# Dreaming of Streaming webinar transcript

# 29 July 2015

Cassandra Strakosch: OK, well, welcome, everyone to the Vision Australia’s Dreaming of Streaming webinar. My name is Cassandra, and I will be hosting the webinar tonight. Tonight in Dreaming of Streaming, we’ll be talking about video on demand streaming. Now, for those of us who are quite new to streaming, it’s actually what you’re doing right now, which is watching or listening to content over the internet. Tonight we’re focussing just on video on demand streaming, which is where you can watch catch-up TV, movies or other videos when you want, online.

So joining me here at the Vision Australia Sydney office tonight to talk about access to video on demand services are our three wonderful panellists. So first we have Alex Varley, CEO of Media Access Australia.

Alex Varley: Good evening, Cassandra.

Cassandra Strakosch: We also have Paul Paradigm, adaptive technology consultant here at Vision Australia.

Paul Paradigm: Hi, Cass.

And Scott Erichsen, adaptive technology trainer here Vision Australia.

Scott Erichsen: Hi.

Cassandra Strakosch: So welcome to you all and thanks for being here tonight.

Tonight we’re streaming live from Sydney and we want you to participate by asking questions live. Now, there are two ways that you can ask questions tonight for our panellists. The first one is by sending an SMS. And you can send that text message to 0438 792 407. So that’s 0438 792 407. The second way you can ask a question is by email. Now, you can email us at webinar@visionaustralia.org. Now, that’s the same email address where we sent you all the previous information about the webinar. So if in doubt, you can just hit ‘reply’ and we’ll be getting that information.

Now, please include your question and your name in the message. We’ll try to get to as many questions as possible tonight. And we’ll be reading out the questions and the first names of those who submitted them, so hopefully you will know if it’s your question we’re answering. So once again that is SMS 0438 792 407 or email webinar@visionaustralia.org.

We will also be providing a transcript of tonight’s webinar after the session, so if you missed something in the moment, don’t worry, you’ll be able to catch up a bit later on exactly what was said. So now let’s get started Dreaming of Streaming.

So, tonight we’re really lucky to be joined by Alex Varley. Alex, you’ve had lots of experience in the international sector working on access to media for people with disabilities. Can you tell us what’s happening around the world at the moment in relation to video on demand and access to these services?

Alex Varley: Yeah, sure, Cass. So I think the thing that’s interesting about happening in other places is that, not surprisingly, the places that are most advanced in terms of video on demand services with audio description are the ones that actually have audio description on television, which of course we don’t have in Australia yet. And of course the two countries that most come to mind on that are the USA and the UK, and they are the ones that have probably the most advanced services.

So in the UK, for example, you’ve got the BBC, which is like the ABC here, and that has almost three-quarters of its programs that it shows on TV are then available on the video demand on service with audio description. So that’s a reasonably good transition. And then on the Sky Channels, which is a bit like Foxtel here, they’ve got fairly mixed levels - so nowhere near the same levels as the BBC but growing numbers of services. And of course the one that a lot of people would have heard of which is Netflix, which has really been the pioneer in those sort of more independent services that are not related to a TV service.

The US is a little less developed. So there’s sort of patches of audio description appearing on video on demand. And that’s partially because they’ve got a thing called the 21st Century Video Accessibility Act which is pushing along access. And of course Netflix is an American company and that’s really where it all started.

Once you get beyond that, it’s really patchy stuff.

And, surprisingly, New Zealand, which a lot of the people watching the webinar tonight will know has an audio description service on TV, the only audio description service they have otherwise is on Netflix, and that’s because Netflix does that everywhere.

Cassandra Strakosch: So what about here in Australia? What’s happening here in terms of video on demand services?

Alex Varley: Yeah, so Australia, of course, is a little behind in many ways. Of course, the biggest thing we’re behind on is we don’t have a TV service yet. But somewhat surprising, I suppose, for some people, the ABC offers an audio description service on its iView platform, which is the video on demand one. And I think we’ll probably talk a little bit more about that later in terms of which versions of iView it actually works on and that kind of thing. And then, of course, when Netflix launched here a few months ago, somewhat surprisingly for us, but pleasantly surprisingly, they actually announced audio description a couple of days after they launched. And that’s just a reflection that they’re doing that everywhere around the world. And that service seems to be growing. But otherwise, the only other stuff we’ve really seen in Australia is the odd YouTube clip, some, you know, corporate information, government information that’s out there. But very early days for us, I’m afraid.

Cassandra Strakosch: So in your opinion then, Alex, how do you think developments in the international scene will impact what’s happening here in Australia?

Alex Varley: Okay, I think something that’s really important for people to understand is that these services are actually international and that the people that provide them think internationally. What I mean by that is, so, unlike a standard TV service that you might watch here, like a Nine, Ten, SBS, Seven or ABC, things like Netflix, they just say, “Okay, we’ve got got loads of different territories, different parts of the world and probably the only thing that really divides them is language and whether we’re there yet or not. And so when you see something like audio description happening on one of those services, it’s very easy for them to quickly translate that to other places.

