

## Don't exclude us from the digital era: Call for National Standards on Digital Accessibility

Gisele Mesnage, is known to many as the blind woman from Sydney who took on Coles Supermarket. The highly publicized landmark case challenged the supermarket giant over accessibility issues on their online shopping website.

The Case settled amicably in February 2015 however, Gisele was motivated more than ever to continue in her quest in closing the digital gap that exists for as many as 20% of Australians affected by disability and for older people.

The **Digital Gap Initiative** (<http://www.digitalgap.org>), founded by Gisele, is a non-profit network that has brought together like-minded individuals from varied backgrounds all around Australia. They share a wealth of personal first-hand experience, daily facing issues which affect them as normal people who contribute to society and wish to access life. This includes the readiness to spend money with retailers who often inadvertently place barriers in the way of these willing customers.

### Access to digital technology should be guaranteed by law.

The Digital Gap Initiative project will focus on advocating for legal, policy and other systemic reforms, with the aim of reducing digital barriers experienced by people with disability and older people. The project will provide information to groups and individuals on how best to communicate with those whose services are currently inaccessible. At a higher level, the Digital Gap Initiative will seek to bring about systemic change by involving individuals, governments, companies and other stakeholders to work towards policies and compliance-based accessibility standards that are equitable and workable.

Gisele: *"Digitalisation offers unprecedented opportunities for universal access to education, employment, entertainment and much more, because it is far easier to adapt digital codes than the mortar and bricks of the built environment. And for people with disability, older people etc., it is far more convenient to access online services."*

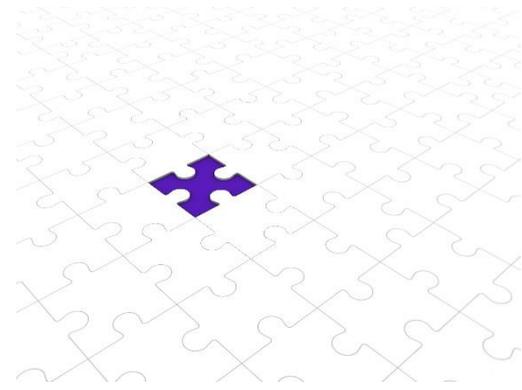
Ted McCoskey, an adaptive technology trainer and vision impaired web developer who is President of the digital Gap Initiative Network, echoes this sentiment and adds: *"Leaving this to the better angels of conscience simply isn't working. People would be shocked by how many companies, even huge ones who ought to know better, and government services too, either ignore or are ignorant of how to make this work. Access to digital technology should be guaranteed by law, in the same way as is access to premises"*

### Integrating Human Quality in Accessibility.

With the generous support of innovative quality integrator consultancy AccessHQ and a grant from My Choice Matters, the Digital Gap Initiative will be launched in Sydney on Thursday 21 May at a breakfast seminar to be hosted by **AccessHQ**.

Greg Barnett, General Manager - Customer Experience Consulting at AccessHQ, where HQ stands for Human Quality, comments: *"Despite an increased focus on accessibility in recent years, the rush of businesses coming online has created a situation where the rate of websites becoming accessible is being outpaced by the rate of new, inaccessible websites.*

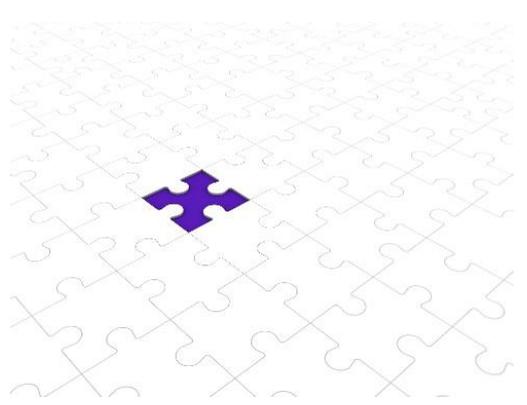
*Although the WCAG 2.0 guidelines are a powerful and sincere way to approach web accessibility, we are seeing gaps in the effectiveness of WCAG 2.0 to cover all accessibility requirements".*



## Global Accessibility Awareness Day

The Launch has been timed to coincide with Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) 2015. GAAD encourages people around the world to talk, think and learn about digital accessibility in all forms.

Gisele urges Australians to take the Global Accessibility Awareness Day challenge: *"For just one hour on 21 May, do not use your mouse - use the keyboard instead. Or switch on a screen reader like VoiceOver or TalkBack on your mobile device"*



## The Digital Gap Initiative Launch

**Date:** Thursday 21 May

**Time:** 8.30 am - 9.30 am

**Location:** Hilton Sydney Hotel, 488 George Street Sydney

**Key Speakers:** Greg Barnett (AccessHQ); Ted McCosky and Gisele Mesnage (Digital Gap Initiative)

## Contact

### Gisele Mesnage (Founder/Coordinator Digital Gap Initiative Network)

Phone: 02 9799 5388 (please use this landline # as main contact or to leave a message)

Mob: 0428 260 600

Email: [Gisele@digitalgap.org](mailto:Gisele@digitalgap.org)

### Ted McCoskey (President, Digital Gap Initiative Network)

Mob: 0404 878 957

Email: [ted@digitalgap.org](mailto:ted@digitalgap.org)

### Greg Barnett (General Manager - Customer Insights Practice AccessHQ)

Mob: 0430 453 304

Email: [greg.barnett@accesshq.com](mailto:greg.barnett@accesshq.com)

Digital Gap Initiative: <http://www.digitalgap.org/>