



Enhancing Self-Disclosure of Equity Group Membership

An investigation of self-disclosure by Indigenous students, students with disabilities and students from non-English-speaking backgrounds at university

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Executive Summary

Students who are members of equity groups constitute a significant and growing population in Australia's tertiary sector. These students often have special requirements, owing to physical, mental, socio-economic and cultural factors that present challenges and obstacles to their outcomes and achievements in the university environment. However, there has been a perception among education providers that a large proportion of students in these groups do not disclose their status to tertiary institutions, and thus cannot access support to which they are entitled.

The Enhancing Self-Disclosure of Equity Group Membership study was an investigation into disclosure patterns of three equity groups:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians;
2. people with disability; and
3. people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)

There were four research questions:

1. How many students in the three equity groups do not disclose their equity status?
2. How do students disclose in Australia's tertiary sector?
3. Why do students choose to disclose their equity status?
4. Why do students choose not to disclose their equity status?

The purpose of this study was to inform future policy development by government and future equity practice by higher education providers. From this research, seven good practice guidelines to encourage self-disclosure are proposed, in addition to group-specific recommendations.

Methods

This was a multi-method study with qualitative and quantitative components. The methods employed were as follows.

1. A survey of students at 35 Australian universities, distributed via newsletters, email lists, websites and social media.
2. A survey of staff at 29 Australian universities distributed via email lists, targeted emails and social media.
3. Interviews with students in the equity groups of interest. These interviews were transcribed and coded for themes concerning reasons for (non)disclosure.

In addition, student reporting of disability / language needs via an online tool (NavigateMe) was compared with formal disclosure via enrolment or registering with disabilities services.

Analysis of quantitative survey data employed Bayesian regression modelling, a method that compensates for imbalances in data and small sample sizes. Qualitative data from the staff survey were compiled to demonstrate differences in disclosure practices across universities and reveal staff perceptions of reasons for and against self-disclosing equity status.

Results

The staff survey received responses from 130 staff of equity units at 27 universities, which enabled the research team to identify differences in disclosure practices and systems to encourage reporting. In particular, it was noted that staff felt efforts to encourage disclosure were effective when information was clear, and students were able to retain control through 'limited' disclosure in certain contexts.

Overall, 1108 students responded to the student survey, at UNSW and across Australia, including 436 NESB students, 253 students with disabilities and 73 Indigenous. This provided a sufficient sample for Bayesian regression analysis method and conclusions were supported by methodological triangulation. Roughly 11% of the surveyed population do not disclose their equity status to their university. Of this number, 6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reported not disclosing, as did 11% of students living with a disability, and 18% of NESB students. Roughly 13% of the total population surveyed reported being unsure whether they have or have not disclosed. This includes 1.5% of Indigenous students, 0.4% of students with disabilities, and 23% of NESB students.

Disclosure is associated with access to benefits or services, or simply because students are asked. Non-disclosure is often simply a result of being unaware of why they should disclose or may be driven by fears of discrimination either by university staff or by other students (this is particularly evident for students with disabilities and Indigenous students). Indigenous students reject perceived "tokenism", that universities seek disclosure not for the students' benefit but to polish their own image. Students with disabilities fear being labelled as less competent or deserving of their academic success. The majority of domestic NESB students will disclose their status if directly asked, but more commonly feel that the university does not need to know.

Proposed Guidelines

Based on the findings of this study, the following guidelines are proposed to improve outcomes for equity students and increase rates of self-disclosure:

1. Adopt inclusive university practices and procedures
2. Offer options of disclosure channels and times where students retain control over their information
3. Explain equity programs and services to students at university, with clear guidelines of benefits, confidentiality and the disclosure process
4. Adopt clear, consistent and easily understood definitions of equity groups for applications, enrolment and support
5. Encourage a wider understanding of equity group membership among staff and students
6. During application and enrolment, explain requests for relevant equity group information, and allow non-responses for students who prefer not to answer, with later follow-up

Table of Contents

List of Tables	6
Table of Figures	7
Abstract	8
Keywords	8
Introduction	9
Research Questions	10
Equity in Australia’s universities	10
Disclosure by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students.....	11
Disclosure by Students with Disabilities.....	14
Disclosure by Students from Non-English-Speaking Backgrounds	21
The Role of Disclosure at University	24
Perceptions of equity group membership.....	24
Processes of Self-Disclosure	24
Methods	26
Student Survey	26
Surveying and Sampling Frame.....	34
Student Interviews	38
Staff Survey	39
Results	45
Student survey	45
Demographics	46
Age.....	46
Gender	46
Disclosure channels	47
Implications of disclosure	48
Concern for privacy	49
Open question response coding	55
Disclosure via an online tool.....	58
Staff Survey and Mapping of Services	61
Disclosure methods and models across Australia’s universities	62
Proof of Aboriginality	70
Effectiveness of measures to encourage disclosure.....	73
Channels of disclosure.....	75
Attributions for student nondisclosure	77
Regression results	81
Interview Responses	87
Graphed Results	90
Discussion	94
Summary of Findings	94
Research Answers	94
Conclusions	96
Proposed Guidelines for Higher Education Providers.....	100
Limitations to the study.....	105
Implications for future research	106
Acknowledgements	107

Bibliography	108
Appendix 1: Indigenous Support Units	115
Appendix 2: Disabilities Support Units	123
Appendix 3: NESB Support Units	129
Appendix 4: Measures to encourage disclosure – Indigenous unit staff	135
Appendix 5: Measures to encourage disclosure – Disability unit staff	138
Appendix 6: Measures to encourage disclosure – NESB support staff.....	142
Appendix 7: Disclosure Survey Advertisements	144
Appendix 8: Emails for survey distribution.....	146
Appendix 9: Facebook keywords.....	148
Appendix 10: Sample Interview Responses	150
Students with Disabilities	150
Indigenous Students.....	157
Non-English-Speaking Background Students.....	161

List of Tables

Table 1: Definitions of disability types.....	30
Table 2: Numbers of survey respondents	46
Table 3: Breakdown of respondents by SES.....	46
Table 4: Breakdown of SES by gender (when stated).....	47
Table 5: Reported channels of disclosure	47
Table 6: Student agreement with statements on disclosure	48
Table 7: Concern for Own Informational Privacy	50
Table 8: Concern for privacy by disability type	51
Table 9: Correlations of privacy and disclosure statements—Indigenous	52
Table 10: Correlations of privacy and disclosure statements—SWDs	53
Table 11: Correlations of privacy and disclosure statements—NESB	54
Table 12: English proficiency self-assessment	54
Table 13: Survey codes: Indigenous—Reluctance to disclose (60 comments).....	55
Table 14: Reluctance to disclose (326 comments)	57
Table 15: NESB reluctance to disclose (271 comments).....	58
Table 16: NavigateMe reports versus formal disclosure	59
Table 17: NESB Background (MyUNSW)	60
Table 18: Count of respondents’ universities	61
Table 19: Selected disclosure practices	65
Table 20: Non-university-specific additional disclosure channels	67
Table 21: Channels of disclosure: Before or at enrolment—Indigenous.....	75
Table 22: Channels of disclosure: After enrolment—Indigenous	75
Table 23: Channels of disclosure: Before or at enrolment—SWDs.....	76
Table 24: Channels of disclosure: After enrolment—SWDs	76
Table 25: Channels of disclosure: Before or at enrolment—NESB	76
Table 26: Channels of disclosure: After enrolment—NESB	77
Table 27: Staff attributions for nondisclosure of Indigenous identity	77
Table 28: Attributed reasons for nondisclosure—students with disabilities	79
Table 29: Staff attributions for NESB non-disclosure	81
Table 30: Variables predictive of nondisclosure: Indigenous students.....	82
Table 31: Variables predictive of nondisclosure: SWDs	83
Table 32: Variables predictive of nondisclosure: NESB students.....	85
Table 33: Codes for Indigenous students.....	87
Table 34: Codes for students with disabilities (SWDs)	87
Table 35: Codes for NESB students.....	88
Table 36: Frequency of codes.....	89

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Reasons for student reluctance to disclose disabilities	43
Figure 2: Channels of disclosure by equity group	47
Figure 3: Statements about disclosure	49
Figure 4: Concern for privacy by equity group	51
Figure 5: Privacy Concerns by Disability Type	52
Figure 6: Questions from NSW UAC application form.....	63
Figure 7: Staff attributions for nondisclosure by disability type	80
Figure 8: Radar chart of Indigenous students' codes	90
Figure 9: Radar chart of codes from students with disabilities.....	91
Figure 10: NESB Students' codes	92
Figure 11: Comparison of equity group profiles of concerns.....	93

Abstract

Students who are members of equity groups constitute a significant and growing population in Australia's tertiary sector. These students often have special requirements, owing to physical, mental, socio-economic and cultural factors that present challenges and obstacles to their outcomes and achievements in the university environment. Since the publication of the landmark 1990 report *A fair chance for all: National and institutional planning for equity in higher education* by the Department of Education, Employment and Training (1990), recognition of equity students and of the need to accommodate this diverse population has become a significant focus of discussion and practice in higher education. Despite this focus, there remains ambiguity regarding the size of the equity population and the needs of equity students. This can translate into significant gaps in service delivery and quality, as many equity students are unknown and invisible to their education providers. This research report seeks to fill this gap by considering the size of the non-disclosing equity student population in Australia's tertiary sector. Employing survey and interview data, this report aims to calculate the rate of non-disclosure across three equity groups in Australia's tertiary sector—Indigenous students, students living with disabilities, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). This report also aims to present students' perspectives on the disclosure process, why non-disclosure occurs, and students' solutions to non-disclosure. In doing so, this research is emancipatory, offering a voice to a population that has thus far remained largely hidden and marginalized in the university sector.

Keywords

Australia; Disability; Disclosure; Equity; Indigenous; Non-English-Speaking; Tertiary

Introduction

This research report aims to explore Australian universities' disclosure processes from the perspectives of equity staff and students. Australia's universities offer myriad processes for students from equity backgrounds to disclose their needs and requirements for adjustment and accommodation. However, the evidence presented in this report indicates that a significant population of students choose not to disclose their medical requirements, English-speaking abilities, or Indigenous status to their institutions. This an overall discussion of equity in Australia's universities is offered. Second, disclosure processes at Australia's universities are compared. These processes differ between institutions, and this may affect the rates of disclosure between institutions. Third, the methodologies employed in this study are described. Fourth, the results of this study are presented. Finally, these results and their outcomes are discussed in depth and in the context of a growing tertiary sector, limitations of this study are mentioned, and future research potential is discussed.

It should be noted that these groups are quite different in epistemological terms, and indeed may not perceive themselves as part of a group. Indigenous Australians belong to an ethnic group (or to one of a number of nations). People with disabilities are defined by life circumstances or medical conditions, and those of non-English-speaking backgrounds by what they are not. How these groups are understood by universities, equity/support services, the Federal Government and by the members of the groups themselves differs.

The *Guide for Applicants* provided by Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) during the application process for this project notes that students may "identify themselves to the university when they enrol or at some other time during the course of their studies". This has implications for methods and definitions applied. The information disclosed must be such that the student is aware of it and can choose to disclose or conceal it. For this research, we sought a consistent approach to surveying that would enable the contrast of factors that may impede disclosure.

Second, people in these groups are conscious of a history of discrimination and unequal treatment, and many have personally experienced discrimination. This results in reticence and resistance to providing information to researchers even among those who have disclosed group membership; it is particularly difficult to reach those who have previously chosen not to disclose. For the same reason, we were prevented from using methods that were intrusive, relied on profiling of potential respondents, or would misuse previously disclosed information. We are gratified that so many trusted the research team sufficiently to answer our questions.

Research Questions

The research is organized around four research questions;

1. How many students in the three equity groups do not disclose their equity status?
2. How do students disclose in Australia's tertiary sector?
3. Why do students choose to disclose their equity status?
4. Why do students choose not to disclose their equity status?

Equity in Australia's universities

The Australian tertiary sector has experienced immense growth in enrolments in the past decade, with numbers of students growing from just over 800,000 in 2001 to a total of 1,457,209 domestic and postgraduate students in 2016 (Department of Education and Training, 2016). This growth is the result of political, structural, economic, and cultural factors. In 2009, the Rudd Labor Government endorsed a target of 40% of 25–34 years-olds in Australia having at least a bachelor's degree by 2025. Student intake caps were removed for Australian universities, meaning that universities themselves decided how many students could enrol. At the same time, cuts to university funding encouraged greater self-sufficiency of Australia's universities, translating to reliance on increasing enrolments, fees, and alternative sources of funding for continued research and teaching. As a result of these changes, in the period 2009 to 2013, domestic bachelor's degree enrolments grew by 27.5%, translating to more than 53,500 new students (Larkins, 2015). In other words, Australia's universities have experienced a period of unprecedented growth in terms of student population.

The proportion of equity students in Australia's tertiary sector has grown significantly, outpacing this already significant general growth rate in admissions. There are more students from equity backgrounds than ever in Australia's universities. "Equity" students come from six distinct categories, with some students being members of more than one. These are Indigenous students, students living with a disability, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, people from rural and isolated areas, women in non-traditional areas (Department of Education Employment and Training 1990). This research report focuses on three equity groups:

1. Indigenous students (Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students)
2. Students with disabilities (SWDs)
3. Students from non-English-speaking backgrounds

Between 2008 and 2015, enrolments by students with disabilities nearly doubled, increasing by 94%. In the same period, the proportion of Indigenous student enrolments increased by 74%, from 7,038 students to 12,240. The numbers of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds increased by 50%, from 90,460 to 135,859. There was also a 45% increase in regional and remote student enrolments, from 110,124 to 159,949 (Department of Education Employment and Training, 2015). These figures are promising. Following directed efforts to increase access and outcomes for equity students in Australian universities, these numbers indicate impressive sector-wide success in attracting equity students.

Despite these promising numbers, the true figure of equity students in Australia's tertiary sector is unknown. Many students who have disabilities, who are Indigenous, or have difficulties with the English language choose not to disclose this to their institutions. This has created a gap between reported equity figures and the true size of the equity-student population. In a United States study, Newman and Madaus (2015) found that only 35% of youth with disabilities informed their college of their disability. Likewise, in the UK, Aronin and Smith (2016) found that 27% of students self-identified as having a mental illness, more than double the 12.7% rate of students that have reported a disability according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency UK (2015, cited in Grimes, Scevak, Southgate & Buchanan, 2017). This disconnect between rates of disclosure and actual equity numbers means that many students are not receiving the services they may need and may have a right to. Some students may suffer unnecessary hardship in their studies and personal lives, and university teaching staff are unable to offer accommodations and alternatives for students that need equity arrangements. Universities also cannot adequately resource equity programs and services for students without accurate numbers.

Disclosure by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students

The definition of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander has long been a source of confusion in Australia, with as many as 67 different definitions reported in various forms of legislation (McCorquodale, 1986). There are a number of issues raised by this conceptual confusion. As the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) notes, there are variations in the proportions of Australian citizens identifying as Indigenous that are not attributable to population growth or data collection procedures, suggesting that individuals' desire to self-disclose may vary over time. Indeed, race-based categories may be too simplistic to capture nuances of group affiliation.

Hickey (2015) found that only 50% of a study sample of children identified by their mothers as Indigenous at birth self-identified as such 30 years later. Some of this discrepancy is attributed to simple errors in birth records or differences in racial categories on birth certificates, but there is also considerable complexity in human identity that may not be reflected in administrative categories or political agendas. Nonetheless, while the difficulties of reducing human identity to racial labels must be recognised, it is beyond the scope of this research to explore them. Because this study concerns administrative procedures, we apply standard administrative categories and consider a student to be of Indigenous descent if they identify as such. The definition of The ABS relies on the *Standard Indigenous Question* (SIQ) to identify people of Indigenous origin—"Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island origin?" (ABS, 2012).

Since the publication of *A fair chance for all: national and institutional planning for equity in higher education: a discussion paper* in 1990 (henceforth, 'A fair chance for all'), there has been increasing recognition of the importance of making Australian culture inclusive of Indigenous peoples and practices (McKenna, 2014). For this change to be more than tokenism, it is essential that Indigenous people gain access to the same opportunities as the rest of the population. However, the proportion of Indigenous people who participate in higher education is less than half that of non-Indigenous Australians (Anderson, Bexley, Devlin, Garnett, Marginson & Maxwell, 2008).

At universities there has been growing awareness that Indigenous students are disadvantaged in terms of access/attrition rates as well as employment prospects (Day & Nolde, 2009). For this reason, universities as well as the Commonwealth Government are anxious to obtain accurate figures on Indigenous enrolments and outcomes. This requires accurate records from high schools or self-disclosure by students who meet the commonly accepted definitions of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander.

When identification is linked to monetary benefit, the requirements for self-disclosure of Indigeneity inevitably become more stringent. The 1981 Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) definition set three criteria.

A person is considered Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander if he or she:

1. is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin
2. identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
3. is accepted by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community.

(DAA, 1981, cited by ABS 2012).

In practice, this means that to access specific services, Indigenous students at university must produce confirmation of Aboriginality, in the form of documentation from a recognised Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation.¹

Despite these services, Indigenous students remain poorly represented at university (Day & Nolde, 2009). This may be reflective of the educational experience and aspirations of Indigenous students or lack of family support throughout their school careers (Craven, Tucker, Munns, Hinkley, & Simpson, 2005), or it may be attributable to university factors such as inappropriate orientation, stress or negative reactions to “special treatment” from other students (Farrington, DiGregorio, & Page, 1999).

Issues around ethnic self-disclosure

The history of Aboriginal people with bureaucracy is a troubled one, and issues continue to the present day (Cowlshaw, 1992; Martin, 2012). This may be because the image of Aboriginal people in the minds of bureaucrats and administrators does not reflect Aboriginal concepts of themselves:

“The symbols and myths of this [bureaucratic] culture rely on a base construct “the Aborigines”. It is of less relevance than would be imagined that there really are “Aborigines” in the world, since the bureaucratic culture that plans for and administers them largely does not deal with them”. (Sullivan, 2008)

Such an attitude would go some way to explaining the abovementioned lack of trust. Added to this is a perception that measures ostensibly to support Indigenous people may in fact be intended to achieve bureaucratic goals of managing public perceptions and meeting “diversity” targets. As Sullivan (2008) notes:

“[Bureaucrats] tend to react by retreating into bureaucratic involution where real-world Aborigines and real-world development programmes become symbolic capital in internal bureaucratic cultural exchanges”

¹ <http://aiatsis.gov.au/research/finding-your-family/before-you-start/proof-aboriginality>

Sullivan concludes that bureaucratic culture and Aboriginal culture “perform within the same social field in which Aboriginal people become symbolic capital in patterns of action determined by the bureaucratic imagination”. If Indigenous students extend this perception to universities and believe that administrative attempts to persuade them to self-disclose Indigenous identity out of bureaucratic self-interest, a reluctance to participate in Sullivan’s bureaucratic “Morris Dance” is understandable.

As noted above, ethnic self-identification is a rather crude measure of identity, and may be based on incorrect records and assumptions (Hickey, 2015). Administrative categories of ethnicity, such as that of the ABS (2012), appear to assume that Aboriginal identity is a stable characteristic. In fact, there is evidence in other contexts that ethnic self-identification is subject to change.

In a study of Canadian Aboriginal youth, Hallett, Want, Chandler, Flores and Gehrke (2008) found that approximately half of those who began Grade 7 in 1995 did not consistently self-identify as Aboriginal over a 10-year period. Canadian Aboriginal people have a comparable history to their Australian counterparts in terms of colonialism, forced assimilation and generally poorer educational outcomes. Hallet et al. (2008) found that the always-declared group had the highest drop-out rate from school, while those that declared later or declared once were far less likely to drop out. While Hallet et al. (2008) draw no conclusion about this difference, they note that many of the youth in their study live on reserves, and these students have higher drop-out rates than those who do not. Because these students live in a location where ethnic identification is unavoidable, and where poverty is at much higher levels than the national average (Kirkup, 2016), it may be speculated that both self-disclosure and dropping out are the results of economic need. Moreover, if the Aboriginal identity is stigmatised, as Currie, Wild, Schopflocher, Laing and Veugelers (2012) suggest, there may be a disincentive to disclose for Canadian Aboriginal students not in need of specific targeted support.

Note that this study uses the terms “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” (ATSI) and “Indigenous” interchangeably. Multiple guides on Indigenous terminology use the terms as synonymous, such as the Gulanga Good Practice Guides (ACT Council of Social Service, 2016). Multiple university Indigenous services and programs use Indigenous and Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander interchangeably, including the UNSW Nura Gili Centre for Indigenous Programs, the University of Melbourne’s Murrup Barak Institute for Indigenous Development, and the Australian National University’s Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre.

Reasons to identify/not identify as Indigenous

The ABS (2012) study consulted Indigenous focus groups and identified several reasons to self-disclose as Indigenous. Paraphrased, these were:

1. Pride and confidence in their identity
2. Perceived benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the individual personally
3. Desire for recognition of issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
4. A ‘Confirmation of Aboriginality’ to support their identification
5. The perception that answering the question was compulsory

Conversely, the reasons to avoid disclosure in the ABS study are:

1. Fear of negative repercussions for the individual/community
2. Fear of racism, discrimination or differential treatment
3. Learned behaviour owing to previous experiences
4. Offence at being asked the identity question
5. A need for more information about the reasons for asking questions.

These reasons seem applicable to the university context. Essentially, these factors paint a picture of Indigenous students taking pride in their identity, seeking benefits from entry programs that their identity as Indigenous entitles them to, but also fear negative repercussions, racism, discrimination, and/or learned behaviours of avoiding the question and questioning the reasons for being asked.