And if I just use Netflix as an example, Netflix originally wasn’t planning to have audio description. And for people who have watched it, there’s a really good show called ‘Daredevil’ on there which features a blind superhero. And in America there was some litigation that was going on where people were suing them because they hadn’t audio described that show, saying “It’s got a blind superhero, it’s gotta be audio described.” And so they decided to put that on. And literally days later it appeared on all the other territories where they’re operating. So here in Australia and New Zealand we got audio description straightaway. And that’s what tends to happen. So things that are happening in other places will filter through to Australia.

And the good thing about video on demand services is that they’re all using the same basic technology so you don’t have, you know different kinds of platforms, you don’t have different television systems that make it difficult for them to not show it in other places. So what you’re watching in America, same system here, same system in Europe, same system in Asia. So I think the exciting thing is we’re starting to see these services come through and that will translate into Australia, and what we can do is try and speed that process up a little.

Cassandra Strakosch: Fantastic. Thanks, Alex.

And, Paul, we’ve heard from Alex that there are in Australia then just a few video on demand services offering that audio description. Now, audio description - just in case people haven’t heard of it before - is the narration of the visual elements of the video in between the dialogue so you can hear what’s happening in the action of the film as well. So, Paul, of those ones that we do have here, so Netflix and ABC iView, can you explain to us how we go about locating those programs that do have that audio description? How do you find them on ABC iView?

Paul Paradigm: Okay so ABC iView is primarily available on the iPhone, the iOS platform. It is available on other platforms. To my knowledge at this time the audio description and accessibility is best on the iOS devices like the iPhone, the iPad, iPod Touch.

To locate the audio described content, it’s just a matter of going to the A-Z program listing, which is off the main menu of that application, and then selecting that option. It will then come up with a list of programs In an A-Z listing. And there's a little subcategory or button at the top of that list which is called 'Audio Description'. If you just press that, or double tap if you're a screen reader user on a iOS device, it will then only show you a listing of the programs that are audio described.

Cassandra Strakosch: Thanks, Paul.

And, Scott, how about Netflix? How do you find the audio described content there? Is there a lot on there?

Scott Erichsen: Yeah, there is quite a bit actually. You can actually log in... After you have logged into the Netflix website - and bear in mind you have to do this using a PC or a Mac, the Netflix IOS app or the Apple TV, they won't actually show this - but when you log in to the site, there is a listing of audio described content. And it shows all the things. Strangely, if you are using a PC and you click on the any of the shows, you won’t be able to play them. You have to use your iPhone or your Apple TV or even the Mac to play them, but on the PC it's not accessible. But at least you can see that list.

Cassandra Strakosch: And how have you found watching programs that are audio described on Netflix?

Scott Erichsen: It's fascinating because you get all the information that you would have missed out on when you’re watching some of these movies. I mean, you know, sometimes you can watch movies with friends and if you're lucky you have a friend who describes it really well. Others like to watch the movie and don't wanna always tell you what’s going on.

But I think, you know, having audio description just in general has made a huge difference to, certainly, the way I consume content. And, yeah, it makes you just want to watch more because you really…particularly if it's a series, you really want to find out what happens next and really... And you remember it as well, I find that you remember it. And you can talk about it with other people because you know what has happened You can talk about it with your sighted friends or even your other blind friends if they've watched it.

Cassandra Strakosch: Fantastic. Thanks, Scott.

Now, I will just remind people how they can ask a question tonight. Do you can ask on live of our panellists. You can text 0438 792 407. Or you can email us at webinar@visionaustralia.org. Now, we have had a question come through from Anna. "How do I find the audio described movies on Netflix?"

Now, Scott, is it the same way as you described how you find the other content.

Scott Erichsen: Yes. Yes, it is. So you have to… Once you've logged in, you will find a list of all the audio described content. And you just pretty much have to go through that list and find what is movies and what is TV shows, I guess. Yeah.

Paul Paradigm: So if you're a screen reader user… It's Paul here. The easiest way for you to do that is to actually just search on the word 'audio description'. And it's actually a link that you need to click before the listing comes up. It is not formatted as a list. It’s kind of vertically listed. But if you just moved from link to link, you'd at least get the names of the TV shows or movies that you're looking for.

Scott Erichsen: Yeah. In cases like this, it does help to know your screen reader - things like heading commands and particularly the find command of your particular screen reader, it’s a really huge advantage, particularly to find those words 'audio description'. There’s no edit box on the web page to find them. You actually have to use your screen reader's find command to actually search for those words within the page.

Cassandra Strakosch: And we've had a question come in form Janine. "Are there any good series available on ABC iView. Is the audio description good quality?"

So, Scott, have you been watching any the programs on ABC iView which have audio description?

Scott Erichsen: Yeah, I've watched quite a few. I’ve watched 'Glitch' which is this new one that a lot of people have been talking about. I think I’ve watched about five episodes of that now. And the audio description is really good. I highly recommend it. There’s quite a lot of stuff there. I definitely recommend checking it out. And you will find a lot of good content. You’ll certainly find several things that I’m sure you’re interested in.

Cassandra Strakosch: Great. And we had another question come in from Violetta. "Are the video on demand streaming services for people of all ages?" Paul, maybe you can answer that one?

Paul Paradigm: Well, certainly on iView they are for all ages. I can’t really comment about… I'm just having a look now. I don’t see a lot of content for young people that’s audio described on Netflix. Please bear in mind that I’m vision impaired and that I’m just looking at pictures here, but I don’t see a lot of material for the younger audience.

