# Day 3 Transcript: Simon Darcy and Tracey Dickson

**Alison Whiting:** Our next speakers are Simon Darcy and Tracey Dixon. Simon is a professor professor of Social Inclusion in the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. Over his career, he has researched, contributed policy development and advocated for improved access and inclusion in the natural environment. Tracey is an Associate Professor of Event and Tourism Management at the University of Canberra in Australia whose research has focused on minimizing the physical risk of being outdoors while maximizing the health and well-being of benefits. Simon is presenting first through a pre-recorded talk and then we'll welcome Tracey. Welcome Simon and Tracey.

**Simon Darcy:** Hi, my name's Simon Darcy. I'm a Professor of Social Inclusion at the UTS Business School, University of Technology, Sydney and am the co-investigator with Tracey Dixon who's doing the main presentation.

I've got ninety seconds. The Australian context around environmental planning and natural areas is one that goes back to our Australian constitution where the environment really wasn't thought about much at the beginning of the beginning of the 20th century. So the the whole constitution in itself leaves the environment out. So the environment in Australia is dealt with largely under state which is similar to your provinces and hence can be a little different moving from state to state. However, we have had a Disability Discrimination Act since 1992 and I congratulate the Canadian government on moving forward on this very important area in Canada.

In Australia, we sorry under the Disability Discrimination Act and the New South Wales implementation of it, I was part of the Disability Council of New South Wales, when we brought in what was called the Inclusion Act 2014 and this placed on the agenda the importance of disability inclusion action plans by all levels of government. And and the way that they are implemented it took it from being left out omitted or othered by various groups to making it a required inclusion that had to go beyond just being a compliance base. Hence, best practice in this space and we believe we're part of that best practice is developing co-design processes so that there is true and authentic consultation that sometimes brings with it an uncomfortable truth for the organizations involved. I would suggest that most natural resource based parks organizations have a classroom cultures between resource management and a new developing culture around social sciences and the engagement of all stakeholder groups that are involved.

So this is why it's important it's on the agenda and it's far more, it's far more important now to make sure that any investment in this area is appropriate, effective, and efficient from a public policy perspective. I will now hand over to Tracey Dixon to present the rest of the story from a theoretical and an empirical perspective. Thank you.

I do note that I forgot to say why the background photo was so important. These are beach environments. This beach environment while in the metropolitan area of Sydney, extends into a marine reserve and that marine reserve is used by an organization called the Sargood Foundation for undertaking a variety of engagements by people with high level disability and spinal cord injuries, similar to myself, who I didn't identify as a person with a disability in the earlier part of the recording. So this space and place are being tested for the boundaries of what had been considered activities appropriate for people with high-level disabilities. So within this precinct, we are seeing everything from getting back into the ocean pool, to doing snorkeling, and scuba diving licenses, through to the ultimate engagement in the water of getting people back, surfing in the adaptive surfing movement. Thank you again.

**Tracey Dickson:** Thank you for the opportunity to present on this policy development that Simon and I were involved in. You'll note that Simon can't work out what ninety seconds is.

As we start, Sam and I wish to acknowledge the Maraura, Ngarigo and the Gadigal people who are the traditional custodians of the land upon which we live and upon whose shoulders we stand and to all First Nations of the lands of those who are listening to this presentation. We acknowledge their and your continuing connection to land, skies and water and we pay our respects to elders past present and emerging. Next slides please.

Building upon Simon's comment comments, federally in Australia, the Disability Action Plans have been required since 1992, while in the state that we live in, New South Wales, public authorities have been required to have a Disability Inclusion Action Plan since 2015. Next slide please. And next slide.

We will see, I was a member and Chair of the New South Wale's Minister's Advisory Council for one public authority. In 2017, we're asked to provide some input as they began to develop their disability in an inclusion action plan. As the presentation started, it was clear that the work had been that we had done years ago on the Alpine Accessible Tourism Project in partnership with Disabled Winter Sport Australia, nearly a decade earlier may be of help and so it was. This aim of the Alpine Accessible Tourism Project was to develop summer accessible tourism opportunities in and around Australian alpine areas. Yes we do have some, that leverage off the good work done by DWA in partnership with the resorts for nearly three decades. Next slide please.

During my six years on council, I kept prompting about accessibility in all protected area plans and Lucy will be pleased to know that included toilets. In March 2021, I was approached about a consultation process on a draft accessibility policy. With Simon, we devised a great two-day residential conference at Sargood. Only COVID wanted to be invited too and so we moved to online. While it was incredibly challenging for all, just as the is happening here, it also had benefits. Next slide please.

In consultation with the staff, we defined four key objectives for the workshops: inform policy, develop relationships, build internal capacity, and consider how to keep the conversation going. Next slide please. Representation was invited from across five dimensions of access, from advocacy groups, disability service providers, disability activity groups, access consultants, and carer groups. Sam and I were very clear that it was essential for the internal stakeholders to be listeners and to avoid trying to defend what may have occurred before. Next slide thanks.

