Jade Taylor: (singing). Hi everyone. Welcome to episode three of the Women With Disabilities Australia Youth Network podcast. Today, we're excited to be interviewing Ashleigh Rae. A writer, advocate of disability and antipoverty and survivorship. I will start with acknowledging, acknowledgement of country and acknowledging that I am calling in from the charitable people and the Yaygir country and pay respects to elders past, present and emerging. Before we go on, I would like to advise anyone listening to this podcast episode may include discussion of violence and abuse. If you're affected by violence and abuse or discussion in this podcast, you can contact 1800RESPECT for support and counseling on 1800737732. So Ashleigh, tell us about yourself. Can you tell us your name, age, disability, where you live and anything else you would like listeners to know about you?

Ashleigh Rae: Hey, thank you so much for having me on your podcast. Um, my name is Ashleigh Rae, howdy and um, I'm do I dare say my real age or should I just like wing this and because no one can verify it on a podcast just say what I prefer? (laughs).

Jade Taylor: I mean, a stage name is totally fine these days. (laughing).

Ashleigh Rae: Uh, look I'm 30 going on 31. So I'm not that old, but I'm, I'm an elder millennial, maybe a geriatric millennial is what we call ourselves now. Um, uh, my disability is sight related, so I have some serious issues with my eyes. My eyeballs are totally healthy and fine, but my cornea is a notch and they cause significant difficulty for me, uh, functioning in the world. Um, yeah, I, I guess that's, I guess that's a good starting point.

Jade Taylor: And whereabouts in Australia, do you live Ashleigh?

Ashleigh Rae: I'm in Victoria, and right now we are in, I don't know what day or month or week it is really, but we're in lockdown. That's about all I know. (laughs).

Jade Taylor: Lockdown is so much fun, right?

Ashleigh Rae: I mean, I've lived in my hoodie and in my fluffy waffy, um, slippers for like weeks now.

Jade Taylor: I mean, I'm, I would be totally okay with that to be honest.

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah. I mean, you do have to wash them from time to time apparently.

Jade Taylor: Oh yeah. That, that could be a good idea. That's why we, that's why you need two, right?

Ashleigh Rae: Exactly. Exactly.

Jade Taylor: Tell us about your experience in disability rights, advocating for survivors of sexual violence.

Ashleigh Rae: It's been a roller coaster is the only way I can describe it. I only came into the disability community within the last year, um, following a diagnosis with my vision and it's been really interesting. I've had friends, I've got friends and family with disability, but it's never been so personal to me until I got my own diagnosis. Um, I didn't really understand all of the nuances of conversations that I was having. I was learning a lot from people about when they would talk about things like, well, they can't go to a certain, um, event that they'd really like to go to because it wasn't wheelchair accessible and I didn't really understand the impact of accessibility until I got my own diagnosis and started to work through one of those things, I think that happens with a lot of people with sight issues is we, our lives adapt to our site. And so I hadn't actually realized all of the little accommodations and things that I changed in my life to accommodate for the fact that I'm blind as a bat.

Ashleigh Rae: And then when I started to work with professionals on where I was struggling, um, I started to really recognize a lot of the things that people had been talking about to me for years and went, oh, I get this in a whole new dimension now. I understand this. I get how frustrating it I- it is to use public transport and how inaccessible that is or how difficult it is to get an education. Um, all of the different things and how much of a burden it is to be someone with a disability like the extra expenses and, um, care that you need, not just from people in your immediate circle, but you know, let's not even get into the pension and NDIS, like that's a whole other kettle of fish. And it was just this baptism of fire. (laughs).

Jade Taylor: Yeah. Yeah. I, I really relate to you saying, you know, like you didn't understand, like for me living with Spina Bifida, you know, some days I can walk and, and, and then other days I wake up and my legs are just like, you know what, no, not today.

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah. (laughing).

Jade Taylor: So like, if I'm planning something with my friends and trying to live a normal life that a normal 27 year old lives I've gotta think, wait, but if thi- on this day, if, if my legs wake up and they go, no, that's, that's not happening today am I still gonna be able to do this? How am I gonna get to there? You know? And I, I guess that that's something that being in that situation is something only you know about.

