, they do it well, and that's what they're doing. I think there's an opportunity, going back to what we were discussing before, is it disruption, is it evolution? There's an opportunity for the rest of the sector to say, well, we're a traditional provider, we've got more of a hands-on relationship with this person, why don't we design the cool program that can intersect? If the person wants to be able to choose their own support worker, but that's really hard for us to manage, okay, you do that through Hireup. Then we're going to run a separate program that intersects with that, that enables the person in their chosen support worker to come and get some value add. Maybe skills, capacity building.

Jordan: I'll give a really specific example of that. I've met an amazing young OT from Newcastle that's running a surfing program for kids with autism. The theory there

is, the activity-based learning for kids that want to go and learn how to surf, it's really an amazing experience, the sensory work on the beach and the sand and the water, and the seaweed splashing around. It's a really, really great program. It's an example. I was talking to this OT who was saying, they're in the early stages of really trying to get it going. It's like, how can we work together? We've got all of these people that might love to participate in a program like that. We've got all of these wonderful workers. How could we work together? We don't have the answers necessarily.

Evie: Yes, I just think about when I was in uni, I studied media, so it's different, but what you would have done for a meaningful internship when you're in uni before you had your first job opportunity, and to think you could be an OT student or a physio student who's just got a real interest in your hobbies or your interests that you could develop a program around, put it on Hireup and find people who can really enjoy it. I just think, I don't know why this opportunity is so invisible to so many potential people who could be working in the sector.

Roland: I want to go a step above that, just in a moment, my back of the envelope calculations says about it's somewhere between four and six billion dollars is being spent on day programs. Now, a very significant number of those day programs are the sort of programs you described before. They're doing their best, but they're really struggling and they're not really achieving the sort of outcomes anybody wanted them to achieve. Then if you take the other statistic, that over 70 percent of the national disability insurance scheme participants will have a significant cognitive disability.

We're looking for something that can be meaningful for them. I hate to say it, but at least on a termly basis, so that families can do back to work, but so that they can have opportunities to lead valued lives. That's not going to happen by surfing once a fortnight, it's not going to happen by having Hireup come into my – and I'm not criticizing Hireup – come into my home and assist me to do what I need to do, or to do a few little things. Someone needs to come along and reinvent that opportunity for someone to have a program, a whole term of meaningful activities and put some stuff across the top of it. Am I just bullshitting or...?

Laura: I could not agree with you more. I think that what we need are entrepreneurs and the existing sector thinking creatively and thinking, how can we add value?

Evie: Isn't that largely what you do at Fighting Chance? If we're talking about entrepreneurs and valued lives?

Laura: Absolutely. At Fighting Chance, we run yoga, we run a whole bunch of stuff that people come to with their Hireup worker. We as a more traditional provider with more overheads, it's harder for us to do the one-to-one thing effectively, rather than lose money on that and having to feel like we have to horde all of the workflow. Okay, you'll come with your worker, we'll focus on the value add that we can add. I

think it's important that Hireup resist the urge – let Hireup do a surfing program, Hireup do this, Hireup. That's not Hireup's place.

Roland: You want something aggregating it above it, don't you?

Laura: I think there is enormous opportunity for other providers to start to think creatively non-traditionally about how we are providing all of the value add, the program, the quality of the lived experience that then can intersect with something like Hireup.

Roland: One of the things we as a consulting business have experienced over the last couple of years is increasing numbers of private equity coming to us and saying, "We want to buy stuff in the industry." You say, the industry is not for profit, you can't buy stuff. A couple of us have said to us, "Everybody has their price." Which is just hilarious, because the not for profit sector does not have its price. You can't even work out what its price is to sell stuff, let alone sell stuff. But private equity is snooping, and we know they're snooping, we know they're sniffing around organisations like Hireup.

At some stage, they're going to come along with a big bag of money and say, "Do you really want that Beach house in Briar Bay?" We'll help you with Hireup, not only will we leave you in charge, we'll let you run it exactly the way you want to run it and give you this big bag of money, and then they'll shit on you, because that's what they'll do.

