Margherita:

Hi everyone. Welcome back to Women With Disabilities Australia Youth Network podcast. Today, you might be hearing a new voice. As our regular interviewer, Jade, is sick, I will be stepping in, Margherita. Um, but we send so much love to Jade and hope that she has a really speedy recovery. Today we are interviewing Charlotte Young. Charlotte is a member of our youth advisory committee, but is involved in her community in so many ways, um, but specifically at university. Before we start, I'm very eager to get into the questions. Um, but I'd like to do an acknowledgement on co- of country and acknowledge that I'm calling in from Ngunuwal and Ngambri country. This land was stolen and now receded. I would also like to acknowledge our elders, past, present and emerging, and extend that to all indigenous listeners. Uh, and also Charlotte, if before you'd like to start, you'd like to acknowledge the land that you're on. Um, and my first question is, if you could tell us a little bit about yourself and your background.

Charlotte:

Of course. Hi, everyone. Um, thank you so much for having me. I'm very excited to be here. Um, also acknowledging that I'm currently on the Ngunuwal and Ngambri land. Um, so yeah, uh, as you've mentioned, um-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

... Margherita, it's been bit of a, an exciting journey. Like I've done-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

... quite a lot of, um, different aspects and different dabbling into the areas. Um, but to put it shortly, um, I'm a youth and disability advocate, and unpacking all of that, it's consisting of being on representative councils. I help facilitate and organize youth-led events. Um, and I am involved in commentating on issues and opportunities, um, that relate to young people through public speaking. Um, in terms of my education, I'm in my second year of a double bachelor of politics, philosophy and economics. So, that's one bachelor called PPE. And, um, my second one is arts up at ANU. Um, yeah, I'm currently settling into uni and the rigors of college life-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

... which is serving me well at the moment. (laughing) Um, I, in terms of some background about my disability, I, um, have hearing aids. I wear them in both ears. I have what is medically known as, um, a bilateral, moderate hearing loss. Essentially both ears, I've lost about 50%. Um, I was diagnosed relatively late for a young person-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... at around four years old. Uh, thank, many thanks to my mom for advocating in those, um-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... those doctors. Um, sometimes it can be-

Margherita:

Must be hard.

Charlotte:

Yeah. Um, but, you know, we got there. And so in terms of my childhood, I grew up in Melbourne. Um, I loved doing dance and music. Margherita may have heard a few of my DJ sets up at college. (laughs)

Margherita:

Yeah. So, exciting.

Charlotte:

I love, and I also love like, obviously, um, it's so wonderful to have disability representation in music, but like female DJs, I'm all for it. (laughs) It's so much fun. I reckon everybody should get around it.

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

Um, but yeah, I think it's really funnily enough stems from doing dance as a young, young kid since I was like eight, to, to this day. And I remember having to just put myself out there on the stage, you know, putting-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... lot of makeup on and then sort of getting into that performance, um, stage performing for others. And then I found myself in this interesting work of advocacy, which I never could have expected.

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

Um, but I think that's, that's sort of where my, I guess, natural inclination occurred to work in this area.

Margherita:

Yeah, no, I love hearing, um, activism in art spaces and in, you know, dance and all of these things. I know normally when we think about activism, we kind of think about, oh, going to conferences and speaking on panels, and all of this stuff. Um, but I love hearing that you're from that background, uh, and that you continue to do it, which is so exciting.

Charlotte:

(laughs)

Margherita:

Um, I guess more specifically, I'd like to hear about your activism at, I guess, like an educational level, you know, high school, university. Um, how did you get involved in such huge institutions-

Charlotte:

Okay.

Margherita:

... that, uh, as I'm sure, you know, so often really don't wanna facilitate that, um, involvement of people with disabilities.

Charlotte:

Mm-hmm. Yeah. So, I come from an arts oriented family. Um, and my first, I guess, major experience with advocacy specifically in activism was being a part of the national gallery of Victoria's Teen Council.

Margherita:

Wow.

Charlotte:

Yeah. And funnily enough, um, yeah, it, it was really just to do with seeing somebody and that linked me and, um, saying, I think you'd be interested in this. And so I applied. Um, very thankfully, um, I got in, and some of the people that I've met there are my best friends to this day. Um-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... and I, yeah, I adored that experience of having, um, you know, sort of an underlying motivation to drive inclusion and use voice. Um, but at the same time, creating fun events and, you know, um-

Margherita:

Yeah, absolutely.

Charlotte:

... one that we hosted was, um, the art party, which in- invited a bunch of young people to come to the NGV, um, at night have a bit of a boogie, have a bit of a dance.