Ashleigh Rae: 100%. There's so much extra burden, like right now I am a full-time student and um, every time I start a new subject at school I have to send an access plan to my new teacher, which is fine, but then that inevitably leads to conversations

about them making reasonable accommodations, like, okay, is there a textbook for this? And is it compulsory or is it just that you'd prefer us to have it because if you prefer us to have it, then you can provide me with an accessible version of the chapters you'd like us to read versus it's very different if it's a requirement. Um-

Jade Taylor: Yes.

Ashleigh Rae: ... and even then I've had difficulties with being able to, um, you know, other students have been able to get away with just doing a free online reading of a, of a text, whereas because of limitations with, um, tertiary education textbooks and, and journals and the memberships universities have with publishers I can't exactly do that. I have to actually go and buy that book, whereas other students [inaudible 00:06:41]. Even though it might only be a $100, that's still an extra burden that other students didn't have to bear, but I did.

Jade Taylor: But, and I, I guess it's a $100 for you who's not in the same situation as everyone else. Like yeah, okay, let's not get into NDIS and disability pension a whole lot, because I feel like we'll be here for hours, but (laughs) you know, like a $100 when you're living on DSP that's-

Ashleigh Rae: Is a lot of money.

Jade Taylor: Is a lot of money. Like I know that like buying Christmas presents and birthday presents for my nieces and nephews, you know, I've got, I've got eight of them. If I've counted that right in the two seconds. I've got eight nieces and nephews, you know, I have Christmas and birthdays and, you know, I can't buy them what I want because I have things that I need, like, you know, education and uni books and medical supplies and, you know, just general things.

Ashleigh Rae: It's just an inequity that doesn't really need to be there. Like it's very easily solvable, but it's still there.

Jade Taylor: Exactly. Um, how did you get involved in the, Let Us Speak campaign and what impact has it had on you Ashleigh?

Ashleigh Rae: Oh, wow, okay. (laughing). Where do we start there's so much? Um, I got involved with the campaign after I had just come through the criminal justice system myself as a, um, survivor of sexual violence. Um, we, it had taken us like four years to get through the criminal justice system, it was a long time and I was exploring and just sort of s- just sort of trying to figure out what next, because I had taken up such an enormous part of my life for so many years that my partner and I were just sort of beginning to recover from the fact that that was an enormous trauma to both of us. And we were kind of just like catching our breath and going, okay, what now? 'Cause now there's this enormous vacuum of

stuff in our life and by chance I got in touch with Nina Funnell who's, um, one of the founders of Let Us Speak.

Ashleigh Rae: And we got to talking and I was curious at the time about how do I tell my story? And I had a discussion with her and then she said, "Actually, I've just been made aware of this law in Victoria. And, you know, we need to do something about this." Um, so over a period of weeks and conversations that we had about the law and the implications of the law which was the judicial proceedings and reports act of 1958, um, I recognized that I'd been in breach of this law and this law that I didn't even know had passed, no, it had never been reported on in the media, no one knew that this had happened. And the thing that was really scary to me is having just come through the criminal justice system. Um, and then discovering that I was in breach of a law I didn't know existed largely the public had no idea existed in Victoria, but that I was at fault of something I had no idea about. And that the punishment was really harsh. The punishment was a jail term and a fine, or one or the other.

