



# All In

## Accessibility & Inclusion @ Telstra

Issue 1 - March 2018

---

### “Back in the game”: How a conversation gave live football to a whole community

When prominent blind advocate Martin Stewart started running through the shortcomings of the AFL Live Official App with Telstra staff last April, there were a lot of red faces in the room. From icons that couldn't be deciphered by screen-readers to non-existent voice directions to live games, Australia's leading sports app was far from a winning prospect for blind and low-vision users.

But like the Richmond Tigers themselves, Telstra's popular AFL Live and AFL Club apps emerged from the 2017 season as unlikely victors – and a model for future team-building.

The victory is due in part to the formation of a six-person working group, linking our mobile products team with blind users and advocates from Blind Citizens Australia (BCA), which instigated key accessibility 'fixes' for updates of the apps released last May and throughout the season.

The pioneering project has also seen Telstra sign up two world-class app developers with strong

accessibility records: UK-based Pulselive for AFL Live, and US-based YinzCam (which also manages the NFL and NBA team apps) for the 18 AFL Club apps, and Telstra's NRL and Netball apps.

The result has been hailed as a breakthrough for thousands of Australian footy fans with low vision. “Before last season, we were completely shut out by this app,” says Martin Stewart. “Now we've got access to everything it offers. We're back in the game!”

## A six-week turnaround

The project's success owes a great deal to Martin's passion and determination. As a prominent campaigner for the blind community, Martin had received a number of complaints from other frustrated AFL fans and had been pursuing Telstra since 2016 to make the app more accessible. After an initial meeting last March, we enlisted Telstra's Mobile Products Manager, Sabrina Boucher, and Rikki Chaplin, BCA's tireless Advocacy Officer, in what would become the App Accessibility Working Group.

In just over six weeks in mid-2017, fixes were initiated for around 70% of the issues Martin had raised. These ranged from complex metadata changes to provide clearer directions to live feeds, to codes enabling screen-readers to decipher club flags and abbreviations with multiple meanings.

Many of these fixes have now been incorporated into the NRL Live and Netball Live apps – which we are currently upgrading in preparation for the 2018 seasons.

“One of the great things to come out of this process is the strong relationship between BCA and Telstra, which will ensure that future apps have all these features built in from the start,” says Rikki Chaplin. “With the current

legislative environment in Australia, BCA often has to approach individual companies to get standards up where they should be. Telstra has set a great example with these apps – and we're determined that it be a lasting example.”

“Telstra handles a lot of important access points for the blind community, and I hope the company will be very proud of these inclusive and accessible apps,” adds Martin Stewart. “When you're developing an app you have to know the diversity of the community you're developing it for, and involve them in its design from the outset. Otherwise it can be very difficult – and extremely costly – to upgrade afterwards.

“Most of the AFL upgrades may have been done, but it's the attitudes of the app developers that will decide if this work is sustainable. Projects like these only effect lasting change if the culture of the organisation – and the ethos and attitudes of its people – become fully inclusive as well.”

For more information visit:

**AFL Live Official App:**  
[afl.com.au/mobile](http://afl.com.au/mobile)

**AFL, NRL and Netball Live Passes:**  
[telstra.com.au/livesport](http://telstra.com.au/livesport)



### What our customers say:

“Last night I updated the app and attempted to access the stats screen to follow the progress of the players in my AFL fantasy team. Well, imagine my excitement when it actually worked! ... I then checked out all the other issues I have raised with the labelling of team logos and accessing of radio stations. All of these issues were also fixed. I was just so glad I can now use the app and get what I want from it.”

**AFL Live app user, to Telstra Crowdsupport**

Telstra's AFL Live and AFL Club apps are now more accessible

# Melbourne store showcases the simple joys of diversity

There's much more to discover than street-smart phones and chic wearables at Telstra's Melbourne Discovery Store. In fact, the 70 sales and support staff have become an in-vogue statement in themselves since they launched a deliberate push to mirror the diversity of Australia's most liveable city.



