Interviewee: Peter Vance

Interviewer: Racheal Missingham

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Transcript

Racheal: Hello, Peter, thank you for coming today.

Peter: Pleasure, Racheal, lovely to be involved.

Racheal: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself, who you are, what you do, where you're from, and how did it helped you to become the person you are today?

Peter: Yeah, it's interesting, I guess, having when I saw that, when I looked at that type of question that thing. I sort of where do I start at the beginning or at the end? Because when you've had a fairly long and happy life, there has been some challenges. But I don't know where to start, anyway I'll probably just start beginning and then I'll jump to the end. And then we can fit the middle in between. So it makes sense.

Racheal: Yes, it makes sense.

Peter: Yeah. So I was I grew up in in Melbourne, in the suburbs, back in the 40s 50s 60s. And, yeah, surrounded by a family, a musical family. But I was really more into sport. So my mom was a music teacher, but she tried to teach me but always want to be outside kicking a football. And anyway, so I've always had a passion for music though, and passion for performing. And someone. When we were kids, we always used to have in the holidays, we'd always have a put on the show in the garage and invite all the neighbors and stuff. So that's always been a part of my life. My my, yeah, teen growing up was, was, was really good. I was one of three, three boys, and we, and I studied – I did reasonably well at school. Although English, my English wasn't really good. But I studied – was very keen on agriculture. I had a grandfather who lived on a farm and another uncle in in Victoria. So I studied agricultural science. But someone gave me guitar when I was 13. So music has always been an important part of my life, an important part of my hobby. And I met my soulmate, Marilyn, my wife, in when we were 16, and we were married, when we were 21. And we had three children, and I now have nine grandchildren. Sadly, I lost Marilyn in 2006 to cancer. But life was good with agricultural science, we had a lot of, lot of possibilities. And when I graduated in 1968, we decided to go to Papua New Guinea. So we spent 10 years in Papua New Guinea, in research and two of my children were born up there. And, but music was always part of my life. So even when someone gave me a guitar, when I was 13, I'd be playing in the coffee shops down the coast during the holidays. And then I always have a band, **I** had a band when I was at university, called the Sleepless Nights and toured with…taught a few mates to play guitar.

Peter: We used to play in all sorts of stuff. And up in New Guinea, I had a trio and I used to…what would happen with a band, you know, because I was self-taught, if they needed a bass player, I'd buy a bass guitar and play or they needed a keyboard player, I'd buy a piano. So I bought one of the first Roland EP 30s Back in the 1970s. And so I had a trio there and we used to fly all over the country playing different places in Papua New Guinea. And one of the great, great gigs I did up there was with my trio. We played alongside the Royal Australian Navy Band in 1976 for the Papua New Guinea Independence Ball. So it was very exciting. The fact that way back, I think back well. I was playing piano, and we're celebrating the independence of Papua New Guinea. So it was very exciting. Probably if I jump forward. So with my main career in agriculture then we decided we couldn't go back to Melbourne, it was too cold. So we moved to Queensland. And we settled. I was a research agronomist up in Papua New Guinea. And then we went to Kingaroy in the South Burnett where Marilyn fell in love with an old Queenslander house. Yeah, one of those places - holes in the wall and everything. But anyway, that was exciting and I worked there in advisory work. And I love working with farmers, my agriculture and with agriculture now it's still a great passion for me and looking after the environment and everything. And I just love that side of my life. And I had a duo **[**band] there. So we used to play country dances with a dance floor and everything.

Peter: And then I have a job offer for Brisbane after 12 years in Kingaroy, and moved to Brisbane to a job in management, statewide management. Sadly, I had no time for music. And also, when we moved the – had a big change in government, and so the branch I was working with was closed down. So I had to find a new job. And so I then put in for – I'd already, had already achieved two masters, masters degrees one in, in physical science, agronomy and the other in social science, working with farmers, so I had two master's degrees. So I thought oh, I got to do a PhD, we always used to say a bachelor of science is just bullshit, Master science is more shit. And a PhD was piled higher and deeper. So here, was me thinking I'll do a PhD and there was an opportunity to work with CSIRO, the University of Queensland, and my own department. But at that time, my sight was decreasing. I'd inherited my blindness from my mum, and in the families has night blindness and progressive loss of peripheral vision. So now I have a tiny bit left. Back in those days, I was losing my sight. So I couldn't really read properly. And, and going to a new, a new organisation in a very instead of different culture compared with the Department of Primary Industries, which was a very collaborative, very open, beautiful culture. Everyone was equal.