Ashleigh Rae: So either a combination of the two or, you know, jail or a fine. And that was really terrifying because the punishment was actually harsh as in, um, the sentencing in the criminal case that I'd just been through. Um, and it was frightening and enraging and that's, that's what got me on board, that's what made me go, "Okay, gotta do something about this." So we did that all through 2020 in, I'm not sure, um, what part of the world you're hailing from Jade, but you know, Melbourne last year in 2020 was an, I, I don't know if I'm allowed to swear on this podcast, but, um, it was an absolute shit show here, um, with lockdowns and with our first coronavirus outbreaks and every day our media was absolutely slammed with coverage wall to wall about COVID and deaths and case numbers and horrific political backlash. And at the time as well, I'm sure a lot of the listeners will, um, relate to this, but being told that we were dispensable almost every single day and that our lives were sacrificable every single day. (laughs). Um, it was just so- somehow we managed to pull off this campaign in the midst of all that, which I don't know how we did, kind of incredible.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. Like, honestly, you guys deserve like the biggest high five handshake, amen. Whatever you feel like doing 'cause even from my side of the universe which I am in Brisbane so I'm on just that little bit, just the other side of Australia to you. But um, like I knew about it and I followed you guys and, you know, like I think it, I also think it didn't get the spotlight that it deserve too by the same-

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah.

Jade Taylor: You know what I mean?

Ashleigh Rae: I mean, pretty much the entire news cycle. The stories that needed to be told last year that deserved that space didn't get it. And it's happened again this year because of the Delta outbreak.

Jade Taylor: Exactly. And that was part of the main reason of, um, me talking to Heidi and working with WWDA and coming up with this was because, you know, like there are people out there like you actually, yes, you have a platform and we'll get to that but, um, your story deserves to be told, your story someone else is gonna look at your story and they're gonna go, "Oh my God, I relate to her. You know, she makes me feel like I need to speak up. I have something to say." you know? And there has been very few people in my life that I can say I've looked at and I have gone, I can honestly say I agree 110% with everything that that person is saying. And that was you, you were that human on the other side of my, my phone screen or to that, that I was like refreshing, just waiting to, you know, get me through lockdown, you know, like get me through a really hard time in my life. And I, you know, I followed it and I was like, this is not getting the spotlight that it deserves.

Ashleigh Rae: No, it really didn't. And I really appreciate you saying that because I'm quite frankly, most of the content I make is not very, um, high budget. (laughs). It's literally me and my hoodie in like some corner of the house. (laughs).

Jade Taylor: But it's human, it's human. And, and, and, and for me the, I love talking to a human about human things. You know, like you talk about disability support pension and that's what, you know, that's what I go through every fortnight, like I've moved away, I've moved out of my home town so I could get to better medical, you know, I'm, I'm living by myself with my husband yes, but he is on care pension for me because no one will hire him because I can go into hospital any time case in point. You know what I mean? Like, so it's hard for him, and it's hard for us where, you know, managing like, you know, getting married, like that was a huge thing, you know, like just like, like normal things that people don't appreciate and realize if that makes sense.

Ashleigh Rae: 100%, 100%.

Jade Taylor: Um, what have you learned in the space of talking about sexual violence as a woman with a disability?

Ashleigh Rae: I don't even know where to start because there's so much that I've learned from advocacy in general, um, let alone how it applies to disability. But I guess a really big thing that I've learned is patience, and to have respect for where people are at. And sometimes that means that people are in a very painful place and they can't have conversations with you that you would like to have with them because they they're just not there. And that's not a bad thing nor a good thing, it's just, it is what it is. And we have to be respectful of that. Um, and that also

applies not just to people with disabilities that also applies to politicians, (laughs) to journalists-

Jade Taylor: Yes. (laughs).

Ashleigh Rae: ... um, people who, you know, um, I, I guess a big thing that I've learned as well is, and something that has been a lot of discussion about in different ways in the last couple of years in Australia in particular is, um, free speech and around having, you know, a fair criticism of something versus actually having a personal dig at someone. Um, you know, for example, we've seen a lot of people having cracks it, um, Gladys Berejiklian for her appearance, um, same for Kerry Chant, but we haven't seen that same kind of stuff translate to the male politicians, um, when it comes to them with far more, you know, ready to criticize their policy decisions rather than, oh, they turned up in that same suit they wore yesterday.

Jade Taylor: Yes.

Ashleigh Rae: Um, I guess it's, it's patience and having respect and dignity for where people are at.

