**8 April 2012**

**Roberta:** Nokia has announced their new Audio Direction available on the mobile version of Nokia Maps. This feature has great potential for people who are blind or vision impaired, but an inaccessible website stops them from being able to access this feature. Sarah Pulis, manager of Digital Media and Technology from Media Access Australia is here to fill us in on the details. Welcome Sarah.

**Sarah:** Thank you very much Roberta.

**Roberta:** So, what does the new Audio Direction allow you to do and why would it be useful to people who are blind and vision impaired?

**Sarah:** Well, the Audio Directions allow you to request walking directions from point A to point B, but in audio form. So, you can access Nokia Maps by a web browser on any smart phone, like your I-phone or your android smart phone, so you don’t have to have a Nokia phone.

First, you tell Nokia Maps where you want to start walking from and where you want to get to. Once Nokia Maps works out the best route you can ask it to give you audio directions. Now, within your smart phone you’ll have an inbuilt GPS that tells Nokia Maps where you’re located, say on the side of the street and it will actually provide you turn by turn audio instructions based on where you’re at. So, you might be on a corner and it tells you, ‘turn left here.’

**Roberta:** So, Sarah, what makes in inaccessible at the moment?

**Sarah:** Well, Nokia Maps mobile website is inaccessible to people using a screen reader. So, you can put in a single address into the search box, but what you can’t do is actually access the button which sends the request for audio navigation, or allows you to put in the details about where your journey will start and stop. So, essentially, for people using a screen reader, they can’t get access to any of those features.

**Roberta:** So, what’s the impact of not considering accessibility in websites and their mobile versions?

**Sarah:** The impact is simple and that’s that people can’t access the information or services that they need. More and more information and services are being provided online through websites and via mobile apps as well and as they move away from more traditional methods, like picking up the phone and giving someone a call, it’s even more important that online information is accessible to people who have differing needs.

It doesn’t matter what those needs are or whether you’re accessing this information say, via your computer in your home or on a mobile device like and I-Phone it should all be accessible. And Nokia Maps is a classic example of a feature that has so much potential for people who are blind or vision impaired, but due to an inaccessible website, that information service is, in essence, denied to them.

**Roberta:** Sarah, can you give us some examples of mobile websites or apps that have been developed so that people with disabilities can use them?

**Sarah:** Yeah, look there’s actually a lot of them out there. There’s a number of apps on Android, um, two of which are called, “Intersection Explorer” and “Walkie Talkie” and you can download those apps for your Android device. They allow you to explore your surroundings before going and visiting a place, and actually also give you walking directions. So, it’s not a case of Nokia Maps not being able to provide that, it’s just the case that they haven’t paid attention to this as the ability of their website.

Apple is renowned for the accessibility of their apps so all apps designed by Apple are accessible and there are also quite a number of apps built by other people that work on the likes of the I-Phone and the I-Pad that are accessible as well. We’re also seeing government departments improve their accessibility on their websites now which is particularly important for information delivery.

**Roberta:** So, how can people find accessible mobile apps?

**Sarah:** Well, there’s two great websites. The first one is for anyone who owns an Android device and that’s called Android Access. It’s available at [www.androidaccess.net](http://www.androidaccess.net) and that actually allows people to put up reviews of how accessible and android app is and then other people can go and see that. The counterpart for anyone who owns an I-Phone, I-Pad or an I-Pod touch is AppleVis, so that’s [www.applevis.com](http://www.applevis.com) and it works under the same principle.

**Roberta:** A little bit different. Can you give us that last one again that address?

**Sarah:** Yes, certainly it’s applevis.com.

**Roberta:** Sounds great. Well, thanks for talking with us today Sarah.

**Sarah:** Thank you very much Roberta.

**Roberta:** For news and development on accessible technologies and online media, check out Media Access Australia’s website at mediaaccess.org.au. Alternatively, you can email me at Access at [info@mediaaccess.org.au](mailto:info@mediaaccess.org.au). I have been speaking with Manager of Media and Digital Technology from Media Access Australia’s Sarah Pulis, and thank you Media Access Australia for being supporters of this program.