Disclosure by Students with Disabilities

As of 2016, Australian universities are attended by a total 60,019 students living with disabilities (Department of Education and Training, 2016). This indicates an increase in students with disabilities of 7.9% since 2014. However, these figures may not be representative of the entire student population with disabilities. Many students choose not to disclose their disability to the university. In some cases, students may have disclosed to other institutions, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) or to other disability services, but not to the university itself. This has implications for students, teaching staff, and the university's services and institutions.

Recent advances in disability research have sought to recognize a myriad of conditions and circumstances that qualify broadly as disabilities. There is a recognition of varying levels of severity of disabilities, and of apparent and hidden disabilities (Hernandez, 2011; Mullins & Preyde, 2013; Olney & Brockelman, 2003), as well as the sometimes-temporal nature of disabilities; that is, some disabilities are evident and limiting at some occasions, and latent at others. Essentially, disability research and policy have shifted focus from diagnostics and categorization that often assume lifelong disability and significant and universal impairment, towards understandings of disabilities as sometimes hidden; impacting several domains of life, not just physical and mental but also social and emotional, and sometimes exclusive to particular activities, situations, and contexts. Highlighted by Cook, Griffin, Hayden, Hinson & Raven, 2012, p. 564) "Current definitions of disability have moved away from the 'medical' model, towards a 'social' model that emphasises the role of institutions in removing unnecessary barriers to learning through flexible provision".

Changing understandings and a recognition of the multifaceted nature of disability has led to a number of definitions of 'disability': some narrow, and some more comprehensive. This may lead to confusion and conceptual ambiguity regarding what 'disability' actually is. Below, some of the more widely used definitions of 'disability' are discussed, in terms of their breadth and reach, and what this means for disability disclosure in Australia's tertiary sector.

The *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth.) defines disability along medical lines, focusing on a stringent list of conditions:

- a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or

- c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that:
 - i. presently exists; or
 - ii. previously existed but no longer exists; or
 - iii. may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or
 - iv. is imputed to a person.

Similarly, the *Disability Services Act 1993* (NSW) defines a person with a disability as follows:

"A person is in the target group of the person has a disability (however arising and whether or not of a chronic episodic nature):

- a) that is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, physical or like impairment to a combination of such impairments, and
- b) that is permanent or is likely to be permanent; and
- c) that results in:
 - a. a significantly reduced capacity in one or more major life activities, such as communication, learning, mobility, decision-making or self-care; and
 - b. the need for support, whether or not of an ongoing nature".

The ABS has adopted a wider consideration of disability. This definition focuses on limitations caused by a condition, and less on identifying and classifying particular conditions and symptoms:

"A person has a disability if they report they have a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities" (ABS, 2016). The 2009 ABS 'Profiles of Disability, Australia' issue clarifies this with an example: "a person may report loss of sight as a health condition, but if they are able to see and function 'normally' by wearing corrective glasses, they are not considered (for statistical purposes) to have a disability. In contrast, a person who, even when wearing glasses, is still restricted in everyday activities by their vision, does have a disability" (ABS 2009). According to this definition, approximately 18.3% of Australians reported living with a disability in 2015, showing a relatively stable rate over time (18.5% in 2012, and in 2009).

Social-relational understandings of disability

The *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth.) and the *Disability Services Act 1993* (NSW) definitions focus on categorizing a medical condition and connecting that to an impairment or loss of ability. Differing from this, the more inclusive ABS definition considers disabilities in terms of everyday restrictions and their outcomes. This shift, from a medical focus with an emphasis on 'hard' disability, to a more holistic consideration of livelihood impairments and limitations, has roots in social-relational considerations of disability. This

model, pioneered by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS, 1975), reconsiders 'disability' along social equity lines, defines disability as:

“the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities”.

In other words, the UPIAS considers disability to be socially constructed, where physically and mentally differently abled people are limited in their capacity due to systems not considering taking sufficient account of their needs. This lifts disability from its narrow association with biomedical considerations, and places it on a wider social plain (Thomas 2004, p.33). This reorientation has exposed the social barriers faced by disabled people (Thomas, 2004). It has also enabled a new strategy for addressing disabilities in institutions and organizations—barrier removal (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). “The priority is to dismantle these disabling barriers, in order to promote the inclusion of people with impairments [sic]. Rather than pursuing a strategy of medical cure or rehabilitation, it is better to pursue a strategy of social change” (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002, p. 5).

University definitions of disability

Australia's tertiary sector has made great strides away from methods of disability assistance that are highly rigid and narrowly focused, and towards more successful methods of removing barriers and empowering students, inspired by the social-relational model. Tertiary disability services, however, alternate between variations of the above definitions. For example, Curtin University employs the *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth.) definition of disability (Curtin University, 2016). Similarly, the University of Queensland presents a shortlist of specific conditions that may warrant academic adjustment, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosed by a registered psychologist or psychiatrist; hearing impairment diagnosed by an audiologist; illnesses including chronic fatigue syndrome, glandular fever, diabetes or epilepsy diagnosed by a general practitioner or specialist; neurological impairment including an acquired brain injury, cerebral aneurysm, cerebral tumour, concussion, or side effects for cancer therapies, in chronic conditions diagnosed by a neurologist, neurophysiologist, registered psychologist with clinical designation, psychiatrist, or in temporary conditions a general practitioner; physical impairments) diagnosed by a specialist in chronic conditions including low muscle tone, poor or impaired motor skills, arthritis, cancer, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, paraplegia or in temporary conditions a general practitioner for an arm in plaster, arm in sling (writing hand), broken hand/wrist/finger (writing hand), or broken scapula; and psychological or emotional impairment or difficulties including depression, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic/anxiety disorder diagnosed by a registered psychologist, psychiatrist, or general practitioner; learning difficulties including Autism Spectrum Disorder, dyslexia or auditory processing problems diagnosed by an educational psychologist with training and experience testing for a learning disability; or a visual impairment/difficulty diagnosed by an ophthalmologist (University of Queensland, 2017).

The University of New South Wales offers another definition, with examples of some of the disabilities that may fall under this ambit:

“Disabilities’ is a broad term used to cover a wide range of professionally diagnosed illnesses, learning difficulties, injuries, medical and mental health conditions. You may be affected permanently or have symptoms that occur from time to time. Your disability could be one or more of the following: Attention Deficit Disorder; Anxiety disorder (including Obsessive Compulsive Disorder); Autism spectrum (including Asperger’s Syndrome); Depressive disorder; Eating disorder; Hearing impairment; Learning disability; Medical condition; Neurological condition; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; Physical disability; Psychiatric condition; Psychological condition; Psychotic disorder; Vision impairment” (University of New South Wales 2016).

This definition, while including a list of examples, emphasises the breadth of the term ‘disability’, that symptoms may be impermanent, and that this includes professionally diagnosed illnesses, cognitive difficulties, physical difficulties and mental health conditions.

The description of disability in this study is not greatly different from that the Higher Education Information Managements System (HEIMS)²: “Students who have indicated that they have a disability, impairment or long-term medical condition which may affect their studies”. Where it differs is that the HEIMS definition assumes what we intend to measure; we are particularly interested in students who have *not* indicated a disability. The statement that it might affect the student’s studies is similarly problematic, as it assumes that the respondents (many in their first year, indeed in an orientation week) can judge this accurately. Disabilities may be undisclosed because they are undocumented, episodic (sometimes affecting the student and sometimes not) or considered under control—whether rightly or wrongly. Indeed, we encountered a number of respondents who did not disclose immediately because they did not realise the impact of their condition on their study.

Hidden figures and disclosure in Australia’s tertiary sector

As of 2015, the Australian tertiary sector includes a population of 1,035,474 students. Of these, 60,019, or approximately 5.8%, identify as having a disability. This has implications for students, teaching staff, and the universities services and institutions.

At the individual level, non-disclosure may affect student performance, student retention, physical and mental health, social wellbeing, agency, and access to services that the student has a right to. At the institutional level, non-disclosure has outcomes on resourcing and funding programs aimed at disabled students, for service provision, and infrastructure. For university staff, teachers and academics, non-disclosure of a disability may result in that disability and other related circumstances not being taken into account in course and class planning, and assessment.

Issues impacting disclosure / non-disclosure of disabilities

Despite strides made in conceptualizing disabilities, and a growing population of tertiary students with disabilities, many students choose not to disclose their disability to university services, either not disclosing formally but selectively disclosing to friends and confidantes, or keeping their disability hidden altogether. The decision not to disclose is influenced by a

² http://heimshelp.education.gov.au/sites/heimshelp/2017_data_requirements/2017dataelements/pages/386

number of factors. Issues of stigma and fears of the social consequences of disclosure are common findings (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002; Hoehn, 1998). Hernandez (2011) examines relationships between wellbeing, disclosure, acceptance and stigma regarding disability status in individuals living with apparent and non-apparent (hidden) disabilities. Stigma was shown to be a fundamental problem for individuals with physical disabilities because it often overshadows their personal identity. Although it was assumed that individuals with non-apparent physical disabilities would experience high levels of stigma, because of fears their non-apparent disability would be seen by others to be false or discredited, the study found no difference between the levels of stigma between apparent and non-apparent disabilities. However, those with non-apparent disabilities who experienced more stigma tended to disclose less. Hernandez links this with Matthews and Harrington's (2000) finding that individuals with non-apparent disabilities felt disclosure would elicit unwarranted sympathy, invite judgement, and damage existing relationships.

One significant factor in disability disclosure is the 'visibility' of the disability. Research suggests that individuals with 'hidden' disabilities, those that are not immediately obvious (these may include mental and cognitive disabilities), are less likely to immediately disclose, and have significant misgivings about formal disclosure. Morris and Turnbull (2006) discuss disclosure and non-disclosure of nursing students with a less visible disability—dyslexia. Of eighteen students diagnosed with dyslexia, six had decided not to disclose, six had disclosed only when there was a recognized need for support, and the final six had disclosed their disability at the outset of their program. One non-disclosing student states, "I've listened to nurses talking disrespectfully about others because they are slow. If they knew I was dyslexic, they would talk about me behind my back" (Morris & Turnbull 2006, p. 241). Similarly, one disclosing student states "I've told my mentor, so she's completely understanding, but some of the staff nurses—there's no point. You just grin and bear it and do your best" (p. 241). Other reports include, "I'd get the rubbish jobs, any HCA jobs, when they should be taking you through the practice of the core nursing staff"; "I don't tell them because I don't want pity. I don't want people to tell me not to do the Kardex (nursing records) if it's a problem for me, because that won't help anybody". However, one disclosing student also reports that "because I was newly diagnosed I wanted everyone to know straight away, so if I had problems I could get help" (p. 241). These accounts suggest that disclosing, in this context, involves a number of crucial considerations—of peer attitudes, of career outcomes, of pity, but also in one case of disclosing so that the information could be used to help the student. Overall, disclosure involves considerations of privacy, fears of discrimination and differential treatment, weighed with considerations of responsibility and best practice. Some students also suggested disclosure was associated with admitting a problem existed, and shame. Regarding one student's dyslexia, they state "no one knows about it—I can't bring myself to say it. I hated to be labelled as having it (dyslexia). I just can't, and I hate it" (p. 242).

Olney and Brockelman (2003) examine the ways university students with hidden disabilities employ methods of perception management when choosing to disclose or to not disclose their disability. Students in the study recognized both advantages and disadvantages that their disability afforded them. Olney and Brockelman suggest that a student's disability adds insight into their lives, may be associated with particular qualities, may not be particularly restrictive, connects them to others with disabilities, and overall, is a part of the fabric of

their identity (2003, pp. 47–48). However, students also selectively concealed their disabilities in particular contexts.

Contradicting Hernandez's (2011) findings, Olney and Brockelman (2003) found that students reported that this was when they were concerned that others would not believe they had a bona-fide disability; when participants felt that others would see them as less competent; when they wished to be viewed as consistent and trustworthy; and when they worried about being seen as needing help rather than a peer who can give and take in relationships (2003, p. 48). Overall, Olney and Brockelman (2003) find that disclosure involves an "intricate decision-making process about revealing disability information". Being empowered and having agency about when, where, and how to disclose, and how much to disclose, is an important part of the disclosure process. Essentially, disclosure is linked to perception management, to having some agency over how one's peers and colleagues see an individual and their disability.

Jacklin (2011) examines in depth a single case study of a non-declaring student with a disability (post brain-tumour related seizures): "Anna's" decision to not formally disclose her condition at her institution was shaped by a number of factors. First, the visibility of her disability together with the degree to which it could be hidden. When Anna's disability was revealed, through her seizures, she attempted to manage other people's reactions as impairment effects became social effects. For those that Anna did disclose her condition to, "what was important was that Anna felt they showed they understood, without treating her differently: restrictions of activity became due solely to impairment effects, not imposed through their responses" (Jacklin 2011, p.103). Although Anna officially did not disclose her condition, she strategically and increasingly disclosed informally to those around her. Finally, Anna's decision to not disclose was shaped by her earlier disclosure experiences. When applying for post-graduate study, Anna was rejected by all higher education institutions where she had mentioned her impairment in applications. The only acceptance was the institution she was studying in at the time of the study, as a non-disclosing student. Essentially, Anna's decision not to disclose formally was shaped by a number of experiences and perceptions. She did informally disclose to those close to her that she trusted, and in cases where it was impossible to hide her disability, such as when she was having seizures, to calm the reactions of her peers, and to prevent a physical impairment becoming a social impairment. However, this did not extend to formal disclosure, where she felt her disclosure on paper limited her choices.

Mullins and Preyde (2013) conducted interviews with university students with hidden disabilities – dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and mental illness. Students identified several social and organizational barriers to disclosure that encouraged shame and embarrassment at having a disability and seeking accommodations for it. It was inferred that the invisible nature of students' disabilities had a role in the negative perceptions surrounding their disabilities. Participants reported belittling and negative comments about their disability (Mullins & Preyde, 2013, p. 154). When requesting considerations and accommodations, students indicated resistance from professors related to the misconception that accommodations provide the students with an unfair advantage. Likewise, other students resented disabled students for receiving accommodations – "you could hear it in little, little comments like, 'oh, aren't you lucky'" (p. 154). These perceptions affected students' decisions to seek accommodation. Some students indicated that accessing accommodations emphasised their difference from other students: "I also didn't

want to be a disappointment to myself and to some extent I think sometimes I just want it to go away and I just want to be normal and by not getting the accommodations I thought that perhaps that might make me a bit more normal” (p. 154).

Students reported that they would choose to hide their disability to limit these negative perceptions. One student remarked “it’s also easier to become normal because it’s invisible. So, people don’t really treat you any differently unless they, unless you say I have a disability” (p. 155).

De Cesarei (2015) finds that reasons for disclosure of disabilities varies. For most, disclosure was aimed at obtaining accommodations and compensatory measures. However, with less visible disabilities, disclosure occurred when students could not cope with their study demands. Mullins and Preyde (2013), discussed above, suggest that the reasons for this may be embarrassment or shame of having a hidden disability, fear of rejection, and fears of being ‘outed’ for having a cognitive disability or mental illness. As well as this, Jacklin et al. (2007) find that the timing of disclosure varies markedly. Half of the students studied disclosed during the application or registration. One quarter disclosed their disability during the first year. Of the remainder, timing was unknown, or occurred in second or third year.

Riley and Hagger (2015) interviewed ten people of various ages who had suffered from a traumatic brain injury. They identify six reasons for non-disclosure: Fears of negative reactions from others; feelings of shame; avoidance of emotional upset about the incident causing the injury; feelings that others are not interested in their injury; that the stress of disclosing their injury to others outweighs the benefits; and wanting to fit in as a person without a brain injury, or in other words, not wanting a traumatic brain injury to define them and isolate them socially. Again, the same issues appear. For those with hidden disabilities and limitations caused by injury and disability, disclosure is sometimes traumatic, sometimes is seen as more trouble than it is worth, and sometimes serves to expand their distance from peers and colleagues and further isolate. Where the injury may be mental and/or physical, the factors weighing on its disclosure tend to be social, relating to perceptions of how that injury will be received and accepted, or not accepted, by those around them and close to them.

These results were similar to those of Cole and Cawthon (2015), who analysed qualitative data to identify four factors that were important when students are considering to disclose or not to disclose learning disabilities to university staff: First, poor knowledge of accommodations. One student remarked that “I didn’t feel like my problems would qualify compared to people who were blind or deaf” (Cole & Cawthon, 2015, p. 170). Second, non-disclosing individuals were found to have an “overwhelmingly negative” view of their disability compared to disclosing individuals, considering their disabilities as “as stigma, excuse, problem, and handicapping” (Cole & Cawthon, 2015, p. 170). Third, students that felt they did not need accommodations, either for fear of taking advantage of accommodations they felt they did not need, or finding that they were coping well without accommodations. Finally, students that did not disclose their learning disability did so to maintain a typical identity and avoid negative reactions from peers.

Cai and Richdale (2016) detail the experiences of university students in Australia living with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). Among other issues, the 23 Victorian students interviewed, and their families discussed the difficult process of gaining access to university

disability support services. Most students only disclosed their ASD after enrolment, once classes had started (Cai & Richdale, p. 38). Additionally, the potential benefits of disclosure of diagnosis and registration were not provided. Several students only registered following a crisis, which may have been otherwise averted if their situation was known to services. Despite this, when accessing services, students found disability support staff helpful, and they enhanced students' education experience.

Disclosure by Students from Non-English-Speaking Backgrounds

Students from Non-English-Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) may face significant challenges in Australia's tertiary education system. These students operate in an environment where advanced English skills are often considered standard, and where accessing essential support and services also often depends on an ability to understand, navigate and utilize English speaking, reading, and writing skills. Despite these challenges, Australia's tertiary student population in 2015 included 40,281 domestic NESB students, in a total student population of 1,035,474 students. These figures are distinct from Australia's international student population, which is not considered in this study, but is nevertheless far greater (363 298 students in 2015) (Department of Education Employment and Training, 2105).

Definitions of non-English-speaking background

A commonly applied definition of NESB people is that they should be "born overseas and less than 10 years living in Australia" (Gale & Parker, 2013). The 10-year rule may be useful for bureaucratic purposes, but is impractical for interventions, as it suggests that the arbitrary period of 10 years is adequate for an NESB person to adjust to the Australian cultural and linguistic environment. In fact, as *A fair chance for all* (Department of Education Employment and Training, 1990) notes, even second-generation immigrants are likely to need assistance to succeed in tertiary education. The difficulty with NESB disclosure is that unlike Indigenous status or disabilities, the question of whether students are NESB is not directly asked by admission centres or by university admissions departments. Moreover, the ABS does not recommend the use of the term (ABS, 1999).

For a survey study of motivations for and deterrents to disclosure, the definition must be operationalizable in a form understandable to students rather than statisticians. The students must be aware of their disclosure and make a deliberate choice to do so. For an investigation of equity issues, the most fruitful approach is to ask directly about the phenomenon of interest rather than try to determine it *a priori* based on predictive factors.

The HEIMS definition of NESB³ is reported by universities based on three data points—residency type, year of arrival less than 10 years prior to reference year (further defined as "the year to which the data relate"), and language spoken at home ("use of a language other than English at the student's/applicant's permanent home residence"). By this strict definition, the student would be unaware that he/she is disclosing an NESB. Furthermore, we would need to define "permanent home residence" (presumably family home, but university students live in a variety of domestic situations, so this cannot be assumed) and language spoken at home, which does not cover the range of options, including the not uncommon situation where more than one language is spoken at home. The 10-year limit is arbitrary, and again difficult to apply. It is not clear whether it refers to the point of

³ <http://heimshelp.education.gov.au/sites/heimshelp/dictionary/derived/pages/941>

enrolment (which may be in the current program or a previous one), the time of the survey, or at the time of disclosure. By strict definition, an NESB student would cease to be NESB after 10 years, and potentially over the course of their university enrolment. Thus, while the HEIMS definition is reasonable for drawing inferences from population data, and is used by universities for reporting purposes, it is impractical to apply at the personal level. It is a temporary status rather than a background, and it is possible that one reason that students do not disclose this information is that they are unaware that they qualify.

Thus, there are multiple definitions of NESB and similar terms that all consider essential elements to meet NESB status, with some nuanced differences. Hence, students were presented with a straightforward question on the only common factor: “do you identify as an Australian student from a non-English speaking background?”. The footnoted definition on the survey is one of language background other than English suggested by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (1997, cited in Australian Council of Educational Research, 2000): ‘either born in a non-English speaking country, or in Australia with one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country, or are Indigenous students for whom English is a second or other language’ (MCEETYA 1997:78). Language proficiency is self-assessed with separate question.

Essentially, for the purposes of this study, NESB students are local students, but share the same insecurities and challenges as migrants, albeit in an environment where ‘migrant’ is a fixed and restrictive term, one that many of them by default do not hold. Some of these individuals are second-generation refugees (Joyce, Earnest, de Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Kong et al., 2016), some are students who have come from overseas and attained citizenship before going on to university study (Fildes, Cunnington, & Quaglio, 2010). Hence, NESB students are a diverse group with some similar and many differing needs.