Jade Taylor: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ashleigh Rae: I don't have to agree with people, I don't have to like their opinions, I don't have to, I don't have to, um, put myself through hearing all of it, but I do have dignity and respect for the fact that they're at where they're at, and this is how the world looks to someone through that lens.

Jade Taylor: I was just about to say, we all look at the world differently and there's a reason for that.

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah. And some of us are, you know, especially when we're talking about sexual violence, a lot of us are dealing with trauma, same in the disability community, different types of trauma. Um, I know that in the disability community sexual violence is a hugely, um, it's a huge problem and it is never talked about because we often have people who are incapable of communicating what's happening to them, um, because of their condition who are being hurt by people in positions of power over them. It's not talked about it's rarely ever prosecuted it's rarely ever dealt with. Um, and talking about trauma is something we've gotta handle with a lot of care and expertise. And not everyone is equipped to do that. And that's okay. Not everyone needs to be, but if you're in a position of power and authority or influence, then we need to have some mechanisms in place to ensure that this can be handled in the best way that we know how.

Jade Taylor: Yeah, exactly. And, and it really does come down to people watching what people, other people do. Hmm. That's it?

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah. I mean, we've all seen those awful headlines about, you know, the, the very victim blamey headlines that, you know, put all of the onus of responsibility for sexual assault on the victim and paint the perpetrator out to be just such a good guy who was, you know, catfished by this awful woman or something, you know? People say that (laughs) it has an impact.

Jade Taylor: Yes, yes it does. What qualities do you think a good leader should have Ashleigh?

Ashleigh Rae: Uh, empathy is a really good starting point.

Jade Taylor: I agree. (laughing). I agree.

Ashleigh Rae: Um, I don't wanna say it's not active listening, I think that term is overused, I wanna say it's like deep and continuous listening. Again, you don't have to agree with everyone, you don't have to like what everyone says, but if you're someone who's elected into a position of power, whether that's on a board of C- of, of executives or whether that is, um, politically, you're there to listen, you're there to solve problems and you don't have to like what's happening, but you do need to listen to what people want and what people are saying. And people get angry when they aren't listened to, people act out when they feel ignored. That's when you get things like protests, petitions. When people aren't feeling heard and like, there is a reasonable chance of action being taken, um, to support them in whatever the cause is, that's when we start to have conflict.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. So coming off of that question, do you consider yourself a leader?

Ashleigh Rae: I consider myself to be very curious and nosy. (laughing).

Jade Taylor: Uh, and I would definitely put you in the influence, uh, category and, and a leader for some people, definitely. Like I, I consider you a leader. (laughs).

Ashleigh Rae: Thank you. I kind of look at it and go I just have some things that I really wanna talk about and I'm tired of us not talking about it because, um, I don't know if anyone's familiar with Brené Brown's work, but her work was very life-changing for me and it made a lot of sense. And I started looking at different parts of my life with it and went, I don't understand why we're not talking about what the hell is going on with Centrelink or NDIS or whatever. And like, why? Why are we so embarrassed to talk about this? Why should I feel ashamed to say that I receive a benefit? What, there's nothing wrong with that statement.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. It's, it's it's as much as saying I have Spina Bifida, I have vision impairments, you know, like it's, why are we so ashamed to say who we are?

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah. And so much of what I've seen in the, you know, over the course of my lifetime, all comes down to shame.

Jade Taylor: Yes.

Ashleigh Rae: Feeling ashamed of ourselves, something we've, you know, it's the difference between guilt and shame. You know, if it's guilt, it's far easier to work through because it's a behavior that we can recognize like, oh, I drink too much coffee, okay, so just make less coffee. (laughs).

Jade Taylor: Yeah.

Ashleigh Rae: Um, but if it's I'm bad because I drink so much coffee that's a lo- that's a bigger thing to deal with, that's a bigger thing to work through.

Jade Taylor: And I think of I think, I think you hit a word really hard before, and it's a word that I struggle with and something I live with day to day is we do feel like burdens, we feel like burdens on the system on our f- like on our families on our friends. You know what I mean? Like, you know, that word I, I struggle with and I relate with all at the same time.

