

Unfiltered Podcast Series Transcript - Episode 1

Clare: Hi, and welcome to episode one of unfiltered. My name's Clare. I'm the host for the series. We're here today, thanks to a partnership with Valued Lives and DRN1, Diversity Radio Network. I am joined by the amazing Rita and John and Charlotte. And today we're going to be talking all about some of the myths and the ideas that people have around employment.

So, I'm going to go straight to you, Rita. Tell us a little bit about you and what you do.

Rita: Oh, okay. So, I was born in New South Wales, in Kings Cross. And when I was three years old, I went back to UK with my mum and my father. And then I decided to resettle in Western Australia, and that was ten years ago. So, I've got a disability. I'm legally blind and deaf. I've got a guide dog called Joel. I wear hearing aids. I'm married with two grown up sons. I'm a grandmother of five [00:01:00] grandchildren and a great grandmother of two great grandchildren. Which tells you how ancient I am.

Clare: I don't think so.

Rita: I've worked in the legal profession for 22 years. I've been in private practice and I have been in community law centres. Yeah, I've had a good variety of legal work, particularly with disability rights.

Clare Yep,

Rita that's my passion. And then I'm the chairperson of Valued Lives and I'm on some other boards and government boards and yeah, the busy life I live.

Clare: Sure is, Cool, thanks Rita. It is a busy life indeed. I'm gonna go, I might start with you, Charlotte. Charlotte, tell us a little bit about you.

Charlotte: Yes, I am Charlotte Patterson, and, with me, I am a story author for children's stories. I write stories from my own ideas that that I get from my inspiration and from my passion, actually. My passion is writing sorry, I like to do writing of stories [00:02:00] or writing of something else, to get some ideas. And I'm famously related to Banjo Patterson, he's my great grandfather's cousin. Great grandfather's cousin, who was a famous poet and story writer.

Clare: Yeah, awesome. That's really cool.

And you do some advocacy work too, don't you? Talk to students and stuff?

Charlotte: Yes. Yes. I do talk to students. And I used to do a public speaking course. A public speaking course. Last year I did this course and we just basically learned about what you want to say, what you want to say in your speech and just do a little introduction about yourself and just learn many other things and I really enjoyed it.

Clare: Wow, awesome. Thanks for sharing. And last but by no means least, John. Do you want to introduce yourself? Yeah,

John: my name's John. I'm John Patterson. I'm Charlotte's father. I drive her around places and help her with her business. Selling her books [00:03:00] at markets and things like that.

Clare: Yep

John: And try to get her to clean up her room occasionally.

Clare: How successful is that?

John: Yeah, I'm Very proud of her. She's come a long way from a little girl.

Charlotte: Oh yeah.

John: Overcome quite a few challenges too.

John: Yeah, and epilepsy and things like that and I'm very proud with the number of challenges she's decided to take on and really stick with it and master those challenges. She's got quite a few milestones behind her. Yeah, very proud Dad.

Clare: That's cool. Does that make you blush when you hear Dad say that? Thanks dad.

Clare: Alright, so what we're going to do guys as part of this conversation is we're going to run through some questions that we've been sent in or people have asked, over the past few months, since we've decided to put the podcast together. So, the first question that we got asked, and weirdly we got asked this one a few times.

Clare: Is it true that people with disability don't want to work? Who wants to answer that one first? Dad... Charlotte's just dobbed Dad in, listeners.

John: No, I don't believe that for a second. I think, look, I'm currently on long service leave because I'm a primary school teacher by trade and I'm finding that the long periods of not working are actually quite challenging and a bit boring at times. But I know a few people with disabilities, and they want just as much, just like Charlotte was saying before, they want an income to be able to have some agency in their own lives. So, in that regard, they're exactly the same as neurotypical people in inverted commas.

Clare: Yeah

Rita: Yeah, and I agree with that, yeah. Because I think that all people, with disabilities want to work, because without employment, you've got no money. With no money, you've got no housing. Without any housing, you've got no relationship or family. And we all have a moment about going to work, but it's about that self-respect. So, like Charlotte has got her own business. And that is a fantastic achievement. More and above over what anybody could do. She published a book. How awesome is that? Very good. So unique.

Clare: Yeah.

John: And it gives you some control over your life, doesn't it?

Rita: It does, and the thing is people have the attitude that oh, people with disabilities or disabled people don't want to work.

