**Transcript:**

Jade Taylor:                  Hi everyone. Welcome back to episode four of the Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) Youth Network podcast. Today we’re excited to be interviewing Seli, an NDIS support coordinator, disability, consultant, and advocate for rights with people with disabilities. I will start by acknowledging the country and acknowledging that I am calling in from the Gubbi Gubbi and that this land was stolen and never seeded. I would also like to acknowledge our elders past, present and extend that to any indigenous listeners.

Jade Taylor:                  Before we get into the podcast, I would like to say that every participant’s experience with the NDIS is completely different and should seek professional advice and do the research if you need when accessing or navigating the NDIS. So, Seli, tell us about yourself? Can you tell us your name, who you are and what you do?

Seli:                              Sure. First of all, thank you so much for asking me on Jade. I feel like this is, um, a discussion for across the board. NDIS really is a case by case circumstance and I’m so glad that you did add that in. My name is Seli. Um, I am a little bit known on TikTok as the ndis.little.helper. So some people don’t actually (laughs) know my first name and they might relate to me with that name.

Seli:                              Um, I have, um, become a support coordinator just, um, over the past nine months. So I’m actually new in the role but my previous background is working on the NDIS contract itself. So I did work within the actual scheme, um, and that’s how I came about, I suppose, going out on my own, um, to become a support coordinator on the other side of things.

Jade Taylor:                  That’s very cool. It’s, it’s very different and that’s how I know you as, to be honest to the ndis.little.helper. (laughs)

Seli:                              Yeah. (laughs)

Jade Taylor:                  Can you tell us about your business, Trueblue Value Services, when did your business start and what motivated you to start it up?

Seli:                              Sure. Um, so it did all begin with, um, looking for a job after selling a small business in a totally different industry. Um, I just completed an accounting diploma. I wasn’t sure exactly what I was going to be doing with that, but an opportunity came up and, um, you know, there was availability to work in the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Seli:                              And I did have a friend that had previously worked there. So I’ve longed about to knew what the scheme was about and how it, um, helps people with disabilities, um, but it sounded really exciting. It sounded really innovative. Uh, borderline was a bit on, um, the curious side because I was, um, I was curious to find out more how the government had put together the scheme and to me it sounded like too good to be true. So I, I was really interested in participating, I think, to cure my curiosity more than anything at the time.

Seli:                              Um, I did go into an entry level sort of position. Um, worked through, um, several departments, several responsibilities and roles. Um, I was offered a number of roles that I actually ended up turning down and ultimately, um, I ended up coming to the conclusion, I suppose, that for me, um, I really needed satisfaction in finishing off what I start with a participant. Participants being the people that are on the NDIS that received the funding for NDIS.

Seli:                              So in my job at that time, I would help to facilitate like the start of sorting something out but I never actually got to see the end results. So I didn’t know if it went well, if it didn’t go well, if someone needed more information and as you can tell, I can talk. So that’s where (laughs) my passion really came through. Um, after being, you know, in a role that I just, I couldn’t, um, I couldn’t foresee like the conclusion. I decided that it would be best, um, for me to like move on in my experience with small businesses over 25 years. Um, I suppose I had a little bit of confidence behind me understanding how to start small business.

Seli:                              Um, support coordination suited me very well, um, and that’s how Trueblue Value Services started. Um, I officially got up and running, um, actually just, I think it was September last year, but I had to apply for registry, which still hasn’t come through and I’m working independently at the moment. Um, but what I was able to do, moving into support coordination is start the process with the participant, support them all the way through and actually live that outcome with them.

Seli:                              So for me, um, I really needed to have a one-on-one relationship with people that I was helping, not a number and picking up the phone and, yep how you doing? Yep, I sent off the info and good luck with that. It just wasn’t satisfying to me. So yeah, I sort of took a risk and went out there on my own and, um, yeah, quickly found out that with the little bit of advertising, again, yeah, through TikTok, the not, not the norm, um, there was a lot of people asking for help out there.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah, yeah. It, it, it definitely is. Like, I always say to me, to everyone, people say to me, you know, “You know so much about the NDIS.” I say, “Yeah, but there’s a lot of gray areas and that’s the problem.” And what I know, you know, I only know 1%, you know, and I have a friend who I’m very close with and, you know, she works within the NDIS and like, we just bounce off of each other all the time. And it’s like a great way because she’ll say something and I’ll be like, “But hang on a minute. When did that change?” And she’ll be like, “Oh, you know, July 2nd.” And I’ll be like-

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  … “Oh, okay. Apparently I missed that bit of paper.” Because like, that’s one thing like NDIS because it impacts my life so much.

Seli:                              Absolutely.

Jade Taylor:                  You know, me being a participant, living with spina bifida, you know, through it, like, I, it, it, isn’t like I’m living in SDA, which is obviously Specialist Disability Accommodation-

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  … through the NDIS. So like, it impacts. So I try my hardest to stay up on everything.

Seli:                              And it is a job within itself, unfortunately. And, you know, just like a lot of government agencies, you know, the norm is, is that there are changes that just progress as things happen. With the NDIS, I believe because it’s so young, so we have to look at it in real terms. It has been around for quite a while, but if officially the contract didn’t start out to the pub- like to roll out to the public, it was only a year and a half ago.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              It’s massive change across all disability sectors, organisations, community services and everyone just sort of had to catch up overnight. So we are going to get some hurdles. We are gonna get things that come up, but that does mean consistent change on the daily. At work, I was never able to really keep up.

Jade Taylor:                  Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seli:                              And yes, you would have a chance that, you know, at least your team, you know, one person would sort of catch onto one thing. Another one would catch on to another and we’d sort of consult each other just to keep everyone up to date ’cause there was so much going on.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. You just, you can’t stay on top of it. And I guess that leads us into our next question, which is a big one. And I feel like you and I are gonna talk about it for a while. What do you think of the NDIS?

Seli:                              All right. So the first thing, a lot of people ask me this and I am a pro NDIS person. And when I say that, there’s a reason, I really say that and that is that I tried to find out what the catch was. (laughs) It wasn’t a one off. I tried to figure out, you know, the hang on, where’s the catch? And I never found one. The intention, the fundamental intention is amazing. The, the thought put into it is amazing and then as a person with accounting background, I know this is going to sound a little crude, but I see financially how, if it is done correctly, long-term, everyone will benefit from more money in the right places.

Seli:                              So, you know, a lot of people do look at the contract and they’re like, “Oh, it’s such a big amount of money and people waste it and this and that.” Well, if we really got down to all the elements that are involved in community services hospitals, you know, um, placing people in homes that are not actually suitable for them and so on and so forth. In actual fact across the board, this is actually a very economical way to provide supports directly to people for people under their own circumstances. So I’m very for NDIS and this is despite yes, a lot of let’s say, say non-intentional issues that have come up.