Margherita:

(laughs)

Charlotte:

We got, um, a drag queen into MC and-

Margherita:

Wow.

Charlotte:

And yeah, and then, like, the next year we got Dylan Alcott funnily enough to MC, which was, um, amazing, um, and was a really, um, incredible experience to meet him there. Um, and then moving into high school, uh, did, did your good old, um, all of the co-curriculars.

Margherita:

(laughs)

Charlotte:

I was very involved in school based activities, um, specifically sustainability activism. I was part-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... of the green team, um, where we, we did a lot of collaborative work with, um, the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. Um-

Margherita:

Yeah, yeah.

Charlotte:

That, yeah, that exposed me to, um, a different side, a more professional side of, uh, activism, I would say, maybe a bit more politically inclined than something like the NGV. Um, it's still involving youth voices, but was to do with like current events. Um-

Margherita:

Yes.

Charlotte:

... and I was very, very grateful and lucky to have a dedicated school team, um, that supported young women. So, I went to an all girls school, um, in high-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... school that had a dedicated deaf integration, um, program, and so-

Margherita:

Oh, that's so exciting.

Charlotte:

Yeah. Yeah. So, um, some teachers that were very, very supportive. Um, and I sort of found myself in these opportunities where I was invited to speak at the Royal Children's Hospital-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... um, to some nurses. Um, and I guess that sort of exposed me to lending my voice, to speak for others and to educate others. But it wasn't really until year 11, um, when... I, I, I tend to come back to this moment in year 11, where I was reflecting on leadership and the concept of leadership. This was at the point when we were doing all the big, um, prefect elections and everybody was sort of talking.

Margherita:

Yes.

Charlotte:

Yeah. All the, you know, big, uh, inner school bureaucracy moments.

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

Yeah. Um, and I was reflecting on, you know, my personal experiences with what I've done in the past. And I was feeling like I had this gap of being able to advocate, um, sorry to be able to lead, um, inclusively for people with disability. And I came across this program run by the Youth Disability Advocacy Service in Victoria, and it's called the Young Leaders Program.

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

Um, and decided to attend. Uh, it was, really came from a place of yes, wanting to learn how to advocate inclusively, but wanting to make friends in the disability sector and finding my place. Um-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... I really hadn't engaged much with the disability community beforehand, and I think that that young leaders program was a real catalyst for my involvement in that sector, because it gave me tangible skills and networks and training.

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

Um, and it gave me a sense of what's out there. I was so lucky to hear Carly Findlay, who I know that you've-

Margherita:

Yeah. Through interview. Woo.

Charlotte:

Yeah. So, I, she was one of the speakers for this particular training. And hearing her and hearing the experiences of so many other young people just opened my eyes and gave me a sense of what's out there. Um, and the problems that seem so big, such as inequality and discrimination, um, I learned that there are little inroads and wins that count. Um-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

So, then I guess moving into, beyond [inaudible 00:09:02], um, I was approached with an opportunity, I guess, via an email, um, (laughing) that was open to everyone, um, with, to work with Children and Young People with Disability Australia. So, I'll be referring to them as CYDA from now on. Um, but for our listeners who don't know, CYDA is a national representative organization for children and young people with disability between age zero to 25 years.

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

Um, and they provide a link between the direct experiences of children and young people with disability and the Australian government, and other stakeholders. Uh, so I first became involved with CYDA, um, as part of their co-design committee for the inaugural National Youth Disability Summit, um, which was incredible. I loved it.

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

Um, it, it, it was, uh, uh, I definitely have more to speak about it later. Um, but I think that working with the national organization, um, and having them listen to my voice and really accounting my ideas was incredibly empowering. And it led me to work with other groups such as Women with Disabilities Victoria in their co-design groups for restructuring their youth programs, and led me into Women with Disabilities Australia.

Margherita:

Ooh.

Charlotte:

Well, um, where I get to work with the lovely Margherita. And, um, yeah, with the youth advisory group. And I guess since then, it, it sounds like a, I guess, a es- a well established group. But, um, I've also been involved as the representative of Australia in the global network of young people with dis disabilities. So-

Margherita:

So exciting.

Charlotte:

(laughs) Yeah. Um, it, it's, it's a privilege to be in that role. Um, and I'm currently collaborating with the secretariat to build that network. So, hopefully in a few years, um, can you stay tuned, that will become a force for good. Um, and yeah, I just, I spend some time commentating on issues, um, on media outlets and doing-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... just speaking and representing forums, events. Um, but again, it's stemming from being able to get involved was being curious, and being brave and fearless and, you know, that's hard. Um, but-

Margherita:

Yeah, absolutely.