Bear in mind also that when you’re you when you use Netflix there filters that get put in place when you log in. So, for example, if you're setting up your Netflix for the family to watch and there are young children, you would log in with a child parameter, and that would then limit what’s displayed even in the listings and catalogues of what's displayed. But at the moment I’m not logged in as a child so I can’t really see anything at all that's for young viewers.

Alex Varley: Maybe I could just have comment on the ABC, actually, because I was involved in the setting up of the ABC iView services as, sort of a consultant on it if you like. And one of the things they were really careful about is to make sure that the mix of programming included children programming and included popular stuff, and then it’s a mix of international and Australian content.

And this is always a really difficult decision for people because the question I’m often asked is, you know, "Well, what do blind people like watching? And I said, "Well, what does everybody else like watching? Because they're exactly the same." And I think sometimes they think by asking one or two blind people, they get a totally valid sample of what the world likes. My reaction is, "Well, blind people like what everybody else does." So the ABC was quite conscious when they were setting up iView to make sure they got that good mix. Of course we want more and more hours and that will give us more variety but we'll see that come through.

But I did notice on Netflix there was one there.

Paul Paradigm: Yes. I’ve gone through on a bit now and there is about three that look like they’re aiming for a younger audience.

Cassandra Strakosch: Great. And this is a question, either Paul or Scott, you might be interested in answering, that's come through. "What does someone need to get started to stream video on demand?"

Scott Erichsen: Okay, for the best experience, I'd go an iPhone or an iPod or an iPad or even, if you can get it, an Apple TV. But the Apple TV… It's a great device but it requires a bit more thought to put into it, you know, because you need a TV as well to use it. So my solution would be if you’ve got a phone, and it’s an iPhone, generally you will be able to watch some great audio content on there. That’s going to be your most optimal experience, to use iOS, some form of iOS device. And I think whether you use Voiceover or whether you…both the apps are accessible, iView and Netflix are very accessible with Voiceover.

There is one little trick with Voiceover, when you scroll the screen in the Netflix app, when you look down through your shows, Voiceover doesn’t always scroll. You have to actually scroll Voiceover to see some of the shows. But that will be fixed, probably, in an update. Obviously all the apps are free, so that’s another advantage as well.

Cassandra Strakosch: Great, thanks.

Alex Varley: Something I was just gonna add to that, actually. The ABC iView service, which obviously is a free service, what they’re doing is they’re gradually rolling it out across different platforms. So they went Apple and Android first. And the one that’s probably the most in demand is the PC version. And they’re telling us at the moment that that will be ready by the beginning of September, and they’re actually hoping it’s sometime in August but they’re guaranteeing by the beginning of September. So hold out for that. And that’s a free service and easy to access.

Cassandra Strakosch: Great, thanks. Whereas Netflix is a paid-for subscription service.

Alex Varley: Yes, that’s right. Although, I think the first month is still free.

Scott Erichsen: Yeah, the first month’s free.

Alex Varley: So you can try it before you lock yourself in.

Scott Erichsen: But the app itself, once you’ve paid for the subscription, you don’t have to pay for the app but you do have to pay for the subscription once you’ve passed your free trial.

Cassandra Strakosch: Sure. Now, here’s a question that has come in from Susan. Thanks, Susan. “If you wish to watch an audio described program with a partner or friend and they don’t want to listen to the audio description, is there a way to play the program with the audio description in a separate track so only you hear it?” Paul, any ideas?

Paul Paradigm: No, there’s no way of doing that because the platform only supports one audio stream at once and that’s across all of the devices. You either play the audio described stream or you don’t. And just by way of a short explanation, the way that these services work is that it’s like selecting another language track. So if we use Netflix, for example, as an example, the way that it works is that it’s recorded like it was a French version or a German version and that’s the one that you play. It doesn’t play back two simultaneous audio streams. So the only way you could really do that is if you had two devices and somehow you magically sync them together but I don’t think it’s really feasible to do that. I know that some of the set-top boxes for the speaking content, like the channel information, have a separate audio stream facility, but these applications don’t cater for two audio streams.

Alex Varley: I would say you wall want to watch with audio description, you want to do it as a shared experience.

Paul Paradigm: Yes.

Scott Erichsen: Yeah I’d agree with that. Definitely. I’d say I definitely watch with it because the other sighted person watching it may learn something about the description or about, you know, all kinds of things. I think, no, they can watch it with audio description. If they don’t like it, they can go and do something else.

Paul Paradigm: I guess if you’re a family situation and it wasn’t suitable, depending on the account you sign up with Netflix you can have two simultaneous streams. So if you started playing them roughly at a similar time, you could use a device like an iPhone or iPod and just have pop one single earbud, for example, in while the other stream was played, say, on a smart TV or through an Apple TV. And then you could have the best of both worlds but you would need two devices. And your Internet would have to have the bandwidth to be able to play two streams simultaneously.

Cassandra Strakosch: Yeah. So it sounds like there’s ways around it but no easy yes answer to that question.

Alex Varley: No, no, no, no. That’s a dreaming thing.

Cassandra Strakosch: That’s something to dream, continue of.... So another one that has come in... We’ve actually got a couple of questions that have come in on this same topic. “Can you watch old TV shows as well as those that are currently available, or is it just what’s been on recently?” Alex?