Seli:                              So, you know, I think the, the basis is really fantastic. It’s just got to be worked through and with the right type of people on the, on, in the right jobs, it will be amazing. There’s nothing like this in the world. We should be embracing it and accepting that mistakes can happen. And again, it sounds so cold and crude, but that’s part of the learning experience with something brand new. So at this point, I’m all in and all in favor.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. Like me too, honestly.

Seli:                              Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor:                  Like I, so the reason I really came about NDIS was because I was on MASS-

Seli:                              Yes.

Jade Taylor:                  … so the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme.

Seli:                              Yes.

Jade Taylor:                  And the lady rang me and she was like, (laughs) let me be honest, she rang me and she was like, “Oh, we’re gonna change your bit to this NDI Scheme.” And I was like, “Yeah. Okay.” And I just thought it was gonna be like the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme.

Seli:                              Yes.

Jade Taylor:                  I was like, cool, new name, new branding, redder, you know, like wasn’t faced. And I went to my, um, [stomal 00:10:20] therapy nurse.

Seli:                              Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor:                  And, um, she said to me, she said, “Jade I’ve you, I’ve you looked into this NDIS thing?” I was like, “I actually got a phone call about that this morning.” She was like, “Yeah, it’s gonna be the new thing and it’s gonna help you.” And I was like, “I’m gonna be honest, that was a little bit like [inaudible 00:10:35], you know, cool beans.” And then, you know, like I started, I had my first planning meeting and I needed a new chair and the lady was like, to me, “Oh, you know, your chair is falling apart.”

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  I was like, “Yes.” Like literally held together with gaff tape, literally.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  She’s like, “Let’s just get a new one.” I was like, “Uh, okay.” Like, I was very, how much am I gonna have to pay towards that Because my last one, my last chair, they paid four grand and I still had to pay three and a half or something like that.

Seli:                              Correct.

Jade Taylor:                  I don’t remember the exact numbers, don’t quote me, but it was like that, you know, like I still had to part pay.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  And she’s like, “No, no, no, no, no, this is not what that’s about.” And I’m just like, “Okay.”

Seli:                              It’s a bright day when you hear that there’s genuine help and the dollar for that isn’t everything that has to be counted. It’s about you and what you need. And there are so many good stories out there, you know, so many.

Jade Taylor:                  And, and, like every day, you know, like that’s what I love about the NDIS. Like, yes, it gets a lot of bad light and yes-

Seli:                              It does.

Jade Taylor:                  … I understand, I understand that it does need help and it does need, but you know, we have people out there like Senator Jordan Steele John, who is, I don’t know if you know who that is, but to me I idolise him because he’s just standing up for everything that we need and he’s living in that situation.

Seli:                              And that’s the important thing. I think the reality of what someone with a disability or impairment goes through every day. And we’re talking from the time you put your head on the pillow at night to when you open your eyes in the morning, it’s not as simple as just get up. Just go for that, you know, walk, go clean your kitchen, go vacuum your house. It is not as simple as saying it. And you know, across the board, I, I personally have a lot of people with mental health issues. And thank goodness, the NDIS has been very quick to come on board and start recognising areas where something like depression can impact someone to the point of immobility.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              So it becomes a capacity of the body. It’s not just something that, you know, we relate to as, or you’re very sad or, you know, where people don’t quite understand what depression can really impact, you know, someone’s life with. And even though that area still, there’s a lot of improvement to be made, I must say, but at least they are open to that and the real help is there. It’s not just, we’re gonna throw 10 sessions of, you know, psychology at you and hopefully you’ll be fixed in those 10 sessions. Like good luck to you.

Seli:                              This is like ongoing and things that have been impacting your home and your family ’cause like other people are involved as well. That’s one thing I think that blew me away with NDIS and that was the recognition that there’s these people that like, they call them informal supports. When you’re talking about family, friends, community, they just help you because they care but they factor that in that if the informal support for some reason, wasn’t available to you, they’re willing to step in and fill that gap.

Seli:                              So if you’ve had a partner caring for you 24/7 for the past five years, and they need to go work because they still need to support you in other ways and they haven’t been able to do that. Maybe they want to go back to work for their own, you know, wellbeing. That option is there through NDIS because NDIS recognises, “Okay, so there was 12 hours during the day of care that now we need to provide so the other person can live their life as well.” So even that’s incorporated. Like I said, I did a lot of nitpicking, try to find the little traps and the little, you know, [inaudible 00:14:33] but that’s, that’s normally human error through the system, not the actual system itself.

Jade Taylor:                  Yes.

Seli:                              I must admit that too. So, you know, to me, um, yeah, when you ask like, what do I think of NDIS? I could literally talk all day about the great things that I know about NDIS.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. And you know, you’re talking about informal supports is speaking to my soul because like my husband, James, he honestly, he saved me. I can’t, I can’t honestly tell you how much he saved me, 11 years we’ve been together. And like I say this thing where I think my medical for the reason that we have been together for so long.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  But when NDIS came in, I was like, you know, I can go have respite now, you know, you can, you can use your musical equipment and not have to worry about putting on noise canceling headphones and me falling over and, you know, like these little things. So now I go and I have respite, you know, with my, my support worker and you know, I’m really lucky to have a close, cause then your support worker, like people go to me, “Oh yeah, your support worker.” But your support worker then turns into like, you know, she’s like your best friend because you spend so much time with them and I don’t think they get enough recognition either.

Seli:                              They don’t.

Jade Taylor:                  Like the support workers of the world. Thank you.

Seli:                              Yes.

Jade Taylor:                  Just thank you.

Seli:                              That’s right.

Jade Taylor:                  You know, because you are doing something for not only me, but the informal support that have had to be there 24/7.

Seli:                              That’s right.

Jade Taylor:                  And like, I think it’s so important. Like my, one of my nieces, you know, she has seen what I go through and what I deal with and, you know, we were talking the other day and she’s like, “I think I’m gonna become a support worker.”

Seli:                              Isn’t that amazing? Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  And I was like, “Oh, okay.” She goes, “Yeah, because I just wanna help people.”

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  And like, that’s something, you know, and they get to see like, like, yeah, it’s, it’s a really hard job and I’m not, I’m not, I’m not-

Seli:                              It is so tough.

Jade Taylor:                  … I’m not saying that it’s a really easy job, please don’t think that that’s what I’m saying, but it’s a really rewarding job too, at the same time.

Seli:                              Absolutely. Absolutely. And it brings humanity back into care because they’re actual people that, you’re right, it’s not just someone that comes in, spends a few hours, you know, washes your dishes and, you know, wipes down a few benches, they become a companion. You can go to the extent of saying they become, like what you mentioned, like a best friend. They get you from another perspective, which they’ve come in without judgment, without, you know, um, what’s the right word, putting limitations or understanding of what you’re going through. They actually learn with you. Like nurses and care workers to me, are like superheroes.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              I’ve watched and seen and witnessed so many things that just to me, and I’ll be honest, I have skills of my own, but I would find it very tough. Like these people put their lives a side to help others. It’s incredible. It is incredible.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. Like, like my, my support worker, which I’ve talked to her about, me talking about her and she’s totally okay with it. My support worker, Bianca, she, honestly I’ll cry if I talk about it, but last year when I went through the hardest time of my life, you know, she was right there by the side of my hospital bed, working, not being paid for it because she knew that if we took money that she wouldn’t have enough and, you know, we’ve come to an agreement that, you know, she consistently works these hours and it’s enough for her to be paid and it’s enough for me to feel supported. But there have been plenty of times where I’ve rang her outside of those hours and going, “I need you.” And she’s, like that, she’s here.