Charlotte:

... definitely something... The m- the phrase that comes to mind is to back yourself really. Um, so, um-

Margherita:

Yeah, yeah. Well, no, you know, I mean, our next question's about the side of National Youth Disability Summit, but I'd, I'd also really like to hear about really, I mean, hearing from, from these starts and how a lot of the times young people with disabilities really only get involved in the community because of one thing that they were like, oh, I'll sign up to this and it's super scary.

Charlotte:

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Margherita:

Um, and you don't really know anyone yet. And, um, I think like it's such a show to prove how interconnected the community is to know-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... that, like I, like, we do a lot of things with CYDA, but in general, like, um, the disability community just kind of all know each other.

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

Um, and so I just really love to hear about your role with CYDA at the National Youth Disability Summit, but also how, I guess your experience in, um, in the gallery, in the arts, in all of that kind of influence that, as opposed to maybe just seeing it as a, um, youth representative role, but rather have more potential.

Charlotte:

Of course. Yeah. Um, so coming into my role at the moment with CYDA. Um, as a result of my involvement in the first summit, I was approached to be the chair, um, of the co-design committee.

Margherita:

So exciting.

Charlotte:

Um, which I was very happy to do. Um, and I'm fortunate to share the summit and work with some of the brightest minds across the nation, to be honest, um, to help-

Margherita:

Yeah. Yeah.

Charlotte:

And I think that, um, my main role is really to be, I guess, uh, I guess a friend, like, a friendly face who's there to mentor and guide. I, um, coming from a relatively, like, I guess, artistic background and I always try and look at things with a creative lens in terms of strategic, um, aspects. So, some of, some of the things that I notice particularly in the art world, um, is that they tend to be quite, um, innovative in their way-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... of collaborating with, um, very important social issues at the time. So-

Margherita:

Yeah. Yeah.

Charlotte:

... looking at how, um, the NGV collaborates with indigenous artists, I was thinking about how our summit was relating to the indigenous community. Um, and it so happens that, um, our summit will be hosted during NAIDOC Week. And so-

Margherita:

Wow.

Charlotte:

... designing and strategizing with that event was really interesting for me because I, I came from this background of, oh, um, how, how do we collaborate without taking up space? And a lot of that was about being a- allies, um, and collaborating with the appropriate representative groups for that. Um-

Margherita:

Yeah. Yeah. And I'm sure it's also really important considering the intersections that so many, um, people with disabilities also face discrimination from being indigenous and-

Charlotte:

Mm-hmm.

Margherita:

... um, especially women. So, I think it's, it's definitely, I can imagine something really big to think about.

Charlotte:

Hmm. Yeah. And I really think that my awareness of that inclusivity came from, like, the importance that the arts hold in being inclusive, um, and having different methods of portraying information, um, such as videos, and dance, and all of the fantastic things-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... we've seen out in the world, um, are parts of the summit, which I would love to bring. Uh, I mean, sorry, parts of, I guess, e- event experience I'd love to bring to the summit. Um, and so, uh, yeah, within this role I assist in gathering and synthesizing young people's opinions, um-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... and various areas of interest. So, each summit there will be different focuses on what each particular co-design group thinks is relevant and needed to be talked about. So, for example, um, this year we're talking about advocacy and ed- education, and the third group is medical systems and diagnosis or lack thereof, and the-

Margherita:

Wow.

Charlotte:

... mental world of disability. So, these are three major issues that young people feel like need to be represented, and have a space to talk about at the moment. And that's what we deliver on. So, we, yeah, I, I ass- assist with, uh, clarifying those key issues and how do we create an engaging summit that's inclusive and, um, you know, quite, I guess, in- innovative, in a way.

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

You know, because this is only the second national summit that's occurred in Australia, um, ever. So, um, it's, it's really exciting to see it from the beginnings and help develop it, um, with my own little, I guess, experience of the arts, but-

Margherita:

Yes. Yeah.

Charlotte:

... um, all my other experiences, yeah, as well.

Margherita:

Yeah. Well, I, you know, um, again, a little bit off script, but what kind of, um, you know... Following the summit, it happens you hear from all of these young people and, and what kind of happens in the aftermath. I find that so many times people go to events and-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... they participate, um, and sometimes get lost in the kind of what they, what happens after.

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

Um, so, you know, if anyone who is listening might want to attend or, you know, I would hope they do.

Charlotte:

Mm-hmm.

Margherita:

Um, yeah. I'd love to hear about what happens after.

Charlotte:

Yes. For any listeners, it's happening from the 5th to 7th of July, um, completely online and free, and we'll be having, um, mainly, or two autonomous days and one open day for anyone to attend. But, um, in terms of how.... Sorry, Margherita, do you mind repeating?