Melbourne Discovery Store staff in an Auslan training session

On the shop floor you might bump into Thamer Alkhammat, an Iraqi refugee who worked as a physiotherapist with the soccer team that defeated Australia in the 2007 Asian Cup. Or Maryam Seyam, a Tajik lady whose family fled from Afghanistan when the Taliban took a dislike to her father's girls' college. Or the latest of 14 asylum seekers who have found their first Australian jobs at a unique pop-up café run in partnership with the Wise Foundation.

But of all the odds overcome, perhaps none are as impressive as Brad Emin and Bella Penfold – two gutsy young Melburnians with intellectual disabilities, who for the past 18 months have brought a unique new passion and optimism to their work supporting the sales and accounting staff at Telstra's largest retail store.

"We don't do this for charity, we do it because it's great for both our customers and our people," says Discovery Store Leader Wendy Duff. "I'm

always surprised at how many of our staff come up to me and say: 'I have a brother or a sister with a disability, and I love what we're trying to do.'"

Studies show that where staff reflect customer diversity – in gender, ability, ethnicity and sexual orientation – customers are happier and brand loyalty is strengthened. A [2017 survey](#) of 1,200 Australians by Deloitte and the Australian Human Rights Commission found that:

- Customers from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, with a disability or identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual were significantly more likely to say they'd experienced discrimination by an organisation.
- Customers from an Indigenous background, with a disability or identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual were three times as likely to avoid an organisation and twice as likely to dissuade others because of its negative diversity reputation.



## Bella Penfold and Brad Emin at Telstra's Melbourne Discovery Store

"Everyone's accepted here, it doesn't matter where you're from. I've never seen a single argument here, or anyone giving anyone else a hard time."

– **Brad Emin, Sales Consultant, Telstra Discovery Store**



Brad and Bella at work

- 1 in 2 customers identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual or practicing a noticeable faith said their buying choices were positively influenced by an organisation's support for gender equality, marriage equality, people with a disability, older people or cultural diversity.

### Giving everyone a chance

Telstra has long promoted mentoring and engagement opportunities for Indigenous employees, as well as being the largest corporate provider of the Australian Network on Disability's 'Stepping Into' internship program. However, this has not necessarily translated into greater inclusion in our retail shops, perhaps considered a non-traditional working environment for people with disability.

"It's been a long-standing disappointment of mine," admits Wendy Duff, who has recently signed agreements with the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) and Uniting Employment Services to hire sales staff from a broader range of ethnicities and abilities.

Brian Finnigan, BSL's Employer Engagement Manager, says the organisation's Given the Chance Employment Program plans to recruit former refugees for several Telstra stores in Victoria during 2018. "These jobs not only have the power to change individual lives," he says, "but to affect systemic change in the way that people all over Australia regard refugees."

In October, the program took on its first two jobseekers – Maryam and Thamer – who

are undergoing intensive training in Telstra's products and customer services.

Four years after he left his last full-time job as Head of Physiotherapy at Baghdad University, 38-year-old Thamer says Telstra offers him the perfect career refresh. "These guys are giving me proper training, one-on-one," he says, "so soon I'll be able to answer any technology question you can ask me."

### A long journey

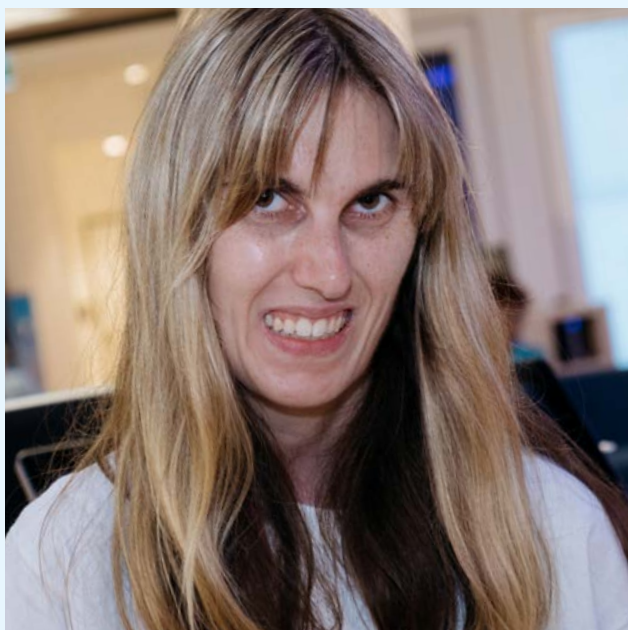
Like many former refugees, Maryam went through horror and heartache on her year-long journey to Australia in 2010. Prior to joining Telstra, she spent two years with BSL, where she studied IT and completed a formal qualification in Auslan – which she'd been learning to communicate with one of her brothers, who is deaf.