Jordan: This is a really important question for me. As we said, we started Fighting Chance in 2011. Laura and I have grown up in the world of not-for-profit. We really understand the world of philanthropy. When we were thinking about Hireup, we realised that it was going to be an expensive exercise. We realised it's a technology business. We realised, it actually doesn't fit a charitable model, this is a business and there's a strong business model behind it. All Laura and I really understood was the not-for-profit world, so we spent probably nine/twelve months going in circles, trying to work out, trying to finance as to how are we going to structure Hireup in the right way.

We had this idea that you've got charity on the one hand or ruthless business on the other hand. Neither of those felt right to us. It was only when we hit upon this idea around for-purpose business in the middle and this idea of impact investing and this idea that you can build an organisation with all the heart and soul of a social mission and a for-purpose mission, with all the focus and the rigor and the discipline of a really wonderful business. That, for us, was like a lightbulb. It was this idea that for too long, we've thought about charity on the one hand and business on the other.

We've got the start thinking about, if we want to solve challenges, big social environmental challenges in really scalable and fantastic ways. We have to think about harnessing the very best, the approach that a business can create. For Laura and I, that was like a lightning bolt for us in our journey. Really, since then, we

haven't looked back. We are really proving that you can build a great business that can push you totally as a social mission. I think this idea of we went and found investors in the early days, our primary investor has been the MIA Foundation.

The MIA Foundation, when everyone else was saying no to us, Roland, when the big end of the business town, we'd go and say, we've got this idea, could you support us? They'd say, "No, we think this is a rubbish idea." The people who gave us our break were the MIA Foundation here in Melbourne. They've got a wonderful program called the MIA innovation fellowship and they gave us \$130,000 as a grant, no strings attached.

Go away, build a great business that can solve a social challenge, and with that money, we were able to start Hireup. We then went back to the MIA Foundation who became one of our biggest investors and supporters. They put money into the business saying, if this can make money one day, we can do more impact investing and more adventure philanthropy. For us, that model was set, we had got people behind us who are focused on this social impact that we can have on the world. I guess just to that question about selling the business or what might happen down the track. I heard the Air B&B team talking about the way that they get asked this question all the time. What's going to happen? When are they going to IPO that business? When are they going to sell that business?

What's going to happen? One of the co-founders Joe Gabbai said, you've got to understand that this is about legacy. For me and the other co-founders, this is about legacy. For the first time, it hit me, again, like a lightning bolt of, that's exactly what we're talking about here. For Laura and I, this is about legacy and this is about creating a sector. Spending our lives working in a sector that we can all be really proud of and building things that we can be really proud of.

I don't know what the answer is, I don't know how things are going to change over the next couple of years. I know that we've set the business up in absolutely the right vein. We're proving this model, for-purpose, for-profit innovation and Laura and I are most focused on, how do we create something that we can be really proud of.

Roland: But, Jordan, as the old guy in the room, the thing I can already hear rankling in my head is, private equity will come to you and say, "Jordan, if you really want to make a difference in people's lives, let's grow in America. You're going to need tens of millions of bucks to get this platform up in America and we can do it. We will give you total control."

Jordan: We're getting approached every week by people that want to be a part of this. It's what we've spoken about. Laura and I are laser-focused on what we're doing. It's one of the reasons that Hireup is working, we don't want to grow in America, we don't want to grow overseas. We don't want to do aged care; we don't want to do other things. We want to be the Hireup of the disability sector. We want to build something that can create a fantastic option for a proportion of the market and that

can collaborate and share with the rest of the market, to make sure that we make the most of the NDIS.

Roland: I think it's great advice for us, as well, because everybody wants us to move into aged care, the DSC should be moving into aged care, doing the same model. We're laser focused on being disability specialists.

Laura: I think something to understand about us is that this is personal for us, this is about our brother. This is not – the last thing that I ever thought to happen in my life was that we would start a successful business. This is about creating, all the work that we do is about creating the Australia that we wish that Shane had lived in. The decisions that we make when we're at the board level, when we're deciding where to take the business, they're values-based decisions, based on what would have been best for Shane. We touched on that with the decision around the employment structure and also, the decision with, how do we find the money that you need to build a website, that was a values-based decision to choose aligned backers.