Margherita:

Yeah. Sorry. No, of course. I think it's important to plug it first of all.

Charlotte:

(laughs) Yeah.

Margherita:

I'm just wondering, sort of, what is the aftermath of the summit?

Charlotte:

Hmm. Yeah, of course. So, it, it varies. Um, it's always, uh, an interesting, um, strategic area to think about. Um, last year, I mean, sorry, in 2020, what occurred is that we had our policy team at CYDA go through all the recordings and create, I guess, an advisory sort of sheet, um, an analysis, a policy analysis based on what young people said. And we presented those to major and key stakeholders, including the government. In this year's summit, it might look a bit different. We're, um, aiming to have a more social focus on what will be-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

... the aftermath of it. So, creating a larger ecosystem and more effective means of communicating, so we can continue to build on that strong, uh, community that you talked about, Margherita, um, and let it grow. Um, they've seen... Even in the last three years that I've been involved, um, with CYDA, I've seen it grow so much from the staff to the people engaged, um, and it's so rewarding to see that grow. And what I hope that this summit will bring is a sense of connection and-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

... continued conversations. And between the two between this summit and what lies ahead, we are planning to have another summit potentially. Um, and it is curre- currently under wraps, but, um, we're, we're looking at, how do we bridge those two, um, those two summits together and maintain, I guess, that policy strength and that advocacy strength. Um, and a lot of that will look like continuing the current campaign that CYDA already runs, but also listening to use and what they want. So, a lot of-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

... it will come past the summit.. will come from what occurs in the summit as well. What, what do, what young people feel needs to be happening. Um, do they want to be delegates? Do they want CYDA to take a step up and support them in individual projects? Um, so it's really not up to me to say what's gonna happen. Um-

Margherita:

No, so exciting.

Charlotte:

Yeah. Um, I hope that some really exciting things come out of it policy wise as I'm a bit of a politics nerd. (laughing). Um, but, you know, um, I'm, I'm really excited to see what will happen and, um, yeah, that's-

Margherita:

No, that's so exciting, um, and I'm really excited for it to happen. I guess you mentioned before kind of, um, the importance of, you know, being involved in a community at school and also how supportive your school was. And I know now that you're at university and doing some wonderful things. So, I kind of wanted to ask, uh, what do you think needs to change at a university or school, or I guess, any sort of, um, that could include TA for, or whatnot level, um, for disability inclusion specifically?

Charlotte:

Yeah, well, a massive question. Um- (laughs)

Margherita:

Yeah. Huge. I know. I mean, we can't tackle everything and I know that, um, you could probably make a super long list about what needs to change.

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

But we can definitely just briefly touch on the most important things.

Charlotte:

Yeah, of course. Um, personally, what I've been focusing on is essentially what, what I've experienced from my lived experience. So, that's looking from quite a metropolitan point of view. Um, but from what I understand and what I think needs to change is, um, access essentially, but in terms of eq- equitable intellectual access and physical access to, um, institutions that have been quite like, uh, inaccessible in the past-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

... possibilities. So, um, last year... I'm, I'm currently at a residential college at ANU, um, and I served as chair of diversity. Um, and obviously that wasn't just about disability access, but all kinds of access and including low SES and rural access. So, um, that opened my mind and my eyes into the power of collaboration and how we can all work together to, to take the lead as young people, um, and as members of the community, and not waiting for somebody else to do something to intervene, um, and instead creating our own opportunities in the college.

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

And this year I'm, I'm the co-chair of cultural change, um, which-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... involves actioning, um, recommendations on independent advisory council, um, found about our college's experiences and how it can improve them. Um, and one of those for me, personally, is to raise awareness of disability, um, and diversity. So, um, f- for example, um, one of the things that I was able to achieve last year as diversity chair was to introduce an access and inclusion officer. And that enables for the college to have a list of all the access needs that all the students have and have a dedicated s- student representative address all of those needs at events and anything involved with our college.

Charlotte:

So, now that our college has it, it sets a benchmark for other colleges, and I feel like that creates change just by having an expectation. So, I think those sort of expectations of access are definitely what needs to change at a university level, especially for residences. Um, and I think I've seen a lot of young youth disability advocates come out and sta- and start speaking for themselves, which is incredible. And I-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... I really hope that that is, doesn't change. Um, in fact-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... I think that we've seen massive leaps forward. You know, the, Dylan Alcott being Australian of the year is incredible, but otherwise it is step by step. And I think that, um, you know, unless you have a massive platform, like Alcott, we need to make incremental change in our own orbits.