No, it's not that we don't want to work, it's because people have got this attitude, we'll employ people with disabilities, we will put the support in place and the employment

workplace or the workplace. We just want a chance to be an ordinary citizen of Australia and that's all it is.

Clare Yeah.

Rita: Unfortunately, we don't, through the NDIS, don't have [00:06:00] funding for employment. There is a little bit there, but hey ho, people with disabilities or disabled people, if we had that support. Just imagine how much we could achieve.

Clare: Absolutely. The question was people with disability don't want to work.

Is that true for you?

Charlotte: From that one, no, I don't think it's true. Because with that, if you if you at least have enough money and a little bit of faith, you can try to start from baby steps and with your inspiration or from your passion of what you want to do in the future, you can try to at least achieve that.

And with my business called Creatorrrs World, my main three slogan words is dream, imagine, and create. So, with those, if you have those three including an active imagination, you can try all different sorts of things

John: but Charlotte, I'm just wondering, we've just come from work experience, you've just done some work experience this morning, haven't you? At the cafe?

Charlotte: Today, yeah.

John And from my experience, you are looking forward to that work each week. You can't wait to get there. Yes. So, you're quite keen to work, aren't you?

Charlotte: Yes. From a work experience perspective. But as for next year, 2024, I would love for that work experience to actually turn it, into a paid work.

A paid work as in job one day. As in still helping around in the kitchen. But there's another thing that I love to do is. basically waitering, but it's more as in delivering food or drinks or both to the customers at the table and not taking orders, but other than that's something I'd like to explore next year.

John: In addition, as well, that cafe experience that you've had at working has inspired you to go off and join a TAFE course to learn how to do a cookery skill set, haven't you? And you're about to start that next, week.

Charlotte: Yes, next week, and it's going to be... for the next four weeks. And yeah, with just the experience of doing the actual course, we're hoping that for me to explore different opportunities in cooking and if not cooking, there could maybe be some other opportunities.

John: As a result of doing the work experience, you've found a direction, another direction for you to go besides your business and get a paid employment, haven't you?

Charlotte: Yes

Clare: Yeah cool, Awesome. So that's going to lead me, that's a beautiful opportunity for me to go into the next question is, do people with disability always have that sort of entry level job that doesn't have a lot of skills? Or, with that baby steps, can there be more?

Charlotte: If you're taking anything from Baby Steps, I think with Baby Steps, they could achieve a lot more. A lot more, and if you write a few little things down of what you want to do in the future, you could achieve anything you want to do.

Clare: Yeah.

John: I think a lot of people with disability perhaps didn't get the academic qualifications that they might need to apply for certain jobs. So that's a bit of a restriction I suppose but you've because you're working really hard, you've found another pathway to get a qualification to get a job.

Charlotte: Ah yes.

Clare: Yeah, that's right.

Charlotte: And I need to get a job next year

Rita: Yeah. And I agree with you there, Charlotte. When I was living in the UK, I went to a special school, and I found, bearing in mind this is going back a lot of years, that, you weren't as well educated as the kids in the street and I pestered my mom to go to mainstream school and, I found it hard, I found it really hard in the sixties and seventies, but I left with, the equivalent of four ATAR, and, went into the public service with the government for 20 years. My eyesight started deteriorating. And then I changed, I looked at - exactly what Charlotte is doing now - looking at different areas, what does she like, exploring - and that's what I did - I looked into doing legal work, doing a legal course. Just a basic general level and then before I knew it, we were doing a law degree, and I qualified as a lawyer.

John: That's quite an achievement in the 60s and 70s, that's big, so you were your own advocate in a way.

Rita: Yeah. I think the way Charlotte is doing it is, she's exploring, and she's got a passion, working with the public and she's also got that really good skill of writing. You never know, Charlotte, further down in your life, in your lifeline, you might change your career two or three times.

John: Yes, and it's fun, it's doing lots of different things and finding that thing that really switches you on, and sometimes it's not obvious what switches you on.

Rita: Exactly.

John: Until you've tried all those different things. Like you might have found that in your career, I imagine. So, giving opportunity for work, I think and lots of varied areas, especially for people with disabilities, is key because people want to follow their passion, but 8 out of 10 people don't know what their passion is, so that's not very helpful advice. You've got to try lots of different things and work out what you like doing and then match that.