Alex Varley: Okay, well, the programming is often a mix of repeats and new stuff. But that’s what’s you’re going to get. The Netflix stuff tends to be older and, you know, with a few newer releases. But the ABC, again, it’s just trying to do the popular thing. Some of those old, old favourites are actually very popular shows on the ABC so that’s what you’ll see.

Paul Paradigm: So just to elaborate a little bit on that, Cass, for example, with Netflix clicks you could go back and watch all of, for example… I’m just trying to think of something off the top of my head.

Alex Varley: ‘House of Cards’.

Paul Paradigm: ‘House of Cards’ OK.

Scott Erichsen: ‘Orange is the New Black’.

Paul Paradigm: But for some older stuff like old ‘Star Trek’ episodes, ‘Stargate’, ‘Stargate Atlantis’, they would have...those particular ones they would have the full series. And there is quite a lot of full series going back even through to the ‘80s and the ‘70s. Not a huge amount but that list is growing.

Alex Varley: You’re showing your preferences there too, Paul. You’re obviously a sci-fi guy.

Paul Paradigm: I am, alright.

Cassandra Strakosch: And I have another question come in from Cameron. “Is Netflix constantly adding audio described content?” So at the moment not everything is audio described, is that right, Alex?

Alex Varley: Oh, no, no, by far not described, I would say. And it doesn’t seem to be a particular pattern, so there’s just bits appearing randomly, almost. And just before the webinar tonight, we were having a look just to see what the latest stuff is, and there’s a lot more than when I last checked a few weeks ago. So, yeah, it’s there. And I think part of that is because unlike TV services, there is no sort of fixed, regulation quotas or anything like that, so it’s really, I think, a question of what they get hold of next, and decide to pop that up.

Cassandra Strakosch: Yeah. And those regulation quotas, they’re overseas quotas?

Alex Varley: I was gonna say, yeah. But they’re more on TV shows rather than video on demand shows.

Cassandra Strakosch: Great. Now, I’ll just do another reminder about how people can ask questions. We’re actually having a great number of questions come through but keep them coming, we love to hear from you. So, you can SMS a question to 0438 792 407. That’s 0438 792 407. Or you can email us - webinar@visionaustralia.org. And a really easy way to remember that is just to reply to one of the emails we sent you previously about how to log in to the webinar. So that’s webinar@visionaustralia.org.

So we’ve talked a bit about how you can access these services using audio description. But we know there’s more to access than audio description. It’s also about the platforms themselves. So I’m really interested to think about a little bit how you can access those platforms in different ways.

So, Paul, as someone who has low vision, how do you access video on demand streaming platforms?

Paul Paradigm: I use multiple different ways depending on the situation. If I’m viewing material, programming for myself, my preference is to use a tablet-sized or a laptop-sized device. Because for me as somebody with quite low...very low vision, what I need is something to be really close to me. And when I’m, I guess, watching TV with the family, that’s one thing. But when I watching it alone, my preference is to have a very close working distance, and I’m talking about, you know, 10 or 15 centimetres.

To me it doesn’t really matter that it is an 8o-inch screen or a 20-inch screen, I still need to be pretty close to be able to focus and see that. And I guess this is why I really quite like streaming because I can just lie there in bed or at a desk and be able to see a lot more at a close working distance. And I think that a lot of low vision people will empathise with this. So that’s how I view it.

It’s actually been quite good for me insofar as because I can use a close working distance without having to turn my head because it’s such a large screen, it has meant that I’m able to view stuff with subtitles. So I’ve never been able to comfortably read subtitles on a larger screen, as I say, having to turn your head because you’re sitting so close makes it a little bit difficult. But with a smaller screen, I’ve actually sat down and watched a two-hour movie and read the whole thing. It did require a little bit of pausing. But I guess that’s the great thing about using streaming as well is that I can pause it, and if I want to have a look at something in the background, I can use a zoom feature of my computer or tablet to view that.

The other thing that I really like about using streaming - because I do use a mix of voice and my vision - is being able to access the details about the television program or the movie. Being able to see who is in it, who the directors are, to have a good description of some of the cast and a description of the movie before I watch it, because I don’t have access to that otherwise. I can’t see scrolling titles if I’m sitting there watching the TV in the lounge room with the family.

Cassandra Strakosch: Thanks, Paul. And you’ve also, you know, when we were chatting about this prior to the webinar, you talked to us a little bit about Apple TV and how that can work for people. Can you explain that a little bit more? So, like, a way to watch it, such as through the Apple TV?

Paul Paradigm: I think the beauty of the Apple TV for, I guess, our audience would be for those people that may not be expert screen reader users, the Apple TV is a good option - aside from the initial setup which can be a little bit problematic but you can you get help from your family or help from Vision Australia to set up the Apple TV. But once it is up and running it’s really a matter of using the little remote control. It only has a few keys on it. Directional arrow keys - up, down, right, left - and then enter key and then two menu keys. And it just means that you don’t have to learn to use a screen reader or a computer or a tablet.

The Apple TV does not have screen magnification built into it at this time. It does have a screen reader. So even if you were totally blind or have very low vision, once it’s set up, you can have full access to the programming material that’s available through the Apple TV. And that includes Apple’s own material plus the stuff that’s on Netflix.

Cassandra Strakosch: Thanks, Paul.

And, Scott, as a person who is blind, how do you find the platforms’ accessibility? Maybe what’s currently accessible using a screen reader?