Seli:                              Yep. That’s right. And that personalised care if you take away NDIS that is no longer there.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah, exactly.

Seli:                              It doesn’t exist.

Jade Taylor:                  No. And, and I would be, I, I, yeah, I couldn’t function. Like I couldn’t function now. It would be-

Seli:                              That’s an incredible connection to make through a government scheme.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              It is incredible.

Jade Taylor:                  Exactly. In your opinion, what changes do you think could the NDIS benefit from in the changes way? So what changes would you make?

Seli:                              Oh, God, honestly, there is so much to change. There’s so much to update. There’s, there’s massive loopholes that exist at the moment.

Jade Taylor:                  Oh, yeah. (laughs)

Seli:                              I’m not gonna lie. The things that I’ve seen and witnessed and heard, um, you know, they just shouldn’t happen. Um, it’s like, um, it’s like, it’s slipping through the cracks. So, so certain people have been very, um, Chloe to catch on to areas that they can just take full advantage of. I’m not a big fan of corporatisation as a general rule for a country. So for me, the big corporate, um, entities that are involved have swallowed up already a big portion of, you know, NDIS services that exist already. And I believe that that, that needs to be looked at at some point because they are operating in a very much number kind of fashion. So, you know, number one client needs this and we give nothing more.

Seli:                              Like they, they do take out that human touch, you know, that human heart a little bit. Um, but I think the ultimate, um, out of everything, the ultimate thing is actually training for support coordinators to be completely honest, um, with you. So my number one, um, shout out if there was anyone, you know, (laughs) listening out there in regards to, you know, being able to do something, um, education for support coordinators. There’s a lot of, um, responsibility that does lie on a support coordinator, knowing how to do what they’re supposed to do, but that’s the big issue. A lot don’t know what they’re supposed to be doing.

Jade Taylor:                  Exactly.

Seli:                              There are different levels as well. So, um, I cover all apart from specialised because you do need a qualification, but I have employees that step into that role. Um, but even down to, um, there is, uh, um, psychosocial recovery coach that can be offered through support coordination. I have a lived experience, um, through a few different areas of mental illness, physical, um, disabilities and so on and I do make that very clear to my clients before I take them on that, that’s where my experience comes from. It’s not a university degree, but my experience is what I can offer.

Seli:                              In the instance of where (laughs) I suppose why they’re coming over to me to begin with, is when they’ve asked their own support coordinator or psychosocial recovery coach, even basic question, the answers are not there. And if you talk to them, the support coordinators themselves, they’re like, “Well, we did this online thing that was like 12 sessions, but all we learned about was the NDIS legislation.” It’s still not training enough to really put the right people in the right position. So I’m going to say, you know, I’m a big believer in gaining your own knowledge, doing research, finding out for yourself.

Seli:                              I have the advantage that I worked at the NDIS so I know from the inside what was expected and how the system runs, but someone should be overlooking some kind of initial education. And I’m not saying you have to be qualified because different people can do this job, but educating the support coordinators, there’s a massive gap right now. So a lot of people aren’t getting what they need, basically, because the support coordinators don’t actually know what they’re supposed to be doing and how to do it best. So I would say that’s actually my number one, and that’s not picking on anyone. That’s just observation and feedback from public and feedback from participants.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. And I’m gonna be one of those participants that’s gonna give you feedback right now. And this is not me picking on anyone and this is not me having a go at anyone. I don’t have a support coordinator.

Seli:                              Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  Because, because I tried that.

Seli:                              Yep. I knew.

Jade Taylor:                  And it did not go swimmingly.

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  So I went, I can do this myself.

Seli:                              And unfortunately see it takes that whole extra support net that’s meant to be there. So support coordinator can work in many different ways. One can be that there’s an agreement between you both. Let’s say for example, um, you’re more than capable of organising your own services and supports and finding what you want to have through NDIS but, but if you get stuck, give me a bus, right?

Jade Taylor:                  Yes.

Seli:                              Then there’s the other types of support coordinators that basically the participant is like, “I don’t wanna deal with no one. You tell me what’s happening. I’ll tell you if I like it or not and we’ll, we’ll figure it out as we go.” But unfortunately it’s like what you’re saying, you get this really weird clash. So even personality-wise, I think our support coordinators are not gonna like me right now. They sit on some kind of pedestal that they think that they are maybe in control somehow and choice and control is everything when we’re looking at NDIS and the participants involvement. The participant has choice and control. It’s really drummed into everybody very clearly, but I don’t know, support coordinators have this thing where they really feel like, “no, that’s no good for you. I think this is best for you.”

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              It’s despite the point.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              It is despite the point. So yeah, it’s lost in translation. I think that’s, what’s happening. Support coordination is lost in translation and no one really knows what’s supposed to be happening.

Jade Taylor:                  Exactly. And to be honest, it’s the same with, um, LACs, Local Area Coordinators, It’s the exact same.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  Like I, at the moment, wouldn’t be able to tell you what my local area coordinator’s name is because, um, one left, one came, one left, one came, one left, one came and now I don’t know.

Seli:                              Local area coordinators too are made out, I believe through their training to really, um, offer a kind of impression that therefore you as a support coordinator when you need it, but that’s not really how it plays out.

Jade Taylor:                  That’s, that’s not how it works.

Seli:                              No. They will help you through the setup of your initial planning and it’s almost like a government funded free to the community support coordinator. But if you can imagine on their desk and in their workload, there could be 70, 80, 150 people in there one portfolio. I don’t know how they’d be expected to give the help that they need and then they’re rushed through the process, again, of training through the NDIS. So NDIS does tra- train the local area coordinators. So it is on them for this. Um, I think it’s rushed. I don’t think they’re giving enough, um, understanding to the case by case element. So we really, what, what works for one person does not work for another. What’s allowed for one person is not allowed for another.

Jade Taylor:                  Allowed for another. Yeah.

Seli:                              It’s very interpretive. And if you’re on the receiving end, it’s very easy to get into a pattern of, oh, they got a assistant dog and that dog has all its food paid for. I’ve got a pet dog. I want my pet food paid for. The, the element that’s missing is they’re not the same or someone that is entitled, so has a registered, um, you know, therapy dog that could have food for that dog paid through NDIS, a local area coordinator might not actually know the process of how to make that happen. So you call up, you get, you finally get someone on the phone. So you’re relieved with even that.