Peter: We listened to the farmers, we helped the farmers, we listened to the researchers, we everything. I found the university environment and CSIRO very competitive. And it didn't really fit in with how I thought about the world. And unfortunately, then trying and struggling to do my PhD while losing the sight and stuff. I had to have people read to me so I can understand what the topics are about. So I had a mental breakdown and yeah, ended up in New Farm clinic for a couple of months. And I'd been treated with depression leading up to that, and that wasn't working. And I went on this…so I have, I now have, I have, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, which I now live with comfortably, my blindness and my bipolar are a part of me and they will make me who I am. My bipolar is quite creative at times, but also realising at times, I need time for rest. And so that was, that was a big change in my life. There was no music, the music was a release from other parts of life. You know, I realise now it was important part of my life. When I moved to Brisbane, there was not that opportunity. I had to focus on management and that which I loved with that team, but then when, when it was all changed, I had to face up to something else. And I realised after that, that I was probably I was always trying to be good and excel at what I did. And I did really well with my agricultural work. But towards the end, I realised with the PhD, I was trying to live up to other people's expectations, not my own. So that was an important realisation. And so when I had the breakdown, I remember you know, parents flew up from Melbourne, they thought I was I was, I was off the planet for a while. And they thought he's gone. So, and I remember had now had all these because when you're in a psychotic state, the mind's going whoa. So I'm writing all this stuff and I'm getting Marilyn to sign for me. And I remember writing one thing which I said a rope, I'm looking for words to describe how I feel. And that's how I was at that time. I had nothing. So it took a couple of years for me to… and, but now, if I look at myself now. Take you there was 95, 96 now to 2021 so that some 26 years later

Peter: I'm, I'm very busy with my music. I write music. And I think this last month, I've had, you know, mainstream, very big gigs I performed to us at City Hall last month, Lord mayor senior gala a couple of weeks ago, performed twice at the Brisbane Jazz Club. And I love what I do. And I think back the changing point for me was when I came, when I, coming out of that breakdown, I dropped all that baggage that I had before. But it took me a couple of years to come to come to grips. And during that time, because I was finding it hard to speak and incoherent, I actually joined Toastmasters, the speaking group, so they helped me and from that, I wrote a story called, which was about celebrating my life because Cane became an important part of my life. So this story of “CANE ’n ABLE”, CANE enables the blind to do many things. So CANE, became my older brother, and I was ABLE because of Cane. And so that won a humorous speech award in Toastmasters. And then I took it to the La Boite Theatre’s so it was “Shock of the New Festival” then, and then it went to, we then took it to the High Beam Festival in Adelaide in the late 90s. So that was a very significant festival. It was a Disability Arts festival - was run by the equivalent of Access Arts Qld I think they call them Arts in Action, which is when you think about crazy the words arts, inaction, arts, in action, to not confuse with inaction. And that was in Adelaide. And so that was a big celebration for me, telling my story about how liberated I felt now that I had my cane, even though my brain was not quite there.

Peter: And I met up with Liz Navratil who is was the president of Access Arts Queensland, we had good conversations over a couple of glasses of wine on the plane coming back from Adelaide. And so then I joined Access Arts. That was a big changing point for me. Because then, as well as performing and singing other people's songs, I was invited to write, encouraged to write my own song. The first song I wrote was “Welcome to My Day,” which was based during – I think it was Access Arts, send out those little, little cameras, remember the disposable cameras to members across the state. And they would take photos of their typical day in their lives, not necessarily to do with their arts, but just the day in their lives. And this then became a collage, which was celebrated during disability – it used to be called Disability Awareness Week in the State Library in the foyer. So all these, these photos that they'd taken of their life – 11 of them replied – and it was called “Welcome To My Day” so that became the song that I was encouraged to write. And I wrote that with Ant McKenna, and the help of Neil Price, who was of Access Arts then and Liz Navratil. Neil was the CEO – that’s right. And then we took that Access Arts had been involved internationally with Asia Pacific, and we took that song to “Welcome to My Day” to the fifth Asia Pacific Wataboshi Music Festival in Nada, the ancient capital of Japan. So I was given that opportunity, I think it was 1998. So I sang before an, an audience, and we were the first Caucasian group to perform at this Asia Pacific Disability Arts festival. Basically, there was 12 countries from around who had, had artists with disability, who had written the music, song or dance or whatever, and that all was performed at this particular festival. So it was a really great, great experience. And as we…halfway through our song, the audience began to applaud. Very, very wildly. And at the end, they went crazy. We said to our manager, then, gee, we must have sung that really well.

