Melanie Hawkes – Transcript

Audio Description: A woman in a straw hat, purple t shirt and grey trousers, Melanie, is travelling in a power wheelchair on the sidewalk of a suburban street with a golden Labrador, Upton, on a leash alongside.

**Melanie:** My name’s Melanie. I live in Riverton with my dog Upton. I’m passionate about the environment and anything related to Japanese.

Audio description: Upton picks up a plastic water bottle in his mouth from the grass and puts it onto Melanie’s tray table where there are bits of plastic litter and an open plastic container with treats. Melanie uses a custom made white stick, held in her mouth, to transfer a treat to Upton.

Back at home, Melanie supervises Upton as he puts one of the empty water bottles in a recycling bin and flips the lip closed.

**Melanie:** I love a day at home. Me and the dog and no deadlines and schedules.

Audio Description: Melanie is in her loungeroom watching as Upton climbs onto a cream sofa with a brown dog blanket on it. With her chair alongside the sofa, he takes a treat from her hand as she talks to him.

**Melanie:** Upton helps me out heaps at home. He can pick up things that I drop. He can open the fridge and he enables me to live a life where I don’t have to have people in here all the time, which I really value.

Audio Description: In another part of the house Melanie and Upton are outside a bedroom door which Upton opens by rising on his back legs briefly and tugging at a cord on the door handle.

In the kitchen he opens the lower freezer door on the fridge, also using a cord. From the freezer he drags out a plastic bag which has a large rubber Kong dog treat toy. There are two similar toys in metal bowls in the freezer. There are magnets on the fridge, one of which says Housing Choices Western Australia.

Melanie sits near the kitchen table and leans forward so that Upton can grasp the brim of her straw hat and take it off and lay it gently on the table.

**Melanie:** Having an accessible place means that I canbe left on my own for longer periods andbeing able to still function and get a drink.

Audio Description: Upton tugs open the oven door and Melanie uses her long stick to push in a tray spread with pumpkin seeds. She also uses the stick to turn over wedges of pumpkin baking on the tray above, to push the tray back in, turn the oven temperature dial and close the door.

Out in the street near her letterbox, Melanie uses the stick to open it and slide the letters onto her tray table.

**Melanie:** Yeah, those little things that make a big difference to my day to day life. Yeah, I’m really proud that it was built the way I wanted it to be and it’s such a relief to know that I’ll never have to move again.

I work for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. I write transcripts and captions of the videos.

Audio Description: In her colourful home office, Upton lies on the floor next to Melanie who is at her desk in front of a computer. On screen she is editing audio on the video of a bushfire. On screen the title says: Burn Smart 1 Copy 02. banksiaWinterBurning.master.mov(78.6%) Dip to black. The screen changes to one with captions which say: “So with the increased suspension: smoother ride. And you can hold more momentum, so which is yeah, a crucial aspect of being able to get up soft sandy hils like we have here”. Another screen page shows a video with a fireman in an orange uniform in front of a white truck.

**Melanie:** Part of my role is also to issue public information through the Emergency WA website, and I like to think that I’m saving lives from my computer desk, by telling people what to do during emergencies.

Audio Description: Melanie uses her phone which is on the Warnings and Incidents page of the Department’s website showing Bushfire and other weather emergency advice. She presses on a section with the heading: Storm – Take Action Now. It briefly turns blue and then opens another section with the words: Storm – Take Action Now – the Pilbara and Gascoyne Districts. The following alert has been issued by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES). Please note changes to Weather Details. Time of Issue: 11.00 am. Date of issue: 31 March 2022. Take action with severe weather coming in parts of the Midwest Gascoyne. {ilbara

**Melanie:** I also work at ADWebKey and my role is a Usability Analyst, and I provide feedback on what works and what doesn’t work on websites and apps.

On a different screen page on her computer, Melanie writes an email above her signature block that has Melanie Hawkes Usability Analyst ADWebkey and then works on a page entitled Quiever Analysis Contents.

**Melanie:** I’m also on several committees including, as an associate director for the Physical Disability Australia’s board.

I studied Japanese at high school and university, and it’s been a big influence on the rest of my life,and it’s just boiled over into other things that I do, so I got into the Bonsai Society of WA, and I have a collection of Bonsais now.

So I do a lot of things that just relate to my love of Japan and Japanese culture.

Audio Description: In a courtyard with creeper covered fences and tables with bonsai plants, Melanie is one of five people wearing blue polo shirts who sit or stand and trim their different bonsai plants. With a specialised set of scissors held in her mouth she clips leaves on the tiny tree in front of her.

**Melanie:** Homelife is also about, you know, what I love doing, It’s just nice having a place that I can be creative and write and, but also get some work done from home and, yeah it’s just the whole flexibility of using my home how I want it to. Each day is different.

Audio Description: Melanie is in front of her computer reading from a story document with the title Compact Magazine. In a different scene with her phone and a remote in front of her, Upton nudges her arm with his nose as she smiles at him.

In a different location, a white mug with the words, The Society of Women Writers WA, is filled with hot chocolate and a straw and has two pink marshmallows on the saucer below. Melanie is in a café with the cup and an open book on her traytable. She is in a circle of women who are chatting, and one is reading from a book.

**Melanie:** I recently started writing as a hobby. And I recently joined a writer’s circle. So I submit stories every month and get feedback on my stories and provide feedback to others.

My very first published piece of writing was a poem that I wrote about my home, and it was a pretty special moment to see it published in a book.

Audio Description: A young woman next to Melanie holds a book with a picture of a woman in a hat looking out at tree with magnificent purple flowers. The title says ‘A Sense of Place’ and has the words - Society of Women Writers WA, at the bottom. She opens it to a bookmarked page showing Melanie’s poem – Home is my sanctuary. Melanie reads it aloud to the other women.

**Melanie:** Home is my sanctuary. I'm surrounded by things that make me happy. Where I can be comfy and silly, and my dog makes me hairy. My bed is warm and cosy, and my bath is luxurious and soapy. It is my place of safety. I can hang out with friends and family over a coffee or a pot of tea, or if I'm in the mood, a glass of bubbly. Where I can stay in trackies and have fun with my hobbies including bonsai, my tiny trees, to go with my love of all things Japanese. My kimono on display, with geta and obi, and cook yummy food: udon, tonkatsu and sushi! And not wear a bra or shoes and be free. My home: where I can just be, despite my physical disability. Most of the time it's just my dog and me.

Audio Description: As Melanie reads there are scenes from her home; using her stick to flick treats to Upton who catches them in his mouth, or transferring them directly to him from the treat box on her tray table; with her parents smiling and chatting as they enjoy a pot of tea at her kitchen table; going into the backyard with Upton; trimming her bonsai trees and chatting and eating a colourful array of Japanese food with the Bonsai club members; an apricot kimono on a dressmakers dummy with a purple parasol at the top; and an art work in her kitchen with the title Home is my Sanctuary that has her poem printed out in a large standalone frame with a paper bonsai tree down the bottom and plants and cards surrounding it. The final image is of Melanie travelling into her kitchen with Upton following.

Text on screen:

The Lives We Lead Homelife. This story is part of The Lives We Lead Homelife and has been funded by the Department of Communities, Disability Services

Underneath are the logos for: WAIS (WA’s Individualised Services; Kin (Know What’s Possible) and PWDWA (People with Disabilities Western Australia)