Fildes et al. (2010) identify a number of factors weighing on the mental health and performance of NESB students in Australian universities. These included academic barriers, such as not knowing “the system”. Several students were unaware that they were able to request extensions, were unaware of online components of courses, and were unaware of university email accounts. Essentially, a lack of understanding of the structures the university offers them. Second, there are language and cultural barriers. Students had issues with formal and informal language, vocabulary and terminology. Related to this, asking questions of tutors, lecturers, and other staff was complicated by anxiety surrounding their own poor self-perceptions of their language skills (Fildes et al., 2010: pp. 30–31). Students faced social barriers, related to isolation and in many cases having few family members and friends nearby to talk to, or who understood their issues at university. Personal barriers such as disconnection from mainstream cultural norms, and a sense of disconnection from the wider community also effected NESB student wellbeing (2010, p.32). Most importantly, structural barriers were found to create a rift between NESB students and university educators:

“Many tertiary educators feel challenged by NESB students and may not consider themselves qualified to support students’ language and cultural needs. They may become frustrated by grammatical mistakes or inappropriate styles of writing, and having to spend extra time correcting them”. (Pantelides, 1999)

Ballard and Clancy (1997, p. 2) found that lecturers were often frustrated by perceived “weaknesses” and “poor English” in students and “the extra demands that fall upon them as teachers”. This has the potential to cause ambivalence about the beneficial influence of internationalisation on higher education. Teaching staff are at the interface of these ideologies, and may experience some dissonance about their roles and responsibilities” (Fildes et al. 2010, p.26).

Although there is little research on NESB disclosure/non-disclosure at present, the research suggests that NESB students face real and perceived barriers in accessing services and seeking help in universities. First, there is a lack of awareness of services in the university. This may be related to language skills, or a disconnection from the wider student population. Second, cultural barriers that may make many NESB students uncomfortable seeking help, or may see asking for help or assistance in the form of accommodations or extensions as embarrassing or as a personal defeat. Third, as discussed by Fildes et al (2010), cultural and linguistic differences do not exist alone, and extend a rift between NESB students and teaching staff. This may make students apprehensive to approach staff for help when they need it.

The Role of Disclosure at University

This literature review has considered issues of voluntary disclosure / non-disclosure from three equity groups: Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Each of these groups faces unique challenges and obstacles linked to their equity status, although, these are not unique to these groups nor are universal within these groups. Broadly, self-disclosure for each of these groups is a highly personal and often conflicting consideration. Many Indigenous students, in a number of contexts, have been shown to employ their equity status selectively, sometimes not disclosing, and sometimes disclosing to access particular programs and services. Likewise, self-disclosure by students living with disabilities involves considerations of stigma, of identity as a person living with a disability, and considerations of what the actual purpose—what is achieved—by disclosing. For NESB students, self-disclosure may offer access to special considerations and accommodations not just linked to more obvious language and cultural issues but may offer a space of connection with other services and students for a population that is disjointed and often isolated in a new environment. This does not assume that Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and NESB students do not disclose at all, but that they do not disclose to university services through formal means. As discussed above, for many students with hidden disabilities in particular, disclosure may involve a staggered, scaled and gradual process of disclosing to close friends and confidantes, tutors, lecturers, and service providers based on a students' needs at the time. The reasons for this non-disclosure are myriad, encompassing sectoral, cultural, institutional, structural and personal factors. However, two broad themes may cover many of these factors: perceptions and processes.

Perceptions of equity group membership

Perceptions of equity status include one's personal ideas surrounding their equity status, as well as others' ideas about that student and their status. Perceptions are informed by institutional cultures and social experiences. They may take the form of overt and explicit discrimination, but may also involve less explicit, subtle social interactions such as social exclusion and avoidance. Perceptions may also be informed by equity processes themselves, by over-servicing and infantilizing service seekers. Some equity students fear being seen as 'tokens' by their peers, that is, as having access, achievements, or recognition based on their equity status rather than on their own merit.

Processes of Self-Disclosure

The second factor in disclosure involves processes. Australian universities are guided by anti-discrimination laws, including the Disability Standards for Education Act (2005), the *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth.). These and other state anti-discrimination laws provide loose guidance about what constitutes discrimination; however, universities' resolutions and provision of equity and inclusion frameworks are largely self-directed. In other words, although universities in Australia exist within a legal framework that discourages exclusion and encourages inclusion, the ways they do this are largely left up to the university. Because of this, Australian universities have a myriad of equity disclosure processes. This presents equity students with a confusing landscape of processes, standards, and bureaucracy.

Equity disclosure: Conclusions

The research discussed above suggests key issues for students and disclosure. First, many students choose not to disclose until later in their tertiary careers, especially students with disabilities. This may occur when students face problems associated with their studies or require targeted assistance and need to reconsider their choice to not disclose. This also suggests that, as well as considerations of stigma, students weigh considerations of the purpose of disclosure. If a disability does not interfere with their performance and sense of wellbeing as a student, then what need is there to disclose it? Second, disclosure is a gradual process. Students often disclose to close friends and associates, despite being uncomfortable making a formal disclosure to the university or to other university services. This suggests that trust is a factor in a student's decision to disclose. Third, disclosure involves more than disclosing to a service or an authority. It is a personal step in recognizing and identifying with an equity group.

A number of students and stakeholders in the studies above, especially highlighted by Mullins and Preyde (2013), saw disclosing a disability as a step in identifying as "disabled", which in their case was a category resisted. Similarly, Indigenous students or those from NESBs may resist that label or have reservations about the way in which these groups are perceived by others. Finally, there is an issue of choice and managing perceptions of others. Lighter-skinned people of Aboriginal descent, students with hidden disabilities, and NESB students who are proficient in English can choose whether to disclose this information. While some of these students may simply choose not to disclose because they see doing so as unnecessary and do not need to access to support services, many of these students feel shame, fear, and apprehension about their equity status and this affects their decision to disclose. There are fears that those around them might not see their need for equity assistance as genuine. There are fears of being labelled. For many, there are also personal doubts about their own needs and entitlements, and where to draw a line between facing challenges and limitations, and having bona fide equity status. Clearly, labelling has a significant role to play in this consideration.

This has outcomes for disability disclosure policies and procedures. A student may decide to disclose at any point in their tertiary career, and as such, disability services need to ensure disclosure pathways are easily accessible at any time, and not just during enrolment. Because much of the research above suggests that non-disclosure is related to fears of being 'outed', fears of positive and negative discrimination, and concerns about privacy, disclosure services also need to ensure that disclosure processes are clearly secure, private, and need to ensure that students are aware of how their information will be shared, who with, and what level of control they themselves have in this process. Finally, the research suggests that for those with a hidden or less visible disability, disclosure can be a more stressful and worrying experience, involving a fear of being seen as lying, of having their disability(ies) being discredited, and/or of being treated differently when they want to be treated the same as their peers and colleagues. For disclosure services, this presents a challenge, one that needs to be met with an open and transparent approach to disability recognition that allows students to have some idea before they begin the disclosure process of how their disclosure will be handled, what factors are considered, and what types of situations merit accommodations and equity consideration. De-identified student experiences as examples may be useful for overcoming this challenge.

Methods

Approaching non-disclosure presents a significant challenge to researchers. Non-disclosing equity students are undocumented and unknown to equity services. In other words, the focus groups of this study are a hidden population, often by choice. Their disability(ies), indigenous status, and/or language background are unknown, and hence they are invisible for statistics and research purposes. Identifying and accessing the research subjects is a thus challenge in itself. This research approaches this problem through a mixed-methodology model, employing quantitative and qualitative methods to access the broadest possible selection of participants, with controls for personal and confounding variables, discussed below. Mixed methods methodologies involve the collection and analysis, integration of findings, and inference drawing using both qualitative and quantitative techniques (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007 p. 4). This approach provides a way to explore and explain complex research phenomena more rigorously and with better transferability than single-method approaches (Cai & Mehari, 2015; Creswell, 2010). Mixed methodologies allow quantitative data to lead qualitative inquiry, lending depth to large pools of data that would otherwise offer accuracy but little inferential value (Cai & Mehari, 2015).

This study's methodology involves a three-pronged approach to data gathering and analysis—an online survey of equity unit staff across Australia, a student survey of UNSW students and university students across Australia and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This triangulation of methods allowed a wide collection of data to identify trends in the equity groups surveyed online, and a deeper inquiry into these trends and the personal experiences that surround them in face-to-face and telephone interviews. This choice of methodology also allowed anonymous access to non-disclosing students.

There were significant difficulties in gaining a sufficient number of responses to the student survey. The study was conducted on a modest budget that did not allow visits to other universities or extensive in-person approaches. Moreover, the cohort of interest were students who chose to conceal a potentially sensitive aspect of their identity, so our methods had to provide channels that would protect anonymity. As discussed below, the Bayesian regression method adopted for the statistical analysis was used to compensate for imbalance in the data. Moreover, the triangulation of methods in this study—student survey, staff survey and interviews—revealed common themes.

In addition, at the time of the research, two other nationwide surveys were underway: the Australian Government Department of Education and Training *Student Experience Survey* (SES) and the Australian Human Rights Commission *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Survey*. Both of these surveys were heavily promoted throughout Australia and attracted significant press coverage, which may have contributed to survey fatigue. Moreover, changes to Australian Federal Government funding to universities were proposed, and several universities, including UNSW, were undergoing restructures which may have dampened the enthusiasm of staff members to distribute the *Enhancing Self-Disclosure of Equity Group Membership* survey.

Student Survey

The student survey was developed following consultation with a range of stakeholders and during the process of ethics approval. The stakeholders included academic staff specializing

in disability services and university equity service practitioners with years of experience working with students from equity backgrounds. Consulting staff advised on clarity and content, while the Ethics Committee required inclusion of information relating to participants' rights and the use of the data for research purposes. Online surveys were advised to be the best method of data gathering to access a large population of equity students; facilitate a safe, de-identified and open environment for enquiry; and encourage students with diverse needs and abilities to take part in the survey. Key variables of interest were identified as: student equity demographic data (disability; Indigenous; NESB), disclosure status, method(s) of disclosure, type of disability, and perspectives of disclosure. A preliminary survey was written for the first five participants to test empirical validity, link questions to research variables, and test the reliability of the survey software. This conforms with research by Gideon (2012) on questionnaire construction:

1. Defining variables according to the research objectives
2. Formulate preliminary survey items
3. Examine preliminary questionnaire items
4. Empirical Examination in a pilot study
5. Correct and rephrase items according to findings from previous stage
6. Writing the survey introduction
7. Final adjustments and modifications (Gideon, 2012, p.91–105)

Survey development and changes

This section outlines the plan originally proposed in the expression of interest to the funding body and changes made.

Survey generation and analysis were proposed as follows.

Survey questions will be generated, selected and pre-tested with student focus groups to improve reliability and validity. Responses will be stored in a spreadsheet format to enable linking to student record data. Responses to open questions can be analysed for themes in the same way as interview data (see below) while quantitative data can be linked to a student database for regression and correlation analysis.

The survey of UNSW students was generally conducted as planned. Because ethics approval was required, the focus group stage was abbreviated, and the stakeholders consulted individually and by email. Survey questions were generated and selected by the project team, and discussed with four recent graduates who worked in the equity area including two who had previously disclosed disabilities and a student intern for readability and clarity, with two staff members who had tutored with the UNSW Indigenous service, with heads of services (the UNSW Nura Gili Indigenous and Disabilities Services unit) and staff members who work with students in areas of interest—an Associate Professor who conducts research on students with disabilities and a Senior Lecturer who teaches a course to improve the communication skills of students, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds. After this process, minor changes were made to wording for clarity and a question on types of disability added. At the suggestion of a member of the Ethics Secretariat of the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, the wording “Do you identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Student?” (in place of “Are you...?”) was adopted. The same wording was used for the other groups for consistency.

Note that the surveys use the “Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander” in the first instance and the more concise “Indigenous” thereafter.

Two modes of survey distribution were planned, as follows.

Surveys of all students at UNSW (email during study periods or face-to-face during orientation week), to gather background information and—with assurances of confidentiality and the option of anonymity—ask whether the prospective and/or university student has disclosed or undisclosed status as a member of one of the above groups. Information packs on support / opportunities will be distributed.

Following the receipt of ethics approval, the pilot version of the survey was distributed via an equity services email, distributed to 6169 students, and 42 responses were received between March 30 and April 11. Further minor changes were made for clarity, and the survey tool was changed to a paid account on the *SurveyMonkey* platform.⁴ This was done because early feedback from students indicated that the UNSW was difficult to use on mobile devices and it could not be used on the UNSW *Uni-Verse* mobile phone app surveys tab.

The survey was distributed as described below.

Changes to student survey methodology

Three changes were made to the proposed survey method. First, the survey was workshopped with recent graduates and staff members rather than with student focus groups. Second, the survey of students during O-Week was delayed until mid-year. It could not be conducted in February 2017 because ethics committee approval had not yet been obtained. A walk-around survey was conducted in the mid-year orientation week in July.

During this O-Week survey, student volunteers were situated at a table with a poster advertising the survey and given training in asking appropriately. This consisted of asking passers-by if they were aware what “equity groups” were and whether they knew about support options such as disability services. They told these people about the prizes, Volunteers were requested not to ‘profile’ people for approach but merely to speak to those who showed an interest and pass them an iPad if they were willing to take the survey. They had stickers with QR codes for those who preferred to take the survey later, and pieces of paper for those willing to be interviewed. This could be placed in a sealed box for later contact by the research team.

Response rates were rather low (25 responses), and mainly confined to NESB students. Thus, the effect of this change on final results is likely to be minimal.

Third, a major change was to extend the survey to include students at other universities. This was prompted by the need for a larger sample size, particularly of Indigenous students. This change entailed minor adaptation of question wording to remove references to specifically UNSW systems, such as the MyUNSW website, where enrolled students complete a statistical profile on enrolment. Disclosing equity group status via MyUNSW was amended to “disclosed on enrolment”.

⁴ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

This extension of the survey created a challenge in distributing the survey, as the project team did not have direct access to student email lists for other universities. The survey was therefore distributed in a similar manner to the staff survey, below, with equity units, equity staff email lists and organisations such as ADCET and NCSEHE contacted for assistance with survey distribution. In addition, paid Facebook and Instagram posts with links to the survey were used to contact the target groups directly. These distribution methods are described below.

Survey development and questions

Questions were produced according to the goals of the research, namely, to identify the proportion of non-disclosing equity students in Australian universities, and to find out why that gap exists. The survey included multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Drafts of the survey were discussed with service heads at UNSW and with researchers with experience in work with the relevant groups. The questions were also discussed with students and staff members to ensure that the wording was clear. The wording was amended as necessary and errors were removed prior to distribution. Demographic information could be linked by the UNSW student ID to student records. For non-UNSW students who provided contact details, separate questions were asked via email for gender, age and residential postcode when first enrolled. These were compared with the ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) of 2011 to provide an approximation of socioeconomic status (high, medium or low).

Multiple choice questions included questions on equity group identification:

(Questions. 3/8/14) (“do you identify as Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander”, “do you consider yourself to have a permanent or long-term disability?”, “do you identify as an Australian student from a non-English speaking background?”). Please note the comments above on definitions.

In each section, there is a question on disclosure and channels. These were separate for each group, as some students fell into more than one category.

(Questions. 4/9/16) “Have you disclosed as an Indigenous student (student with a disability/ student from a non-English speaking background) student to your university?”

1. Disclosed to the university via a tertiary admissions centre (e.g. UAC) during the application process)
2. Disclosed on enrolment
3. Disclosed to the university by registration with a dedicated Indigenous Unit or equity support service
4. Not disclosed to the university
5. Unsure whether disclosed to the university
6. Prefer not to say
7. Other (please specify)”

Questions 5, 11, and 17 asked students whether they agreed with statements about self-disclosing relevant to their self-identified equity group. These questions were suggested by the literature review or suggestions with equity staff.

“Please indicate whether you agree with these statements about self-disclosing as an Indigenous student (Q. 5) / disclosing a disability (Q.11) / disclosing a non-English speaking background (Q.17):

1. Disclosing this information to the university benefits students.
2. I trust the university with this information
3. I fear prejudice in my university life if I disclose
4. I fear prejudice in my professional life after university if I disclose
5. I am concerned about the confidentiality of this information
6. Students do not wish to be ‘labelled’
7. The university does not need to know
8. I do not know why I should disclose this information
9. I do not know how to disclose this information

Responses were scored on a five-point Likert scale anchored by “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree”.

One question (Q9) asks about type of disability: “Can you tell us the general area of disability/disabilities that you have experienced? This is because the type of disability may well influence the student’s willingness to disclose. Social/emotional or cognitive disabilities may be more easily concealed than physical or sensory ones, so this may be significant. The categories of disability used were those of the *Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability*.⁵ These were: physical, cognitive, sensory and social/emotional. We added a category for “carer for a person with a disability” as this is also disclosable information that may influence a student’s study.

Table 1 summarises the disability classification according to the *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth.) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005

Table 1: Definitions of disability types

Primary disability category	Definition
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total or partial loss of a part of the body • the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body • the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness • the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions • a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction
Sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions • the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body
Social/emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a disorder, illness or disease that affects the person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement, or that results in disturbed behaviour

⁵ See <http://www.schooldisabilitydatapl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/broad-categories-of-disability.pdf> for brief descriptions.

Open-ended questions

Questions 6, 12, and 18 were projective and open-ended questions. These are worded indirectly to encourage equity students to describe their perspectives on why they and their peers may be reluctant to disclose, while also mitigating any risk of triggering or raising uncomfortable personal experiences of reluctance and disclosure to the participant (Fisher, 1993; Hojnoski, Morrison, Brown, & Matthews, 2006; Jones, Magee, & Andrews, 2015).

“Do you believe students from Indigenous (Q.6) / students living with a disability (Q.12) / students from non-English speaking backgrounds (Q.18) are reluctant to self-disclose a disability? Why?”

Questions 7, 13, and 19 asked students for their own input into what universities could do to encourage disclosure:

“What could universities do to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Q.7) / students living with a disability (Q.13) / students from non-English speaking backgrounds (Q.19) to self-disclose this information?”

To control for dispositional factors in concern for privacy, four items were included from the Privacy Orientation Scale (Baruh & Cemalcilar, 2014). The subscale was “concern about own informational privacy”, which in Baruh and Cemalcilar’s study correlated strongly with concern for general online privacy, for example “the extent to which they protected online privacy by taking measures such as giving a false or inaccurate email address”. A person with a strong concern for privacy may be disinclined to disclose personal information irrespective of their equity group.

Thus, question 20 was “how strongly do you agree with the following statements?”:

- a) When I share the details of my personal life with somebody, I often worry that he/she will tell those details to other people.
- b) I am concerned that people around me know too much about me.
- c) I am concerned with the consequences of sharing identity information.
- d) I worry about sharing information with more people than I intend to.

Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, strongly disagree.

Survey tool and distribution

The survey was distributed as below via Survey Monkey, an online tool with branch logic—i.e., students were presented with questions according to their choices. Thus, when a student indicated that he/she did not identify as Indigenous, the questions relating to Aboriginality were skipped.

Respondents were offered a chance to win one of five \$100 vouchers as an inducement to complete the survey. To be eligible for the prize they needed to leave a contact email address and/or mobile phone number. However, the survey could be completed anonymously. See Appendices 7– and 8 for emails and social media advertisements.

The survey was distributed via several channels:

1. an equity student newsletter at UNSW (to 6169 UNSW equity students)

2. a UNSW newsletter to all 46,696 UNSW students
3. email lists of equity practitioners at other universities for distribution: these lists included EPHEA and Edequity lists (Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia), Austed (Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability) and ADCET (Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training)
4. direct assistance from staff at other universities, including the University of Newcastle Indigenous Student Collective, Equity and Student Counselling service at the Queensland University of Technology and the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) at Curtin University.
5. advertisements on websites: ADCET and NCSEHE and All Daily News⁶
6. a poster and special interest group at the Student Transitions Achievement, Retention and Success (STARS) conference
7. QR codes on posters and stickers around the UNSW campus
8. student volunteers advertising the survey on campus, with iPads for students to complete the survey during the mid-year orientation week
9. sponsored Facebook, Instagram advertisements, with keywords such as “disability”, “non-English-speaking”, “migrant”, “Indigenous”, “Aboriginal” “university” and “student”, as well as a post on UNSW Reddit.
10. a member of the research team emailed the members of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC) <http://natsihec.edu.au/membership/units/>, which placed a link to the survey in its newsletter.

Facebook and Instagram posts

Sponsored Facebook and Instagram posts are targeted with keywords to ensure that people with the applicable words in their profile are exposed to the relevant advertisement. A list of keywords is shown in Appendix 9.

These advertisements were designed by a staff member with experience in marketing and a student social media intern to appeal to the target cohort. The designs were varied to avoid exposing potential respondents to the same image repeatedly and to appeal to different groups. Examples of these advertisements are given in Appendix 7.

There were challenges during distribution of the survey between April and September 2017. Several staff respondents noted that requests for research surveys were common, and the survey on disclosure would be one of many. Two major surveys were conducted in 2017: the Australian Government Department of Education and Training *Student Experience Survey* (SES) and the Australian Human Rights Commission *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Survey*. Both of these surveys were heavily promoted throughout Australia and attracted significant press coverage, which may have contributed to survey fatigue. Moreover, changes to Australian Federal Government funding to universities were proposed, and several universities, including UNSW, were undergoing restructures which may have dampened the enthusiasm of staff members to distribute the *Enhancing Self-Disclosure of Equity Group Membership* survey.