Now to the benefit of our customers, Maryam is bringing her unique skillset in-store – including a new language to add to the 19 already on offer.

Maryam sees the presence of people from diverse backgrounds and abilities at Telstra as a singular strength – a sign that you will never be judged for who you are or where you came from.

"People are very kind here," she says. "No one minds if you wear a hijab or not. Outside some people give you the look – you know – but here in the store, everyone's really friendly and you can learn so many things. It's a place you can easily want to stay forever."

## All work and no play... makes Bella truly happy



Bella Penfold

When was the last time you met a 20-something who loved their job so much they wanted to work through Christmas? Then again, Bella Penfold is not your average employee. In many ways, this softly-spoken 23-year old Melburnian is charting a remarkable new path – and her experience could impact the lives of hundreds of Australians.

Bella is a sales consultant at Telstra's Discovery Store, where for the past 18 months she's worked two days a week, arranging and stocking the store's displays, signing in deliveries, and relaying sales receipts and other documents to the accounts department. She works on alternate days with Brad Emin, a jovial 27-year old who also joined the company in July 2016.

Although they live with an intellectual disability, both Bella and Brad are highly independent – and increasingly indispensable – employees, whose passion and dedication provide a daily inspiration to their team members. Over the past year, both have effectively doubled their range of responsibilities.

"I can't remember a single day when either of them has taken a day off," says Store Leader Wendy Duff. "We always have to tell them to stop working!"

Brad and Bella's employment was arranged by Uniting Employment Services, which works to find meaningful employment for people with disability. Vicki Walsh, Uniting's Community Relations Manager, says as their confidence has grown, both Brad and Bella have required less support from her.

"In fact their employment has been so successful, we've been using them as a case study for other employers," says Vicki. "Studies show that the vast majority of employees with disability are just as productive, if not more so, than their co-workers – and they generally have much better attendance and safety records. When people see a company like Telstra doing this, it can have a really powerful impact."

So what of Bella's holiday plans? "None," she insists. "Well, maybe Christmas Day or Boxing Day for the cricket – but the rest of that week I'd be much happier at work. This is way more important to me than having a holiday!"

# A smart home and personal courage unlock the door to independence

This year, Michelle Newland will sleep alone in her own home for the first time since 2002, when she sustained a devastating asthma attack that might have rendered her dependent on others for life.



Michelle Newland with her mother, Ann

Her devoted mother, Ann, meanwhile, will be sleeping in her own house next door – safe in the knowledge that Michelle is being watched over by one of the world’s most advanced remote monitoring systems.

Across Melbourne, in a supported home for people with multiple sclerosis, Jason Anderson will be issuing a familiar list of commands into his mobile phone – “OK Google, turn on my TV... OK Google, dim the lights” – as he settles down to watch his favourite show.

Michelle, Ann and Jason are among a growing number of Australians whose lives are profoundly affected by disability, but who have discovered a newfound independence and peace of mind through Telstra Smart Home.

In 2017, Telstra broke new ground when we introduced our Smart Home bundles with Google Home – the tech giant’s voice-activation system that lets people ‘talk’ to their home appliances and security systems, and check on their homes when they’re away.

While this might provide practical fun for most families, for people with a disability – people

whose mobility is hampered by multiple sclerosis, or who live with a debilitating genetic disorder or an acquired brain injury – the Telstra-Google system has been life-changing.

“Whereas multiple sclerosis takes a lot of my independence away, Telstra and Google have given me back my independence”

– Jason Anderson

“This technology has given me back my independence,” says Jason, who after 20 years with MS has such limited dexterity that switching on a light can be a challenge. Not anymore. “I no longer have to call someone to change the TV channel, switch on the radio or turn on a light,” he says. “I can do it all with my voice.”