Scott Erichsen: Well, obviously ABC iView is using the iPhone. Netflix is a strange one because obviously the website is accessible in terms of you can use your PC or your Mac to log in to the site and you can sign up, you can view, as we were talking about before, you can view your list of shows, but what you can’t do if you’re using Windows is actually play the material, which I would hope they would address that you know, soon. It would be nice if it was yesterday, but, you know, it’ll happen.

But, like Paul, I like to watch, you know, lots of material and, like him, I have lots of devices to watch it on. But, again, the Apple TV is another thing that I’d say is an option. In terms of screen reading that’s accessible, Netflix is the best, I’d say, on my iOS or the Apple TV, which we’ve mentioned before. And obviously iView is only on the iOS at the moment. But for me it’ll be great when it eventually does come to the PC because there are times when you are on your computer and, you know, you want to... You’re doing things on your computer and you’ve found the name of a show you want to watch and you’re like. “Oh, well, I can’t watch it from here, I have to watch on something else.

In terms of Netflix watching on the Mac, if you don’t want to pause or control or do anything with the show, if you just want to watch it from start to end, you can play it but you have to basically then sit there for the hour two hours or however long it is because you have no way of stopping it and starting it. You can just play the show. And that does work on the Mac, which is good.

Cassandra Strakosch: And, now, all of these services, of course, need an internet connection. We’re having quite a few questions come through about data and bandwidth, like what does that actually take from an internet perspective?

Alex, can you just mention a little bit about that?

Alex Varley: Yeah, sure. So the thing I would say to you is if you are out and about, don’t try and watch these things just using your normal phone data allowance because movie and video material chews through that incredibly quickly and you’ll end up with a great big phone bill. The best thing to do is go find somewhere with some decent wi-fi, whether that’s at home or, you know, there’s lots of public wi-fi around the place, and do it that way.

I mean, typically people in homes these days have 500 gigabytes, terabytes or whatever. And I’ve got a three teenage kids, and we ain’t got anywhere close to our home limits yet, so, you know, it doesn’t use up those. But please don’t do it while you’re going home from work on the train or something because you’ll blow your allowance straight away.

Cassandra Strakosch: Yep. And I’ll just put another reminder out for questions, how you can ask a question tonight. Keep them coming. We love to get them. As a text message to 0438 792 407. Or an email to webinar@visionaustralia.org.

Now, I’ve got a related question to the one I just asked. Slightly different. It’s from Marie. “Can I download a movie to my iPhone through my home wi-fi using these services?” So is it downloading? It’s a bit different to downloading. It’s streaming, isn’t it?

Paul Paradigm: That’s right. And I think that most of these services really are relying on you to stream to limit the content, otherwise if you could download them, then you would be, you know, infringing someone’s copyright. To my knowledge at this time there are no services that actually permit you to download and cache them on your computer, as far as I know of.

Cassandra Strakosch: So you are just watching them online, and when you’re finished they stay on that platform.

Paul Paradigm: That’s right.

Alex Varley: Yeah. And I think, actually, it raises quite a useful point which is, you know, what actually is a video on demand service? You know, there’s lots of different definitions of that. And we tend to think of it as being something that you’re going to get via the Internet. And I would actually include things like iTunes on that, and some iTunes products you can actually download them and watch them later. But the general intention of it - and that’s why it’s called Dreaming for Streaming - is that it’s a streaming thing, that you watch it and it flows away and that’s it. If you wanna watch it again, you have to stream it again.

Cassandra Strakosch: Yeah. And, now, Alex, do know of any work being done on improving these platforms’ accessibility?

Alex Varley: Well, there is a lot of lobbying going on about that. Probably the people who have taken that most seriously in the world is the BBC. And they have a long-standing reputation for sorting out accessibility across all their platforms, and they have probably the most content in the world as well. And what you will see is they will lead the way and others will pick that up.

But I think the issues are actually more around the devices that you are trying to access these services through. And probably the good news there is that everybody keeps talking about Apple, and of course the Apple services generally are extremely accessible but they are also the most expensive ones. And what we’ve certainly noticed in our work in the last few years is that the Android and other platforms are actually catching up there and they are actually becoming more accessible. And of course these video streaming services are supposed to be platform neutral in that sense. So, yeah, there is work being done but it is not systematic.

Cassandra Strakosch: Yep. And we’ve had a question come in from Coral. And it’s talking about how what opinions are on iView having audio description as a catch-up service versus it being broadcast live on the television. And, you know, it costs download time, it’s not in real broadcast time, you need your own equipment.

So what is your opinion on the differences, Paul?

Paul Paradigm: Coral, I think my response is, as a VI person, is it’s better than nothing. And as an interim measure, I think that’s the only comment that I want to make. I have Internet at home, I don’t have any huge limits on my internet. It’s less common to have very low limits on home internet. Like we’ve said, don’t watch it on the go. So from a data point of view and a cost point of view, it doesn’t really affect me at all. But, I mean, ideally I want to see things live. I want to see them when my family is watching them, not a day later.

Cassandra Strakosch: And, Scott, you have experience watching audio described television overseas.