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

So, I, I think that it's not always up to the disability community to, to create their own solutions to problems, I think it's definitely up to the general public as well. Um, however, we need to also see it as a step by step process. 'Cause disability is so broad and our strength comes from our diversity of experiences, and seeing how we can feel those gaps. Um, yeah. I, I know that's a bit of a, um-

Margherita:

Sh- no, no, it was great.

Charlotte:

... in terms of what we could change. I think that's definitely something that we'll probably talk about in the summit. Um, but yeah, I think it's, it's such an important question, um, and so personal as well.

Margherita:

Yeah, no, and honestly, while you're talking, I was thinking about ama- so many amazing quotes (laughs) that could be pulled out of that.

Charlotte:

(laughs)

Margherita:

Um, because honestly it is a huge question and-

Charlotte:

Mm-hmm.

Margherita:

... it is, as you said, a step by step process.

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

And I think it's, it's really important to have these conversations and why we also have these podcasts about the step by step things that people are doing in their communities. And-

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

... um, even if it, a lot of times, might seem like, oh, you're just impacting your community, It is just as strong as, um-

Charlotte:

Exactly.

Margherita:

... people you are. You know, winning Australian of the year, it's, it's-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... you know, a still significant impact.

Charlotte:

Ye- yeah. And it, the more that we all do it, the more we inspire each other. Um-

Margherita:

Yes. Yeah. And the more we, you know, I, I find that the community often, uh, reaches out to people that they know for opportunities and empowers people in so many ways. So, yeah, I think, I think-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... you had a wonderful response and it's really important to keep all of those things in mind.

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

Um, I guess kind of moving on a little bit, just because I'm really curious about this, and I've been waiting the whole, um-

Charlotte:

(laughs)

Margherita:

... the whole first questions to find out about this. Um, but, you know, we talk about the community and we talk about disability and, and I know that, uh, a lot of, obviously we're not a, a homogenous community, we're very different. And essentially, I'd like to hear your thoughts on disability language, um, that's used in the disability community. Uh, I know that, you know, it's, it's difficult to sometimes tackle different words, and, and I wanted to ask if you've tackled languages surrounding words such as deaf or hard of hearing-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... um, and how you kind of go about that.

Charlotte:

I, I love these sort of conversations and I think it's, um, fascinating. Uh, my personal experience is that at school, I referred to myself and, um, and people in the community, um, referred to me as having a hearing loss. So, the word deaf was more reserved, um, for kids that signed, um, and hard of hearing just wasn't really, um, a term that we used. Um, disability you, was more of a word that I used in a professional setting. So, moving into those first exposures into the professional disability community with wide as, than CYDA, that was really when I started to hear the word disability. And, um, you know, uh, it, it's something that I personally, I'm quite flexible, um, with, I don't really mind what I use. I know that, um, in some areas it's quite controversial, um, to, to label, um, your identity as one thing or another. In, for example, in the summer in 2020, we had, um, person first language, which is where you-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... say a person with a disability. Like I am a young person with a disability. Um, the alternative to that would be a disability first language, which would be, uh, a disabled person. Um, it, it's a constantly dynamic and changing conversation. Um, it's evolving. And I think that it, it's something that I love hearing, um, about. Uh, I think it's something that young people can really take into their own hands and, um, figure out what they like. And, um, we are tackling it again at the summit this year.

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

Interestingly enough, the, the attitudes have changed since the last co-design committee. We've had, um, this co-design committee has come to the consensus that we want to have a mix of both person first and disability first-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... really changeable. Um, but ultimately, I think that the key is to speak, um, about other people respect and what, whatever that language is, um, respect their use and their preferences. Um, and, uh, as for myself, I'm, I'm pretty easy, like pretty easy with going with how, um, I'm referred to myself, and yeah.

Margherita:

Yeah. No, it's, it's a really interesting conversation and I love to hear about, um, I guess the changing, the, the summit, well, like changing their views kind of reflects-

Charlotte:

Mm-hmm.

Margherita:

... I reckon the general community in that we are all different, and different people have different preferences. And I guess flowing onto that, Um, I'd love to hear about, you know, a lot of the times we talk about, um, successes and that's so important, and I think it's also, though, important to recognize the kind of things that we do go through. Um, and the kind of, um... I guess, in some way it is empowering to talk about the challenges-

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

... and, uh, say, you know, this is what I am fighting against, and this is how I'm doing it so successfully. So, I'd love to hear about, you know, what challenges have you found in disability activism and, um, and also, you know, how have you grown and, and learned from those?

Charlotte:

(laugh) Wow. Um, it's, it's... Yeah. I think the biggest challenge for me, um, with disability activism, I guess if I break it into two parts of entering disability activis- activism, and today what I experience in the industry is, entering into it, the largest challenge was imposter syndrome.