Ashleigh Rae: It's really hard when all of the media that you see is geared towards showing you a very unrealistic picture of the kind of life that you should have.

Jade Taylor: Yeah.

Ashleigh Rae: And it makes you ashamed to, it makes you ashamed of the life that you do have, because shouldn't you be running around in a bikini or beautifully tanned with glossy perfect skin and hair, and, you know, jumping off peers in Vanuatu into the beautiful water and traveling all around the wo- like shouldn't you be having that life? And it's like, well, but my life is that today I can't get out of bed-

Jade Taylor: (laughs) Yeah.

Ashleigh Rae: ... because I'm in so much pain. Or today I can't see anything because my eyes aren't working.

Jade Taylor: Yeah, exactly. (laughs). You know, like I say so many times where I'll open up my Instagram feed or, you know, my Facebook feed and it'll be like "10 great holiday spots." and it's like, why is that never "10 great holiday spots with wheelchair access." you know?

Ashleigh Rae: Yes.

Jade Taylor: Like why is that, why are we not concentrating on that? Or like this, um, I don't, there's like sh- TV shows based around that type of deal. And it's like why are we not showing off places that you know have accessibility points and you know like great places for people with disabilities. All type of disabilities, autism, you

know, supports like there's just there's not enough you know people think that they know what it's like to live with a disability and there are people that they're very, very close to people with disabilities who have a very good idea, but no one walks in your shoes.

Ashleigh Rae: Exactly. 100 squillion percent.

Jade Taylor: (laughs) And it's just, it's a matter of that. It's like nobody walks in your shoes or rides in your wheelchair if you can't walk. 'Cause I hate that, I hate that saying walk in your shoes because not everyone walks in shoes.

Ashleigh Rae: Very true, very true.

Jade Taylor: You know, and that's just, again, something that my, my life has taught me. That's taught other people, you know?

Ashleigh Rae: I mean, disability teaches you so much about the capacity for caring in others, which is a really beautiful thing as well. I think there's a lot of really wonderful things that come from being disabled, that if, if you don't mind I'd like to go on a little tangent about something.

Jade Taylor: Yeah.

Ashleigh Rae: Um, something that I've learned that's really been beautiful and this wonderful reaffirming I may have some faith left in humanity kinda thing is I think people with disabilities because we've had to be vulnerable with medical professionals for most of our lives, or like we've been forced into those positions of vulnerability, like where we have to talk about things that other people would consider really embarrassing and humiliating to talk about. Like, you know what talking about, um, I'm gonna get my terminology wrong, but you know, people who need the feeding tubes in the stomach or the stom- um, the bags that catch, um, urine and, and poo, um, because not able to use other body parts, all of that sort of stuff. Because we've had to go through all of those vulnerable moments and make peace with that, I think we're actually far more in tune with ourselves emotionally and psychologically than the general populace is. And that is a solid, I'm gonna drop the F bomb, that is a solid fucking foundation for-

Jade Taylor: Yes.

Ashleigh Rae: ... healthy friendships, relationships and love.

Jade Taylor: Yes. I, I always say that I thank my disability every day for the person that I am today.

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah. There's a lot that comes from being disable that is beautiful and wonderful and absolutely worthy of being celebrated every day. And it (laughs) sadly isn't fun. I really, I really think we should have our own, you know, festival for this.

Jade Taylor: Oh my God. Let's do that, you and I (laughs) let's, let's just start a, we're gonna do this after COVID and everyone gets their vaccines and does all their things, we'll just have a festival for all-

Ashleigh Rae: Exactly.

Jade Taylor: ... all of us.

Ashleigh Rae: We just want everyone to recover from their second dose of Pfizer. (laughs).