Peter: And she said, “oh, you did but actually, the reason crowd went wild is they thought they thought you were Kenny Rogers.” And because back then my hair was a bit longer and beard a bit feral. So that was fun. So that was the writing experience. And I suppose since then that opportunity given to me by Access Arts has opened so many doors because I've, I've been writing music ever since. A lot of it when I was chair of disability - was Disability Awareness Week, then we changed the name to Disability Action Week - I was chair of that. And so I used to write the theme song each year. So one year it was Connecting Communities. And, and then probably, so that songwriting has really carried through and now living at Sandgate - I moved there 10 years ago, I've written all the festival songs for Sandgate. So we have the Blue Water Festival, which is the big celebration at the start of the Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht race, I write, written and performed that every year, got the a Einbunpin Festival, which is now I think in its 30th year or something. And then there’s Jingle all the Bay the Christmas festival. So it's just – helps me connect with community and celebrate with community. And I think that, to me is a big part of it. And part of, of the arts and how we work is that we not only perform and write, but we celebrate. And that's what I love doing. And probably one of the other key just finishing off on one of the key things to know about my writing is that in 2011, I performed, recorded my first album, which was called “The Truth”. And that has four original songs on it. But they were songs that I'd written.

Peter: And I combined with my young brother Andy, who's a professional jazz musician, and he wrote rewrote rearranged all the songs. So my stories were reinterpreted in a jazz format. And I also had my first singing lesson in 2008. So I could sing a bit better than I do now, maybe. And so this…the other exciting thing with this album, are was that all the funds from that because I had such joy with Access Arts all the funds from the album went to Access Arts to, to the SAFE Fund, which is a fund that we established in memory of my wife. But the other, other exciting thing from an arts point of view is that all the images on the album were created by Access Arts visual artists members of, of the Brisbane Outsider Artists group back then and they listened to the four original songs and all these artworks were created by Access Arts visual artists in a process, which was facilitated by Zane Trow. So not only was my music reinterpreted in a jazz format, but also reinterpreted visually, which to me was just very exciting. And this, this cover image by Terrence Stewart is called ‘The Jazz Club’ and that's now on the wall in the jazz club in Brisbane Jazz Club. And just thinking about significant moments. So that was 10 years ago, we launched that. Last month, I had another show, I had my show called “10 Years On” at the Brisbane Jazz Club, where we celebrated this. And I presented the big picture of this to the President. And then we also had a show working with another quintet. I worked with the Mark Pradella band. And so that was taking us into the future. But that's probably enough. I guess the other things that I, I do, I do now as well as performing mainstream, this is one of the things that keeps me really grounded is every so often I visit the Access Arts singers, because a lot of those people there‘s Julie and Julia and others that I've known for many years. We were with Access Arts when we had “Sound Circles” and other programs, which were, which were significant. And it's just lovely to catch up with with friends. And that's been really good. And unfortunately, it's interesting with my age.

Peter: I'm not, I'm not - right outside of NDIS. So a lot of the funding for, for people to attend, things like Access Arts and Access Arts had singers is now through NDIS. So I just can only I can go along, it was very complicated for me to attend Access Arts in a formal sense, in a paid sense, I'd have to go for an aged care package, which personally, I wasn't comfortable with, because I'm independent enough still, that I didn't want, didn't want the government sort of ruling my life. And so my now, my opportunity to visit Access Arts singers is just as a guest, and I can go, you know, a couple of times a term, but it's so nice to visit my friends and even another friend, another member there, David Goldsmith, I first met him at the Brotherhood of the Wordless in Sandgate for people who use Facilitated Communication. And to me, work, I wrote some music for them. And just listening to those stories. Yeah, people, people who can't speak, like I can, or you can, Racheal, it's just so wonderful to hear their stories and hear them tell their stories. And I suppose where I'm, I'm blessed is that music is the universal language. And Ed Ayres had there’s a recent book, he's from one of the presenters on ABC classic Eddie Ayres. And he's one of his quotes from his book was, “Music takes you to a world beyond words”. And so with the rhythm and the feeling and the joy, that's what I love doing is, is celebrating that and thanks to Access Arts and being given that, that, that great opportunity, and attend I still now celebrate that outside wherever. What did I miss?