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

Um, uh, for me, it was a sense of saying, am I disabled enough to advocate for each others? Um, and for others and for each other, and for people who aren't hard of hearing. You know, what, what sort of, um, authority do I have to speak on behalf of them? And a lot of this sort of, um, was addressed through very casual conversations with other people in the disability community, knowing that it's a, it's a well felt, um, and shared experience.

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

And also knowing that a lot of my roles were co-design in, in the fact that I wasn't there to speak on behalf of people, but with people. Um, and I may synthesize their thoughts, but it's not my thoughts, if that makes sense. It's always-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... informed by others. And so, um, I think that importance of acknowledging others and collaborating with each others. And, you know, the concept of being disabled enough, (laugh) it's, it's always gonna be hard, you know. Um, imposter syndrome permeates across our society in so many different sectors. Uh, I could, I'm sure there have been countless conversations with feminism and-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... you know, um, race related issues. And so, um, I think it's really, it, it shows the power of the disability community, um, how we support each other. Um-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... you know, I was this shy year 11 kid, um, like fresh outta high school-

Margherita:

(laughs)

Charlotte:

... just interested in like, oh, what's this event like. Oh, I, I could really do something here. And, um, I felt so empowered. Um, and this is something that I really want to share with other people. And I, I guess, moving into the disability community today and how I find activism, and what I think needs to be changed, and those challenges is, what, how do we find the best methods of communicating that fit everyone's needs? You know, especially in the disability community, we've got collisions of access needs. So, for-

Margherita:

Yeah, absolutely.

Charlotte:

Um, for, for example, like, um, it, it's hard to find enough assis- assistance to have everybody involved in a Zoom meeting. If we don't have a specific interpreter available, then what do we do? Do we, do we leave that person out of the conversation? Do we let the meeting go ahead? Do we postpone the meeting? Um, and so it's all about, I guess, looking at the resources that are available, um, and trying to navigate that bureaucracy. I'm sure that many young people-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Charlotte:

... today are still sort of navigating the NDIS and, (laughs) you know-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... it's like to do, to do those medical sy- to navigate those medical systems and government structures on your own is incredibly challenging. Um, and I've been lucky enough to have the support of my school and to have the support of formal organizations, and, um, my family, but it, it's something that young people do struggle with. And it's not just a challenge that, um, you know, professionals in the sector deal with. It's challenge that people deal with every day. (laughs)

Margherita:

Yeah, no. Yeah.

Charlotte:

So-

Margherita:

And-

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

... uh, I think like, uh, that's why community's so important, right?

Charlotte:

Mm-hmm. Um, and I, I think it's, um, it, it, it's interesting the, the, the new technologies that are coming out to, um, help facilitate these communications needs. Um, and I hope that, um, yeah, we'll see some more exciting things in the future.

Margherita:

Yeah. No, absolutely. I completely agree. And, and hopefully with those little things, steps that we were talking about before kind of culminating to bigger things, um, as time goes on.

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

And so, you know, we, we've talked a bit about challenges, but, um, and we've also, you know, talked about projects that you've got going on and things like that. But I wanna hear from you, what's your favorite project, uh, or piece of advocacy that you've done so far? I know that a lot of times when we do a lot of things, we get kind of mixed up in the, in the mess of it and lose what we love to do.

Charlotte:

Yeah (laughs)

Margherita:

Uh, but yeah, I'd love to hear your favorite project, even if that was a really long time ago.

Charlotte:

Oh gosh. Um, the summer. I, I just have to say the 2022 (laughs). Um, I know I mentioned it so much, but it was, it, it was incredible. Um, uh, something that really stands out to me was I, I got to interview the directors of this, um, Oscar nominated documentary called Crip Camp.

Margherita:

Ah, yes. Yeah. (laughing)

Charlotte:

Anybody who hasn't watch it, you better watch it on Netflix [inaudible 00:32:42].

Margherita:

(laughs)

Charlotte:

Um, it, it's not about the Crip, um, gang, but actual little crippled people. (laughing) Um, and it's, um, yeah, it's really, it's very cool. They touch on the experiences of the, um, the grassroots movement of the disability rights movement in the sixties in the US. Um, and I just loved it. I mean, I loved being able to speak with historical figures, um, who are still making change today. And-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... you know, um, the experience of organizing the summit was incredible, but as an attendee, even just having, um, the opportunity to advocate, to ministers and senators and make networks with other young people, it was just such an incredible project. Um, and I think it was incredibly impactful for me. I know it was. And, um, I can't wait to see.