Seli:                              And then the local area coordinator misses the beat. Doesn’t quite listen that this is a registered therapy assistant dog. They just hear a dog and they go, “No, no, no, you can’t, that we can’t pay for that.” Technically you can, because it’s a different type of pet, but because they’re taught, I suppose, in an hour, quick finish, you know, sort of wrap it up. They, um, yeah. They make little mistakes like that, which look, irritates everybody at the end of the day and I think even they are frustrated themselves.

Jade Taylor:                  I was gonna say that, like I get, I, I understand that they’re frustrated and like, it, I’m not pulling them out or anything like that.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  Like, I’m just trying to bring light to areas that do need, like the NDIS is great and we’ve talked about that, but there are very much so things that do need more help and more support.

Seli:                              Absolutely. And unfortunately for LACs they do cop a lot of the backlash of, and again, it’s not a bad thing. It’s just something that happens. Conversations that begin on groups on Facebook, one person declares. So someone’s received something. They declare it to be fact that now everybody can receive this same thing. And then let’s say, for example, everyone’s calling their LAC going, “Hang on a second, that person just got a laptop that’s $2,000. How come mine’s only 750?” So if you know, the rules you’ll know that it’s $750 and that person’s potentially got some real disability elements that need customising on that, that assistive technology.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              So a laptop or phone or whatever, and that’s why that price is high. They also, might’ve had to go through a lengthy process of getting an occupational therapists report, which is very lengthy, but they go on. They’re so excited that they’ve received something and everyone else interprets it. Yes, It’s gone from $750 to $2000, well, it has not. So LACs cop a lot of that.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              And they have to find a way to move people forward.

Jade Taylor:                  Explain it.

Seli:                              Yes. In very quick amounts of time. So it’s not an easy gig.

Jade Taylor:                  Word of mouth can be a great thing and then word of mouth can be, uh-

Seli:                              Can be dangerous.

Jade Taylor:                  … can be dangerous. Can be very, very dangerous. If you could give any advice to participants just starting out on the NDIS scheme, what would it be?

Seli:                              Don’t be afraid. Don’t be afraid. Go for it. Applications. This is the beauty as well. This is something that I loved. Every application can be rejected and once it is, you can, you’ve got two options ’cause this is where a lot of people talk themselves out of it, “It will be rejected. I didn’t, you know, offer enough information.” They work themselves up to talking themselves out of it. Worst case scenario, your application is rejected. The next thing that happens is the NDIS will actually send you out a detailed, specific letter outlining why. If you don’t get that letter, you can always ask for it ’cause yes, mail can get lost and all sorts of things can happen. So you can definitely ask them. Usually it takes about two weeks to come out.

Seli:                              If you don’t understand what’s on that letter, definitely ask someone to help but the basic thing is, is once you’ve got that letter, you can do one of two things. You can try and figure out what they’re trying to say you’re missing ’cause usually it’s something small and silly that you can actually get so that you can get your application over the line. But if it’s not and you want to sort of, if, if it’s become like a bit too complicated and you don’t wanna persist there, you can just start a new application. The new application will not affect anything that you’ve done in the past. So even if you’re six applications in, right? All the rest, even though they’ve been rejected for multiple reasons, for whatever reason, the next one in line has nothing. They will not reflect backwards. They will only take your new one as it is.

Seli:                              A lot of people want to review the decision but that is a very specific, um, like thought that needs to go into it. Because when you review a rejection, people need to start understanding it’s that you’re calling the NDIS wrong. So there’s a big misunderstanding with that. If they’ve made a mistake, it’s one thing. If they’re asking you for more information just to process your application totally different thing. So you need to understand the difference. I think, between calling the NDIS out on making a mistake and then simply just not having enough info at that time to let you join the NDIS.

Seli:                              So you can do a multiple of things but there’s no, um, what’s the right word? There’s, there’s no, um, limit. You can, you can sort of just take it as you, as you need. So just don’t be afraid. Go for it. Call them up. Their customer service is actually fantastic. 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, which other government service does that? They’ve people, all different cities, main cities of Australia. I can vouch for that. They know their staff. They, that’s what they’re there for. Call up, get advice and keep applying if you need to. Don’t be afraid.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. And like, for me, I should, when I do my planning meetings-

Seli:                              Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor:                  … I, I grid, like, I always say, you know, like talking to my friend again, um, I have two things, you know, you can either do one or two things. You can give them the minimum or you can bombard them.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  I always go to the bombard-wise. I would rather give-

Seli:                              Me too.

Jade Taylor:                  … I would rather give them 800 bits of paper and be like, now, you read them all.

Seli:                              That’s right.

Jade Taylor:                  Then give them, uh, a little sheet of paper that says, “Yeah, I did this issue and this is why I need this, this next issue.”

Seli:                              Absolutely.

Jade Taylor:                  You know what I mean? Like, and like, what’s different for me and what’s different for other people, you know. Like that’s what people say to me like, “How do I, how do I go about doing this?” And I’m not, I’m not a professional. I’m not gonna put myself out there and be like, “Yeah, I’m a professional. I know about the NDIS.” But like, you know, people will say to me, “Jade, how do I apply for the NDIS?” And I’m more than happy to help them-

Seli:                              Absolutely.

Jade Taylor:                  … because I know that much.

Seli:                              Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor:                  I don’t know a lot, but I can help you.

Seli:                              Absolutely. And I added in a specific page actually to my website, which I never intended to on the beginning. And it’s a complete A to Z on how to apply and the options during that application process. Because, so, I suppose in a, in a sense it does, um, complicate things with the NDIS. There’s a lot of options for everything. So you can get lost even just in the options that you’ve got.

Jade Taylor:                  Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Seli:                              Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor:                  And I mean, it’s, (laughs) it’s cosmic paperwork. It’s going to-

Seli:                              Yay, we love that. (laughs)

Jade Taylor:                  Yay. Yay. It’s everything we live for. But you know, like I, I get, I get why, you know, they’re asking the four questions the same time, just in a different wording, you know.

Seli:                              Exactly.

Jade Taylor:                  Like I get that. But by the same token, it’s like, you know, I looked at the paperwork because paperwork is not my strong suit because of my disability and I went, “Hey James.”

Seli:                              Absolutely. Look, finding people to help. There’s more advocates out there now that are, you know, um, NDIS based. Um, and again, you know, a lot of, um, sort of rejections turn into reviews that really technically all they needed was one diagnosis paperwork.

Jade Taylor:                  Exactly.

Seli:                              So you don’t necessarily need to get that, you know, sort of, um, review happening ’cause that’s where it drags out. It drags out really a longer period of time rather than stopping reapplying ’cause you can reapply the day after. There’s no, you know, um, hurdles in that aspect and adding that one extra bit of document and you’re over the line. So yeah, it, it’s understanding, but yes, information is slowly coming out. I think I’m a little bit like ahead of the eight ball in the sense that publicly there’s no one really giving a lot of detail about what the NDIS is. I think even some people are quiet because they’re just so shocked on the assistance that they’re getting.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              Like they don’t wanna ruin it almost. They’re like scared about talking about it.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              So it’s a weird, a weird vibe that goes with NDIS at the moment.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. Yeah. I agree. And you just started to talk about our next question. What made you start on your social media journey When it comes to NDIS providing tips and tricks?