Rita: Yeah, and it's like what Charlotte said, it's take baby step, explore what you want to do, what your passion is, take the baby steps.

Clare: It's true, isn't it?

Rita: Yeah, definitely.

Clare: I'm gonna ask you a little bit more about your micro business. Why did you want to start your own small business?

John: I remember you were writing stories as a kid.

Charlotte: Yes.

John: You loved to write stories and you were, you loved the Lord of the Rings, and you started writing your own version "Before the Lord of the Rings", a very long story. And when you were a young teenager, you wrote and you wrote and it was very, you loved it.

Charlotte: Yeah.

John: And so, when it came time to think about a microenterprise?

Charlotte: Yes, to think of a microenterprise, back when I was in year 12, actually at my high school it was when we came to that decision at the meeting for us Year 12s, about what we're going to do in the future. Actually, I'm going to become a writer because I'm really enjoying writing my story at the moment, and just like seeing where it goes in the future, and yeah.

Clare: That's cool. How did you feel the first time you saw your book in print?

Charlotte: Oh my god. Just like with everyone else, very surprised and happy and shocked like it came out so perfect.

Clare: Yeah, it is pretty cool.

John: I was there when the box of books arrived at home and you opened it up and had a smile beam on her face, she was just ecstatic.

Charlotte: Yes.

John: We all weren't we?

Charlotte: Yeah. I got the book, I think it was like last year or something, got the whole entire book collection of my very first book, yeah, somewhere around last year in, I don't know, maybe like November or October, that sort of thing, and yeah, and just what my Dad said, just literally, yes.

John: A little bit about the book about cat called Phoebe that you liked. You knew Phoebe in real life, but you wrote the story about Phoebe, didn't you?

Charlotte: Yes, yes, that was the very first book that I did publish actually and with the Facebook Creator's World I actually have my website which is also called Creator's World and the link is actually inside my Facebook.

Clare: Right, we will provide the link with the podcast, now my next question and then I am going to slip over to Rita about work in an employment setting, but how did you feel when you made your first sale?

Charlotte: My very first sale is....

Clare: How did it make you feel?

Charlotte: Yeah, it's definitely the same way that when I got my book, when I got my first sale, I was, yeah, literally so happy and surprised to literally go to these markets to go there to actually sell something that I did. I was literally so happy.

John: It's very, it was very affirming, wasn't it, because it opened up a whole new world of possibilities that you can just sit down and create something.

Charlotte: Yeah.

John: And then create an income from that.

Rita: Yes. And, the important thing, Charlotte, is that book is going to be around forever. When my granddaughter comes to my house, I've got a copy of your book, and I sit down and..and read the book with her - and then our three cats come and join us!

Clare: There you go, I'm sure they like the story... all three cats. How cool is that? Now you need to do one for the dog people in the world.

Charlotte: Yeah. Yeah, totally.

Clare: So, Rita, I've got a question for you. And this is something that we've talked about in the past. And it's about being in a, working for someone else rather than running your own business. But the question comes up, do you have to tell your boss that you've got a disability?

Rita: Okay, I'm going to be wearing two hats here to tell you.

Clare: Yep, that's why I'm asking.

Rita: I've done employment law, legally, you don't have to disclose anything. From a personal level, I definitely would disclose my disability. I think it would be blatantly obvious if I walked in with a guide dog.

Clare: Yeah

Rita: so, I think if you're open, frank, and you sit down and explain how it's not how your disability affects you, but it's what support you need to do the job. So, for me, when working, I need specialist software. But if I didn't tell my employers that I had a vision impairment, how will they know what supports to put in for me.

I also wear hearing aids, if I didn't tell them about my hearing impairment, how would they know that I needed support with note taking? I think it's better to be honest and just have that frank conversation. And, if they take your disability into account, and you don't get the job, then they're not, they're not worthy of your skills.

Clare: Because you've had a funny experience, haven't you, with a job interview?

Rita: Yes, I have.

Clare: Do you want to, are you comfortable to share?