Margherita:

Yeah. What will come out of that. Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

So, exciting. And, and hopefully as the years go on, it just, I mean, to come out of the gate and, and do-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... those kinds of interviews, I actually got chills when you said it. I was like, whoa, no, it was )laughs). It was incredible. Um, I remember sitting in my bedroom and my mom was sitting on my bed, like, behind the laptop and was just, like, filming me, going like go, girl. (laughing)

Margherita:

That is so cute. Yeah.

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

It is like huge. That is a huge moment for you. And-

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

... and definitely, um, I feel like I haven't said it, but congratulations on, not only chairing, but, um, being able to kind of lead these sorts of things because it is so exciting. And, and also I think something about the summit that, um, at least I really-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... not only appreciate as a young person, but admire is that it is free and it is open, and you can, you know, people can hear these sorts of interviews-

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

... without having to pay $400 to go to an event.

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

Um, you know, without having to reserve a spot in, and it's like one of five and it's so-

Charlotte:

(laughs)

Margherita:

... just wild.

Charlotte:

Okay.

Margherita:

So, that is really exciting. Hmm. Yeah. Oh, it's, it's incredible. Yeah.

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

And, uh, and it is so wonderful to hear about it. And I wanna hear more about, you know, we've talked about a lot about activism, but I wanna hear about... Um, you know, in 2022, I know we're about a third of the way through the year. I actually can't do math. I'm not-

Charlotte:

(laughs) Yeah.

Margherita:

Um, but I'd love to hear about your, you know, what are your goals, what are you hoping to achieve? Uh, and in both your personal life and your activism. I just, I, I know that the summit is coming up, but, uh, would love to hear about anything else as well.

Charlotte:

Yeah, of course. Um, well, I'm continuing working on something that I established a few years ago, um, with my old high school, um, and an international school in Vietnam. Um, and it's called Hearing and Beyond, um, and it's-

Margherita:

Hmm.

Charlotte:

... and, uh, yeah, it's a deaf school, uh, a school for deaf kids in Vietnam. Um, and, um, it's focusing on the allocation and sharing of resources and, um, creating sensitive internationalism, um, across the visibility community. And that's been incredibly rewarding. Um-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... and part of that experience... Partly because of that experience, um, I'm now in the early stages of establishing, um, a project called Hearing for Justice. Um, so that's going to be working with remote, um, indigenous communities with, um, individuals who have hearing loss. Um, and I'm incredibly grateful that recently I've got, um, international support for that project. Um-

Margherita:

Woohoo. Congratulations.

Charlotte:

Thank you very much. Um, and I think that that project, I, I hope will, um, enable both a, a twofold effect, one in the sense that we can, um, empower young people to be advocates for themselves. But secondly, to address the, um, the issues that the very, the very serious issues that we see, um, in indigenous communities today with, uh, l- a lack of resources and, um, you know, a lack of translators in courts, you know. There was only one-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... [inaudible 00:36:36], um, interpreter in Northern Territory, um, for one whole year. And even then they didn't even know all the nuanced sign languages of the-

Margherita:

Yeah. And, you know, the prime minister not having a sign language interpreter and, uh, it's, yeah. It's-

Charlotte:

Yeah. Um, and so there's obviously a long way to go with those sort of projects. Um, but I think a, a, a part of that project was, um, came out of a sense of responsibility that I have had these incredible opportunities in the past, and now have these, um, established connections with quite large groups. And so how can we, um, how can we utilize those connections, um, and make sure that they're equitable and well used for everyone? Um, and so I, yeah, I'm really excited to see that. Um, and-

Margherita:

That is so exciting and we'll definitely be following-

Charlotte:

(laughs) Yeah.

Margherita:

... and supporting you along this project, 'cause it sounds like a wonderful project.

Charlotte:

Thanks so much. And yeah, I guess in terms of my personal life, um, it's really just enjoying second year uni. There's lots going on. Um-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... I'm sure. You know, but I think it'll be lots of extracurricular activities. Uni [inaudible 00:37:48] very quickly. I'm starting to learn. So, uh, I know it's already April, almost May.

Margherita:

It's crazy.

Charlotte:

I was like, whoa. (laughs) It's crazy. Um, so yeah, I'm just enjoying ANU, being in Canberra, being in a college, loving it.

Margherita:

Um, being cold all the time.

Charlotte:

Yeah. (laughs) I'm looking at the cute ducks on campus, you know, the living loving, laughing. Um, so yeah, that's really, um, that's really what my personal um, goals are for this year.

Margherita:

No, that is so exciting. Um, and we'll definitely, you know, when those things come up, like, we'll definitely be fo- sharing and following, and, and seeing how those things go, which are all so, so, so, so exciting.

