



A NEW SIGHT OF PERSPECTIVE

We sat down with the founder of Beernuts Productions on the Gold Coast who is calling out on society's blind ignorance when it comes to the film industry, and people with a disability.

Hi Gough, tell us a little about Beernuts Productions...

It is an independent production company I started in 2006 on the Gold Coast. I released my first feature film, a documentary about disability and mental health in 2010 and since then have created 16 short films, nine comedy audio downloads and written five books.

Your personal journey is incredible being the first legally blind person to achieve so much at a production company unassisted. How did it happen?

Before Beernuts Productions began, I spent years trying to get scripts produced. I travelled all over the world and met with producers, networks, distributors and private investors but once they found out I couldn't see, their interest dried up. I was left with a simple choice: I could leave these scripts on the shelf or I could make them myself. So, I gathered up all my savings and bought some basic film equipment to make my first film.

Could you explain how being legally blind affects your work?

Not being able to see means I've spent a lifetime listening to

people, which helps me write my scripts because I know how people speak. It also helps when directing actors because I pay close attention to their tones and inflections to ensure they deliver the lines right. I'm sure we've all been to a party where someone is telling a joke so badly you wish they'd stop. I make sure that doesn't happen on my film shoots.

Do you have a support network around you when you're dealing with certain challenges?

On set I have a sighted guide, Simon, who I have worked with for 15 out of the 17 films I've done.

What do you think is the biggest stigma towards someone with a disability?

Just a general lack of understanding. There is still a lot of negative stigma that goes along with a disability and of course that leads to discrimination and segregation, and to people having problems with their mental health due to being excluded and not being given a "fair go" (I hate that phrase). More needs to be done to educate the wider community about disabilities and what folks with a disability can do.

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