Scott Erichsen: Yeah. I was in the UK a few years ago and I happened to watch a medical show, and I watched at least three or four episodes of it. And the amazing thing for me was it was, you know, live television. It was 8:00, 8:30 at night, you could sit down and watch audio described TV. And for me that was just amazing because, I mean, I’d seen audio described stuff before but never as part of a TV channel. I thought it was just amazing to be able to do that. And I thought, “I wish we had that in Australia.” And we’re not quite there yet but we are getting there.

Look, obviously in a ideal world, like Paul said, we’d much rather watch things live but for now it’s certainly…yeah, I agree, definitely better than nothing. And it gives us a taste for what is to come. I mean, if this is the first solution, it can only get better from here.

Cassandra Strakosch: And Alex.

Alex Varley: Well, I’m going to go out on a limb and I’m going to say it’s absolutely crazy. We are the only country in the world that has a catch-up TV service with audio description but no audio description on that original TV service. And for people just to understand what I mean by that, the programs that you’re watching on things like iView are exactly the same as the one that’s broadcast. And the processes by which they create the audio description are essentially the same and so I just find it extremely strange that the effort is being put into creating that audio description for something only a handful of people at the moment can really watch.

Although everybody talks about the great march of technology and how the world is changing and everything’s on the Internet, the surveys keep showing that the most popular way of consuming content by far is the good old-fashioned television in the corner of the lounge room., and it’s going to be like that for a long time. So I actually think it’s madness and I want to see it on both. It’s got to be on both like it is in other places on the world.

Cassandra Strakosch: Great. Thanks, Alex. And I’ve had another couple of questions come through. So the first one… There’s a couple about accessing, and there’s a couple about audio description. So I’ll do some, then the other. This is from Terry. “Do I need an iPhone if I already have an Android?”

Scott? Any ideas? In terms of accessing these different types of platforms, and it’s more than Netflix and iView, but, you know.

Scott Erichsen: I’d say iPhone if you want the best experience. As far as I know, I don’t even think the Android version of the iView system is actually accessible. I don’t even know if either of you guys are played with it but I certainly haven’t. And Netflix, again, I’m not sure. Because I have an Android tablet that I’ve played with but not for that kind of thing.

If you’ve already got an Android phone, I wouldn’t go out and get an iPhone. Just get an iPod Touch, you know. It doesn’t have to be expensive iPod Touch. And that will allow you to at least watch the stuff. Or an iPad if you want an iPad. But if you want just something small to watch and you’ve already got an Android phone, no need to go and spend big money and get an iPhone. just get an iPod Touch. And long as it’s an iPod an iPhone or and iPad, one or the other, that will be fine.

Cassandra Strakosch: And we’ve had another question come through, so I might put this one to Paul. You wee talking about Apple TV a little bit earlier. This is from Jennifer. “Does Apple TV have audio description? If not, are there any plans for Apple to do this in the future?”

Paul Paradigm: I know that Apple are working for their own platform on bringing content out. I can’t really can’t comment on how much content there is available because, unlike the Netflix where you can select a listing of audio described content, there isn’t, as far as I know, a way of doing that on the iTunes Store.

Alex Varley: No, there isn’t, no.

Paul Paradigm: And there isn’t on the Apple TV either, which is based on the iTunes Store. I haven’t actually looked at how you would sort out which content is available on Netflix on the Apple TV. But, yes, the answer is yes, there is some content, I believe, on the iTunes Store.

But you need to bear in mind that at present it’s just a little bit different from the way that the iView and the Netflix works. Their system is more like a pay-per-view kind of system where you rent the video or the TV show, it’s available to you for about 24 hours, and it’s a per-view payment. So, like, a TV series might cost you $3 to watch one episode and it may cost you $6 to watch a current movie on there with or without audio description.

But there isn’t a huge amount of audio described content available through their own services at this time. I’ve heard anecdotally that there is some content but I can’t tell you what that is or how you’d go about locating new titles. Not at this time. And I wouldn’t imagine that Apple would publicise it in a huge way until they have a way that we can actually access that content.

Alex Varley: I’d also just say for people out there, I know people quite often have friends in other countries and they exchange emails about what’s accessible. Just be very careful when you’re getting advice about which programs on things like iTunes may be accessible because iTunes is actually different in different countries, they have different content. And we actually came across something like this a couple of weeks ago when a Disney movie popped up on Australian iTunes with audio description and we’re trying to work out where that came from. And people get excited and then they discover that, no, it actually doesn’t work in Australia but they’ve already spent their six bucks or whatever and discover - no audio description. So just watch out for that.

Paul Paradigm: And I think the same thing goes with Netflix. If you are corresponding to people overseas, the platform is regionalised and the content that you have in Australia is not the same as it is in the US. If you have a friend that’s in the US and they log into their version of Netflix, it’s the same server you are logging in to but the content is regionalised. So in the US you have a lot more content than you have in Australia. And the content will differ. It differs from country to country. The kind of programs that you get in Netflix in the UK, while they may have the same programs, they may have programs on their Netflix that we don’t.

Scott Erichsen: Just one thing I would quickly mention about the Apple TV. If you have the second-generation Apple TV, you are not going to be able to watch audio described content on Netflix. The audio description doesn’t actually work. It’s something to do with the version of software on the Apple TV. And the third-generation Apple TV and the current one that you can get now, that does have audio description, that does have the facility for the audio description. But if you bought your Apple TV in sort of 2011, you’re not going to get it.