Racheal: Reflecting on what you’ve been talking about. And I think that the time in your life had changed over time that you started with agriculture, and then you got motivated to get involved in music. And it seems to me that with Access Arts, and what has been happening in your life has motivates you to create music today?

Peter: Exactly. Racheal, the motivation is in the creation of the music. Yeah, the fact that before I was playing music, because it was a release, or change, a change, you know. I have, my love of my life is my family, to who always walk with me and being so close and supportive. Music is probably second and then travel, I love to travel, those all those things always, always there and foremost in my mind, but the opportunity to write music, and to tell my story in a way that, that that people might listen might engage. And you know, the, that Access Arts started me on that journey and so, I’m really thankful for that. A couple of things. We realised that not everyone can appreciate music the same way as I do. And so in 2003 Access Arts, actually through Ross Barber who was the CEO at that time, started a program called “Sound Circles”, which was based not on music but based, but on sound based. And, and and vibration based. And that, that program. It grew very rapidly over a number of years and we had facilitators all across the state and we'd run workshops so it's based on…

Peter: The room now is quiet there is no sound.

Racheal: Yes.

Peter: That is beautiful. Yes beautiful. I can hear an echo of the Air Con.

Racheal: Yeah, the Air Con is on.

Peter: And so what “Sound Circles” would do would be either relate to that, that sound you can hear so or if it was too noisy, you'd match that sound and bring it down to, to your level. So create space you're always working wherever, chair or whatever. And this was this was a fantastic thing and it was so engaging within the workshop process, we would have just start off with with an idea, but always ending in a performance. So it wasn't that you're working on performance in three month’s time, there's always a celebration at the end. And we, we actually developed a toolkit. And that was I presented a paper at the World Music Therapy congress here in Brisbane, I think it was 2004 2005. And then in 2005, we went to World Expo, and we had a month there, with our partners from Japan celebrating this concept that, that it was, to me it was more than music, it was just engaging people. Very hard to describe unless you are actually in it that. So that was a changing moment for me.

Peter: And also, the important point with that was that my wife Marilyn was in fairly advanced cancer treatment. And she was given the opportunity to travel with us we were a party of 12. And she was a great visual artist. And she travelled with us, as the photographer. And so for that, that was the first time that my wife and I had actually done our artwork together because she was the visual artist going off painting, not really wanting to perform, someone else put them up. And whereas I was always performing, but this is this great opportunity that Access Arts gave us. And from that we established the…from her her estate, we established the Safe Fund, which now - because she was a teacher provides opportunities for, for artists to grow. The other interesting thing that I'm now involved in for the last 15 years in, in the seniors in Brisbane, have It’s a wonderful concept. It involving a series of masterclasses, showcases, and then big concert. And it's about adult education and seniors, people a bit younger than me and older who can explore their performance creative art potential. And one of the really important things to me is you always think I can never learn anymore. I'm, I've had it up to here. One of the mentors, they have taught top class mentors was Rhonda Burchmore, who's the actor who's been in movies and she's very tall woman. Anyway, she was my mentor and for the masterclass, you have 15 minutes with a mentor. And she said to me, “Peter, I don't know if you realise, but when you’re singing on stage, your eyes are closed. And I understand, you know, that probably doesn't matter to you. But actually, for the audience, to have your eyes open is one way of that they connect with you.” And I hadn't realised that over the years as my sight was decreasing. I just, you know, I just hadn’t worried, the audience is somewhere there, just put the mic in front of me, so I know where to face so that I know where the audience is. Anyway, she said to me it’d be really lovely if you could just open your eyes because I know you're visually impaired but have you - and I've done that ever since. And that was just a few years ago.

Peter: And to think that, to me and every year I learned, you know, when I attend the master classes and then perform, you always learn so much more. And I think the other thing, talking about the Access Arts singers and the joy of just going and being with the group. I do a little bit of work at retirement villages. And the other day I was singing, singing the beautiful Hoagy Carmichael song “Georgia”, which is now the Ray Charles did a lovely version of that. And I started off “Georgia, Georgia the whole day through … Ta da ta da.”