Charlotte:

Thank you.

Margherita:

Um, this is our last question. So, we're about to wrap up. But this is kind of... I love this question because-

Charlotte:

(laughs)

Margherita:

... I love hearing, um, who, different people. I love discovering new people in the community.

Charlotte:

Okay.

Margherita:

Um, and this is, you know, who do you look up to?

Charlotte:

I could give you a whole list. Um-

Margherita:

(laughs) I know it's hard to refine it down-

Charlotte:

(laughs)

Margherita:

... to one, isn't it? Yeah.

Charlotte:

Um, uh, I mean, if I were to give you two, um, that would have to-

Margherita:

Yes, go for it.

Charlotte:

... be, uh, my mother and Judy.

Margherita:

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte:

And, um, I think that, uh, there's so much that I, I, I know that there's many universal experiences of why people admire their parents. Um, and particularly my, my mom has been so, um, perceptive and supportive of everything from the get go, you know. Literally from getting-

Margherita:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Charlotte:

... diagnosed, um, to supporting me. And I think that, that resilience, um, and so many descriptive words I could use. But it, it's an intangible, the support. And, um, that kind of support and admiration, and, um, positivity is really invaluable. And, um, I, I just adore the strength of my mother. And so, um-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... something that I hope to maintain throughout that, and, and that integrity of, um, your commitment to your projects. And I guess looking into disability specific individual, Judy Heumann. I mean, what can I say?

Margherita:

Yeah. (laughing)

Charlotte:

I mean, um-

Margherita:

Well, whe- whe- when does the list start, you know?

Charlotte:

I mean, you know, it, it's funny because I think that it was really that first interview with, um, with the directors of Crip Camp that exposed me to her. Because I was like, CYDA came up to me and I was like, would you, like, uh, I was nominated by the co-design committee to do it. And so they came up to me and was like, "Okay, um, these are the people you'll be interviewing." Okay. So, okay. I'll watch the movie. Um, and- (laughing)

Margherita:

Compulsory have to watch it.

Charlotte:

Yeah. And I rem- I've sat down with my family. We all watched it, we all loved it. Um, and then I, I just fell down this rabbit hole of following Judy Heumann. I was... Yeah. Um, and look at, uh, at her tenacity and resilience, and her involvement in both, um, a personal, um, I guess social aspect with Crip Camp, but also on the political level, um, you know, breaking those glass ceilings. Um, and I, I have such respect for her. Um, and-

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

... I, I know I don't really list qualities here, but I think it's more about the way that she made me feel when I listened to her.

Margherita:

Yeah.

Charlotte:

Her, um, her speeches during Crip Camp. A lot of what she was saying was... I, I remember this distinct quote that she said, and she was like, "I wanna see a group of feisty young people with disability out there." And I was like, beautiful quote. Like, oh, like that's actually me. And so I was like, okay, okay, Judy, I'll do that. Okay, Judy.

Margherita:

(laughs)

Charlotte:

I'm on it. Don't worry. It's on my to do list. (laughing) Yeah. Yeah. And, and so that really motivated me. I was like, it, it felt like I had her personal backing even though, like, you know, she didn't know me personally. I was like, you know, that really touched me. And I think that sort of belief, um, and that history has really inspired me. So...

Margherita:

Yeah. No. And it's, it's been so wonderful. I think that, um, she's definitely such an important person that-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... we all kind of look up to-

Charlotte:

Mm-hmm.

Margherita:

... especially, um, the recent news that she like spoke next to Taylor Swift. And I was like, (laughing) what if this... I was like, this is a bit of an odd pairing, but I was-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... I was so excited for it.

Charlotte:

Yeah.

Margherita:

Um, and I think you're so right. Like sometimes it's, it's not about those descriptive words, but more about how people make you feel, and-

Charlotte:

Hmm.

Margherita:

... and how their words make you feel.

Charlotte:

Yeah, exactly. Reminds me that my Angela quote, um, Angela quote, that's like, yeah. Um, but...

Margherita:

Yeah, yeah. No, and you know, um, I feel like this whole, this whole podcast, I've been having so much fun listening to you and, and listening to your projects, but also, yeah, your personal opinions, what you think, and just having a nice chat. So, thank you so much for joining us today, Charlotte. It has been so wonderful to interview you and so wonderful to hear about you. Um, we will definitely be sharing any of these/all of these projects on our social medias or newsletters. Um, so definitely keep an eye out.

Charlotte:

Well, thank you so much for having me. This was a whole... (laughs)

Margherita:

No, so wonderful. Thank you.

Charlotte:

Thank you.

Speaker 3:

I'm so happy now.