Paul Paradigm: However, if you did buy in the last year or so, you will have it as well. Before we move on, I just want to go back and answer another question that’s related to this topic. The person who asked about downloadable content - if we’re talking about the streaming service from Apple, that is downloadable content on some of their devices. So if you actually purchase a movie, and bear mind that it’s about the same cost as purchasing a DVD, you can actually download that. But, again, it is a pay-per-item kind of thing. So if you want to buy my favourite ‘Star Trek’ movie, you can buy it, it will cost you 20 bucks, but you can download it and keep it forever. But that’s not streaming.

Cassandra Strakosch: Now, Scott, I know that there are other platforms out there apart from Netflix and iView, and there’s a few that have come onto the market in Australia recently. Have you had a look at any of those other streaming services and how accessible they are?

Scott Erichsen: Yeah, in terms of watching things on Stan and Presto and stuff like that, it’s doable. You can obviously use the iPhone or the PC to an extent to watch them. But I guess the one difference between all those services and Netflix and iView is on those services you are not going to get any audio described content. You are going to get content that’s currently on television now from, you know, Channel 9, Channel 7 Channel 10.

Cassandra Strakosch: Great. Thanks, Scott.

Now, here’s a question that has come through from Jamie. “Hi, great presentation.” Thanks, Jamie. “How easy is it for a first-time Netflix user on an iPhone to find out audio described content?”

Scott? Yeah. Go for it.

Scott Erichsen: We were all gonna answer at once.

You will need either a PC or Mac to look at the website. You could possibly do it in Safari on the iPhone. What you want to do is obviously log in once you’ve signed up, and you’ll find the listing of audio described content. To play the content, though, yeah, you use the Netflix app.

Paul Paradigm: I think the other thing that you could do is, also, if you are a member of any internet mailing lists or you subscribe to some blogs, you can always have a look at what other people are doing. I think that on an iOS device at this time, that would be the easiest way to go if you don’t actually have access to a PC to actually look up what you want to watch, Jamie.

You know, at the moment on the Netflix, there’s 34 programs available as of right now - we’re looking at the screen here. I’m using a Mac and, yes, I could get that information, I could arrow through them and get it. But on an iPhone I can’t say for certain that you could do that with Safari. So, no, read the forums, look at the blogs.

Alex Varley: Yeah, share the information and chat about it. That’s the fastest way of finding out, I think. That’s how I often find out what’s been done.

Cassandra Strakosch: So, really, there’s no easy way, necessarily, on an iPhone, but get involved chatting with others, word-of-mouth.

Scott Erichsen: Playing the content, obviously, is fine on the iPhone but it’s finding it that’s more of the challenge.

Cassandra Strakosch: Sure. Thanks, everyone. So I have another question. This might differ depending on how you are watching the streaming video. But this question comes from Marion. “If you are streaming a movie and you are interrupted for more than five minutes, can you back come back to where you left off, for example, a day or two later?”

Alex, any ideas on whether you can stop and start?

Alex Varley: Certainly, my expense with Netflix is that it always remembers where you last watched it. So, yeah, you can do that. I don’t think I’ve ever tried to not watch all of an iView program so I’m not really sure about that.

Paul Paradigm: Yeah, I’m not sure either. I don’t think it does remember.

Scott Erichsen: No, iView doesn’t.

Paul Paradigm: I think you can pause it while the app is open, and while you’re logged in to your session, it will remember it. But, as you say, on Netflix and on the Apple video platform...whether it’s on Netflix or their own platform, it does remember where you are. And you can start watching 17 movies and it will remember where you are in each individual program.

Cassandra Strakosch: And so now we are starring to come towards the end of the webinar so I’ll just do a final call-out for final questions. You can text them to 0438 792 407 or you can email us at webinar@visionaustralia.org. But you’ll have to get in pretty quickly now as we are coming to the end.

So we’ve talked a lot about audio description and how it’s really changed the way you’ve watched things. How do we go about getting more audio description on video on demand services in Australia? What can we do?

Alex, what do you think we can do?

Alex Varley: Well, the first thing I would say to you is consume what’s there and tell people you’re doing that. So just remember that all these services like Netflix, they are commercial services, they are commercial entertainment services and they want your business. And every time that you watch something on Netflix, you are adding to their profits and they like that and they’re more likely to do more and more. And of course for the Stans and Prestos of the world that are competing against them, tell them that you would love to watch their shows because you’ve heard that they’ve got great content, but until it gets description on there, there is absolutely no point in you doing that. So that’s the first thing I’d say to you is consume and tell people that’s what you are doing and share it with your friends.

Cassandra Strakosch: And of course the audio description on ABC iView is still a trial so watching it is really important.

Alex Varley: Yes, and what they’re actually doing - all these services do this anyway - but they can totally track at any time how many people are watching it, what they’re watching it through, which bits of it they’re turning on and off and everything else.

And with the ABC audio description trial, which is being run for the Department of Communications, it’s really important that you give them feedback about that because they work on the basis that, oh, if they don’t hear anything they’re assuming that no-one’s watching it, whereas, of course, you may not have told them because you’re saying, “It’s a great service, I’m just enjoying it.” Well, let them know that. That’s really, really important. And that’s one way of getting more.

Cassandra Strakosch: And another question on a similar topic from Courtney. “Are Media Access Australia...” - so you’re from Media Access Australia - “..and Vision Australia lobbying for more audio description?”

