**Between our pages**

Episode 11 with Layne Dixon

[0:00] Music.

Fiona: Welcome, you're listening to Between Our Pages, a Premier's Reading Challenge WA podcast.

This episode was recorded on Whadjuk Noongar land. We acknowledge the traditional custodians and pay respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

My name is Fiona Bartholomaeus and together we'll be diving into the wonderful world of books and reading right here in WA.

Today we're chatting with Layne Dixon, writer, para-athlete and disability advocate about their blog and passion for writing.

Let's go!

[0:38] Music.

[0:44] fiona: Blogs are a great way to learn more about the world around us through the eyes and experiences of someone else.

They offer insights, passion, and they don't skim on the good or bad situations in life.

Layne Dixon runs a blog dedicated to sharing their story about their disability and the triumphs and challenges they've faced along the way.

The blog aims to improve access for people with disabilities and to better educate members of the community.

Layne, thank you so much for joining me.

Layne: Thank you for having me, Fiona.

Fiona: You're an avid blog writer, a para-athlete and a disability advocate. That is an awesome list. Can you tell us a little bit about your athletic journey?

Layne: I was in athletics prior to 2020. The journey started in 2016 and since then I became an Australian record holder in shot put, discus and javelin.

Fiona: Yeah, I read that you broke the Australian record in 2017 in shot put as an F33 under 20 seated thrower as well as an under 18 seated javelin. What was that experience like for you to break those records?

Layne: It was amazing, I didn't expect that there would be such a big chance for para-athletes to have the spotlight.

Yes it's hard work, like non-disabled athletes you still need to put the work in, in order to achieve, but it's a great highlight for me.

[2:39] fiona: So tell us about your blog, how did it come about?

Layne: I was talking to the support workers and with their help and with the struggles I was facing in school I knew something needed to be changed, but specifically I didn't see anyone like me in the news and in like social media and I wanted that to change.

Fiona: So what drew you to writing because I've read some of the pieces on your blog and it was so interesting and just really great to be able to read some of your experiences.

Layne: Thank you for reading some of my articles. I love to share as much as I can without overloading people like yourselves.

[3:41] My blog covers a lot of mental health as a person with a disability because that doesn't get a shine as much as Pride and Inspiration Porn does.

I'm very much against inaccessibility, ableism and of course Inspiration Porn. So I try to advocate and share as much knowledge as possible about CP, about disabilities, and sharing my own experience both navigating as a proud queer disabled person but also, the experiences of neglect and inaccessibility as a disabled but also queer person.

Fiona: Yeah, that's something that I was going to say. Your blog, it covers the good, it covers some of the challenges you face. How do you decide what to write about and what to include when you sit down at your computer?

[5:07] layne: It just really comes to me, week by week. I sometimes have enough time to write about three or four articles and that's why they are shorter than the typical blogs that you see on professionals' page.

But I give insight that not only shares my journey, but also gives people a knowledge that 'ah, this is the thing I was talking about', or 'this is how I should interact or act around people with disabilities', which is so important.

Fiona: And it's such an important blog and I highly recommend everyone has a read of it. Has writing always been a passion of yours?

Layne: Not really.

[6:14] Once I figured out that I liked athletics in and around 2016, I picked up typing on the computer, couple years later and since then it just...

Fiona: It blew up and now you're writing articles and stories all the time.

Layne: I'm trying to, yes.

Fiona: And speaking of stories, you've also been involved with the Pulch Mag, can you tell us a bit about that?

Layne: I've been fortunate to write an article for Pulch which has been published into a book, which you folks have come across, and that's how I've become an ambassador for your reading challenge.

Fiona: So tell us about what you wrote for the Pulch Mag. What was your submission and piece that's part of it?

[7:14] LAYNE: Um, I've had this disability my whole life and I strongly identified with having a disability and now as a non-binary person, but I had so much struggle in high school with accepting myself and the bullies around me, they were my fault or some other person's fault. So that's what it is about accepting disability pride, which not a lot of people talk about.

[8:02] fiona: It's definitely a conversation that more people need to have. I feel like it's growing slowly but still a lot of work needs to be done. What is it like for you though being able to have the physical Pulch Mag in your hand with your submission in it? I imagine it's a bit different from your blog page where everything's in the internet?

Layne: Yeah, it is really different. I kind of expected that Pulch would do a digital version of the Pulch Mag and put it up on Kindle or iBooks, but unfortunately Pulch, which is run by Centre for Stories, didn't think that far ahead so it's only available when there's compete.

[8:53] fiona: Hopefully at some point in the future it will be online or you'll be able to post it online at some point.

Layne: Hopefully.

Fiona: So how do you hope your blog will help other people?

Layne: I'm taking a little break from writing at the moment but it has helped people in so many ways. My aim is not to just share my story but to give people insight and knowledge and ideas of what they can do or how they can help themselves because I really needed something like this when I was just starting out and there wasn't anything.

Fiona: Do you think one day in the future you might venture into books and have your name as an author and be able to go to a signing and get people to come sign your books?

Layne: Oh, I wish that's the goal for one day, maybe like adolescents, aiming for teenagers and young adults.

Fiona: Now the challenge has wrapped up for 2023 but as always, we want everyone to keep reading. Before we let you go, I'm going to ask you a couple of rapid-fire questions and I just want the first answer that comes into your head.

What is your favourite book?

Layne: City Made by Rebecca Tudson.

Fiona: What are you reading at the moment?

Layne: I'm not reading anything. I'm in between music and podcasts.

Fiona: Non-fiction or fiction?

Layne: I like to write non-fiction, but I do like reading both.

Fiona: And in the spirit of the Premier's Reading Challenge, how many books or audiobooks do you hope to read and listen to in 2023?

Layne: Um, about 20.

Fiona: That is a nice solid number.

[11:03] Music.

[11:11] Hello, my name is Suy Urbaniak, I'm Chenée Marrapodi, I'm James Foley, hi I'm Dianne Wolfer, hi I'm Tony Buti, my name is Craig Silvey, hi my name is Tracy Dembo, this is Sean E Avery, hi I'm Aśka, I'm Taryn Brumfitt, hi I'm Layne Dixon, and I’m Fiona Bartholomaeus.

You've been listening to Between Our Pages, a Premier's Reading Challenge WA podcast.

Thanks to guest Layne Dixon for joining me on this episode.

That's it for season one of Between Our Pages. It's been an absolute blast chatting with these amazing writers and illustrators.

Keep an eye out on the Premier's Reading Challenge Facebook and Instagram pages, at Premier's Reading Challenge WA, for future updates on Between Our Pages.

Thank you for listening, happy reading, we'll see you next time.

[11:55] Music.