

Video transcript: Ryan's Story [Co-design Group Member]

Ryan:

Hi, I'm Ryan Honshin. I'm around 52 years of age so I do play a lot of blind cricket. I play blind soccer and blind tennis and in the past have been known to dabble in blind sailing.

I've been blind since birth. I had retinoblastoma so they had to remove both my eyes, but it didn't faze me and here I am.

I think what I enjoy the most about sport is getting out of the house, getting involved in something, forgetting about life for however long it is. You're on the Oval, on the court, you're concentrating on what you're doing there and then and you can forget about all the other hassles in life.

Being part of a Sports Club. It's about belonging to a group, it's about belonging to a social network. It's about being able to turn up and, you know, say g'day to people in the club or they come up and say g'day to you.

You talk about the common interest, I guess, which is that sport or you can just offload about your week or they might offload about their week.

But it's just about that social connection, good for your mental health. It's just it's a community that you can belong to.

Sport in general, for me as a vision impaired person, I've had some pretty good dealings with my sports and I guess that's because I've mainly stayed around other blind and vision impaired people or the community and joined in with their sporting clubs that already exist.

A couple of times I have tried to venture out and go to general everyday sporting club and it can be pretty daunting at first when you get there, that's for sure.

You know, I remember going to one particular club and there was no one to meet and greet.

And what I didn't realise it was there was a lot of construction going on.

So when I turned up, not only did I get dropped off in the wrong place, I had no idea about the construction, didn't realise there was actually two or three club rooms in this area, so the three different buildings, and had no idea that these guys actually weren't meeting at the club, they were meeting out in the middle of the Oval.

So by the time I was told and found out it was down on the Oval and where there was squads of lots of people training in their own little groups and that. And then I'm sort of standing thinking, well, how do I know which squad's mine? Where do I need to go?

And it was only because, I guess, asked a lot of questions of people or someone did actually spot me and come over and help.

And by the time I got there, I was that exhausted through just through trying to get there that really taking part in the sport wasn't high on my list anymore.

Sometimes sports clubs don't have to actually change much at all or do much at all.

They, they can operate within the normal parameters, but just make a few slight changes to the way they run their programmes.

The most important thing is to come and talk, come and ask, come and communicate with us and work out what is going to be the best fit because disability is a huge area.

There's, there's lots of different disabilities. I mean, what you might put in place for, say, someone who's hard of hearing, or someone is vision impaired or someone is with an intellectual disability or someone in a wheelchair, you can't put that across the whole sector.

You've got to adjust depending on what need you're looking out for. It's so easy for a club to tick the inclusion box and say yes, we've got a team of people who are different, but it's so easy also at the same time for that club to just hide those people away.

They don't train on the same day as everyone else. They're not really included in the social side of the club. They're hidden way up the back end of the Oval and probably have to walk the furthest or whatever like that to get to the game, you know.

And that, to me, is not inclusion, you know, that's just ticking a box just to make yourself look good. You know, if you're going to tick that inclusion box, be inclusive.

Train on the same day as everybody else, mingle in the club with everybody else.

If the club has a regular, you know, meal on a Friday night where all the club members come, encourage that group to come as well and be part of it and, and just mingle in with

everyone else. Because a lot of the times those people will end up making other friends within the club and social connections within the club.

And that just helps grow the community and educate the community on what people can achieve and what they can do. Breaks down those stereotypes, breaks down as many barriers. Don't try and reinvent the wheel yourself.

Reach out to programmes that have already been written, produced, made, do your research and find out what you can do.

It's easy to say, Oh no, we can't do this, but it's just as easy to go find out the information and then bring that into your club and then include that person into your club and you'd be surprised what that person's going to bring to the club.

The attitude, the change, a different dynamic and it's going to be fun and it's going to be a great adventure.