Seli:                              All right. I’ll tell the truth on this one. All right. So lock down. I mean, I’m in Victoria. So we are like the absolute pinnacle of what happens to a person (laughs) when they’re locked down for a very long period of time. I, um, tripped over, you know, and fell face first into TikTok thinking, “Oh, this is cool. I like the music. I like the little short, you know, um, videos.” It was very, um, distracting in a sense. So being frustrated that we were stuck at home and things like that. My kids are older so, you know, they don’t wanna hang out with mum.

Jade Taylor:                  [inaudible 00:35:21].

Seli:                              You know what? We, we have an understanding. We have an understanding, me and my kids. So they, they know where to find me if they need me. (laughs) But look, I just thought, “Oh, I’ll just muck around with this.” Like I do, in my own mind I think that I’m funny, but I don’t think anyone else (laughs) really, laughs.

Jade Taylor:                  Oh, no. No. I think they get to me and sometimes I’ll just scroll and I’ll be like, “Oh look, she’s gonna, she’s gonna entertain me for the day, you know”

Seli:                              Yeah. But look, it was one of those things that I thought was kind of cool, but I actually, myself, I felt very awkward in doing frivolous TikToks. So I did it for a while. I’d shut my account down or I’d put it away for a bit and then I’d be bored again. So I’d be like, “Oh, this trend is cOLL. I’ll give this a go.” But over a period of time, I was like, “Ah, I don’t know. I don’t know if this is for me.” And I actually closed down my account. So that was just a personal one. But when I decided to go into support coordination, I felt like there was a real big audience on TikTok that I could reach. And even if I got one person per day to learn something new about NDIS, I was gonna give it a crack. The actual like outcome I wasn’t expecting.

Seli:                              So even my account really, like I started it like May but I didn’t do anything with it. Um, and then I started putting up like some frequent videos and, um, yeah, I had heaps of support. So for me, I was sort of like, I was a TikToker in a sense but with no real, um, you know, following or anything. I was just doing my own thing. Um, but then I felt like, yeah, TikTok could be somewhere where little bits of information that could really hit home and really hit quick, especially with terminology. So, um, something that I found works with me and all of my clients across the board, it doesn’t matter what disability or impairment they have. They like me breaking down the information for them in ways it is actually understandable.

Jade Taylor:                  Yes.

Seli:                              So there’s certain things I don’t call when I talked to a client, I don’t call certain things away the NDIS would call them, even participant. You know, a lot of people when they get to me, they’re like, “So who is this participant?” And I’m like, “It’s you?” And they’re like, “What?” So they don’t even know what their own role in the whole scheme is called. You know, even a lot of people get caught out with the NDIS and the NDIA. So the NDIA is just the A on the end for that agency for the scheme.

Jade Taylor:                  Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seli:                              But it’s an agency you actually deal with. So people used to call us at work too, and you’d be like, you know, “Hi, this is Seli from the NDIA.” And they’d be like, “Oh, sorry, I think I’ve called the wrong number.” So even just small things like that, even my website, I’ve added in a breaking of terminology because it, it, it’s unnecessarily overboard, unnecessarily overboard. So even that, I think that’s what my aim was. Simplify, get it as short as possible and yes, I do talk a lot. So my three minute videos, you know, they get snuck in, but I try my best to keep it very short. So it’s a hard-hitting bit of information that someone really could have gone two years on NDIS and not actually known. That was all that my aim was. And so far I look, I have fun with it too. I enjoy it.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. And that’s, I mean, that’s the main thing, like for me, I mean, getting to talk to you and (laughs) getting to talk to Ashley, like I know, [crosstalk 00:38:53], you know, and there’s like a few out there that I just like everyday is just my go-to like, I wake up and I, uh, my, my automate thing is look at my emails. Okay, cool. Open TikTok, type in Ashley, you know, (laughs) and she comes up and I’m like, “Okay, what is she gonna talk about today?” You know what I mean? Like, and, and like, just getting to talk to her the last podcast, I was just like, I was the worst star struck. Like, it was like-

Seli:                              No, she’s really cool chick. Really cool chick.

Jade Taylor:                  You don’t know how much I idolise you as a human being. Like, honestly, [crosstalk 00:39:28] was like, like watching her in the, um, uh, the, I’ve lost the word, the SPEAK campaign she did.

Seli:                              Yes. It was amazing.

Jade Taylor:                  It was amazing just watching her work and like, I was, uh, and just, I was like, “Oh my God.” When I talked to Heidi about it’s podcasting, I was like, “please, please, please let me just be.”

Seli:                              Yes. And I thought it was a fantastic idea. Absolutely. Absolutely. We all have something to share at the end of the day. And that’s why even, you know, I’m a little, I’m actually a little bit shy. Like I have to work myself up to do TikTok videos ’cause I easily convinced myself out of it. I’m the first person to go, “I’ll just do it tomorrow.” I haven’t done many because I’ve been a bit busy, but I, I easily talk myself out of it, you know. What if I say the wrong word or if it doesn’t come across right? So I’ll convince myself to not do it more than do it, but I love that somebody gets something out of it that they just, it, it could change how they look at the whole NDIS like that one bit of information.

Jade Taylor:                  And that they don’t know, you know what I mean? Like it’s just-

Seli:                              How are they expected too. Where do you go?

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              You ask. Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. You know, you, you load up the NDIS website and you try and took me through that.

Seli:                              [inaudible 00:40:46].

Jade Taylor:                  It’s just, it’s nice. No, thanks. I’m, I’m pretty tech savvy. Like, you know, my disability doesn’t affect that. Like I’m pretty, I’m pretty tech savvy, but even I, I just don’t use the portal. I’m gonna be honest.

Seli:                              Okay.

Jade Taylor:                  I just don’t. I don’t go there.

Seli:                              It is. It’s too, it’s too much. It’s too much. It’s become, it all becomes a job. Like on top of having to deal (laughs) with your daily disability, you know, like the NDIS does become a job when the right people are put in the right places to support you and like good people at their job, right? It’s the secondary part. And those good people need to have more training and more education in the sector they work in. So that’s where it gets a little messy.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              Just a little bit messy.

Jade Taylor:                  And that’s why, I guess I wanted to go into this NDIS advocacy thing and like being a helper. Like, if you need something, just ask.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  Just ask. If I don’t know, I will point you to someone who I do know because, you know-

Seli:                              [inaudible 00:41:40].

Jade Taylor:                  … I have so many, I’ve met so many people through my supports that are gonna know someone who’s gonna know.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  I can shoot an email, I can shoot a message and be like, “Hey, this person’s struggling with this, do you know any information?” You know, like-

Seli:                              Absolutely.

Jade Taylor:                  [inaudible 00:41:52]. And I mean, it’s all about leaving a footprint. Like, well, you know, we’re put on this earth to, you know, we’re here. Why not try and leave something?