Rita: Yeah, sure. When I came back to Australia about, probably about eight years, nine years ago, I had my old guide dog with me, Ivy, and I got, I did a really good resume, and got. Shortlisted, telephone interview, then got shortlisted again, and then went in to have my interview. And this was a city firm. I walked in with my guide dog and there was a panel of three men. And they all looked at the guide dog. Didn't acknowledge me. And I said, shall I sit down? Oh yeah, okay yeah, sit down. I sat down, I got the dog settled. And yeah, the interview process started. So, one of the panellists said, oh wait, how long have you had the dog? I said, oh, yeah, two years, oh and is it a retriever or? Actually, I'm here to be interviewed for the job. I was polite about it. And then one of the other panelists said, Isn't she beautiful? Isn't she beautiful? I said, you know what? I'm not bad for my age. And I was so annoyed I should have got up and walked out of the interview. Needless to say, I didn't get the job.

But yeah, it was just, It wasn't nice at the time, but now I can look back and laugh at it. And anyway, when I walked out in that, probably in that, within the hour, I'd got offered another job. Yeah. Yeah, so it was meant to be.

Clare: Yeah, So I've got a question, yeah, I have so many things I want to say about that, but none of them are fit to print. I've got a question for the three of you, because you guys have all experienced job interviews and the process in a whole bunch of different ways. What is something that potential employers could do to just make it that bit easier for recruitment or to get a job for people with a disability?

Rita: I think for me if you've had to disclose your disability on the application form or...I would ask for a reasonable adjustments.

Clare: Yeah.

For example, if I had a job interview, where I might have to do a test.

Clare: Yeah.

Rita: Therefore, I'd ask the interviewer to make sure the room was well lit, and I had access to the relevant software to read, or - maybe there was a hearing aid loop, environment for me.

Clare: Yeah.

Rita: I know some people with intellectual disabilities like to have easy, easy read questions or, easy English. Yeah, everybody's different. Some people sail through an interview, some people are so nervous, but it all depends.

What do you think, John?

John: That's a hard question. What were you asking? Exactly?

Clare: So, what could employers do to make the recruitment or say the application process easier for people with disability?

John: That's a good question. I'm not sure I've got a quick answer to that.

Clare: That's okay

I think what sprung to mind when you first said it was if they could educate themselves on examples of people with disabilities that had been employed and how they'd gone and what it took to make that successful - if that was part of their knowledge I suppose, that would help, but again you'd have to get them to do that - but that experience you just shared, it was just staggeringly bad.

Clare: Yeah.

John: And it sounds to me like you handled it really well. Oh! But, yeah, I don't know, it's a very good question.

Clare: Yeah.

Rita: I think John, I had I remember I had a client who was autistic. Yeah. Who is autistic. And at the time I was working at the Community Law Centre and they did have the interview but the person's mother, felt that there was no reasonable adjustments, and she came to me for advice, and, obviously I got involved as a legal advocate, and rang up, or telephoned up the potential employer. And I said, look, you could have done this better. And in all honesty, they didn't... Number one, they weren't aware of the person with disability who was autistic. And number two, they had no idea about reasonable adjustments. And I connected them to a DES provider, made sure that clients of mine was connected to a DES provider. They're not perfect for everybody. And we did some research, got in touch with the autism association, and they sent some information. And what happened was, we didn't have a structured interview. Yeah. It was a very informal meeting, and the person got the job.

John: If there was a person like...In their organization, willing to do that. To be an advocate or to be a source of information about how to accommodate. That's, perhaps that's what they can do, is to have a dedicated person.

Clare: I've often wondered that Does it always have to be, you come in 15 minutes before, you get the questions, you go away, you write the notes, you come in, you answer the questions, and you walk out?

What does that really tell you about somebody's skills? Does it tell you about their ability to answer those four questions, or does it tell you about their experiences?

John: And there are advantages to employing a person with a disability, in terms of customised employment. Because there are some real benefits, there might be some things in the business that are not getting done that need to be done.

Or this person with a disability might be a brilliant lawyer. Yep.

So

it's worth exploring.

Rita: Or a person who, a known author of Childrens book. Yeah.

Clare: Yeah. Being a business owner has a lot of employability skills behind it, doesn't it? Do you think, Charlotte?

Charlotte: Yeah definitely.

Clare: Yeah cool. Alright guys that takes the care of the questions around employment today. So, I just want to say thank you so much for your insight. Sorry about the little technical difficulty, but yeah, thank you so much for your input. And let's hope that we get some employers out there who are willing to think outside the box.

Okay. See you next time on Unfiltered. Bye.