Alex Varley: Yeah that’s a great question. And, Courtney, it’s happening both here in Australia and being connected worldwide. So the thing is, as I’ve mentioned before, these services are just international and blind people everywhere want access to these things. So there’s actually quite a coordinated group of people, including Vision Australia, Media Access Australian, Blind Citizens Australia and the various blindness agencies around the country.

And probably the simplest way, if you want to get involved, is there’s a really easy website to remember - it’s audiodescription.com.au, and there there’s is information about the latest campaign and links to various things connected with audio description. And that’s not just about video on demand services, that’s also about TV services. So if you want to get involved, and I encourage you to do that, that’s a way to do that in a really coordinated way.

And, obviously, if these voices are joined together and we’re all asking for the same thing and we’re being very careful to make sure that people in America, people in the UK and people in Australia and New Zealand are asking for the same sorts of things, that it’s more likely to happen.

Cassandra Strakosch: Thanks. And we have another question that’s come through -slightly different topic now. But we’ve had a question about from Anne-Marie which is “Once you get the Netflix app, how do you stream the content onto a TV so others can watch?” And maybe that’s the same as the other platforms? How can you stream it on a TV so that others can watch?

Is there a way of doing it, Paul?

Paul Paradigm: It really depends on the platform, how you actually do it. I’l try to be quick. If you’re using an iOS device, the only real way...the easiest way, let’s say the easiest way, is to stream it via an Apple TV, okay? The Apple devices, including the Macs and the MacBooks, laptops, have the facility to connect to an Apple TV, and that allows you to stream directly.

The other option is most laptops these days, and many desktop PCs, have HDMI connectors on them. And if you have a PC and you have a modern TV, like flatscreen TV, it’s going to have an HDMI connector on it. It’s just a matter of switching your device, that is your PC or your Mac, into a full-screen mode, connect a cable. And you can get really long ones. At home we’ve got one that’s 10 metres long, that can connect our laptops into the TV in the lounge.

Android devices also have the Chromecast, which is another device that you can purchase. It’s about $60, $70. I suppose I should actually point out that the Apple TV is about $110 to purchase. And that does similar thing, it allows you to wirelessly stream - so we’re streaming the streaming - to the TV to allow you to share the content.

So, as a low vision person, I think that it’s important to know that on these platforms if you do stream using the wi-fi, you can’t watch them on both devices. So as soon as you start streaming your video to your TV, to your Apple TV, you can’t see it on your iPad. So you just need to know that.

Cassandra Strakosch: Great. Thanks, Paul.

And we’ve had a question come through from Geoffrey. “How can I get technical help with streaming?”

MIght go to you again, Paul. How can you get technical help with streaming?

Paul Paradigm: I guess if you’re stuck setting up an Apple TV or your iPhone or iOS device, or an Android device, and even a PC, my first port of call if I have trouble would be to call the Vision Australia Helpdesk. That’s the regular Vision Australia telephone number 1300 847 466. That’s 1300 847 466. And if there’s a simple question that you have about, “Well, how do I download this app?” or “How do I do this?” then we may be able to help you over the phone. And that line is open in our normal business hours.

If it’s a little bit more complex, if this is all very new to you and you don’t actually know how to use these devices, like, if you are new to the iPhone or iPad and you are struggling a little bit with using the apps and getting things set up, I would speak to your Vision Australia Key Contact Worker and ask them to make a referral to an adaptive technology consultant or trainer.

If you are not currently receiving services from Vision Australia, call through to that number 1300 847 466, and you can refer yourself into our service and make the request. And be specific and say exactly what it is that you’re after - some technical support, one-on-one stuff from an adaptive technology person. And we can arrange something from there, whether it’s you coming in and having a quick lesson on your iPad, for example, or if you need a little bit of help perhaps setting up your Apple TV, we can arrange that as well.

Cassandra Strakosch: So both Scott and Paul, you’re members of our adaptive technology team. So you can come and have a chat to two lovely people like Scott and Paul. And we have others in that team as well. So that’s a great option, thanks, guys.

So we are actually now coming to the very end of the webinar. So I just wanted to remind people that we are going to have a transcript of tonight’s webinar available as soon as we can. And that is a great way, if you miss something maybe from the beginning, if you joined us a little bit later, or didn’t quite catch all the technical details or the numbers, you can go to that transcript and it will cover everything we had talked about tonight.

We would actually also love to hear your feedback. So tonight was our first webinar from Vision Australia for people who are blind, have low vision, talking about some different new ideas. And we would love to hear about how you found it. So did you enjoy joining in from home? Do you have any other ideas about other webinar topics we could potentially cover. We’d actually love to hear how you’d found it. And you can just get in touch with us by emailing what is now hopefully a very familiar email address, which is webinar@visionaustralia.org, and send through your feedback because we’d actually really love to hear from you.

And I would like to finish by finally saying a really warm thank you to everyone who joined us tonight. We hope we got a lot out of it. We’ve really enjoyed putting it on and chatting tonight about all things Dreaming of Streaming. And I would also like to say a really big thank-you to our wonderful panel - Alex, Paul and Scott. Thank you for coming in at nighttime and talking to us and sharing all your knowledge and tips. It was really great to hear from you. So on that I will leave it and say goodnight everyone.