Seli:                              Yeah. Well, I never thought personally, like I’ve always like achieved in my jobs that I’ve had in my businesses that I’ve had and everything, but I never thought I was gonna be one of those people that when I clock off at the end of the day, I’m like, “I can’t wait for tomorrow.” And I am. Like, to me, it’s been like, I don’t know, almost like a little miracle of my own because I really found my little space that I fit in that I can’t get enough of this, like to help people with this. And I do believe it will be really good moving into the future. I think there’ll be a lot of changes but I think it will be very, very good moving into the future.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. Well, it’s like me with WWDA and, you know, all that, like I’ve always wanted to do this media platform thing, do podcasts, do all that, but I’ve just never had the-

Seli:                              YEAH.

Jade Taylor:                  … the where do you start thinking? You know, and, and seeing the application put up, you know, we were looking for advocates and stuff like that. I was like, “I’m just gonna, I’m gonna, I’m gonna do it. I’m gonna just do it.” You know what I mean?

Seli:                              Go for it. I love it.

Jade Taylor:                  And I was in that mood and I was like, I present my application where it was like, “Oh, wait, what if I get accepted?” (laughs) You know what I mean by that?

Seli:                              Now what?

Jade Taylor:                  Now want? And now I’m here.

Seli:                              That’s cool.

Jade Taylor:                  So what kind of services do you provide to the NDIS participants and how do you think people could benefit from it?

Seli:                              Okay. So the scope is very wide because I create aids, a service dependent on what someone needs from me. I’m very good at, I think I’m a good communicator, so that helps a lot. But the second part to it is, is I’m a really good listener. I really listen and where someone feels that they are wanting my help, generally with a few conversations we really do get down to the nitty gritty of where they need someone to just sort of slide in and take care of a certain area.

Seli:                              So with support coordination, there’s very basic services. Like for example, exposing and offering knowledge about, you know, other allied health professionals, community services, you know, government agencies that already exist out there that could connect to helping a person more with their NDIS like elements. So it would be a community service rather than just NDIS. It’s combining the two and working collaboratively, collaboratively, or you would be doing things like, um, accessing choices to certain services. So it could be something as simple as a gardener. You know, you can’t do your gardening or mow your lawn. You know, every couple of weeks I would provide you with five different choices of local gardeners and I would also give you the information about how much it costs through NDIS.

Seli:                              I do a bit of negotiating too, on behalf of my clients, which is something, again, a lot of support coordinators don’t do. And, um, it works in our benefit very well because we’ll have a discussion, um, not necessarily, um, immediately but most services in general say, you know, cutting the lawn is $40. Well, standard NDIS charges like $50. So we come up to a middle ground and we talk to say the, you know, Gardner, and they’re always willing to help and sort of stretch that funding a little bit more if you ask. So as a support coordinator, again, I, um, it may be my accounting influence. So maybe I just don’t mean to be like that, but I’m very business minded. So it helps with negotiating with pricing agreements.

Seli:                              So service agreements are a big thing. People need help to understand what this thing is that they’re signing, you know, because you get thrown a lot of bits of paper at you in the NDIS when you’re starting services and all of them look different, all of them are structured differently, all of them have different information and different prices. So by the time you’ve looked at like psychology, house cleaning, care, you know, in home, um, social and community participation, like there’s this whole massive list and you might have one, you know, company for each of these, it can get overwhelming.

Seli:                              So I kind of bring that down to the basics. I explain it before someone’s signing off on it. I also, a lot of the times with one-on-one care, I have this tendency and sorry to all the providers listening, I put them on the spot and actually ask them for trial periods without signing anything at all. I’m not a fan-

Jade Taylor:                  Yep. Yeah.

Seli:                              … of pushing a service, getting it signed off before anything was to start. So I advocate in that sense. I protect the participant from being trapped in a situation where they signed a bit of paper and despite look, they can cancel that’s, you know, always doable, but most service agreements hold onto that-

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              … like contract for at least four weeks. So you’re sort of stuck in this no man’s land. You’ve either got to pay them anyway, or you’re stuck with them sort of them being a little bit, you know, upset and then you’re apprehensive to bring someone else in. So I will do extra little things like that for my clients, which is make sure, it’s almost like trial before we sign off. We need to be happy and we need to try different things. And I’m very clear, always that if someone’s not happy, it does not matter. You do not need to explain to anyone. You do not need to, you know, apologise to anyone. If something’s not working, you tell me and we stop. That’s it.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              That’s it. But a lot of support coordinators don’t see it that way. They are getting the service, throwing it at the person, “Oh, you just got to sign.” And before you know it, you’ve actually got a service you don’t want, you don’t need, you don’t like, but you feel obligated. Like someone will be upset and ’cause you’re so grateful that you’re receiving, you don’t wanna say no. So you get stuck in this real weird cycle. Then the frustration starts.

Seli:                              So as a support coordinator, I think that I just try my best to expose potential risks like to the participant. And again, I really represent the providers as well. I don’t put them together and then run away. I’m here for both parties because you know, sometimes the easiest way to, um, communicate is not necessarily with the participant because they’re not comfortable with the provider, like the manager at the, at the company yet.

Jade Taylor:                  Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seli:                              They’re not gonna open up to them. They don’t wanna have certain discussions with them. So I’m sort of the middle ground that if they want me to, I kind of, you know, represent them. We get our message across and we get the services and supports we need. So I don’t know how to describe myself. I’m an all-rounder. I’m just an all-rounder. (laughs)

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. That’s totally fine. You know, going back to the lawn mowing thing, you know, you hit, you hit home with me because, okay, so my partner, James, he’s allergic to grass, right?

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  Like cannot do it. He’s tried. He’s tried every type of way to do it, he cannot do it, right?

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  I obviously spinal bifida, if I go out-

Seli:                              You’re not in a position to do that.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. So getting lawn mowing to me was something important, right?

Seli:                              Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor:                  My yard is two meters by like six meters. It’s like, I live in the middle of Brisbane. It’s literally like this big, right?

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  So like, (laughs) so Sean, my mowing guy, he has to charge a minimum. You understand? Like they have the minimum they have to charge.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  He’s like, “Jade, I feel like I’m legitimately ripping you off.” And I’m like, “Okay.” And he’s like, “I’m gonna come clean you gutters.” I was like, “Okay.” So he thinks [crosstalk 00:49:27].

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  You know what I mean? And like I had, I had a few things that needed doing around the house and he was, I needed some stuff taken to the-

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  … the cardboardy place and I was just talking to him in general. And he’s like, “Jade, you have time banked. I’ll do it.”

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  You know what I mean?