Peter: Anyway, the crowd were quite quiet and that but then when I came back to singing, “Georgia”, this woman in the back right the back of the room called “Georgia, Georgia” and the people in the front said “oh quiet quiet” and I just, I realised that this this might have been the first word that this woman had said all day, all week, I don't know, but she could relate because she heard this song that she could relate to. And to me that was so special, you know, you can. It's, their moments. And of course, then we told the people in the front row, “let her go, let her go” and she just sang and it was just so beautiful. So I think that sort of connecting with the audience and that sort of thing and things I've learned are so important. And just walking, you know, walking with your audience, being with your audience and connecting, it's so important and in that way, in part, we can show that there are no limits to what we do. And that's how, you know that's, that's, that's probably how I go, go about things.

Peter: The other, other probably significant thing in my life…So the ABC studio was very close. And in the probably 2004, 2005, they had “Songs of the Suburbs”. So I would write you know, I‘d submit a song – this is for the Breakfast Show. And the, the roving reporter Paul Boddington. If your song was chosen to be played, he’d come around for an early morning, cuppa coffee, and they'd switch to the radio and then have a live broadcast. And so that happened quite quite often. For me. I got to know Paul really well, he was a lovely guy. Unfortunately, he committed suicide in 2005, 2006 – was very sad loss because he was just just so precious, but I took him one day to the Brotherhood of the Wordless down in Sandgate, the people who used to facilitated communication, and he was, we'd written a song – we thought the song’s important, but he couldn't believe how these fit the stories these people were telling. And instead of, instead of being a – the song being played, they switched over to the, to the main announcer and the whole – Paul was just going around interviewing the various participants and their progress and stuff and it was very exciting. And so my connection and listening to the ABC has been good and, and one time I was listening to the Breakfast Show and they're interviewing – Spencer Howson was interviewing a woman with dwarfism, Marie and this was back, it probably early, probably, almost 20 years ago. And there was a woman in Melbourne who'd pregnant, who decided to abort her daughter dwarf foetus, I think foetus at 20 weeks and Marie said to, to the presenter, “I would have – while I feel empathy with the woman in Melbourne, I would have loved to have the opportunity to adopted that dwarf foetus and dwarf baby.” And she said to Spencer, “I may be physically small, but my heart, my mind and my spirit are as big as anyone's to me.”

Peter: Marie said “I'm handmade. You're just another one off the rack”. So this got me thinking about my blindness inherited and my bipolar, which can be inherited. I'm thinking, well, knowing what we know now about genetics and inheritance, my parents might have decided back then we're not going to have this guy, and I might not be here. So this got me thinking and this song came out of that called the “Rack of Life”. And that's on the album and it talks about my, my journey, my challenges, my, but always positive. Because Marie was… I met her and she was such a positive person. We you know, it was just lovely being with her and she said yeah, and anyway, the songs on the album and it'll be on my new album, which was recorded, as I said 10 years on. So I guess you know, you pick up on different points and different stories from other people, which then really help you reflect on your life and your situation, you're thinking, well, it might have been different. But hey, I'm here. Let's celebrate, let's be on the “Rack of life”, see what it's like. And that's what the song is about. It's very positive. Because we continue to learn and grow together, you know, it’s a celebration. And so I guess that's – and that song was on the album, and now being reworked. So there’s little stories that you pick up on the way and they influence your writing, and your music and how you celebrate life, not on your own, never on your own, or with other people like being here with you today, Racheal celebrating.

Racheal: I completely agree. I notice you were pointing out a festival in Adelaide and you attended the Undercover Artist Festival, in the last 20 years or so how much has Disability Arts have changed in the last 20 years and is it better today than many years ago or do we still have a lot of work to do?

Peter: I think me personally. Yeah, there's always work to do. Things can always always get get better, the knowing more inclusive. For me, I think, I think the realisation that there probably is are no limits to what we can do. And I think I always think about the Paralympic movement, and how that is celebrated and how that's now you know, and I was just thinking, if we sort of had the forces and the energy and the money behind Disability Arts like we have behind the Paralympic movement, but I guess it's coming. You think of Tony Dee who did the, for the London Paralympics the big, you know, the big promo and stuff. I mean, that was amazing. But so, what's different? It's, I’m probably…it's different in that the organisational structure, has sort of changed quite a bit. That makes it different. And that can be positive or negative. For me, I'm very fortunate to be a life member of Access Arts. I'm also a life member of the Brisbane Jazz Club. And life membership of Access Arts, I don't think is no longer available. Because, because of the pressures of NDIS, and management and survival of the company, in very difficult financial times, when the federal government funding could only come through NDIS. That was, I understand not, not possible for a small organisation to manage let alone survive.