Jason uses voice capability integrated with Telstra Smart Home virtually every hour of the day – from checking the time and turning on lights, to operating his TV and music, getting



notifications from Google Calendar, checking emails, sending voice-to-text messages, and surfing the Internet.

“Before this tech, I had to rely on carers for everything, which often made me feel very guilty,” he says. “Now I no longer need to call someone who might be attending to a more urgent matter.”

## Safety at home

Telstra’s first range of Smart Home products – including cameras, motion sensors and smart power plugs – have been on the market for over a year, but the new voice activation is a game-changer for people like Jason, whose dexterity and mobility are seriously undermined by MS.

And it’s providing newfound independence for people like Michelle, whose family is growing in confidence over the safeguards offered by the combination of interlinked cameras, door locks, motion sensors and message channels that can all be remotely monitored.

“I never thought this moment would arrive,” says Ann Newland, whose daughter is transitioning to a life in which she cooks, cleans and looks after herself – with fewer carers and much more personal space. “I was very nervous about leaving Michelle initially, but this technology has given us the confidence to finally let her achieve the independence she’s been fighting so hard for.”

Between February and July last year, Michelle and Jason were part of a trial supported by Telstra, in which two people with MS and two with acquired brain injuries ‘field tested’ the various technologies integrated with Telstra Smart Home.

The trial gave rise to a voice-enabled Smart Home, with sensors, smart bulbs and smart plugs that retrofit to make ordinary appliances turn on and off with voice activation. The trial also involved Telstra Platinum – a premium service that enables professional installation, configuration and 24/7 support. This is particularly helpful for people who want to align their devices and monitoring equipment to specific day or night settings – with alerts

to individual carers or family members when a routine is missed or altered.

The suite of Smart Home products has recently expanded further with the addition of integrated products for water leak detection, smoke alarms, colour changing globes, outdoor floodlights and more.

## Smart Home Users

**Independent living:** Timers and motion sensors activate a person’s Google Home and calendar in the morning, issue reminders about appointments and routines, turn on favourite TV programs, night lights, etc.

**Appliance safety:** Smart plugs switch off irons, lights, hair dryers and other appliances after a pre-set period of inactivity.

**Remote care:** Carers can check whether a person has got out of bed, opened the fridge, and is active around the house – and notify them that a routine is being followed.

**Voice controls:** People with limited dexterity can operate their TV, music, Internet, lights, blinds, heating/cooling, and other appliances using just their voice.

**Home comfort:** Remote temperature controls help to optimise personal comfort and minimise power bills.

**Personal monitoring:** Residents can check internal and external cameras and lock or unlock doors when carers or visitors come to the house – all through their phone.

For more information visit:

**Telstra Smart Home:**  
[telstra.com.au/smart-home](https://telstra.com.au/smart-home)

**Telstra Platinum and tech support services:** [telstra.com.au/broadband/platinum](https://telstra.com.au/broadband/platinum)

## Michelle finally finds a place to call home



Michelle Newland

Before Michelle Newland lived in a truly smart home, every morning began with a series of trips to the kitchen. First, to check what appointments she had on her Google Calendar; then to check which carer was coming, and then – usually on her third or fourth visit – to check the weather to see what she should wear that day.

Today, when Michelle gets out of bed, a motion sensor triggers her Telstra Smart Home, which activates Google Home to read out her calendar appointments for the day. She can also see what she's having for breakfast, tick off her exercises and care routines, activate the radio, turn up the heating, and – of course – ask for a read-out of the fickle Melbourne weather.

For Michelle's mum Ann, it's nothing short of miraculous. So miraculous, in fact, that after two years of sleeping in Michelle's home to support her, Ann will soon be returning to sleep in her own home – leaving Michelle to sleep independently for the first time in 15 years.

In 2002, Michelle – a bright and vivacious 19-year-old student – suffered a major

asthma attack that deprived her brain of oxygen for 10 minutes and left her with severe physical disabilities, short-term memory loss and amnesia.