Seli:                              And this-

Jade Taylor:                  And I’m like-

Seli:                              … and this is the thing, a lot of people let’s say make a big deal of, “Oh, I can’t believe the government’s paying $55 for a house cleaner when I can get one for $35.” Yeah, but it’s about you communicating that, not just getting upset about it.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              Like you can’t just get angry that they did not actually offer an alternate solution. So that’s where again, I come in and I can see certain clients of mine will get frustrated and you’re absolutely right. We’ll just negotiate that the person goes outside and cleans under the pergola as well, for example. So he makes sure, you know, the outside is cleaned or the barbecue areas, so that they’ve got what they feel is value for money as well, you know. So yeah, it’s, it’s a battle both way straight.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              That’s what I’m really trying to say. And, and most, most genuine business people will meet you in the middle because they know what’s fair. They know what’s fair.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. Like, like Sean, Sean approached me. He was like, “Jade, I’m ripping you off and I’m not happy about this but I, I don’t have a choice. Like I need to be paid but you know, I don’t have a choice, so I’m gonna come clean your gutters and then I’m, uh, you know, just clean your screens and, you know, do all these things.” And like, I will just, like, he texted me and he said, “I’ll be around tomorrow to do a few small jobs.” And I’ll be like, “Okay.”

Jade Taylor:                  And we’re at the point where I said to him, I said, “Sean, I don’t mind if I’m home or not home.” Because he used to have this really big thing that I had to be home before he would enter that property. And like, we came to an agreement and then this is coming into another thing you said. So we redraw off our service agreement that said that I was happy for him to enter my property, not inside, but outside without me being home.

Seli:                              Yeah. Absolutely.

Jade Taylor:                  Because service agreements are so important. I cannot.

Seli:                              And, and certain businesses get that. You don’t just say it’s the client, it’s all about the client. They actually respect that it’s all about the client.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              And that’s where I think going back to what I said earlier about the potential issues, big companies are not offering that at the moment.

Jade Taylor:                  No. No.

Seli:                              And I’m worried that it will move forward and get worse. Whereas the little guys, they are so appreciative of that extra five bucks. They’re so understanding and willing to work with a client in comparison to the bigger corps. That is what, you know, to me makes even the scheme that little bit more special ’cause I was a small business owner for a very long time and I knew the struggles day to day. So for them as well to be able to have that as an option to keep their business going through all these hard times as well, because it’s been weird couple of years, um, you know, isn’t that amazing? It’s like, the whole thing just works if everyone’s doing like the honesty. I think that’s got a lot to do with it too.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. Yeah. Being honest with each other.

Seli:                              Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jade Taylor:                  And being open communication.

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  Like even my, like going to, you know, plan managed, self-managed, NDIA managed, you know, like my plan is I, um, I cannot give them enough thank you very much, you know.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  I owed them so much because like I have had times where I’ve been completely lost and I don’t have a support coordinator, you know, moving down to Brisbane and, you know, that’s all that I had and I had the find, I had to start again with all my services because obviously moving from Bundi to Brisbane-

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  … I couldn’t bring them with me-

Seli:                              No.

Jade Taylor:                  … you know. So like, and, and like I moved when, a time when my health was at its absolute worst. Like it’s not-

Seli:                              It’s very hard.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. It’s not what I was today. And I, my planner, just, she was amazing.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  Like I owe her so much, like my, my repayment to her is up here, you know, I’m still paying it off.

Seli:                              Yeah. Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  But, you know, it comes back to the big company again, you know, my plan is on, they’re Australia wide, but they’re not like, you know, one of the big, big, big ones that you think of immediately when you say, “Oh, NDIS plan manager.”

Seli:                              Yep. Absolutely. And again, look, I, I just think if it’s all upfront, all open, all transparent, great. But we know that’s not how the world sort of goes around.

Jade Taylor:                  No.

Seli:                              What I actually have more of an issue with, with the big corporate is their registrations, um, they crossover every absolute category. So that’s where I get a little bit mm ’cause I have heard too many stories about one company supplying five services. And I think that, that that’s room for, I’m not gonna call it corruption, but room for taking advantage of someone-

Jade Taylor:                  Very much so.

Seli:                              … that might quite understand. So that’s where I don’t believe. Like I understand they’ve got, you know, policies, procedures and, you know, everything in place to keep it all kosher and above board. It’s just, it’s too easy, you know, and I’d, I’d prefer to see separation like, all right, you’ve got a big corporate. That means you can separate your company’s true? So take them and separate them into separate companies-

Jade Taylor:                  Break them down.

Seli:                              … so that, you know, exactly, break them down, um, rather than having, yeah, just one name and everything sits under that. I just find that a little bit too much for my liking. But again, you know, it is, it is each to their own. And I think people will see for themselves over time, how different people work like different companies work.

Jade Taylor:                  Literally as a participant, I avoid them.

Seli:                              Yeah. And this is what I mean, I’m not trying to put anyone off. If they’ve got a good service and you’re happy with it, that’s fine. It’s from my feedback that I’ve gotten, like I’ve gotten so many TikTok messages that is exactly that like, “Oh, why did they send me, you know, the support worker from there when I asked from somewhere else and my plan manager is there and my support coordinator is there?” So it’s like, of course one company look any smart. Business owner is gonna give it all back to themselves but is that the best for the participants? I’m not really on board that, that is.

Jade Taylor:                  I, I, uh, I’m whole heartedly agreeing. What services do you, um, is there anything that you have learned working with disability services that you can share with our audience?

Seli:                              I think that I would have to say that there has been much neglect in Australia across the board to the needs of a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds, histories, disabilities, you know, impairments, you know, even accident, you know, um, accidents that don’t happen and, you know, TAC is on board and all of a sudden they’ve got a problem, you know, paying someone out. Like those things have always really gotten to my heart when I’ve heard and I’ve got one particular friend that, um, I call him a friend now. He was an employee and I like love him to bits because really like had so many difficulties, but he would always put in 500%. I’m not even talking 150%. He would put in 500%.

Seli:                              He would go home and I know he used to be in such extreme pain, but even for him, he, he just, he didn’t have avenues to turn to someone and go, I need help, you know. So for me, the biggest thing that I’ve, now with so many stories as well, like that I’ve been able to listen to, I just have realised like how many people have been left behind due to like, you know, paperwork, red tape, bureaucracy, you know, all the rest of it, and even down to states.

Seli:                              So one thing that I am very, very happy with the NDIS is that it is federal and it’s across Australia. If you move from Victoria to Queensland, nothing changes. Your plan stays the same. You are free to, maybe not with COVID now, but you are (laughs) you are free to live your life. So if you really have always said, “Oh, I wish I could go to Queensland.” Once upon a time, if you had really good services hooked up in Victoria, if you moved to Queensland, you lost all those. You couldn’t take them with you. It was all state-based.

Jade Taylor:                  Yep.

Seli:                              It was also organisation based, which worked in some ways, but didn’t work in others. So a lot of people, again, like how could one person because they live in one area, get a brand new, let’s say wheelchair every year, supply to them, full charge, no out-of-pocket fees. But if you lived in a rural area that was completely different-

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              … how, or I didn’t, that, I think that’s what was exposed to me more and more. And again, because of my accounting curiosity mind, I started looking at figures more than anything, percentages and how it was all broken down. And they really did do a good job of saying what’s fair is fair as long as you can present it to us in a way that we can, and I hate saying the word, but justify-

Jade Taylor:                  Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Seli:                              … what you’re asking for, they will say, yes. They will support you. Like it is therefore the taking an Australia wide and with full access, including your own personal, you know, views. I would also say the second thing that I have learnt, and this is, even when I started at the NDIS, um, a lot of people are in much self doubt of themselves because of a disability impairment. There’s some of the most down to earth intelligent, well-spoken, you know, I’ve heard people say so many times to you, “I’m so sorry.” You know, like apologising to me as if I wouldn’t be able to understand and know. People don’t stop and listen, and that’s got, that’s got to end.