⁶ <http://all-daily-news.com/2017/02/17/national-project-enhancing-self-disclosure/0081181>

Student Survey Methods Timetable

Stage	Detail	Date(s)
Planning	Confirm HEPPP agreement and sign	01/2017 – 03/2017
	Compile profiles of equity student population at all Australian Universities	01/2017-03/2017
	Consult with stakeholders and disability experts	01/03/2017
	Literature review	06/04/2017
Ethics	Submission to ethics committee	
	Ethics approval received	
Survey reviewed	First survey draft discussed with recent graduates and subject experts, revised.	30/03/2017 – 06/04/2017
Pilot Survey	Survey distributed on test platform via UNSW survey tool	04/2017
Survey replatformed and distributed	Student surveys distributed via SurveyMonkey to all UNSW students (on three occasions) and placed on UniVerse App “My Surveys” tab	04/2017–07/2017
Survey extended to other universities	Student surveys distributed via SurveyMonkey to other equity units, lists and social media	04/2017–11/2017
Student Interviews	Potential interviewees identified, and invitations sent	03/2017 – 10/2017
	Interviews Conducted	04/2017 – 10/ 2017
Analysis	Data analysis	08/2017 – 11/2017
	Interviews transcribed, coded and analysed	05/2017 – 11/2017
Writing	Report writing and revisions	11/2017 – 03/2018

Analysis

The proposed data analysis was as follows.

Survey data will be linked to student records and analysed for correlations, differences between groups (such as program, faculties, genders or stages of study) and trends. This will involve the use of multi-level regression, correlations and analyses of variance (ANOVA). This will reveal trends and factors that predict disclosure (or nondisclosure) of equity group membership.

Data analysis proceeded as planned, with the exception that standard logistic regression was replaced by Bayesian generalised linear regression as a method which provided more accurate point estimates when dealing with small sample sizes. This is described further in the Analysis section below.

Survey responses were collected through SurveyMonkey.com. These results were then transcribed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Results were analysed through Bayesian analysis, specifically Bayesian generalised linear models were used to model the dependent variable of disclosure (1) or nondisclosure (0) separately for the three minority groups considered in this report. Bayesian analysis can be more flexible and does not require the rigid assumptions of many frequentist methods. In addition, Bayesian analysis allows for the incorporation of prior information into the model. Bayesian analysis is a procedure that

estimates parameters of underlying distribution based on the observed distribution. It multiplies the likelihood based on the data with a specified prior distribution, creating a joint probability model resulting in the posterior distribution (Raghunathan et al., 2001; Rubin, 1976). The posterior can be regarded as updating researchers' prior beliefs in light of the actual data. Parameter estimates, such as means, can then be calculated from the posterior distribution.

Bayesian methods were employed as they allow a weakly informative prior to be used, which has the effect of down weighting the extreme estimates allowed under the likelihood of the model (Gelman et al., 2008). This is particularly important in the disclosure data due to the imbalance in the response (See Tables 30–32), and therefore creates more reliable estimates than traditional logistic regression. This model also allows for estimates to be calculated in the case of complete separation. In addition, Bayesian models are at an advantage for this data as they are known to give good estimates for smaller size samples (Agresti & Coull, 1998). Because in this study there was imbalance in the dependent variable and the data for this study were skewed (with a preponderance of female respondents and most from a narrow age range), Bayesian generalised linear models are also an advantage as they do not require the data to meet the assumptions, such as normality, of traditional regression models.

We use the method suggested by Gelman et al. (2008) employing the Cauchy prior as a default distribution. The *bayesglm* function in the *arm* package of R (Gelman & Su, 2016; R Core Team, 2016) fits a generalised linear model incorporating an approximate expectation-maximisation algorithm in place of iteratively weighted least squares.

Surveying and Sampling Frame

undisclosed members of these groups, who by definition have not recorded their status on enrolment or application forms. Second, these students are of interest precisely because they are reticent about revealing their status. Third, the researchers did not have direct access to the students of interest. At UNSW, the project team was directed to email a newsletter to all students rather than a management email list. At other universities, distribution was conducted via equity units by email and links on email.

The survey of students reported in this study was divided into two parts: a study of UNSW students, and a modified survey extended to students at other universities. There is no firm rule concerning adequate response rates, but Denscombe (2010, p.22) recommends that the response rate should be consistent with those of comparable surveys, appropriate measures should be taken to reduce the incidence of non-response, and attempts made to identify and rectify systematic differences between respondents and non-respondents.

As a comparison, a heavily promoted major survey with funding of over a million dollars supported by the Australian Human Rights Commission was launched in 2016 to determine the extent of sexual harassment at Australian universities. This followed a US documentary, an Australian Broadcasting Commission documentary and widespread media coverage following related scandals. The survey received high-level support from Vice Chancellors across Australia. It was emailed to 10,000 selected students at each of Australia's 39 universities. However, the survey achieved a response rate of only 7.9% (Wahlquist, 2017).

Unlike the sexual harassment survey, this survey was of students defined as being in 'equity' groups and was conducted to identify those who had previously resisted identifying themselves. Previous research (see Porter & Umbach, 2006) indicates that male students and students with lower grade point averages were less likely to respond to surveys, and location and access to computers also affects response rates. Porter and Umbach note that African Americans, an equity group subject to similar discrimination as Australian Indigenous students, are significantly less likely to respond to surveys.

Strategies to boost response rates

Quinn (2002) and Zúñiga (2004) (both cited in Nulty, 2008) recommended a number of strategies to increase response rates to online surveys. These strategies were followed as far as possible. Quinn's strategies are the following.

1. *Extend the duration of a survey's availability*
The survey was extended from April to October 2017.
2. *Involve students in the choice of optional questions*
This did not strictly apply in this case, as it was not the type of in-class survey that Quinn described. However, open questions were included to provide a channel for students to provide feedback of their own.
3. *Assure students of the anonymity of their responses*
The survey instructions assured respondents that they would not be identified. Additionally, students had the option of providing anonymous responses.
4. *Familiarize students with online environments by using online teaching aids/methods*
The study used a familiar and self-explanatory online survey tool (SurveyMonkey).
5. *Keep questionnaires brief*
The survey was relatively brief, requiring approximately 10 minutes to complete. Branch logic allowed irrelevant questions to be skipped, thus reducing time required for scrolling.

Nulty cites Zúñiga's (2004) recommendations that are relevant to this study.

1. *Push the survey.*
"This basically means making it easy for students to access the survey by for example, providing them with the survey URL in an email sent directly to them" (Nulty, 2008). All emails and social media posts provided an email link.
2. *Provide frequent reminders*
All methods of distribution were repeated, although there was no way to ensure that these were passed on by equity units at other universities.
3. *Involve academics.*
As this was a survey of equity students rather than one on courses or teaching evaluations (as Nulty discusses), help was enlisted from professional staff or academics in equity fields.
4. *Provide rewards.*
A prize draw for five \$100 shopping vouchers was offered.

Response rates for the UNSW students were between 6% and 9.6%, with the lowest response rates for Indigenous students.

Equity group	UNSW domestic student population	Number of respondents	Proportion of population sampled
Indigenous	329	20	6.0%
SWD's	1684	163	9.6%
NESB students	4170	372	8.9%

Largely because of the low response rates from Indigenous students, the decision was made to extend the survey to students outside UNSW. It was not possible to email students at other universities directly, so requests were sent to equity units to send the request to students (as detailed in the Methods section). Consequently, response rates at other institutions were much lower.

As of 2016, Australian universities are attended by a total of 1, 457, 209 domestic and postgraduate students (Department of Education and Training, 2016). The Department of Education and Training Annual Report 2016–2017 reports that the numbers of students in our cohorts of interest were 12,900 indigenous students, 48,000 students with disabilities and 27,300 students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Although this is based on self-reported data rather than verified status, these figures provide an approximate sampling frame for the wider survey.

Equity group	Domestic student population	Number of respondents	Proportion
Indigenous	12,900	73	0.6%
SWD's	48,000	253	0.5%
NESB students	27,300	436	1.6%

Student Survey Methods Calendar

Stage	Task	Jan 2017	Feb 2017	Mar 2017	Apr 2017	May 2017	Jun 2017	Jul 2017	Aug 2017	Sept 2017	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	Dec 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018
Planning	Confirm HEPPP agreement and sign	■														
	Compile profiles of equity student population at all Australian Universities	■														
	Consult with stakeholders and disability experts	■	■	■												
	Literature review	■	■	■	■											
Ethics	Submission to ethics committee			■												
	Ethics approval received				■											
Pilot Survey				■	■											
Survey Reviewed				■	■											
Survey Distributed	Conduct student surveys				■	■	■	■	■	■	■					
Student Interviews	Potential interviewees identified, and invitations sent			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					
	Interviews Conducted				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
	Data analysis								■	■	■	■				
	Interviews transcribed, coded and analysed					■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
	Report writing and revisions											■	■	■	■	■

Student Interviews

Student interviews provide a finer-grained source of data than surveys, as well as deeper feedback.

Interviews with a judgement sample of students from the surveys who have agreed to be contacted, focused on those who have an undisclosed equity group membership. These interviews will be transcribed, and themes identified using a coding protocol and software such as NVivo.

Participant selection

Survey respondents who indicated that they would be interested in participating in focus groups were contacted and if they agreed then a time was arranged to speak either face to face or by phone. Respondents were offered the option of focus groups as an alternative to interviews.

In all, 219 students were emailed. However, response rates were low. After four weeks, only 20 interviews had been conducted. The 160 students who had left mobile phone numbers on the survey or on pieces of paper distributed during the orientation week survey were sent messages, and a further 37 agreed to be interviewed. Of these, two were removed from the sample because they did not meet the criteria for the equity group of interest. One NESB student was an international student, and one declined to proceed when contacted.

The final number of interviewees was 14 Indigenous, 25 students with disabilities and 18 NESB.

Changes in methodology

While it was not in the original proposal, students were offered the option of participating in focus groups. On three occasions focus groups were scheduled. However, on all three occasions students cancelled at short notice and the remaining students were interviewed individually.

As noted above, email contacts proved to be inefficient in garnering responses. Mobile phone or personal contact was more successful.

Interview design

Interviews were designed according to the methods discussed by Gideon and Moskos (2012). This included asking initial questions to build rapport and trust with participants, asking straightforward questions to begin with, followed by open ended questions to allow elaboration and facilitate further discussion (Gideon & Moskos, 2012, p. 110–115).

Participants were selected through question 21 in the online student survey: “If you meet the criteria, would you be willing to be interviewed or take part in a focus group as part of this study? (You would receive a \$20 gift voucher for your time)”

“Yes – interview”

“Yes – focus group”

“No – I would prefer not to take part in interviews or focus groups”

Question 22 of the online student survey then asked participants “If you are willing to take part in a focus group/interview, please enter your email address and phone number below.”

All interviews were audio recorded with participants’ consent, and participants were given a statement of their rights and the use of the data. These were explained, and the statement signed by interviewer and interviewee before the interview commenced. When the interviewee was in another location, the statement was emailed and recorded verbal consent obtained before commencement.

There were 11 questions asked to participants in face-to-face and over-the-phone interviews:

1. Could you tell me a little about your background: where did you grow up and where do you live now? Background – include current university, subject and level of study?
2. Regardless of whether you have officially disclosed this to your university or UAC, do you identify as a member of any of these equity groups—Indigenous, non-English-speaking background, or student with a disability?
3. Have you disclosed this to UNSW, for example by registering with the appropriate service, or at any point during the enrolment process? (Was any evidence required?)
4. In your opinion, why do you think people [from this equity group] disclose this information?
5. Why do you think people [from this equity group] might be reluctant to disclose this information?
6. What was your disclosure experience like? Why did you disclose /not disclose your equity status? Did you have reservations?
7. Were you aware of the services available for equity students when you disclosed / decided not to disclose?
8. What support mechanism or services, have you personally used in relation to these issues? Is there any that you would like? e.g. adjustments or facilities such as computer rooms
9. Do you have any other on or off-campus support?
10. Have you accessed any co-curricular services or programs in relation to [your equity group]? e.g. peer mentoring, volunteering, events etc.
11. Have there been any barriers to you disclosing [your equity group membership] at the university? *for example because of lack of documentation or social constraints*
12. In your view, is there anything your university or other educational institution could do to make people from [your equity group] more likely to disclose?

Staff Survey

The staff survey was intended to provide a snapshot of equity staff views of disclosure and practices of universities.

The planned data source was as follows:

An email survey with telephone follow-up of staff in Australian universities in direct contact with students, such as faculty advisors and counsellors to gather information on methods used to encourage disclosure and impressions of their

effectiveness. This would use a "snowball" sampling technique where recipients of the survey link could forward it to relevant colleagues.

This was conducted as planned, with the email distributed via the Edequity, EPHEA (Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia), ADCET/Austed email lists for equity practitioners as follows.

UNSW Student Life would like to invite all Australian university staff and students to contribute to the development of guidelines on encouraging self-disclosure of equity group status. This is an opportunity for universities and equity professionals to have their say on policy that affects the entire sector. To assist with this we request that the attached email be distributed as widely as possible to students (preferably even to non-equity domestic students, as we are seeking a "hidden" cohort).

This HEPPP-funded study is intended to estimate the true proportions of equity students in tertiary education and propose ways to increase self-disclosure by students. This will benefit students by informing support measures and policy throughout Australia.

We are interested in students who identify as:

- *Indigenous students (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students)*
- *Students from non-English speaking backgrounds (Australian citizens or permanent residents) who speak a language other than English at home)*
- *Students with disabilities*

Information about non-disclosure of equity group membership will help us improve services for students and estimate the true impact of existing measures.

The attached email is for students with a [student survey link](#)

Staff are also invited to participate: [staff survey link](#)

More information on the project, with participation information, ethics approval and contact details are available [HERE](#)

Sincerely

Attached was the student invitation email for distribution.

Changes in staff survey methodology

The principal change made to the proposed methodology was an extension from individual consultations to plenary discussions at conferences. The project team hosted a Special Interest Group discussion and a poster session at the STARS (Student Transition, Achievement, Retention and Success) conference in July 2017 and presented findings at the Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association annual conference in December 2017.

Participant selection

University staff were surveyed across campuses Australia-wide. Participants were recruited through emailing equity services based at Australian universities, and through snowball sampling respondents. The purpose of this survey was to gauge frontline staff understandings of the equity student experience. Because of this, equity service

practitioners were specifically targeted for the survey. The staff survey concerns perceptions of equity numbers and representation at the university. The purpose of this survey is to identify staff perspectives of how many equity students are present at the institution, and the quality of the services offered to these students. This is important because divergence between staff perspectives of equity numbers and services and student perspectives indicate a critical gap in service delivery and/or information sharing between staff and students. Staff surveys were distributed to university staff through personal contacts of the researchers, mailing lists, institutional emails and cold calling (through email) university equity services at various university campuses across Australia.

Questions

Questions 1 through 4 regarded understanding the purpose of the study and obtaining consent (Q.1), asking which university the staff member works for (Q.2), which service or faculty within the university (Q.3), and whether they manage issues related to the equity group (Indigenous – Q.4; students with disabilities – Q.12; non-English speaking backgrounds – Q.20).

Question 5 focused on discerning why students might disclose Indigenous status to the university and was open ended. (“What is the role of disclosure of Indigenous heritage at your university (i.e. is it necessary to access services, support, or facilities?)”).

Question 6 asked staff members why in their opinion students might be reluctant to self-disclose their identification as Indigenous. Answers were selected by ticking a box next to the listed statement. More than one statement could be selected:

- a) They do not trust the university with this information.
- b) They see no benefit in disclosure.
- c) They fear prejudice in their university life.
- d) They fear prejudice in their professional life after university.
- e) They are concerned about confidentiality.
- f) They do not wish to be ‘labelled’.
- g) They do not know how to disclose.
- h) They do not have the necessary documentation
- i) Other (please specify)

Questions 7, 15, and 23 sought to identify which pathways students could disclose indigenous status to the university. These questions were intended to identify different disclosure practices at Australian universities:

“Other than information supplied by UAC/tertiary admissions centre, what formal avenues are available for students to disclose Indigenous status (Q.7) / disabilities (Q.15) / NESB (Q.23)?”

Answers were recorded on a yes/no option with selections available for “before or at enrolment” and “after enrolment”. Options were:

- a) “Registration with a dedicated Indigenous support service (Q.7) / disabilities support service (Q.15) / language support service (Q.23)”
- b) “Registration with another support service”
- c) “Registration with an equity student support service”

- d) Notification via a university website (Q.23 only)
- e) “Post-enrolment disclosure via any other verbal/written/online channel (please specify below”.

Questions 8, 16, and 24 sought to discern whether university staff saw any discrepancies between official equity figures and those seen by staff. The purpose of this question was to identify whether formal equity disclosure channels were capturing the number of equity students actually accessing services, to identify under-reporting of equity numbers and informal channels. Participants could select one answer from five options:

“Do you believe that the official number of Indigenous (Q.8) / students with disabilities (Q.16) / domestic students from NESB (Q.24) at your university:

- a) Accurately reflects the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Q.8) / students with disabilities (Q.16) / domestic students from NESB (Q.24) enrolled?
- b) Is less than the true number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Q.8) / students with disabilities (Q.16) / domestic students from NESB (Q.24) enrolled?
- c) Exceeds the true number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Q.8)/ students with disabilities (Q.16) / domestic students from NESB (Q.24) enrolled?
- d) (Unsure/don’t know)
- e) Other (please specify)

Question 14 specifically focused on students with disabilities and reasons why staff believe they may be reluctant to self-disclose. Because students with disabilities are a heterogeneous group of various equity issues, answers were divided according to five criteria: students with physical disabilities; students with cognitive disabilities; students with sensory disabilities; students with social/emotional disabilities; student carers for people with a disability.

Staff were asked for their thoughts on similar items to the statements given to students, shown in Figure 1 below.

Open-ended questions

There were also open-ended questions that offered participants the opportunity to offer in-depth feedback and nuanced perspectives on equity student populations and disclosure mechanisms.

Questions 9, 17, and 25 focused on staff-assessed equity numbers:

“If you believe the number of Indigenous students (Q.9) / students with disabilities (Q.17) / students from NESB (Q.25) is not correct, please state why you believe this?”

Questions 10, 18, and 25 focused on how universities encourage disclosure:

“What does your university do to encourage disclosure by or identify students from Indigenous backgrounds (Q.10) / students with disabilities (Q.18) / students from NESB backgrounds (Q.25)?”

Question 11, 19, and 27 followed up on questions 10, 18, and 25, to gauge how successful staff saw measures to encourage disclosure:

“In your view, how effective are these measures?”

Staff Survey Methods Timetable

Stage	Detail	Date(s)
Planning	Confirm HEPPP agreement and sign	01/2017 – 03/2017
	Compile profiles of equity student population at all Australian Universities	01/2017-03/2017
	Consult with stakeholders and disability experts	01/03/2017
	Literature review	06/04/2017
Ethics	Submission to ethics committee	04/2017
	Ethics approval received	04/2017
Staff Survey Distributed	Distributed via email lists, to equity units and to individuals identified (Appendices 1–3)	04/2017 – 10/2017
Telephone Follow-up		04/2017 – 11/2017
Plenary Session	Plenary session held at STARS conference, Adelaide	07/2017
Analysis	Data analysis	08/2017 – 11/2017
	Interviews transcribed, coded and analysed	05/2017 – 11/2017
Writing	Report writing and revisions	11/2017 – 03/2018

Figure 1: Reasons for student reluctance to disclose disabilities

Staff Survey Methods Calendar

Stage	Task	Jan 2017	Feb 2017	Mar 2017	Apr 2017	May 2017	Jun 2017	Jul 2017	Aug 2017	Sept 2017	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	Dec 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018
Planning	Confirm HEPPP agreement and sign	■														
	Compile profiles of equity student population at all Australian Universities	■														
	Consult with stakeholders and disability experts	■	■	■												
	Literature review	■	■	■	■											
Ethics	Submission to ethics committee			■												
	Ethics approval received				■											
Pilot Survey				■	■											
Staff Survey Distributed				■	■	■	■	■	■	■						
Telephone Follow-up				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					
Plenary Session							■									
Analysis	Data analysis								■	■	■	■				
	Interviews transcribed, coded and analysed					■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Writing	Report writing and revisions											■	■	■	■	■

Results

Student survey

A total of 1108 students, from 35 universities, responded to the student survey. Of these, 107 did not agree to the terms and conditions or provided no further answers. Those that did not agree were redirected to the finish page. This left 1001 respondents responding to the first question on identifying as Indigenous students. Of these, 210 did not belong to any of the equity groups.

Response rates are difficult to estimate because the study sought a hidden cohort of students of unknown size, and it is not possible to estimate the extent or success of measures to promote the survey beyond UNSW. As an indication, there were 329 self-disclosed Indigenous students enrolled at UNSW in Semester 1 and 32 responses of either “yes” (20) or “unsure/do not know” (12). This would suggest a response rate of 6%–9% (depending on whether “do not know responses are included). For Students with disabilities, there were 2071 at UNSW and 163 “yes” responses, 42 “unsure/do not know” and one “prefer not to say”, suggesting a response rate of 8%–10%. There were 3876 domestic NESB students in the same period, and 372 survey respondents that chose “yes” for the question of identification as such, while eight were unsure. Thus, the response rate is approximately 8.9%–9.8%.

As discussed in Methodology, response rates to the wider survey were much smaller, at 0.6% Indigenous, 0.5 SWDs and 1.6% NESB.

The questions on equity group membership (e.g. “Do you identify as an Indigenous student?”) had branch logic, which meant that only those that selected “yes” proceeded to the relevant questions. If “No” was selected, the student proceeded to the question on the next equity group. Overall, 209 students reported that they did not identify with any equity group. A further 48 reported “unsure/do not know” or “prefer not to say” responses to equity group questions. These respondents were referred to open-ended questions on reasons for non-disclosure but not to specific questions on disclosure channels.