Peter: So they're now a limited organisation under, under the wonderful, support of Choice Passion Life (CPL), but that brings about changes. And so but that's, that's how that's how life is. So things are a little bit more corporatised. And whereas compared with my journey way back, I could drop into Access Arts, anytime the doors open, I volunteered there, that's how I learned a lot of my craft, I got a lot of opportunities. I don't see that as much now. But what that the difference then is in the more corporatised thing, like Undercover Artist Festival was part of Brisbane festival. So that's good, good for publicity, good for money, good for people progressing, but it's different. And I'm not saying that's good or bad. I just like to see – I suppose me being able to drop in and catch up with friends I've known for 15 years at Access Arts who were members back then, you know, we're no longer members. We go to workshops, and then we improve, improve. We had this social interaction through workshops, some people move on and get funding and then.

Peter: But then you have other groups come out of it like you think of it Indelible - Indelability Arts, which I know a few of my old friends like Karen Roberts is very involved with. And she's doing she's just going, you know, so well. And so I guess funding is always always an issue, I guess it will always be in the priorities for funding and how the funding is channelled. You know, there are always, always challenges. I think, the way…unfortunately, I was, I was on the steering committee for Undercover Arts Festival, this last two years, but then I didn't actually end up attending, I had other things on and it wasn't convenient. So I certainly attended the previous one. And that was, that was brilliant. And I think that has great scope for for all, all levels and It's really important I suppose I, I think they would I think and I think being mainstream – more mainstream like the thing I was saying it enables other people to come from outside from the wider community and get pretty excited about this stuff and support it and come in and just show that there's, there's no limits.

Peter: I suppose it's it's an interesting journey and one of the challenges.

Racheal: [inaudible]

Peter: Sorry?

Racheal: No keep going.

Peter: Yeah, I think - see for me I guess in my, my journey and what I've tried to come to grips with in recent times is, is to have to tell my bipolar story.

Racheal: Yes.

Peter: My blindness story is very visible and this opens doors [indicates cane]. I get, you know, I tell you on the train station at the start of COVID because there was no one else there I had five staff coming on – "can I help you on" you know some of them had done training [in disability awareness] some of them not. At the airports when we travel overseas – through with the crew, you know, it's just – this is a magic wand [indicates cane]. Honestly, this [indicates vision impaired person - VIP badge]. I wore this for a year before I bought this [indicates cane]. This was the hardest thing for me to put on [indicates VIP badge] because I was in denial. This was back in '95. I got this [VIP badge] and I used to throw it up against the wall. I'm not going blind. I'm not. But now when I…it took me three months to wear it and then I decided "well look, just put it on wear it, it's part of you". People say "why don't you have the new one?", you know, "'I have low vision' or da da da, why have you got VIP?" because this is what I had, this was my, this was me. This was me, this is my start. This is my journey. And they say “why do you have this [indicates VIP badge] when you got this?” [indicates cane] “why do you have this?” I said “well when I go to a counter - they can't see this” [indicates cane]. They say “can you sign?”, “can I help?” whatever. So you know it's an interesting journey. I don't have the same thing with my bipolar. I don’t have “I’m having a bad day” you know if I’m a bit crazy people say “oh you are a bit full of life today. Look out!”

Peter: You know, it's…so that that's a real, real challenge. And I think that's being embraced – there’s certainly a lot of awareness, a lot more scope. And I think the arts is just a great way of telling those stories of being able to you know, all the other, I'm very lucky that I've had good family support, good specialist support – I’ve been very fortunate. And I know, I have a daughter who works, and a daughter and son in law who are both in mental health working there. And the revolving door where there's not place for people, not sufficient beds you know, I had all that I'm so lucky. And I, you know, you want to do everything you can to help help others. And so I think there's a great opportunity for, for festivals, and that to tell the stories, to tell it clearly, but in an engaging way, and people either, you know, they laugh, or they cry, the either end of it. So, I'm actually working on – the story I'm working on is called my new bio. So instead of bipolar dis-order, it's bipolar in-order. And so it's how can how can we make the bipolar more visible, so people understand. And so that's something I’m working on. I know, Karen Roberts does great stuff. Other people do great stuff, and you got a, you got to challenge people. And I think the arts is a great place for that. Whether the, I think, as far as having more, more festivals, and then I think there was big debate, when High Beam started, there – would it be Disability Arts would be would would, would the two words be together? Or would it be an “artist experiencing disability” or just with artists, you know, and I think.