I'm so proud to know that with my Fighting Chance hat on, we apply for grants for people like the MIA Foundation, and with my Hireup hat on, I know that in the future, if Hireup is able to return funds to that organisation, they can then grant that to others. That is such – I'm so proud of that. Who knows what will happen in the future, we may – who knows what will happen? Whatever decision we make will be based on values, what we believe is best for the sector and the decisions that we would make if Shane was in the room.

Roland: This one goes to the heart of debate or a discussion that Evie and I have been having for a number of years. Evie started, well, she finished her masters of sustainable business at HEC in Paris. Proud dad. Basically, she would talk about social enterprises. I would also say, a social enterprise is an oxymoron. That as soon as you put social and enterprise, you start to have people making coffee badly. I can't tell you how many coffee shops have been setup with young, unemployed people that make shit coffee. They go broke very quickly. Years and years ago, there was a moving company, West Moves that was young, unemployed people that didn't like moving furniture, so they didn't actually answer the phone. It was difficult to get West Move to do social enterprise stuff. What you guys have done today was completely convert me to social enterprise is possible.

Evie: Wow. [Laughter]. That's a big deal.

Roland: You've framed it, it's interesting. It's so freaking unusual.

Evie: That's not where I thought this question was going.

Roland: Yes. Where I want to go is, why is it so freaking unusual that people can capture the essence of social enterprise, be innovative, you've been asked this a thousand times before, you must have a good answer for it, and don't be all nice and,

“Everybody is capable of innovation.” Why is it that you guys are still the posterchildren of the industry?

Laura: I think that my view is that social enterprise is still a relatively new concept. It's emerging. It's much more developed in other countries overseas, but it's very much an emerging space here. I think like any approach or industry, it's a wobbly start. I agree with you, I'm not a massive fan of cafes as the only type of social enterprise, but we are seeing across the social enterprise space, so much happening. My personal view is that I think social enterprise is the future of the capitalist system. I think that you hear people in our generation who want to buy well, if you can buy good coffee – well, let's not take good coffee.

If you can buy good laundry services that are equivalent to the commercial laundry services, but they are employing disadvantaged people, of course, you'll buy them. The challenge for entrepreneurs – and you've got to work harder, that's for sure, because there is extra cost and extra challenges that you face when you're trying to not just do a commercial service, but to do it in a social way. That is true. I think as a sector, we are getting better at it. There is more and more amazing stuff coming through.

I think we see in our work, that if we can get with Jigsaw, if we can go into tender with massive global multinationals and we can say, “We will do your digitalisation services just as well as that global multinational, but by doing that, you are empowering people with disability to gain work skills and to earn an award wage.” It's a no-brainer. Additionally, our generation want to work in places like that. These things take time, but I think over the next ten/twenty, thirty years, we'll see more and more social enterprise. They'll get better, more competitive. I think it's the way of the future.

Jordan: Roland, I remember really early days of Hireup and I came across the work of DSC. I was so impressed. I was like, who are these guys? I was reaching out and we got to speak. You were so generous with your time. I remember, we met in a funny hotel in Melbourne for a quick catch-up at some point. We had a furious discussion and you came up and saw some of our work. I remember in our early days, when I was trying to answer this question of, what's going on? This enormous opportunity in the sector, where's the innovation? I'll never forget that you said, and I explain this to people who ask me this question all the time.

It's that, you've got to understand that for so long in the disability space particularly, there wasn't the opportunity to innovate. That people in the sector were often forced into the sector by necessity. That we were doing the best with what we could, but a lot of people, even in the sector, seem to forget just how extraordinary the opportunity is that now presents itself. The minister...

Roland: I just have to say, that's really lovely, but I've never said anything as nice as that in my life.

Evie: [Laughter].

Roland: You're reinterpreted.

Jordan: Yes. I won't say exactly what you said, but it was basically that the green – the people in the sector who have been here historically in the sector aren't the innovators. There hasn't been a system that's encouraged innovation, there's been an opportunity for that. You said to me, "Jordy, you've got to understand that this is going to come over the next decade." It was really profound for me. It's just been interesting for me.