The largest group was the NESB students, who also showed the lowest rate (2.2% of the number who returned a “yes” response) checking “prefer not to say/do not know”. There were 253 responses from students with disabilities, with 49 (19% as a proportion of the “yes” respondents) reporting “prefer not to answer/do not know”. Despite repeated efforts and a wide range of methods to publicise the survey, the number of Indigenous respondents remained rather low, at 73. An additional 20 (27% as a proportion of the “yes” respondents) reported that they did not know or preferred not to say.

The number that selected the third option in each cohort may provide an initial finding in relation to disclosure. NESB status in general requires no documentation or evidence, unlike a disability (medical evidence) or Indigenous status (may require confirmation of Aboriginality to access support). Moreover, as will be discussed below, there appears to be less stigma attached to NESB status and less resentment of “special treatment” for this group. Note that some students belonged to more than one group.

Table 2: Numbers of survey respondents

Do you identify as:	Yes	No	Prefer not to say/do not know
Indigenous (ATSI)	73	908	20
Student with a disability	253	656	49
NESB student	436	450	10

Demographics

Demographic data were only available for students that chose to provide it, and this was optional (where this was lacking, and contact details were provided, a follow-up email was sent to students outside UNSW to request this information). In the case of UNSW students, this was in the form of a student ID. Questions on gender, age and residential postcode at time of initial application to university were asked. The postcodes were linked to the Australian Federal Government 2011 SEIFA index to give an approximate socioeconomic status in terms of high, medium and low.

The respondents for whom measures on these variables are available are as follows.

Table 3: Breakdown of respondents by SES

Group	High SES	Medium SES	Low SES	Total
Indigenous	6	8	3	17
SWDs	60	42	16	118
NESB	85	93	34	212

Age

The average age of respondents was 23.41 years, with slight variations between groups. Indigenous students had an average age of 23.83 years; SWDs were on average slightly older at 26.88 years, and NESB students somewhat younger, at 22.1 years.

Gender

Table 4 below shows the breakdown of genders for the students who provided this information. For all groups there is a preponderance of female respondents that does not reflect the actual breakdown of gender at universities. For comparison, at UNSW at time of writing, 47% of all students are female and 53% male. These proportions are reversed if only Indigenous students (disclosed through tertiary admission centre form) are considered. This raises the possibility that if gender affects the probability of responding to this survey, it could also be a factor in disclosure of equity group membership.

Table 4: Breakdown of SES by gender (when stated)

Group	Male	Female	Total
Indigenous	4	18	22
SWDs	115	209	414
NESB	83	144	227

Disclosure channels

The most common disclosure channels differ for each group. Most Indigenous students disclose on enrolment (59%). Those with disabilities are more than twice as likely to disclose to a support service than to an admissions centre or on enrolment. NESB students are the only group most likely to disclose through UAC, possibly because at many universities no other channels exist. They are also the only group where a substantial minority (23%) are unsure whether they have disclosed. This suggests that disclosure of NESB status is a decision of no great consequence to students, but it is a considered decision for Indigenous students and those with disabilities.

Table 5: Reported channels of disclosure

Equity group	Responses	Tertiary admissions centre	Disclosed on enrolment	Registered with support service	Unsure whether disclosed	Not disclosed
Indigenous	64	30 (47%)	38 (59%)	26 (41%)	1 (1.5%)	4 (6%)
SWDs	226	76 (34%)	84 (37%)	182 (81%)	1 (0.4%)	25 (11%)
NESB	370	194 (52%)	148 (40%)	19 (5%)	86 (23%)	65 (18%)

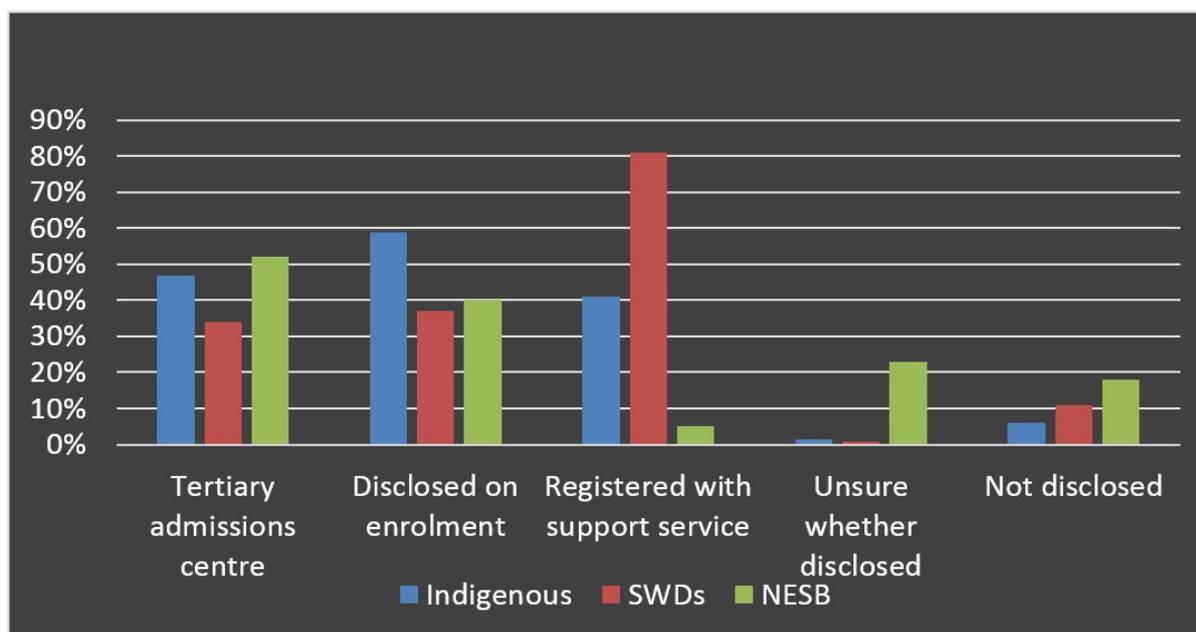


Figure 2: Channels of disclosure by equity group

Implications of disclosure

Students were asked to score their agreement with nine statements shown in Table 6. The respondents scored the statements on a five-point scale, where 1 indicates strong disagreement, 3 “uncertain or do not know”, and 5 indicates strong agreement. The first two measured the belief that disclosure was beneficial to students and that the student trusted the university with the information. Although the differences are minor, Indigenous students showed the strongest agreement (4.1) with both these statements. NESB were much less sure of benefits, at 3.4, but trusted the university to the same extent, at 4.0.

Fears of prejudice were not pronounced for any of the groups, with NESB and Indigenous students disagreeing slightly (2.6 and 2.5, respectively, where a score of 3 indicates uncertainty). SWDs score this statement at 3.1, but were more apprehensive of career implications, scoring fear of prejudice after university at 3.6. Confidentiality was not a strong concern for any of the groups. Of more concern, as discussed in the interviews, was the issue of “labelling” or defining the student by equity group rather than as an individual. This raises multiple issues of self-perception, perceptions of others and self-esteem. This issue is discussed further in relation to interview data.

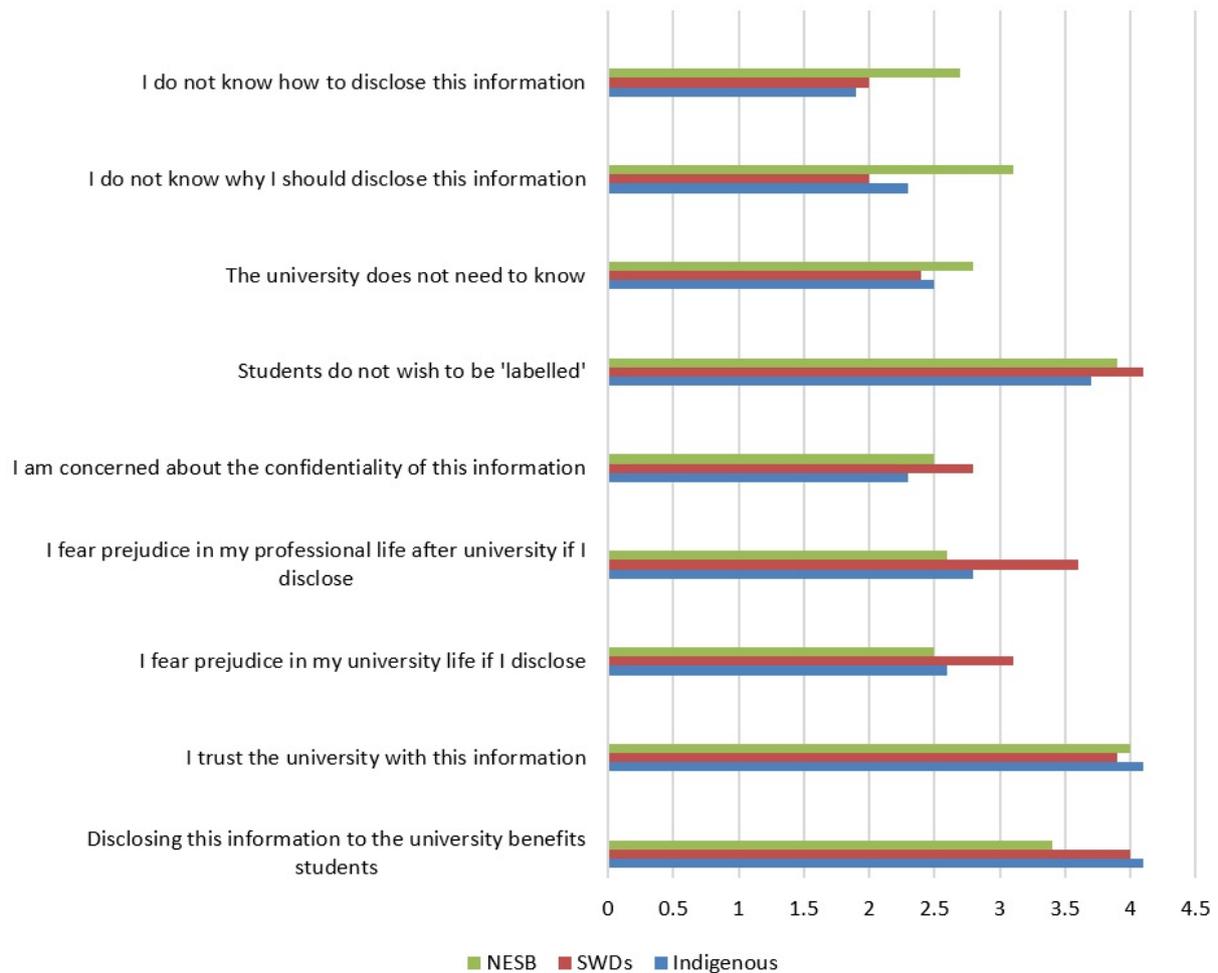
Students do not agree that “the university does not need to know this information”, although the responses of the NESB students are uncertain. NESB students are also uncertain (3.1) why they should disclose their status. Both Indigenous and SWD groups are clear that they know why they should disclose. They also appear to know how to do so (1.9 and 2.0 respectively), although NESB students are less certain (2.7).

Table 6: Student agreement with statements on disclosure

	Indigenous	SWDs	NESB
Disclosing this information to the university benefits students (benefit)	4.1	4.0	3.4
I trust the university with this information (trust)	4.1	3.9	4.0
I fear prejudice in my university life if I disclose (FPrej -U)	2.6	3.1	2.5
I fear prejudice in my professional life after university if I disclose (Fprej-P)	2.8	3.6	2.6
I am concerned about the confidentiality of this information (Confid)	2.3	2.8	2.5
Students do not wish to be 'labelled' (Label)	3.7	4.1	3.9
The university does not need to know (No need)	2.5	2.4	2.8
I do not know why I should disclose this information (not why)	2.3	2.0	3.1
I do not know how to disclose this information (not how)	1.9	2.0	2.7

1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree

Figure 3 (below) shows the contrast in graphical form. Overall, the impression is that NESB students place no special weight on disclosing their status but do not attempt to conceal it, Indigenous students have no great concerns about trust in the institution but resist the perception of needing special treatment, and SWDs are very aware of potential negative consequences.



1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree

Figure 3: Statements about disclosure

These statements were compared with a direct measure of concern for privacy, below.

Concern for privacy

With the increasing ubiquitous use of social media and online collection of personal data, there is increasing concern for the privacy of such data and the possible misuse of disclosed information (Büschel, Mehdi, Cammilleri, Marzouki, & Elger, 2014; Mason, Stevenson, & Freedman, 2014). These concerns may be the subject of individual differences, but may be affected by equity group membership if there is a personal or institutional history of discrimination that may discourage frank disclosure. This study allowed for this possibility by including the four items of the “concern about own informational privacy” subscale from a

Privacy Orientation Scale (Baruh & Cemalcilar, 2014). The results are shown in Table 7 below.

The Concern for Own Informational Privacy scale had good reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.86.

Table 7: Concern for Own Informational Privacy

Statement	Indigenous	SWDs	NESB
When I share the details of my personal life with somebody, I often worry that he/she will tell those details to other people (Conf-1)	3.2	3.6	3.3
I am concerned that people around me know too much about me (Conf-2)	3	3.2	2.9
I worry about sharing information with more people than I intend to (Conf-3)	3.4	3.7	3.5
I am concerned with the consequences of sharing identity information (Conf-4)	3.4	3.7	3.4

1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree

Overall, SWDs showed the highest level of concern for privacy, with Indigenous and NESB students very similar. Independent samples t-tests indicate that students with disabilities in this sample score all four items significantly higher than others ($p < .01$).

It may be speculated that this reflects the potential stigma of a disability in comparison with ethnic or linguistic characteristics. If so, this may be borne out by a comparison of disability types, with more easily concealed or potentially stigmatised disabilities—cognitive or social emotional—showing higher levels of privacy concern.

If disability types are compared, this appears to be the case (see Table 8), although the group with the greatest concerns are carers.

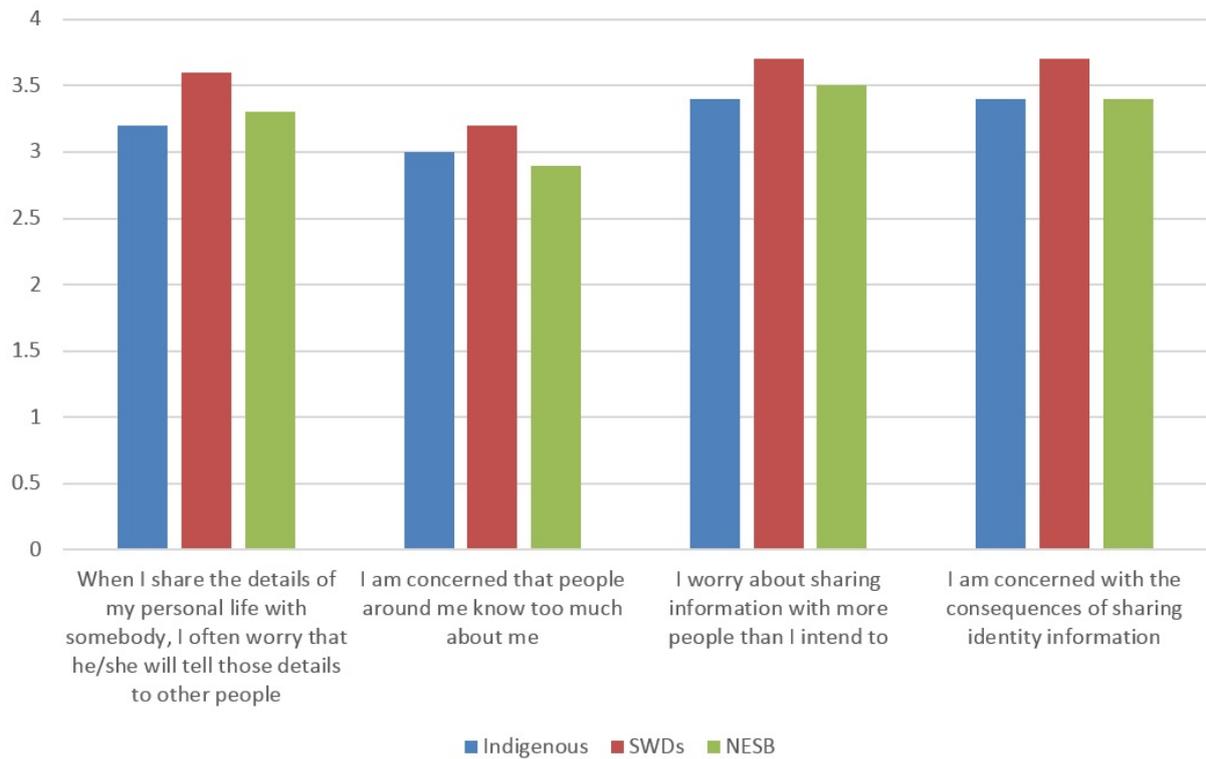


Figure 4: Concern for privacy by equity group

In Table 8 and Figure 5, privacy concerns of SWDs are further broken down by disability type. In all categories, carers are most concerned about sharing information. It is not immediately apparent why this is so, but if respondents are parents, their concern for a child may outweigh fears for themselves.

Table 8: Concern for privacy by disability type

	Physical	Cognitive	Sensory	Social/emotional	Carers
<i>Number of respondents</i>	89	90	53	124	17
When I share the details of my personal life with somebody, I often worry that he/she will tell those details to other people	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.7	4.2
I am concerned that people around me know too much about me	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.5	4.2
I worry about sharing information with more people than I intend to	3.7	4	3.6	3.9	4.1
I am concerned with the consequences of sharing identity information	3.9	4	3.8	3.8	4.1

1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree

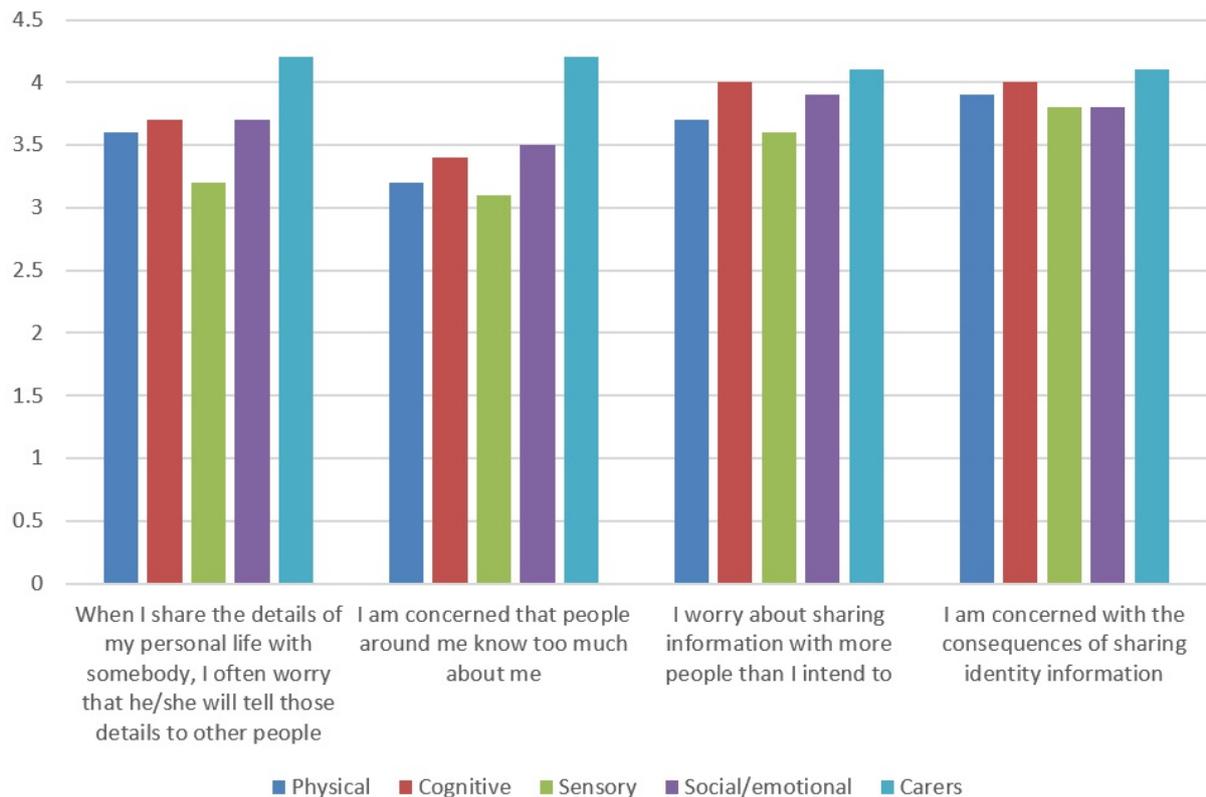


Figure 5: Privacy Concerns by Disability Type

Correlations between concern for privacy and disclosure statements

The correlations (Pearson’s *r*) between privacy statements and the statements about disclosure discussed above indicate the degree of shared variance, or the degree to which general privacy orientation influences students’ views of disclosure at university.

Table 9 below indicates that Aboriginal students have the lowest correlation between privacy concerns and disclosure. The item with the strongest correlation with several negative statements is “I am concerned that people around me know too much about me”. This correlates with both statements about fearing prejudice and most strongly with the statement regarding labelling of students. The relatively low correlations suggest that Indigenous students’ reluctance to disclose, when present, may be a reaction to societal norms rather than personal fears. It should also be recalled that the sample of Indigenous respondents is small, which may reduce the strength of the correlations.