Racheal: It's been a debate, whether it should be “Disability Arts”, or is it “artists with disability”, because a lot of artists who are, have a disability or Deaf prefer to identify as artists – that the same for you?

Peter: Both the opportunity – when the opportunity arrives, I, my cane comes out wild and proud. One of my favourite things, if you look at some of my video clips on YouTube, and that is, when, you know, my cane spins, spins above my head, in celebration, you know, this like that [indicates cane spinning above head]. So you know, when I'm, when I'm doing a show, sometimes Cane doesn't appear. But if I'm performing, it's usually hooked on the mic stand. And when the band are going wild, then I'll do, and the cane will go like this. And people say, “oh,” and then the guide dogs who trained me and see me using the cane like this they saying, “how good is your insurance Pete? What if this thing goes off?” But so to me, it's, it's both. It's both – it informs what I do like, like, my bipolar is now informing my new show. It can't be separate. Because it's me. It's how I am. And, you know, for me, the one thing, the way I say to people is with bipolar, you can have three unrelated, very positive experiences. And unless they are addressed or celebrated, then it can escalate and go out of control. Or you can have three very negative unrelated experiences unless corrected, you can go into a deep hole. And that can happen very quickly like that. But learning to understand that, when I'm slightly down, I call it timeout within, it's telling me I need to have a rest. So I have a rest and when the excitement's on, look out for me at, but not for too long.

So, and I think so, for me, particularly for with my cane, occasionally, you know, that's part of what I do. But for me with the bipolar, that's going to inform and my art and the creativity that bipolar gives me in the slightly elevated mood is really, it's when words come you know, you wake up at four in the morning, and you've written the story. It’s um, but always time for the rest – having a green room.

Racheal: Before we wrap up, do you want to add anything else, or make a comment?

Peter: Yeah, in relation to, you know looking at the history of it…

Racheal: Yeah in relation to Disability Arts, history of your career?

Peter: I think, I think I've probably, I think there's probably enough in the bits and pieces in the story. Unfortunately, when I'm in an interview situation, I tend to go a bit unchecked. So I think but I'm sure within the story, there will be key things. And I think the other important thing is for working with myself now, as I'm aging, I know, things take time. And no matter – you know, when I've been working in, in, in aged care, retirement villages, when they bought in a lot more, there was a lot more paperwork. And the diversional therapist had no time to be with the guests – to be with the residents. And they were very frustrated, the more and more pressure that government puts on for us to be accountable can often require more and more paperwork, less and less time to be given to those who we are really trying to serve. And to me, I guess, I’ve learnt this with COVID a little bit, because we've had a little bit more time to think sit back and think that I know, for me now with my increasing age and, and less sight, things take a lot longer, and you need to allow time. So for people with disability, you know, for them, to find the spark that's gonna set them on, that could take time, don't give up, please allow space, and time and resources to make that happen. I've seen one classic. When we're doing “Sound Circles”, there was this, this guy, a great guy, he used to come in a wheelchair. And he was, he was fed, he had to be fed, he couldn't feed himself. But he was just such a delightful participant. Several years later, I met the same guy on the City Cat walking, I couldn't believe it.

Peter: And I knew his parents and spoke to them about it. And one of the issues there was that the support was based on the carers’ time frame. So if they had to be there, they could only have two hours. So they have to do all that and whatever. So he was denied, you know, and the wheelchair was a way of keeping control of him and whatever. But he was, later he became a great he was a good visual artist and had exhibitions and things. So sort of given the need to work out what, what is required, I guess that's where NDIS is, is helping to do that, but there's still some, some issues of, of having adequate resources, adequate time and the right sort of care and support. But to me, good things take time and Disability Arts and that it's great. But also realise that while we talk a lot about inclusion for a moment, you

Racheal or me need to be very exclusive in our training in our discipline, and we might be narrowly focused on our own thing, learning something new. That's exclusive. That's for me, but then to share that in a broader environment and the wider – makes it very inclusive and very good luck for Disability Arts, you're here to stay and you will grow stronger every day. No limits.

Racheal: Thank you Peter for your time.

Peter: Pleasure, Racheal, lovely to talk with you. Bye.

Racheal: Bye.

Peter: Bye.