Seli:                              You’ve got to give someone attention when you are with them and people with disability impairments, they’ve got probably 10 times more to give than your average able people that just gets up in the morning, comes home at night after work and that’s kind of the end of it. They’ve experienced something and offer something that others can’t offer. So I think my exposure to I was already, I was already a very empathetic person, but this has just taken it to another level. And I’ve learned how beautiful the people inside are once they’ve given that chance. Once they’re given that little bit of a spark. It’s okay, go for it, be yourself. Like it’s, it’s all real, you know, on a bad day I might not feel that way, but it is all real. You can actually go for it.

Jade Taylor:                  You’re literally gonna make me cry. You’re actually gonna make me cry. Um, uh, as someone with a disability who has lived 27 years of my life being told, you know, you’re never gonna move to Brisbane. You’re never gonna have a job. You’re never gonna do anything. You’re just someone with a disability. You’ve just got to deal with your medical, you know. Like I am that type of person where if you tell me that I’m not gonna do something, I will make it my mission to do the polar opposite of it.

Seli:                              Opposite. I love that.

Jade Taylor:                  My, my dad will tell you that wholeheartedly.

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  Like they said to me at 16, you’re never gonna walk again. And I was like-

Seli:                              And I’ll dare anyone. Absolutely.

Jade Taylor:                  … I was like, “Okay, I may ’cause I’m pretty sure I’ve lost my walking and regained at five times now.”

Seli:                              Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  I’m pretty sure I lost my walking three months before my wedding day and still walked down the aisle for my wedding. You know what I mean?

Seli:                              I love that. Yep.

Jade Taylor:                  And like, it’s like moving to Brisbane, you know, yeah, okay, It wasn’t out of my own, I wasn’t like, “Yeah, that’s it. I’m moving to Brisbane.” You know, like, because, um, um, I got the brains up here a little bit to go that’s not gonna work out if I just pack my stuff and move but-

Seli:                              Yes.

Jade Taylor:                  … you know, I was in hospital with Sepsis, to be honest. That’s where I was and my urologist, Dr. Simon, he said to me, he said, “Jade, I can’t treat you being in Bundi. Like I can’t do it. I don’t have [crosstalk 01:01:58]. I don’t have permission to see you at any hospitals. I don’t, I can’t do it.” And the health care, not calling Bundi up, but the healthcare in Bundi is not as good as Brisbane, we all know that.

Seli:                              Yeah.

Jade Taylor:                  Um, and I rang, um, Lauren from Disability Housing and I said, you know, “Help me.” And she said, “How do you not already have SDA?”

Seli:                              Yup.

Jade Taylor:                  And then that was it. I was, I was on the plane. I was taken off, you know, so.

Seli:                              It is, and look, I’ve got goosebumps because that’s exactly how it should be.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              Yeah. I love that.

Jade Taylor:                  What advice would you give to young women, non-binary young people with disabilities wanting to start their own businesses, whether it be on the NDIS side or in their main field?

Seli:                              I’m a big believer that business is usually found in a place that you find a gap. So look at yourself to discover what it is that is not there currently, that you’re looking for and you’ll probably find that a lot of other people are looking for the exact same thing. So don’t try and look outwards to, you know, people that have already made millions, doing all sorts of other things. Don’t, don’t worry about all of that. Look within yourself and find that special thing that you are missing and you’d be surprised how many other people would appreciate if you pursued that.

Seli:                              So look, look within yourself and you will see potential to start your own business and it can be small and innocent and cute and something that you make at home. It doesn’t have to be this trillion dollar idea with marketing and this and that. That’s all BS at the end of the day. Find something that you can’t access and see if it’s something that you can sort of offer to others.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. Exactly. Finally, do you have any disability life hacks or advice for young people listening?

Seli:                              Yep. Tell the truth. It’s really, really basic. I know how hard it is to be vulnerable and in the position where people are asking you questions that you don’t want to even answer to yourself, right? But I’m telling you now, taking that little bit of a chance and humans, they’re pretty good. I know it doesn’t feel like it always, but they are. You give them a chance and you tell them the full truth because what that will do is get you the full help. By protecting yourself and being scared to be vulnerable and that is actually then a lie. So you might not be able to express yourself ’cause you’re so worried, but that little lie that pro- is protecting you so you’re doing it for a good reason, it’s actually not gonna help you. So being truthful and even seeking out someone that you really deep down know that they have the best intention, use them to get your messages across, but trust somebody and tell the truth.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. Yeah. I, I wholeheartedly, especially when it comes to NDIS, you’ve got to be a hundred percent real and a hundred percent open even on things that you’re not comfortable talking about, your just gotta, you gotta do it.

Seli:                              Un- Unfortunately it is part of it, but that will gain you 10 times more than thinking that they don’t need to know this or if I don’t tell anyone, I’ll just sort it out later. You don’t have to hold it in anymore. You find that person, even if it’s just one that you know you can trust and get them to help you. Having a sidekick helps a lot too.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah.

Seli:                              You can, you can, you can have your, your sidekick when it comes to NDIS and they can really be a voice for you if you need it.

Jade Taylor:                  Yeah. So Seli, tell us where people can find you or where I found you, wherever-

Seli:                              Yes.

Jade Taylor:                  … applies to you? (laughs)

Seli:                              Absolutely. Well, look, if you’re interested and look, I’m gonna cringe a little bit now, but TikTok, I am on TikTok. It is ndis.little.helper and otherwise you can look up my website, which is just www.truebluevalueservices.com. So if you’re interested and I’m always open to anyone having questions or, you know, needing a hand, um, I support people for application for absolutely no charge. So if you need it, there is help out there. So feel free to, um, yeah, hit me up, send me a message, email, texts. There’s so many ways you can get in touch.

Jade Taylor:                  Hmm. Thank you so much for today, honestly.

Seli:                              Thank you, Jade. I was like blown away that you’d asked me to come on. So thank you so much. (laughs) Thank you, thank you to the organisation as well. Like honestly, I’ve been reading up a little bit now too, and, um, yeah, amazing, amazing guys.

Jade Taylor:                  Thank you. And, you know, I appreciate everything that you do ’cause like, even like one thing that I might not know there is certainly someone out there who doesn’t know it.

Seli:                              Absolutely. We all have to help each other, um, especially, yeah, with the NDIS, like you said, changes every day. So the more everyone knows we can just share and mix and match. (laughs)

Jade Taylor:                  Exactly. Thank you everyone for listening to episode four of our podcasts. We’ll see you back for episode five.