Table 9: Correlations of privacy and disclosure statements—Indigenous

	Conf1	Conf2	Conf3	Conf4	Benefit	Trust	Fprej-u	Fprej-p	Confid	Label	No need	Not why
Conf2	.629**											
Conf3	.576**	.556**										
Conf4	.630**	.616**	.643**									
Benefit	-0.064	-0.104	0.065	-0.014								
Trust	-0.038	-0.160	0.038	0.027	.596**							

	Conf1	Conf2	Conf3	Conf4	Benefit	Trust	Fprej-u	Fprej-p	Confid	Label	No need	Not why
Prej-u	0.173	.291*	0.099	0.057	-.415**	-.550**						
Prej-p	0.152	.333*	0.184	0.119	-.396**	-.346**	.747**					
Confid	0.152	.265*	0.209	0.122	-.366**	-.615**	.511**	.443**				
Label	.344**	.429**	.335*	.393**	-.371**	-.333**	.497**	.541**	.482**			
No need	0.134	0.172	0.076	0.051	-.343**	-0.249	.263*	0.242	.338**	.334**		
Not why	0.167	0.218	0.119	0.194	-.533**	-.340**	0.220	0.205	.436**	.423**	.661**	
Not how	0.168	0.176	0.054	0.168	-.497**	-.305*	.313*	.323**	.314*	.433**	.486**	.551**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In contrast, the correlations between statements for SWDs in Table 10 indicate a strong concern with confidentiality and a high degree of crossover. All correlations are significant at the 1% level, with the strongest correlation (0.468) between the statements that “I am concerned that people around me know too much about me” and “I fear prejudice in my university life”. There are strong negative correlations between concerns for privacy and the positive statements about benefits to students (-.278) and trust in the university (-.353).

Table 10: Correlations of privacy and disclosure statements—SWDs

	Conf1	Conf2	Conf3	Conf4	Benefit	Trust	Fpreju	Fprejp	Confid	Label	No need	Not why
Conf2	.629**											
Conf3	.576**	.556**										
Conf4	.630**	.616**	.643**									
Benefit	-.210**	-.274**	-.256**	-.278**								
Trust	-.274**	-.346**	-.353**	-.304**	.632**							
Prej-u	.372**	.468**	.426**	.351**	-.468**	-.565**						
Prej-p	.402**	.418**	.376**	.298**	-.375**	-.446**	.613**					
Confid	.344**	.409**	.448**	.338**	-.379**	-.667**	.633**	.465**				
Label	.297**	.242**	.310**	.309**	-.201**	-.243**	.212**	.204**	.294**			
No need	.227**	.227**	.161*	.236**	-.361**	-.349**	.254**	.195**	.236**	.175**		
Not why	.213**	.295**	.193**	.311**	-.451**	-.400**	.307**	.292**	.365**	.205**	.473**	
Not how	.242**	.265**	.190**	.283**	-.279**	-.371**	.334**	.331**	.261**	0.076	.172**	.395**

** Significant at the 0.01 level; * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

NESB students’ concerns about privacy (Table 11) appear to be unrelated to benefits to students, and rather weakly to trust in the university (the strongest correlation being -.156). Fears of prejudice appear to be present in this group (with correlations of up to .342), but these appear to be slightly stronger for prejudice in professional contexts rather than at

university. This may reflect the disadvantage of poor language skills in the job market, and perhaps relates to fears of racism.

Other than this, the correlations are weaker than those of SWDs, but slightly more significant than those of the Indigenous students. It is not immediately clear why this is the case—perhaps a notably “foreign” accent or more obvious ethnicity may contribute to this effect (many Indigenous students noted that they were light skinned, and sometimes their Aboriginality was not apparent to a casual observer). The smaller size of the Indigenous sample may also have an effect.

Table 11: Correlations of privacy and disclosure statements—NESB

	Conf1	Conf2	Conf3	Conf4	Benefit	Trust	Fpreju	Fprejp	Confid	Label	No need	Not why
Conf2	.629**											
Conf3	.576**	.556**										
Conf4	.630**	.616**	.643**									
Benefit	-.069	-.071	-.042	-.026								
Trust	-.141*	-.156**	-.127*	-.093	.382**							
Prej-u	.318**	.309**	.228**	.152**	-.110*	-.410**						
Prej-p	.320**	.342**	.279**	.206**	-.086	-.281**	.665**					
Confid	.285**	.295**	.260**	.216**	-.066	-.409**	.518**	.489**				
Label	.166**	.154**	.190**	.174**	-.039	-.050	.294**	.340**	.272**			
No need	.107	.132*	.126*	0 .093	-.334**	-.326**	.198**	.138**	.277**	.195**		
Not why	.123*	.147**	0 .079	.133*	-.359**	-.269**	.212**	.109*	.258**	.104*	.513**	
Not how	.047	0 .110	0 .047	0 .018	-.120*	-.107*	.280**	.203**	.177**	.114*	.169**	.350**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

English language proficiency

NESB respondents were asked to rate their own proficiency in the English language. This is because language proficiency is likely to affect disclosure, with students of native or near-native fluency being less likely to seek assistance from support services. Results are reported in Table 12. These suggest that most respondents (69%) see their English proficiency as fluent.

Table 12: English proficiency self-assessment

Self-assessment	Count	%
My speech is exactly like that of an educated native speaker of English.	265	69%
I can understand native English speakers in Australia even when they are speaking quickly and using sophisticated or colloquial expressions. My vocabulary is very extensive, I make very few grammatical errors and my pronunciation is very good but not completely native.	55	14%

Self-assessment	Count	%
I can understand almost everything spoken by native English users. I usually know most or all of the words for what I want to say. My grammar is good but I make mistakes with complicated sentences.	42	11%
I can understand most conversations in English except when the speech is very fast. My grammar is fairly good but I make mistakes with complicated constructions.	22	6%

Open question response coding

Coding of the open question ““Do you believe students from Indigenous (Q.6) / students living with a disability (Q.12) / students from non-English speaking backgrounds (Q.18) are reluctant to self-disclose a disability? Why?” followed the method outlined by Bazeley (2013: pp. 125–156).

Indigenous student codes

The responses from Indigenous students indicate a strong concern with the perceptions of others and a rejection of the label of “Aboriginal”, either because this created a perception that the student has received special favours because of a racial profile (“we are there for our skin colour—uni management tokens—instead of our brains”) or because there may be discrimination.

These results are shown in Table 13 (below). The most common responses relate to the perceptions of others, discrimination and challenges to Indigenous identity. Interestingly, some of these challenges appeared to come from other Indigenous students.

Table 13: Survey codes: Indigenous—Reluctance to disclose (60 comments)

Code	Description	Count	% of total
I_Spectreat	Rejection of perceived special treatment (e.g. “Fear of labelling ‘you only got in because you are black’”; “...labels that may come along with it (e.g. they get into uni easier, they get an unfair advantage”	9	15%
I_Rejlabel	Reject the label of “Aboriginal” (“...they don't want to be labelled, and can be targeted in class or group discussions about Aboriginal history etc.”)	7	12%
I_Lackno	Lack of knowledge about self/identity (e.g. <i>Inability to understand why they should</i> [disclose])	1	2%
I_Acaddiscrim	Fear discrimination by academic staff (“e.g. I am typically ignored or treated with less respect by many lecturers in certain fields than I see other students treated”)	5	8%
I_Percep	Rejection of perceptions, racism or prejudice held by others. (e.g. “ <i>Feel judged by other students</i> ”)	8	13%
I_Fearimp	Fear over possible future consequences of disclosure (e.g. “the problems that [disclosure] brings with both university life and a future career/job opportunities.”	1	2%
I_Conven	Convenience of non-disclosure (e.g. “It’s just easier not to”)	4	7%

Code	Description	Count	% of total
I_Pastex	Past experience of prejudice (e.g. “past stigma they may have encountered”)	2	3%
I_Shame	Shame in identity (e.g. “they are in my opinion ashamed of who they are” “Due to shame”)	5	8%
I_Discrim	Fear of discrimination by non-Indigenous others (not otherwise explained)	9	15%
I_Nobenefit	No benefit is seen to disclosure, or disclosure makes no difference	1	2%
I_Identity	Identity or authenticity of ATSI status may be questioned or challenged (e.g. “some Indigenous students who have a lighter skin complexion may feel as though they are not accepted as an Indigenous person”)	8	13%

Students with disabilities codes

SWDs—Reluctance to disclose

While many of the codes used for students with disabilities are similar to those of Indigenous students, there are differences in several codes and patterns are different.

Students with disabilities, like Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island students, are primarily concerned with the perceptions of others and the potential effect on their study and careers of misunderstandings. However, the comments reflect a slight difference in that while Indigenous students may feel singled out for special treatment or feel the weight of stereotypes or preconceived ideas, SWDs may be seen as a nuisance:

*Oh it's that *disability* kid again putting his hand up*

They might just not be bothered with filling out the paperwork that they have to fill out when they approach university support services because they are often tedious and time-consuming and often require a variety of supporting documentation from other stakeholders such as medical professionals, Centrelink and other agencies.

SWDs may also feel embarrassment about their condition. Both groups fear being seen as people who receive unearned benefits, which would reduce the legitimacy of their degrees:

I hate that as a student registered with disability services that I am then required to disclose to tutors and course coordinators at the beginning of the semester. I feel like I am starting off on the wrong foot and like I am not able to prove that I am worthy of my marks with or without adjustments.

The need for and cost of documentation is also a disincentive for disclosure (“My psychologist charges \$480 for a report about my autism”) and there are commonly expressed doubts about which conditions and degrees of severity “count” as genuine disabilities worthy of disclosure to gain adjustments.

Table 14: Reluctance to disclose (326 comments)

Code	Description	Count	% of total
D_Spectreat	Reject special treatment (e.g. "They don't want to be judged for their disability rather than their abilities.")	36	11%
D_Rejlabel	Reject the label of "disability" (e.g. "I still don't categorize myself as disabled")	25	8%
D_Acaddiscrim	Fear discrimination by academic staff (e.g. "Oh it's that *disability* kid again putting his hand up")	24	7%
D_Percep	Fear of perceptions (such as weakness) or ignorance/misconceptions around how a person with a disability will be perceived (e.g. "they fear judgement from staff or students should such information be released.")	57	18%
D_Lackno	Lack of knowledge/education in benefits or reasons to disclose, or how this information will be collected or used (e.g. "I feel uncertain of how to go about finding this support and am concerned about any potential costs of which I am yet unaware").	13	4%
D_Fearimp	General fear / anxiety over the implications of disclosure (e.g. "I... am concerned about any potential costs of which I am yet unaware.") includes risks to future employment or professional opportunities (e.g. "it would impact my reputation and job opportunities with the university if i disclosed.")	20	6%
D_Stigma	Fear of stigma attached to disability, general or specific (e.g. "information is not widely distributed about disability services and there may be some stigma attached to being seen going there")	44	14%
D_Conven	Convenience – the perception that the process of disclosure is too troublesome (e.g. "the process will be awkward / difficult")	12	4%
D_Pastex	Nondisclosure based on previous negative experiences (e.g. "a past of telling someone and being hurt or not getting any help provided before in school or otherwise")	6	2%
D_Shame	A feeling of shame surrounding a disability (or disability in general)	13	4%
D_Discrim	Discrimination—not otherwise explained	26	8%
D_Qual	Not being certain whether a condition counts as a disability – owing to lack of severity or definition (e.g. "my brother has "proper" physical and intellectual disabilities, so I sometimes feel like mine doesn't really count")	18	6%
D_Distrust	Distrust in the university (e.g. "isolated, uni won't do anything about it) – includes fears about breaches of confidentiality (e.g. "[there is no] reason to believe that [personal information] will be handled with the required care").	12	4%
D_Nobenefit	A perception that there is no benefit to the student in disclosing, or no reason to do so. Includes comments that the effort outweighs the benefit. (e.g. "If there are no further adjustments/supports available, there wouldn't seem to be a need to tell anyone at the university as there is nothing else to do")	20	6%

NESB student codes

For students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, similar themes emerge from the coding exercise. One notable difference was the number who responded "no" to the

question of whether NESB students were reluctant to disclose this information (34%). Table 15 shows the table of comments on NESB reluctance to disclose.

Table 15: NESB reluctance to disclose (271 comments)

Code	Description	Count	% of total
N_no	No reluctance to reveal NESB status. (e.g. "No I don't think so because it is noncontroversial information")	91	34%
N_Rejlabel	Reject the label of "NESB". (e.g. "Yes, they don't want to be identified with a non-English speaking background")	20	7%
N_Percep	Fear of perceptions (such as weakness) or ignorance/misconceptions around how an NESB person is perceived (e.g. racism, prejudice: "it might jeopardise how they are seen by the uni")	38	14%
N_Lackno	Lack of knowledge about how or what to disclose (e.g. "don't know how or who to approach to ask for help with English")	9	3%
N_Fearimp	Fear of the implications of disclosure (e.g. "...scared they will become marginalised")	9	3%
N_Shame	Shame or embarrassment (e.g. "feel embarrassed")	6	2%
N_Discrim	Fear of discrimination or unequal treatment (e.g. "Why would they want to further distinguish themselves from Aussies by pointing out their differences?")	59	22%
N_Distrust	Distrust of university / administration (e.g. "it's not clear as to why the information is being collected")	8	3%
N_Nobenefit	The feeling that there is no benefit to disclosure (e.g. "There is no noticeable benefit in doing so")	24	9%
N_Culture	There is a cultural disinclination to disclose NESB status (e.g. "in certain areas as cultures are different and others might not understand them")	7	3%

As with the previous two groups, some fear was expressed over prejudice and misperceptions, and of unequal treatment. However, comments that there is simply no benefit in disclosure as well as no reason to avoid it were more common.

Disclosure via an online tool

UNSW has an online tool—NavigateMe—which is used as a referral tool for student support services and self-help resources. Students can log onto NavigateMe and respond to questions. Three questions relate to disability and illness:

1 = I have a short-term medical issue / injury that's affecting my well-being and current studies

2 = I have a long-term medical condition / disability, and I'd like to know how I can succeed further with my current studies

3 = I have a disability and would like to learn about advancing my career opportunities

Because students log in with a student ID, these can be matched to student records to determine whether a particular user has disclosed a disability either on enrolment or to Disabilities Services.

The results are shown below. Of the 142 students who had selected one of those statements, 99 (70%) had not previously disclosed a disability. Of those 81 who reported long-term illnesses or disabilities, 52 (64%) had not previously disclosed this information. Note that the numbers along the bottom line add to more than 142 because students can disclose disabilities through more than one channel, and those that request assistance must necessarily have first disclosed a disability to a tertiary admissions centre (TAC).

Table 16: NavigateMe reports versus formal disclosure

	Total respondents	Disability (TAC)	Disability (MyUNSW)	Require Assistance (MyUNSW)	Regd. with Disability Service	Previously undisclosed
Short-term issue	61	3	11	8	1	47 (77%)
Long-term issue	40	12	22	20	1	15 (37.5%)
Disability	41	2 (1.5%)	4 (3%)	3 (2%)	0	37 (90%)
TOTAL	142	17 (13%)	37 (27%)	31 (23%)	2 (1.5%)	99 (70%)

1 = I have a short-term medical issue / injury that's affecting my well-being and current studies

2 = I have a long-term medical condition / disability, and I'd like to know how I can succeed further with my current studies

3 = I have a disability and would like to learn about advancing my career opportunities

Of course, this is not a random sample but a sample of people seeking support. Moreover, it is impossible to determine from this data whether the user has a genuine disability or illness, or when the condition arose. It may be that some users are motivated by curiosity to click on these questions simply to see what is available. However, even if the non-disclosure rate is only a fraction of that suggested by the table, there is still support for the notion that disclosure through an impersonal online tool such as NavigateMe presents a lower threshold and may be a productive way to connect students with support services.

English Proficiency support tool

In addition to NavigateMe, UNSW also has a tool for students wishing to self-assess their academic skills in academic literacy (for example referencing and knowledge of types of assessment task), Mathematics (at first-year level of assumed knowledge) and English language proficiency. There is no practicable way to determine whether users have an undisclosed non-English-speaking background, but relatively few have disclosed as such (17/152). Table 17 shows the users of the English test (who have completed it and generated results sheets) by residence type.

Table 17: NESB Background (MyUNSW)

NESB student?	No	Yes	Total
Aust. permanent resident	61	3	11
Aust. citizen	40	12	22
Temporary resident visa	41	2 (1.5%)	4 (3%)
Total	142	17 (13%)	37 (27%)

Staff Survey and Mapping of Services

Respondents to the staff survey covered 130 respondents from 29 universities (some respondents also appeared to be students, and these responses were removed from the staff survey) from all over Australia. The breakdown is shown in Table 18. The table also shows the number of respondents with responsibility for equity issues relating to the three equity groups of this study. Seventeen universities are represented in responses on Indigenous students, 27 for students with disabilities and 13 for NESB. This supports the view that many universities do not have specific disclosure channels or support units for NESB students. The respondent universities are shown below.

As part of this study, the equity units of universities across Australia were mapped with contact details gathered from the staff survey, personal contacts and websites. The full lists for the three equity groups are shown in Appendices 1–3.

Where possible, disclosure procedures at various universities have been described below. Caution must be exercised in interpreting findings, as was apparent that there were varying interpretations of disclosure and few staff had comprehensive knowledge of the subject at their universities.

Table 18: Count of respondents' universities

University	Indigenous	SWDs	NESB
Charles Sturt University	4	1	1
Central Queensland University	2	1	
Curtin	2	-	1
Deakin University	1	1	
Federation University	1	1	1
Flinders University	-	1	
Griffith University	-	6	2
James Cook University Cairns	-	1	
La Trobe	-	2	1
Monash University	1	2	
Queensland University of Technology	6	5	5
RMIT University	5	7	5
Southern Cross University	1	-	
The Australian National University	-	-	
The University of Notre Dame	1	1	
University of Adelaide	-	-	
University of Canberra	-	-	
University of Melbourne	-	1	
University of Newcastle	12	5	4
University of Newcastle	-	1	
University of South Australia	1	1	
University of the Sunshine Coast	-	2	

University	Indigenous	SWDs	NESB
University of Wollongong	1	1	1
UNSW	4	7	5
USQ	-	1	1
UWA	-	1	1
Victoria University	-	-	1
Western Sydney University	1	-	
Not stated	4	1	
Total respondents	68	50	29

Disclosure methods and models across Australia’s universities

There are several points at which students can enrol—when applying for university, on enrolment or after enrolment by registering with a support service.

Pre-enrolment

The first opportunity for formal disclosure of a disability, Indigenous ethnicity or non-English speaking background to a university is via a tertiary admission centre form. Below are the questions on the University Admission Centre for New South Wales. These are in a section marked “Government Statistics”. Clicking on the question mark icon beside the heading yields the following information:

*The Department of Education requires this information for statistical reasons. It **will not** be used to assess your application.*

It is perhaps unclear from this that the information will be communicated to the university where the student enrolls and may be followed by offers of services. However, clicking on the question mark icon beside the question “do you need support services during your studies?” reveals that the information may be shared with disabilities services.

There are two points to note concerning the questions. First, as in the national census, there is no option of “Prefer not to say” for those who do not wish to report these data. Second, the single question on disabilities conflates two questions: “Do you need support services?” in the heading and “Do you have a disability or illness?” as a question (with an asterisk to indicate that a response is mandatory). This must surely pose a dilemma for students yet unacquainted with university study who have a disability but believe they can manage it themselves without support, or those in the not uncommon situation where the disability is episodic and may not require consistent support, or for students who simply do not know whether support will be required. Finally, as discussed below, there are many students who do not know whether a particular feature of their themselves should be considered a disability. This may be particularly unclear for those with social/emotional disabilities or forms of mental illness that are not evident to a lay observer.

For Indigenous and NESB students, there is no indication why this information is required (other than “statistical reasons”), nor are support services mentioned. It is left to the respondent to define these categories. Although these questions are not mandatory, there is no option to leave them blank. The default option for the question on whether a language other than English is spoken at home is “no”, while that on Indigenous status is “Neither

Australian Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander”. Without an option to decline, the prospective student is thus forced either to disclose the information requested or to submit a false statement.

Government statistics

Do you speak a language other than English at home?

Are you an Australian Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander?

Number of parents or guardians during schooling

Parent/guardian 1 details *

Parent/guardian 2 details *



Do you need support services during your studies?

Do you have a disability or illness? * Yes No

Figure 6: Questions from NSW UAC application form⁷

Disclosure on enrolment

On enrolment, students complete a paper or online form, which varies according to institution. At UNSW, for example, the student profile includes a section on “Personal statistical profile”.

1. Are you an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander?
(i.e. are you a person who identifies as such and is accepted as such by the community in which you live?)
 - 1A. Are you an Aboriginal person?
 - 1B. Are you a Torres Strait Islander?

This has a brief definition of Aboriginal, in that the person must “identify as such” and “be accepted as such in the community in which you live”. The question on language distinguishes between language spoken at home and first language.

- 4A. What language did you first speak as a child?
- 4B. What language do you speak at home?

⁷ <https://www5.uac.edu.au/uacug/personalDetails/index>

The question on disability is a simple *yes/no/prefer not to answer* in response to a general question, but a list of possible areas of disability is included. The second question asks about the need for adjustments.