With the dedication of her parents Ann and Vic, Michelle slowly relearned how to eat, walk and talk, and in 2016 was able to move from her parents' home to her own home next door. Never one to stay still, Michelle has also set up a business making greeting cards, runs a monthly playgroup, volunteers and works as a guest speaker – and is, increasingly, “loving being by herself” at home.

“This newfound independence has been incredible for her self-esteem,” says key support worker, Cindy Racolini. “For the first time in 15 years, Michelle has this wonderful pride of having her own home, being able to have visitors, looking after her own life. She's constantly smashing the goals she sets!”

For Ann Newland, Telstra Smart Home with voice-enabled activation has provided the ultimate safety net – and peace of mind – that has let her and Vic release their grip on their daughter. “If we can check in with Michelle when she's cooking or before she goes to bed, then we have the peace of mind of knowing that our precious girl is safe,” says Ann.

During the trial, the Telstra team were able to connect Michelle's existing monitoring – cameras in the main rooms, doorbells that ring in both houses – to the motion sensors in her bedroom and bathroom and sensors on the front and back doors, which automatically send a text to Ann if Michelle gets up in the night – and let her know when she's returned safely to bed.

“The reassurance I get from those notifications cannot be measured in gold,” says Ann. “Basically, I know Michelle is safe, and I can provide her with support when she needs it. It means we can both live independently in our own homes.”



## Virtual conference puts disability issues on-screen

Telstra was a proud supporter of Australia's first National Virtual Disability Conference on 21 March 2018.

This exciting virtual conference brought people together online in real time from around the world to share best practice and discuss ways of supporting people with a disability, their families and service providers.

The conference was accessible via a computer, landline phone or any mobile device from the convenience of people's homes or offices. Now, following the conference, discussions will continue online in forums, and conference materials will be available to download.

The diverse program covered topics relevant to people with disabilities and their families,



### Better Evidence, Better Outcomes event logo and sponsors

support workers, allied health professionals, researchers, advocates and policymakers.

Telstra also provided funding for up to 50 conference registrations for people with disability and/or those living in rural or remote areas.

**For more information, go to:**  
[virtualdisability.conferenceworks.com.au](http://virtualdisability.conferenceworks.com.au)

## Wanted: great ideas for accessible cities

At Telstra, we believe that our cities should be equally accessible to everyone. That is why we've partnered with the City of Melbourne to hold an open innovation competition that aims to make cities more accessible for people with a disability.

Wherever you live – in Melbourne, in Australia, or around the world – this competition is open to you. We want the best and brightest to take part!

### Entrants will have six weeks to develop concepts that:

- enhance the provision of information to help people with disability participate in all aspects of life within a city
- make sure the people and places of Melbourne better address the access needs of people with disability.



A blind woman stepping off a tram

Entrants will have access to mentors from the tech and innovation sectors and the disability community to help them develop and improve their concepts, so we can be sure that final submissions are a great fit for the affected community.

If you're an innovator, entrepreneur, business or part of the disability community, registrations are open now.

**What are you waiting for? Visit:**  
[melbourne.vic.gov.au/accesscompetition](http://melbourne.vic.gov.au/accesscompetition)

Open period: 15 February – 1 April 2018

## We want to hear from you!

Do you have a suggestion for making Telstra more accessible and inclusive, a story idea, or something you'd like to discuss?

We encourage organisations and individuals to provide feedback on our newsletter and other Telstra accessibility and inclusion issues by emailing us at:

[accessibilityandinclusion@team.telstra.com](mailto:accessibilityandinclusion@team.telstra.com)

If your issue relates to a specific Telstra customer account, you can get in touch with our customer service team on

**13 2200** (Voice), **133 677** (TTY)

[telstra.com/contactus](http://telstra.com/contactus)

## Disability Equipment Program

For more information visit

[telstra.com/disability](http://telstra.com/disability)