Jade Taylor: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That sounds amazing. And I mean, like I, a little bit of a tangent, then we'll get to the next question but, you know, my, my I'm very close with my nieces, my nieces and I, I'm the, I'm the cool auntie 'cause I'm under the age of 30. So I'm like that, you know, I understand but I'm not old enough yet. You know, like I'm just that little bit in that, right in their age group. And um, my, my niece got asked the other day "Uh, do you know anyone with a disability?" And she goes, "No." And then she was walking home and she was like, "Wait a minute, auntie Jade has Spina Bifida, hang on a minute." And she said, "It's because I don't think of you like that. To me, you're my auntie." And when she said that it, it made me cry.

Jade Taylor: She doesn't know that 'cause I was on the other side of a phone screen, but because I don't want her to think of me like that, you know what I mean? But she said like, if she seeing is there's a young kid in a wheelchair at her school and he dropped a load of books. And she said the first thing she did was she was late to class 'cause she stopped to help him pick up his books. And she said, "That was because of you auntie Jade." you know? And I'm like, "Okay, I'm doing some good in this world.". (laughs). [crosstalk 00:27:38]. Um, what, what advice would you give to young women and non binary young people with disabilities wanting to start and speak about violence or any other issues that they care about?

Ashleigh Rae: Wow, you do not ask little questions. I think there's a couple of things, the really big one I would say is your disability doesn't limit you in terms of who you can have relationships with or the type of relationships that you have. I think we all need to be reminded all of the time because generally speaking our culture, at least in Australia beats this out of us and does a really good job at trying to make us feel like we can't have this, um, or that we shouldn't have it because we're fetishized and we're sort of turned into some sort of freak show that belongs on American Horror Story. Um, but that we deserve and are entitled and worthy to have wonderful, healthy, vibrant, robust relationships that, uh, romantic, platonic, familial, um, professional, and on the topic of romantic relationships,

we're allowed to have really good sex lives that aren't fetishized and that aren't making us out to be freak shows.

Jade Taylor: Yes.

Ashleigh Rae: Um, and in fact, I, I suspect because I am not a creep, I suspect a lot of us do have very good intimate lives because of that really strong foundation in vulnerability and building relationships.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. Well I, for me, for me being polyamorous, like that's something that's huge to me, you know, I believe in having many partners and it doesn't have to, not every one of them has to be sexual. You know, you can have your emotional partners, you know, you can have your, your sexual partners. But it's just about building great relationships and we do deserve to have the same life as everybody else has.

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah. And I would say on top of that, in terms of being able to speak out about something, I would like to tell people that talking about what's happening for you or has happened to you can be an incredibly powerful way to heal. Um, it can also be a way of keeping us in trauma though, as well. So we need to just, I think, evaluate where we're at with what's going on and try and look at, are we trying to speak up because we actually really do have something we wanna say and something that we need to talk about versus are we going to be bleeding our story on other people because we're still in trauma? If we're st- look either answer is fine, it's just having that awareness and looking at okay the supports that you need might be different depending on what your purpose for speaking out is.

Jade Taylor: Exactly. Like, and, and I will happily sit here and listen to anyone with a disability, with trauma talk anytime. If, if, if they need someone to talk to you, I would happily be that person just to sit and listen because they, they don't have that very often. It's very hard to find. Like I am so lucky in my friend group, you know, like I am so lucky with my friends. I know that I can call them anytime and be like, I'm having a hard day and they'll be there. But not everybody has that.

Ashleigh Rae: Yeah. Yeah. A 100%. I guess and the last thing I would say on that is boundaries are so important. (laughs).

Jade Taylor: Oh yes. Oh yeah they are. Boundaries are something that needs to be talked about with everybody and every relationship needs boundaries.

Ashleigh Rae: Exactly. And sort of on the topic of boundaries, I wanna say there is very much a difference between clearly communicating what your needs are. And I realized that this is a challenge for a lot of people with disabilities because of their condition. Um, but I know that we've all got ways and means of doing that. Um, there's a difference between clearly communicating what your needs are versus

being assertive versus being aggressive. And what happens is often aggression and assertiveness get confused all of the time. Um, and people think that you might be aggressive when really you're just being clear about what you need-

Jade Taylor: Yeah.

Ashleigh Rae: ... and that's not being respected.