1. Are you a person with a disability?

You should tick "Yes" if you have any one or more of the limitations or restrictions listed below:

- A long term medical condition or ailment
- Speech difficulties in your native language
- Disfigurement or deformity
- A psychiatric condition
- Head injury, stroke or any other brain damage
- Loss of sight or hearing
- Incomplete use of any part of your body
- Blackouts, fits or loss of consciousness
- Restriction in physical activities or physical work
- Slowness at learning or understanding
- Any other condition resulting in a restriction

6. If you have answered "Yes" to Question 5 do you require adjustments to be made?

Additional disclosure practices at university

Table 19 below shows comments about particular universities and their disclosure regimes. This information was compiled from comments by staff members and from websites concerning the three equity groups.

All universities are broadly similar in terms of their disclosure channels. All have support units and allow students to register for assistance. For this reason, the questions regarding disclosure channels in our research showed little distinction between universities, but inconsistencies between staff members in the availability of channels was not unusual. It became apparent that many staff members have an incomplete grasp of disclosure regimes at their institutions. However, based on staff members' responses and website information, universities differ in terms of the following factors:

1. The presence of formal disclosure pathways—NESB students generally have access to academic support but may not have a dedicated service for English support that the student can access without charge.
2. The extent to which the need for disclosure of Indigenous/NESB status or a disability is explained on university websites and the ease finding this information.
3. The degree of active outreach to equity students. Some universities place the onus on the student to seek support, while others appear to advertise equity services more actively. For example, Federation University sends information on services to all identified NESB students.
4. The need for documentation for services, and whether this documentation is required immediately, or a period of grace is permitted (this is discussed further below).

Table 19: Selected disclosure practices

University	Equity group	Description of disclosure practice
Curtin University	SWDs	<p>The Curtin University Disability Services website provides information specifically for prospective students regarding the services and support on offer, as well as special consideration entry schemes available to them.</p> <p>This potentially could correlate to higher disclosure rates upon enrolment, due to students being aware of the support services available to them, as well as having the option to pre-register. http://life.curtin.edu.au/health-and-wellbeing/disability_services_prospective_students.htm</p> <p>The website states “Completing the Disability Details section of Curtin’s student record system (Oasis) assists the University to contact you with information about disability services and to provide appropriate disability support to our students... Please note that completing these details does not automatically result in assistance being provided. It is important that you make contact with a Disability Advisor or an appropriate staff member if you require assistance due to a disability”.</p> <p>Counselling and Disability Services confidentiality statement: http://life.curtin.edu.au/health-and-wellbeing/disability_services_confidentiality_policies.htm#/health-and-wellbeing/3272.htm</p>
Deakin University	SWDs	<p>Example of Informal Disclosure practices – Deakin University: “Probably disclosure to the disability service is the only 'formal' avenue, although policy and procedures allow for disclosure to anyone at the university in order that adjustments are put in place (e.g. students can go to the Library or their unit chair and disclose a need for support without needing to register with the disability service”).</p>
Griffith University	SWDs	<p>“Students need to provide supporting documentation from a medical or health practitioner to support their claim. We don't withhold services but we do ask for students to provide it within one semester of commencing study”</p> <p>Griffith University’s Disclosure Statement allows the student the option of partial disclosure / disclosure in a specific course or learning environment, for the purpose of workplace-integrated learning.</p>
University of South Australia	SWDs	<p>Student's disability or medical information remains their private information. Only information students choose to release within the University goes into the Access Plan.</p> <p>The Access Plan is a tool for students to use in negotiating arrangements with academic staff. In order to be eligible for disability services students need to have an Access Plan.</p>
University of New South Wales	All	<p>Current students can choose to disclose by updating their equity status on the student records database ‘myUNSW’ at any time. This form of disclosure does not automatically result in assistance being provided. Students must contact the relevant equity services to register for support.</p>

University	Equity group	Description of disclosure practice
UNSW	SWDs	With pre-enrolment support, students are more likely to register. "I don't believe all students are aware of the support they can receive and how to apply. I have advised many students to apply in my employment capacity. Services are shown on the university website, and if a student has received support in the past (pre-enrolment) they are likely to look for this information. If they develop a condition during their studies, they often speak to their educator and that is another avenue that they receive details on how to report a disability". (UNSW Staff member).
Flinders University	All	Students can email the relevant unit, or make an appointment, when they are considering university (prior to enrolment)
Australian National University	SWDs	Disclosure of information by students with Disability or Illness policy and procedure documents. https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_001226 https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_002604
Murdoch University	SWDs / ATSI students	Murdoch University's Student Learning Centre employs a Lecturer (Equity) who co-ordinates the OnTrack Program, which is an enabling course for individuals who have experienced educational disadvantage or disruption, possibly due to financial circumstances, life circumstances or lack of opportunity. This includes the academic needs of students from rural and isolated backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and students with disability. The Lecturer (Equity) can be contacted by academic staff and students for advice on learning supports. This could also be a potential avenue for disclosure. https://www.murdoch.edu.au/TNE/_document/Supporting-Diversity---Students-with-Disability.pdf
University of Sydney	SWDs	Before registering with disability services, USYD requires that students sign a 'Disability Information' form to acknowledge that their demographic information will be provided to DEEWR (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations), as a requirement of receiving government funding to assist students with disabilities. The form also states that the University reserves the right to amend the students' enrolment information to reflect their registration as a 'student with a disability', including updating the student records should the student register after initial enrolment. https://sydney.edu.au/content/dam/students/documents/deewr-acknowledgement.pdf
Federation University	SWDs	Students need to give enough information for the Disability and Learning Access Officer to make an appropriate recommendation regarding reasonable adjustments.
Federation University	NESB	"NESB Disclosure forms part of the application and enrolment procedure, but is (I believe) voluntary. Disclosure is not necessary in order to access our service, but all students from an NESB receive information about our services (with the option to opt-out)".
RMIT	NESB	Disclosure is not necessary to access support, but students are asked at enrolment about the language spoken at home etc.

University	Equity group	Description of disclosure practice
UNSW Sydney	NESB	There is no formal channel to disclose you are from a NESB. You can access disabilities by registering- all other services you can access without registering e.g. booking an appointment.
La Trobe University	NESB	Students can disclose at enrolment or any time after. Some services are available to all students; some only to students who register e.g. students from a refugee background.

In addition to formal disclosure channels, there are other “semi-formal” forms of disclosure that have emerged in the course of this research. These are often unplanned but arise in response to particular needs or events. An example is interactions with university grievance or student conduct officers, in cases where a previously undisclosed disability affects the student’s relationship with academic or professional staff.

Informal disclosures of equity group membership to academic staff are not uncommon and occur either when prompted by events (as above) or when sufficient trust has been established. For NESB or Indigenous students, such disclosures may not be accompanied by official channels simply because it does not occur to the student to attend a support service. One Indigenous student had disclosed through no official channels but notes “never made a secret of [my Indigenous heritage]” Table 20 summarises other channels of disclosure.

Disclosure and documentation

For most financial assistance for Indigenous students and for adjustments for students with disabilities, documentation is required. There are variations in practices with regard to whether documentation is required for all services and when it is required. For financial assistance such as the University of Newcastle’s Yapug scholarship for Indigenous students, documentation of Indigenous heritage is required. Some universities, such as UNSW, also require documentation for access to facilities. This limits pressure on targeted facilities but may create difficulties for Indigenous students who have difficulty in procuring such documentation and may create resentment among other students. This was the subject of a legal case in 2013 when a (non-Indigenous) student attempted to use a computer in QUT’s Oodgeroo Indigenous unit and was asked to leave⁸.

Table 20: Non-university-specific additional disclosure channels

Equity group	Description
All	Students can email the relevant unit, or make an appointment, when they are considering university.
All	Students can disclose through discussions with counsellors or psychological services.
All	Email to staff in relation to study issues
SWDs	Some students make informal arrangements directly with academic staff. They often speak to their educator and that is another avenue that they receive details on how to report a disability.

⁸ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/quts-oodgeroo-unit-for-indigenous-students-not-discriminatory/news-story/5c755a094fe8929ee410975373dd24b0>

Equity group	Description
All	Course Coordinators "Students are not comfortable disclosing to the university, most will however disclose to course coordinators". (University of Newcastle Staff member).
All	Students may make informal arrangements with academic staff or directly approach a School or Faculty regarding the implementation of provisions.
SWDs and ATSI	Equity Scholarship applications
SWDs	Faculty or School Disability Liaison Officers (USYD).
All	Disclosure as part of Alternative Entry Pathways (ACCESS Scheme) "It is necessary to be invited to attend an Access interview - entry into university based on equity as opposed to a study score. It is also necessary to access all supports at our Centre" (RMIT staff member).
ATSI	Registering for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tutorial Assistance Program.
All	Grievance Officers
All	Guidance Officers (Griffith University)
All	Counselling discussions

Other universities, such as Curtin, allow all students to use Indigenous support services, while still requiring disclosure for specific programs.

For NESB students, disclosure of equity group membership per se is not usually necessary to access services, as such services are based on need rather than on ethnic identity. In many cases, there is no formal channel for post-enrolment disclosure of NESB, as this is not treated as an equity group, with their needs for support treated as part of general academic support.

At some universities, such as Flinders University and some programs at UNSW students sit a post-enrolment English Language proficiency test, and support is recommended for some students. An exception is students from refugee backgrounds, who may be eligible for targeted assistance (as for example at La Trobe University). Federation University includes NESB sends information on support services to all students identified as NESB. In the case of one metropolitan Queensland university, there is no disclosure channel online but NESB students are identified from the HEIM formula:

"If the First character of the Year of Arrival field is not A; and the difference between the submission year and the year of arrival is less than 10; and the year of arrival is <=9999 and the Language code is between 1000 and 9799 (inclusive) or language code =9998 THEN the NESB Indicator is set to Y, otherwise its set to N. (Queensland Respondent).

The respondent also notes that "Our domestic students are able to access our Academic Language and Learning Services team for support".

Confidentiality and control of data

Concerns about confidentiality and control of data may discourage disclosure, particularly when it involves a disability that the student perceives as stigmatised. All universities are sensitive to data confidentiality, but not all adjustments can be concealed and insufficient staff training (particularly for those inexperienced in the disabilities field, as many academics

are) so unintended disclosure can occur. To manage these risks, universities have processes that protect student data and provide students with a clear understanding of how their data is being used and protected. For example, Curtin University's Counselling and Disability Services Confidentiality Statement covers: Record keeping, release of information, and limits of confidentiality (Curtin University, 2013). Student knowledge of this specific confidentiality statement being in place may allay concerns around the confidentiality of disability-related information, which is a common reason for non-disclosure. Staff ensure that students are aware that they are in control and can decide on what level of information they would like to release to the university / include in their access plans. Another approach is to control levels of disclosure, below.

Levels of disclosure

One aspect of disclosure that is sometimes neglected is the level of disclosure and the use to which information may be put. This limits the disclosure to particular courses or learning activities, and this limitation may reassure students with disabilities regarding the uses to which information is put. A disclosure statement was developed by a team of academics at one regional university, in partial consultation with Disability Services in 2014 and had been in use for around 3.5 years at the time of writing. The statement was created in response to a requirement from academics for further information with regard to additional support needs for students undertaking placements; including a need to flag any health and safety concerns within the work integrated learning (WIL) environment. One concern about this approach is that statements put together by academic staff or professional staff who do not work in the disabilities field is that the topic may not be approached with due sensitivity. In the case of this university statement, the students directly disclose their disabilities, without necessarily having any prior involvement with disability services. The form also asks the students to provide their health professionals contact details. This is a separate process from the disability services. Thus, completion rate of the statement is low (University staff member, personal communication).

A university staff member commented that the wording of the statement was rather clinical and even intrusive, but it is included in all course outlines. This sometimes creates the mistaken impression that disclosure of disabilities is a course requirement. In fact, the university does not have a registration form or online process. Instead, a consultative approach is used whereby students present to Disability Services, make appointments and discuss their situation verbally with a disability adviser. Medical evidence / supporting documentation is still required. However, there is no obligation to provide this upfront, thus allowing services to be provided to the student promptly. Medical evidence is to be received within the trimester that the student starts to utilise services.

Timing of disclosure

For students with disabilities, there may be differences in timing of disclosure, as disabilities may be acquired, episodic, or may vary in degree of intensity during a course of study. This means that adjustments may not be required at all times, but may be required at short notice. In such cases, documentation may take time to acquire. Universities do not always recognise this. A respondent from a metropolitan university notes that "Yes - students must disclose their disability or health condition and provide adequate documentation supporting this before reasonable adjustment advice is provided". By contrast, at other universities a

student can receive support immediately but is expected to provide documentation within the semester. It is common for students who are not currently receiving services either to self-disclose or be referred by academics around about week 4 of a trimester. These students can be somewhat unprepared to provide medical evidence, as they either were unaware of their eligibility or did not realise their need for services. The priority is to provide the student with the necessary support to succeed, instead of making them wait until they acquire the necessary evidence to begin receiving support.

Proof of Aboriginality

According to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS <https://aiatsis.gov.au/>), Government agencies and community organisations usually accept three 'working criteria' as proof or confirmation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage. Generally, organisations will require you to meet all three of the following criteria; outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989

Each of below three criteria must apply:

- being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- identifying as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person
- being accepted as such by the community in which you live, or formerly lived.

Australian Universities tend to have their own particular guidelines, and require you to complete a form or provide a letter of 'Confirmation of Aboriginality and/or Torres Strait Islander Heritage'. Programs and support services specific to indigenous students exist to address the social, health and educational issues and inequities that Indigenous people face because of past removal policies and inadequate educational, employment and health services. Requesting evidence of proof of Aboriginality or Torres Strait Islander Heritage from students wishing to apply for scholarships or access targeted services and supports ensures the purpose of these services is upheld and eligible students are supported to access them.

AIATSIS suggests that students undertake the following steps to assist in obtaining the required documentation.

- 1) Researching your family history may help to obtain proof of Aboriginal heritage. "You might find a birth, death or marriage record that traces your family to a particular Aboriginal station or reserve. Or you might have oral history stories that can connect you to a particular area or person or photograph".
- 2) Contact a relevant indigenous organisation or Land Council for assistance, ideally an organisation or Land Council from the area that your family is from. Find out as much as possible about your family history and indigenous heritage before contacting them.
- 3) Conduct a Google search of the location of your ancestry the find the contact details of a land council or other Indigenous community organisations.
- 4) A 'letter of confirmation' is usually obtained from an incorporated Indigenous organisation and must be stamped with their common seal.

Students may consider confirming their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, most universities will accept evidence through either:

- 1) a letter stamped with the common seal and signed by the chairperson of an Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander Land Council, in whose area the person lives or has previously lived\
- 2) a letter stamped with the common seal and signed by a delegate of an incorporated Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander organisation, such as the Aboriginal Medical Service or an Aboriginal Legal Service.
- 3) A statutory declaration

Where records are not available, a person’s Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander identity may be confirmed by a statutory declaration from the individual, declaring that they:

- 1) are of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- 2) identify as an Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander; and
- 3) are accepted as such by the community in which they live, or previously lived.

Examples of requirements for Proof of Aboriginality

Below are some examples of university requirements for proof of Aboriginality.

Western Sydney University

Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Identity⁹

Step 1: Self-declaration

Compulsory statutory declaration of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander self-identity. A Statutory Declaration (‘Declaration of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Identity’) requires you to declare that you identify yourself as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

Step 2: Community confirmation

Additionally, you must provide one of the following:

A certified copy of an existing ‘Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Identity’ recognising and accepting you as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. This letter must be from an incorporated Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation and contain the seal of the organisation.

OR

A Statutory Declaration of Recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Identity provided by another suitable Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander person. This declaration must be completed by a suitable Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Suitable persons to provide recognition and acceptance of your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity are:

- 1) An office bearer within any incorporated Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community-based organisation in the community in which you live in or grew up
- 2) An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person with a significant local, state, territory or national profile who are happy to be contacted by Western Sydney University for this application

⁹ https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/539559/ARO_00370_0514_Confirmation_of_Aboriginal_and_or_Torres_Strait_Islander_identity-LR.pdf

- 3) An Aboriginal worker in a school where you have been known as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student
- 4) An Aboriginal health worker in an Aboriginal Medical Centre; a Police Liaison Officer; an Aboriginal Pastor; an Aboriginal Housing Officer; or Aboriginal Liaison Officer working in similar positions in different government departments

The recognition and acceptance must be provided on a letterhead from the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisation or on the second Statutory Declaration form regarding recognition alongside your first Statutory Declaration.

Indigenous Australian people refers to people of Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island descent. For the purpose of these guidelines, an Indigenous Australian person is one who:

- 1) is of Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island descent;
- 2) identifies as an Australian Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander; and
- 3) is accepted as an Australian Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander by the community in which he or she lives or has lived.

University of Sydney

Confirmation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identity Policy 2015 – USyd.¹⁰

Establishing Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander status

- 1) If it is necessary to confirm an individual's status as an Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander, the University will accept evidence as specified in this policy.
- 2) A person may confirm Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander identity through: (a) a letter stamped with the common seal and signed by the chairperson of an Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander Land Council, in whose area the person lives or has previously lived; or (b) a letter stamped with the common seal and signed by a delegate of an incorporated Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander organisation, such as the Aboriginal Medical Service or an Aboriginal Legal Service.
- 3) Where records are not available, a person's Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander identity may be confirmed by a statutory declaration from the individual, declaring that they: (a) are of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander descent; (b) identify as an Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander; and (c) are accepted as such by the community in which they live, or previously lived.
- 4) The individual is responsible for confirming their own Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander identity. (5) Proof of receipt of Abstudy will not be accepted as confirmation.

University of Technology Sydney

Guidelines for applicants completing the Confirmation of Aboriginality and/or Torres Strait Islander Identity Form¹¹

¹⁰ <http://sydney.edu.au/policies/showdoc.aspx?recnum=PDOC2014/364&RendNum=0>

¹¹ <https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/ConfirmationofAboriginalityIHL.pdf>

For UTS's purposes students may confirm their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity in one of two ways:

- a) Provide a certified copy of a formal document confirming your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity. This should be from an incorporated Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation stating that the organisation recognises you as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This document should also contain the seal of the organisation.
- b) Alternatively you may complete and submit a statutory declaration, certified by a justice of the peace or similar.

Effectiveness of measures to encourage disclosure

Appendices 4–6 show staff responses to two questions: “What does your university do to encourage disclosure by or identify students from NESB?” and “In your view, how effective are these measures?” In general, those who rate their services as effective mention strong management support and good methods of communication with students.

Indigenous disclosure

The staff members who report that their measures are effective note that disclosure is “part of the ‘normal’ business” (SCU respondent) and that their unit/university provides information and engage in active outreach. Universities that take a purely bureaucratic approach where the student is expected to initiate contact appear to be less effective. One Melbourne respondent notes that students have control over the process:

I think the [Indigenous] centre does a pretty good job of making disclosure something that's OK to do with a particular group, but then allow students to still choose who else they want to disclose to. It's almost like they can have the support without the label (if they so choose), in a way? Given how some of my colleagues are, I fully respect this as a very legitimate way to approach things.

One respondent from the University of Newcastle notes that a camp in Canberra had previously been provided where students could research their own ancestry, and that this was effective in encouraging disclosure. However, it appears that this is no longer provided.

Barriers noted by these respondents are prejudice:

I think that they are effective however we can't reach everyone and there is still a large stigma facing lighter skinned Aboriginal students who struggle to confidently identify and make use of the systems and supports

and self-image:

Indigenous people don't want to be viewed as welfare recipients.

Overall, good information to remove misconceptions and avoid perceptions of special treatment or a “welfare model” seem to be important.

Student with disabilities disclosure

Encouragement for SWDs to disclose is similar to measures for Indigenous students in that information is crucial, in welcoming students and throughout the enrolment process.

Promotion, referral services, awareness amongst academic staff, embedded in orientation, outreach activities to partner schools, widening participation activities targeting SWDs. (Griffith University respondent)

Students are encouraged to disclose to disability services by information provided in handbooks, orientation, early lectures and periodically to students and staff. Most students are referred to disability services from other staff (academic and other student services) after they disclose to them, and in response to relevant special consideration applications. I don't have any quantitative evidence, but I would say that more students are being referred to disability services, rather than having their needs met by the person or service they initially disclose to. (Deakin University respondent)

This may not be immediately effective but is remembered when the student requires support:

What we find is that students who do not need the service at the time tend not to remember about it when they do need it, so there are always students who could benefit from the service but report that they don't know about it. (LaTrobe University respondent)

The issue of confidentiality is also mentioned by a number of respondents, who note the risk of discrimination and pressure to succeed on their own:

[The measures] are as effective as they can be, unfortunately people don't always want to be labelled or disclose, they have this idea that they should be able to cope. Cooperation in these processes to support them is difficult. If you add to that cultural issues as well as family pressure these can prevent students disclosing. It's not until problems with studies and noticed behaviour and the student is concerned and that it comes to our attention can we suggest services and explain carefully how the students can use them that you get them to utilise. (RMIT respondent)

NESB student disclosure

There are very few comments on the effectiveness of measures for NESB students, mostly commenting that few such measures exist. One response noted:

There are support services: Study and Learning Centre - workshops before and during semester, drop in centres, counselling, well-being officers, teaching and professional staff support and encourage.

A Griffith university respondent rates the university's service for NESB students as "reasonably effective", and this consists of "equity and English language programs". Another respondent from the same university notes that the measures are effective in "the sense of belonging and engagement students appear to have is good. high engagement and sense of freedom to interact with students from similar backgrounds as well as students from other backgrounds"

One respondent from LaTrobe mentions that students are unaware of services when they need them:

What we find is that students who do not need the service at the time tend not to remember about it when they do need it, so there are always students who could benefit from the service but report that they don't know about it.