## Disability Enquiry Hotline

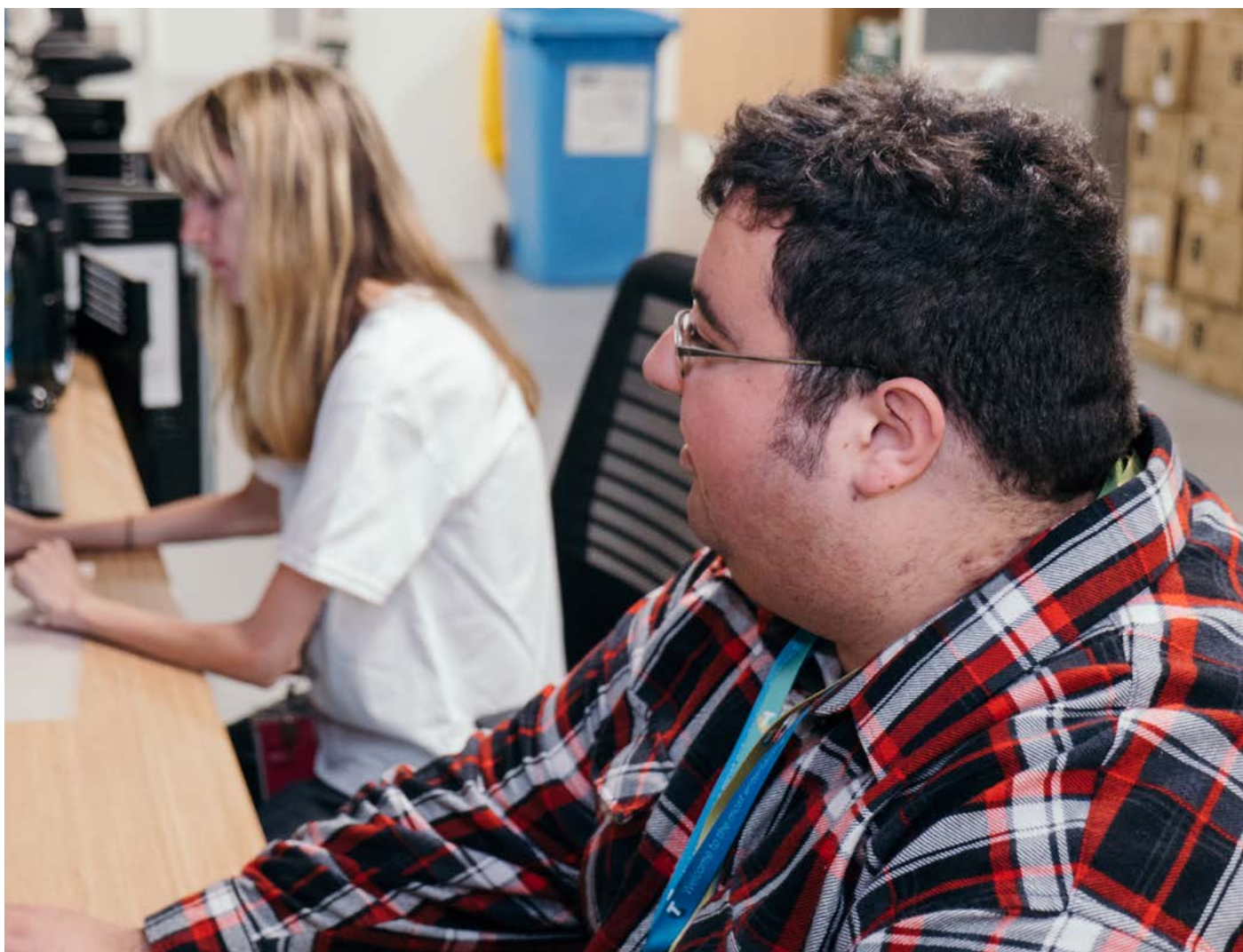
For advice on our disability equipment program or any products and services, contact our Hotline:

**1800 068 424** (Voice), **133 677** (TTY)

[disability@online.telstra.com.au](mailto:disability@online.telstra.com.au)

*Telstra's Accessibility & Inclusion Plan 2017 – 2019* outlines our strategy and commitments to accessibility & inclusion. **Visit:**

[telstra.com.au/aboutus/community-environment/community-programs/disability-disability-action-plan](http://telstra.com.au/aboutus/community-environment/community-programs/disability-disability-action-plan)



Bella Penfold and Brad Emin working at their desks