Jade Taylor: And building on that, like me and my partner James we have this thing every day where we wake up and I s- he says to me, "What's your love language today?".

Ashleigh Rae: Oh, that's a bit beautiful isn't it?

Jade Taylor: And it, and it can be because I'm, I'm in sensory mode, so I don't enjoy the pressure of a hug or, you know, like I don't enjoy that the rubbing of a hand or, you know, so it comes more into a, "Oh, you look really nice doing that." You know what I mean? Like, it's just a very, and we have just like we've been together for 11 years James and I, and we've grown to know what each other needs. And some days I am just a brick wall and it is terrible to deal with and I don't know how he's gotten through some days. But recently we started this, what is your love language today? and it is amazing.

Ashleigh Rae: Cool idea.

Jade Taylor: Yeah. It is amazing. I would highly recommend anyone even in a normal relationship, what is your love language today? 'Cause it's just, it's so easy. It just helps.

Ashleigh Rae: Oh, 100%. I mean, that's, I'm kind of keen to try that and see what happens.

Jade Taylor: Definitely let me know. (laughs). Finally, do you have any visibility life hacks or advice for the young people listening?

Ashleigh Rae: Oh my gosh. I've got okay, I know that what works for me is not gonna work for everyone, um, so please take it and run with it. And if none of it works for you, that's totally okay as well. But, um, I have found that having a diary is absolutely key. If, if, if it doesn't, if it's not in my diary it doesn't happen like it just does not happen because I won't check my diary. Like if it's not written in there, then I will, it's literally like, yeah, it's not on the schedule, it's not happening, I won't turn up for it.

Jade Taylor: Yeah.

Ashleigh Rae: So it needs to be diarized. And for me that means it doesn't just go in a Google Calendar, which I do use. Um, but it goes into several different places so that it is acc- as accessible to me as possible. So it goes in a written diary, it goes in the

digital diary. Um, another thing is documentation is so key. Um, I think a lot of people with disability can probably relate to this, but you may get practitioners throughout your lifetime that are perhaps not as onboard with supporting you as you would like some to be and having documentation of everything as much as you can is really helpful in you getting the support that you need and want. And also f- if you ever choose to hold anyone accountable for a lack of care or a breach of care it's also really, really important. Especially when we're talking about things like NDIS and Centrelink.

Jade Taylor: Mm-hmm (affirmative). NDIS is just a whole other thing that I could sit here and talk to you about for hours, but I'm not gonna do that. Wh- where can people find you Ashleigh? Where are you?

Ashleigh Rae: I, I'm on Twitter @nerdypioneer and I'm also mainly on TikTok um, @feministradical.

Jade Taylor: And that's where I found you. (laughs) That's the platform that I found you on. Think during lockdown everyone downloaded TikTok and they slowly found their people on there. (laughs).

Ashleigh Rae: Oh my God yes. It is the most, honestly that platform is the most connective platform I've ever been on. You know, it's, it's far more interactive to me then Facebook or Instagram or anywhere else.

Jade Taylor: Yes, yes, definitely. And I, everyone keeps saying TikTok's the new Tinder and I'm seeing this more and more actually to be honest. (laughs).

Ashleigh Rae: That frightens me. (laughs).

Jade Taylor: Yeah. You and I both. But I've had it now and I've seen it and I'm like, yeah okay I agree with that. Thank you so much, Ashleigh, for talking with us today. I, I honestly can't tell you from someone sitting with Spina Bifida how much I enjoy watching your hoodie and in the middle of your house, your live streams with your cricket, your just having, uh, being a human, you know, you're not, you're not trying to live this Vanuatu life. You know?

Ashleigh Rae: I mean, I'm here for it if it decides to turn up. Like-

Jade Taylor: Oh yeah, yeah.

Ashleigh Rae: ... in my life I'm here for it. But (laughing)-

Jade Taylor: But you're a human and we really, really appreciate that.

Ashleigh Rae: Thank you so much. I really appreciate you reaching out.

Jade Taylor: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's okay. Thank you everybody for listening today. (singing).