The guiding principles for the workshop were evidence-based, solution focused, and co-creation. It was no good if all we did was to tell the organization what was wrong, if we weren't able to provide evidence-based solutions and over the last couple of days there have been many comments made around the solutions. To help everyone have a similar theoretical understanding, we briefly presented five key theories or concepts that I'll touch on now. Next slide please.

The first was the socio-ecological framework. It's a reminder of the different layers where change may need to occur and or where change has already occurred that may leverage more change. So at the macro level you've got the society as a whole, the political economy the social, the technological. The meso is the parts of society. So community groups, organizations, and then the macro in the middle is the actions of individuals, including support network for people with disabilities such as adaptive sports organizations. Next slide please.

The second model we drew upon was from Pine and Gilmore's 1999 Harvard business review article on the experience economy and we've heard various comments over the last couple of days about the visitors experience. They suggested we have moved from a commodities economy to goods then services and now an experience economy. In 2012, Simon and I had taken their model and added dimension of access that related to how independent the traveler may be resulting in three continuums of active versus passive absorption, to immersion and independence, to dependence and the question is who visits national parks and why and there have been again various comments about why people visit national parks. Next slide please.

We drew upon Simon and Buharlis's conceptualization of accessible tourism, particularly independence equity and dignity. We also drew upon work by Simon and I around the idea of the whole of life participation and all those groups that would benefit from accessibility and that was touched on in the panel just previously where you know looking at people from you know birth to senior citizenship. We noted the difference between accessibility and inclusion that acknowledge that the latter would need to be addressed later on. So the focus of the workshops was purely on accessibility not on inclusion that was to be a later activity. Next slide please.

The fourth, related to the matrix with five dimensions - mobility, vision, learning, cognitive, and mental health and five senses - hearing, smell, taste, touch, and vision. This highlights the complexity of the lived and embodied experiences of people with access needs that remembering that many may have hidden access needs. With infinite combinations, it is difficult to have specific products services or experiences that would meet all these needs and again over the last few days we've heard about the importance of information so people can make a decision upon their own needs. Next slide please.

Another idea was around the travel change, travel chain and service touch points and it asks you to consider who is the person traveling and then how is accessibility addressed across their journey. Such as, why are they traveling, their planning process, how easy it is to book their travel, how they travel to the destination, their multi-sensory experiences at the destination. At each stage of the chain, there is a service touch point and probably many partners in providing their journey and we encourage them to think about who their partners were along the way both on and off park. Next slide please.

After the first workshop, participants were tasked with consulting with their own stakeholders about the good, the bad, and the ugly experiences of accessing protected areas. Simon and I coded them into themes. What was interesting was that the stakeholders identified gaps across the whole of the travel chain including societal attitudes, suitable pre-travel information, quality accessible experiences, trail designs, trailhead access, and the unintended consequences from repair, maintenance, and redevelopment. It was particularly important in this process for internal stakeholders to sit and listen and not to defend. Next slide please.

Next we move from problems to possible solutions. These solutions provided by our participants to overcome their barriers they had previously identified may be summarized under two categories - providing accurate information and consultation. Another way of putting it is effective two-way communication. Next slide please. In the final workshop, we return to the focus back to the policy development and implementation. This including showing this temporal extension of the socio ecological framework or the TESSA. Basically, what we're suggesting is to think of when and how change occurs across each layer of the social ecological framework when you're planning for change. From the intra and interpersonal organizational, community, and public policy, effective change doesn't always happen at once, it's staggered and often messy. Next slide please.

As you will be aware, there are many terms that may be used in the accessibility and disability space, some of which move in and out of fashion. Rather than telling them specific definitions, we generated a list that needed to be defined for this organization, for this policy, at this time. This list may change in the future. Next slide please.

Then in terms of embedding accessibility into the organizational policies, processes, and culture, we suggest that accessibility should not be siloed off into some department or organizational unit. It should be everyone's responsibility. Accessibility should be business as usual for all. Next slide please.

The final aspect was to provide some steps for moving forward. A policy is only good as its implementation. As Simon reminded us at the beginning, policy needs to be appropriate, effective, and efficient. We don't want to be constrained by the limits of the experience and imaginations of those writing policies. We want to provide the best information so that all can achieve our own dreams and reap the benefits of being in our protected and natural areas. Then for those people here who lead small micro charitable and not for profits, I would encourage you to have a succession plan so that your vision continues beyond your involvement and leadership. Thank you.

**Alison Whiting:** Thank you Tracey. That was fantastic to hear about the research happening in Australia at the moment. Unfortunately, I don't think we have time for questions but we'll gather up the questions that we did get and we'll send them over to you and Simon to respond to later.

**Tracey Dickson:** That'll be wonderful, thank you.

**Alison Whiting:** Thank you so much.