Evie: He's been rewriting history, too. [Laughter].

Jordan: Maybe I misremember the conversation, but I'm certainly claiming that conversation and telling other people about it.

Roland: I appreciate it.

Evie: I want to ask you two a question because every time I see the two of you, it just strikes me how fresh you are. You both seem like five/six years into disability, NDIS, running your own businesses, to have an amazing amount of energy and ideas and really – we spoke to Luke Boshier a couple of episodes ago and we called that true believer because he's somebody who really seems a true believer. You two, for me, are the epitome of that. How do you stay so fresh? What's the secret?

Laura: I feel like we haven't even started. I think that the NDIS is a massive social reform as we all know, it's going to take decades to find its stride. That's okay. We are in this for that long-haul. I appreciate you saying we're fresh. I don't feel fresh. I've got two young children, so I'm very rarely fresh these days. We are incredibly passionate about this piece of work. As I said before, this is personal for us, this is about building the world that we wish our brother had lived in. That he didn't have the chance to experience, but that his friends and his peers do. I think that passion is a source of great energy.

Evie: It's clear.

Laura: Also, seeing just yourselves at an event, and I mentioned Hireup, and this lady came up to me afterwards and she said, "My daughter is 19, we use Hireup. It's changed our lives." I will ride that energy for the next six months. That is fuel for my soul that people are being positively impacted by what we're doing. When people say those sorts of things to me, apart from knocking me sideways in terms of the amazement of it, but it's just... right, okay, back to work, okay, we've got to go. We've got to go harder; we've got to grow this thing. We've got to reach more people. I find that very energizing.

Jordan: While it's really important to acknowledge how many people are experiencing challenges across the sector, of which there are a lot, right. We hear it a lot, but I especially at Hireup, in this incredibly unique position, where we're seeing day-to-

day where the NDIS is working brilliantly for people and where people who weren't previously getting supports are now accessing supports. Being more included, fully included in the community, building these relationships and these networks.

We just see an avalanche of those stories every day. It's trying to get the balance right. Certainly, for us, it's starting to come out and talk more about our work, is trying to get the balance right between acknowledging the challenges that so many people are facing, and we see every day. The legitimate challenges of building something as big as the NDIS. With all of the success stories that are out there, and the promise that's being realised and the opportunity of the NDIS.

Roland: That's fabulous. I want to finish with, Evie, it's your birthday today.

Evie: It is.

Roland: You were really happy to spend your birthday with Jordan and Laura O'Reilly in the studio. How come?

Evie: Well, just because of precisely that. It's just what would I rather do with my birthday than have a conversation with two such passionate people. I told Jordan the last time we hung out, we were talking about training, which is a part of the business that I ran. The next day, I felt like, do you know when you've played pool and you break and the balls scatter everywhere, that's what I feel like what my brain feels like, but in a good way.

Roland: It's really invigorating, isn't it?

Evie: It is.

Roland: You guys bring a really lovely energy both to the room and to the industry.

Laura: Do you mind if I just say one more thing? I just want to say thank you to you guys for what you do at DSC. The information, the newsletters are my – when that drops into my inbox, it's like, drop what you're doing, open it up, read what's going on because it's like the core of knowledge and information for me in my work every day and for my team. Everyone who starts, it's like, here's your induction and please sign up to DSC. I just want to say thank you for what you guys do. It's enormous.

Roland: Thanks, folks.

Evie: Thank you, guys.

Roland: That's really good. I just want to give a shout out to Rollin' with Jake Briggs. I just listened to his podcast. He's got three or four on YouTube at the moment. That's Rolling with Jake Briggs. It's a really lovely tone, really lovely voice that Jake is bringing to the podcast. Shout out to Jake.

End of Interview

Outro

Evie: You've been listening to Disability Done Different, Candid Conversations. A podcast by DSC. It's produced by Maia Thomas. If you want to hear more from us, maybe look at that wonderful newsletter that Laura was mentioning. You can go to our website: disabilityservicesconsulting.com.au. If you've liked this podcast, please do subscribe and give us a five-star review.

End of Audio