Channels of disclosure

The figures below in Tables 21–26 relate to numbers of respondents who reported that their universities have these options for disclosure of equity group status. These are not broken down by university, because they are not comprehensive, depend on respondents’ personal knowledge and may create a misleading picture of the services available at individual universities. However, the tables provide an overview of the services and disclosure channels available.

Table 21: Channels of disclosure: Before or at enrolment—Indigenous

Channel of disclosure	Yes		No		Total
	%	n	%	n	
Registration with a dedicated Indigenous support service	92%	24	8%	2	26
Registration with another support service	71%	15	29%	6	21
Registration with an equity student support service	70%	16	30%	7	23
Post-enrolment disclosure via any other verbal/written/online channel	93%	14	7%	1	15
Other					9

Table 22: Channels of disclosure: After enrolment—Indigenous

Channel of disclosure	Yes		No		Total
	%	n	%	n	
Registration with a dedicated Indigenous support service	92%	23	8%	2	25
Registration with another support service	77%	17	23%	5	22
Registration with an equity student support service	82%	18	18%	4	22
Post-enrolment disclosure via any other verbal/written/online channel (please specify below)	94%	17	6%	1	18
Other (please specify)					9

“Other” responses (with “uncertain” or “don’t know” responses removed)

- Students are asked if they identify during their application to attend the university. They do not need to have any documentation if they identify upon enrolment. If a student wants to change their status to indigenous (even if there has been an administrative error), then the student must provide documentations to do this.
- Scholarships applications
- Completing the enrolment process asks many questions in relation to their indigenous status.
- In my courses with my students, I hand out a "getting to know you" sheet in class, and email it with a weekly email, too, which asks students a bunch of questions, about their situation, their learning style and needs, etc. This is a chance for students

to disclose stuff if they wish to. The entire thing is voluntary, and this is made very clear to students.

- advising student administration, if after enrolment will require proof of Aboriginality
- When they fill out their enrolment forms, these can be changed at any given time (some students will be confirmed which means they have provided proof of Aboriginality).

Table 23: Channels of disclosure: Before or at enrolment—SWDs

Disclosure channel	Yes		No		Total
	%	n	%	n	
Registration with a dedicated disabilities support service	86%	37	14%	6	43
Registration with another support service	74%	26	26%	9	35
Registration with an equity support service	69%	25	31%	11	36
Disclosure via any other verbal/written/online channel	81%	25	19%	6	31
Other (please specify)					19

Table 24: Channels of disclosure: After enrolment—SWDs

Disclosure channel	Yes		No		Total
	%	n	%	n	
Registration with a dedicated disabilities support service	100%	42	0.00%	0	42
Registration with another support service	86%	30	14%	5	35
Registration with an equity support service	81%	29	19%	7	36
Disclosure via any other verbal/written/online channel (please specify below)	84%	27	16%	5	32
Other (please specify)					19

“Other” disclosure channels

- Email contact prior to enrolment
- Students often make contact to explore support without disclosing
- Email to staff in relation to study issues
- Some students make informal arrangements directly with academic staff.
- Contact/discussion/enquiry with Accessibility service before enrolment (but not registration).

Table 25: Channels of disclosure: Before or at enrolment—NESB

Disclosure channel	Yes		No		Total
	%	n	%	n	
Registration with a dedicated language support service	61%	11	39%	7	18
Registration with another support service	71%	12	29%	5	17
Registration with an equity student support service	65%	11	35%	6	17
Notification via a university website	40%	6	60%	9	15
Post-enrolment disclosure via any other verbal/written/online channel (please specify below)	64%	9	36%	5	14

Disclosure channel	Yes		No		Total
Other (please specify)					9

Table 26: Channels of disclosure: After enrolment—NESB

Disclosure channel	Yes		No		Total
Registration with a dedicated language support service	60%	12	40%	8	20
Registration with another support service	65%	11	35%	6	17
Registration with an equity student support service	71%	12	29%	5	17
Notification via a university website	43%	6	57%	8	14
Post-enrolment disclosure via any other verbal/written/online channel (please specify below)	64%	9	36%	5	14
Other (please specify)					9

- Students enrolling in TAFE courses are required to undertake a pre-enrolment review including skills level assessment for English. Any student identified below ACSF level 3 is offered specific support services
- I am presuming students could contact the uni to advise their NESB status
- registration with the Student Equity office
- They can disclose their NESB status via the equity scholarships scheme application form for which they may receive points as part of difficult personal circumstances as part of our holistic assessment methodology
- We have a 3-day pre-orientation English language program to assist with academic skills and a transition and support program for people from NESB backgrounds that students can register for
- Griffith offers an in-Program English language course elective Student Services offers an English language readiness course for migrants and students from refugee backgrounds
- Contact with lecturers, learning support officers. however, the [regional] university refuses to provide adequate English language support for NESB speakers at an undergraduate or higher level of degree. They have also eliminated the position of refugee support officer.

Attributions for student nondisclosure

Staff respondents were asked “From your experience, why might students be reluctant to self-disclose their identification as Indigenous/SWD/NESB?”

Indigenous non-disclosure: staff attributions

Table 27: Staff attributions for nondisclosure of Indigenous identity

Reason	Proportion of responses	Number of responses
They do not trust the university with this information	21%	7
They see no benefit in disclosure	53%	18

Reason	Proportion of responses	Number of responses
They fear prejudice in their university life	88%	30
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	35%	12
They are concerned about confidentiality	53%	18
They do not wish to be "labelled"	94%	32
They do not believe the university needs to know	53%	18
They do not know how to disclose	35%	12
They do not have the necessary documentation	47%	16
Other (please specify)	32%	11

The “other” category for Indigenous students included responses such as *“I have known some students and staff who refuse to identify because they don't want the University to benefit in terms of funding etc.”*

“In particular lighter skinned Aboriginal students who fear racism and discrimination by other students / staff when openly identifying as Aboriginal”

“To access services such as 'Key Stones for Success' it is necessary that students have a Confirmation of Aboriginality. Many students that are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders may not have access to this or the knowledge of where their 'mob' comes from so they do not disclose and miss out on not only scholarships but support that they could otherwise receive.”

Two comments mentioned that students did not know they could do so, three (including that above) mentioned the difficulties of obtaining documentation and ambiguity over identity (*“they may not identify as such in their communities”*).

SWDs non-disclosure—staff attributions

The staff attributions for SWDs were categorised by disability type, as there was a possibility of variations in motivations for disclosure/non-disclosure given the wide range of possible disability types.

This view appears to be shared by staff in the field, whose attributions appear to reflect the anticipated pattern that students with cognitive or social/emotional disabilities would be most likely to disclose (Table 28).

Table 28: Attributed reasons for nondisclosure—students with disabilities

Reason for non-disclosure	Physical		Cognitive		Sensory		Social/ emotional		Carers		Total
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	
They do not trust the university with this information	48%	14	69%	20	45%	13	90%	26	41%	12	29
They see no benefit in disclosure	41%	11	44%	12	30%	8	59%	16	63%	17	27
They fear prejudice in their university life	58%	22	76%	29	55%	21	92%	35	42%	16	38
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	55%	16	79%	23	66%	19	90%	26	48%	14	29
They are concerned about confidentiality	59%	19	78%	25	63%	20	91%	29	56%	18	32
They do not wish to be "labelled"	69%	27	74%	29	69%	27	87%	34	51%	20	39
They do not believe the university needs to know	43%	13	70%	21	50%	15	80%	24	67%	20	30
They do not know how to disclose	50%	14	93%	26	64%	18	86%	24	82%	23	28
No pathway exists to disclose	33%	1	33%	1	33%	1	33%	1	100%	3	3
Other (please specify)											9

"Other" reasons for non-disclosure

- Some students want to push themselves to be treated just like everyone else, and don't want to see their disability as a limitation requiring specialised support.
- I have no experience with students not wanting to self-disclose a disability. I have experience where students were not aware of support in place.
- Lack of identification with "disability" no recognition from Centrelink and discourse of individual success
- It can be about relevance and impact of condition on study and whether this can be managed with or without disclosure.
- they do not know what support is available upon disclosure
- I think most of these situations can apply to all students, but may arise more often for students with social/emotional or cognitive disabilities, or for those who are studying in areas which have placements and direct paths to vocational roles.
- The only way to disclose if someone is a student carer is if they apply for an equity scholarship. There is a question on the form for this. This information is assessed on points given as part of our holistic assessment methodology where personal circumstances are assessed.
- Many students think they can manage their disability without disclosing and often only do it at a critical point e.g. need extension, challenges with learning activities, work placements. Mental Health issues are a particular issue for some students who are concerned about stigma.

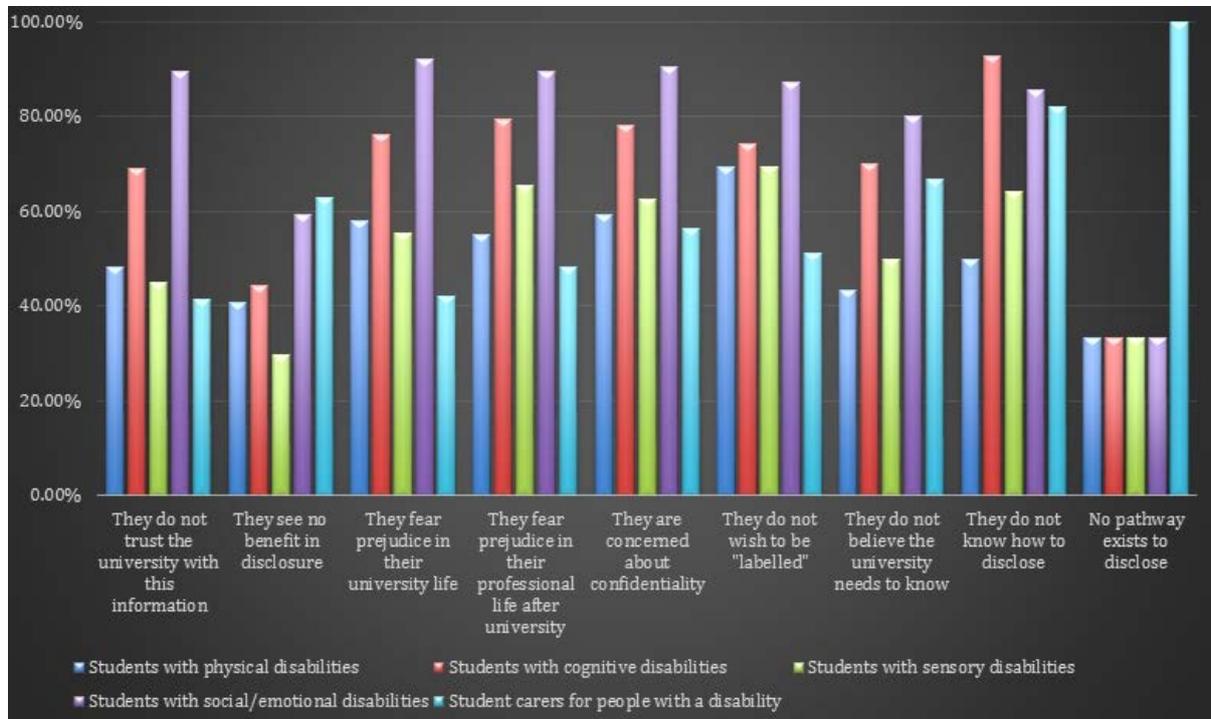


Figure 7: Staff attributions for nondisclosure by disability type

NESB non-disclosure—staff attributions

For NESB students, the staff responses indicate that motivations for nondisclosure are both positive (they do not appear to require assistance) and negative (they avoid labelling and prejudice). There is also a view among half the respondents that the students do not know how or why to disclose.

Table 29: Staff attributions for NESB non-disclosure

Reason	Proportion of responses	Number of responses
They do not trust the university with this information	32%	7
They see no benefit in disclosure	68%	15
They fear prejudice in their university life	68%	15
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	32%	7
They are concerned about confidentiality	27%	6
They do not wish to be "labelled"	73%	16
They do not believe the university needs to know	50%	11
They do not know how to disclose	55%	12
No pathway exists for disclosure	32%	7
Other (please specify)	23%	5

“Other” responses

- They are unaware of the services available
- They don't necessarily see it as an issue.
- Goes against their culture to admit they have something wrong.

Regression results

Bayesian generalised linear models were used to model the dependent variable of disclosure (1) or nondisclosure (0) separately for the three minority groups considered in this report. As mentioned above, Bayesian methods were employed to deal with the small sample sizes, and the imbalance in the outcomes of the data. In the tables below, the following variables are used.

Universities are grouped according to type, with Group of Eight universities as the baseline, as follows:

- 1) Group of Eight (baseline):
 - The University of Adelaide.
 - The Australian National University.
 - The University of Melbourne.
 - Monash University.
 - The University of New South Wales.
 - The University of Queensland.
 - The University of Sydney.

- The University of Western Australia.
- 2) Metropolitan universities (Those in state or territory capitals)
- 3) Regional universities (those outside state capitals)

Socioeconomic status (based on postcode) is scored as low and medium versus high.

Age is treated as a continuous variable.

Agreement scales were transformed to binary variables, with “agree” + “strongly agree” treated as agree, “disagree” and “strongly disagree” treated as disagree, and unsure as missing. Therefore, the coefficient describes agree versus disagree.

Types of disability were dummy variables taking a value of 1 if that disability type was chosen and 0 otherwise. Note that more than one type of disability is possible.

NESB students’ self-assessments of English proficiency had four levels:

- 1) My speech is exactly like that of a native English speaker.
- 2) I can understand native English speakers in Australia even when they are speaking quickly and using sophisticated or colloquial expressions. My vocabulary is very extensive, I make very few grammatical errors and my pronunciation is very good but not completely native.
- 3) I can understand almost everything spoken by native English users. I usually know most or all of the words for what I want to say. My grammar is good but I make mistakes with complicated sentences.
- 4) I can understand most conversations in English except when the speech is very fast. My grammar is fairly good but I make mistakes with complicated constructions.

Indigenous students

The regression model for Indigenous students did not yield significant predictors of disclosure. This may be attributable to the low response rate compared with the NESB students or students with disabilities. Some factors that emerged in the interviews are not strongly reflected here, such as the rejection of labelling.

The strongest predictors are “I do not know why I should disclose” ($-1.84, p = .09$) and “I do not know how to disclose” ($-1.97, p = .14$), which tend to support the view that non-disclosure is less a product of fear of prejudice than a lack of knowledge of the disclosure process or its implications. The Est(B) for the statement “disclosure benefits students” is not significant but is large at 1.47. While students agree in general terms, they may feel that the benefits are insufficient to compensate for the perception of special treatment that emerged in the interviews.

Table 30: Variables predictive of nondisclosure: Indigenous students

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Est(B)</i>	<i>Exp_est (B)</i>	<i>LCI</i>	<i>UCI</i>	<i>p</i>
Type of university					
Metropolitan university	0.42	1.52	0.21	10.87	0.679
Regional university	2.28	9.80	0.54	176.54	0.122

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Est(B)</i>	<i>Exp_est (B)</i>	<i>LCI</i>	<i>UCI</i>	<i>p</i>
Demographic characteristics					
Gender - male	0	1	0.01	98.95	1
Age	0	1	0.11	8.88	1
Socioeconomic status					
Low SES	0	1	0.01	100.90	1
Medium SES	0	1	0.01	85.51	1
Academic achievement					
Cumulative GPA	0	1	0.02	64.02	1
Concern for privacy					
Privacy 1	0.93	2.52	0.33	19.15	0.370
Privacy 2	0.36	1.44	0.19	10.89	0.726
Privacy 3	0.46	1.59	0.16	15.56	0.690
Privacy 4	0.92	1.10	0.14	8.68	0.931
Statements					
Disclosure benefits students	1.47	4.36	0.39	48.31	0.230
Trust in university	-0.18	0.84	0.01	56.12	0.934
Fear prejudice at university	-0.58	0.56	0.06	5.64	0.625
Fear prejudice after university	-0.72	0.49	0.06	3.69	0.488
Data confidentiality concerns	0.87	2.39	0.10	58.04	0.594
Do not want to be labelled	-0.97	0.38	0.02	8.73	0.545
University does not need the information	0.93	2.53	0.11	59.54	0.564
Do not know why should disclose	-1.84	0.16	0.02	1.30	0.086
Do not know how to disclose	-1.97	0.14	0.01	1.91	0.140

Students with disabilities

The regression model for students with disabilities shows quite a different pattern from that of the Indigenous students. Seven of the nine statements about disclosure were significant predictors of disclosure. The strongest positive predictors being a belief that disclosure benefits students (2.86) and trust in the university. The strongest negative predictors were the belief that the university does not need the information and that students do not know why they should disclose. Fear of prejudice at university (0.25) was strongly significant, but fear of later prejudice was not.

Table 31: Variables predictive of nondisclosure: SWDs

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Est(B)</i>	<i>Exp_est (B)</i>	<i>LCI</i>	<i>UCI</i>	<i>p</i>
Type of university					
Metropolitan university	-0.40	0.67	0.27	1.62	0.3735
Regional university	0.13	1.13	0.18	6.95	0.8921
Demographic characteristics					

Variables	Est(B)	Exp_est (B)	LCI	UCI	p
Gender – male	-0.83	0.44	0.11	1.68	0.229
Age	0.27	1.31	0.93	1.84	0.117
Socioeconomic status					
Low SES	-0.40	0.67	0.08	5.29	0.703
Medium SES	-0.60	0.55	0.11	2.65	0.454
Academic achievement					
Cumulative GPA	0.08	1.08	1.00	1.16	0.038*
Concern for privacy					
Privacy 1	-0.15	0.86	0.31	2.38	0.767
Privacy 2	-0.57	0.56	0.21	1.49	0.246
Privacy 3	0.07	1.07	0.38	3.00	0.895
Privacy 4	-1.44	0.24	0.05	1.24	0.088
Statements					
Disclosure benefits students	2.86	17.4	5.12	59.05	<0.001***
Trust in university	1.72	5.56	1.81	17.07	0.003**
Fear prejudice at university	-1.39	0.25	0.09	0.71	0.009**
Fear prejudice after university	-0.84	0.43	0.13	1.40	0.161
Data confidentiality concerns	-1.0	0.37	0.15	0.91	0.031*
Do not want to be labelled	-0.06	0.94	0.23	3.87	0.934
University does not need the information	-1.92	0.15	0.05	0.44	<0.001***
Do not know why should disclose	-2.33	0.10	0.03	0.29	<0.001***
Do not know how to disclose	-1.50	0.22	0.08	0.61	0.004**
Type of disability					
Physical	0.03	1.03	0.44	2.41	0.944
Cognitive	-0.07	0.93	0.40	2.14	0.864
Sensory	0.08	1.09	0.40	2.94	0.868
Social/emotional	0.17	1.19	0.52	2.71	0.679

* Significant at the .05 level, ** Significant at the .01 level, *** Significant at the .001 level.

There was a significant association with cumulative GPA, an indicator of academic achievement. The direction of causality cannot be determined by a regression model, so this finding could indicate either that students willing to disclose received assistance that improved their academic performance, or that more academically motivated students were more likely to disclose.

Of the privacy items, only the fourth—"I worry about sharing information with more people than I intend to"—approached significance (0.24), as did concern for confidentiality (0.37).

Students with disabilities that agree with the statement "I benefit from disclosure" are 2.86 (exp(B)) times more like to disclose than students that disagree (p <0.001). Those that agree with the statement "I don't know why I should disclose this information" have a 9.8% chance of disclosing compared to those that disagree with the statement.

NESB students

NESB students appear to consider disclosure unnecessary. Only two predictors were significant: “do not know how to disclose” (0.17) and—perhaps surprisingly—low SES (1.02). There appears to be little concern over privacy or repercussions of disclosure.

The strongest nonsignificant predictors, with negative coefficients, were “Disclosure is not needed” (−0.64) “Do not want to be labelled” (−1.03) and “Do not know why I should disclose”.

Like Indigenous students, NESB students appear to feel that this information is not relevant to university study, and most do not know how to disclose. Unlike students with disabilities or Indigenous students, NESB students are not directly asked to identify themselves as such—this status is bestowed on them by universities according to a Federal Government formula. If a student voluntarily discloses as NESB, it is generally to a support unit in relation to language issues.

Table 32: Variables predictive of nondisclosure: NESB students

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Est(B)</i>	<i>Exp_est (B)</i>	<i>LCI</i>	<i>UCI</i>	<i>p</i>
Type of university					
Metropolitan university	-0.40	0.67	0.31	1.47	0.321
Regional university	-0.20	0.82	0.12	5.67	0.843
Demographic characteristics					
Gender – male	-0.18	0.84	0.41	1.73	0.634
Age	-0.02	1.02	0.94	1.10	0.692
Socioeconomic status					
Low SES	-1.03	0.36	0.13	0.95	0.040*
Medium SES	-0.45	0.64	0.27	1.49	0.297
Academic achievement					
Cumulative GPA	0.02	1.02	0.97	1.06	0.495
Concern for privacy					
Privacy 1	-0.17	0.85	0.44	1.63	0.616
Privacy 2	-0.07	0.93	0.49	1.79	0.832
Privacy 3	-0.14	0.87	0.43	1.73	0.687
Privacy 4	-0.04	0.96	0.47	1.94	0.903
Statements					
Disclosure benefits students	0.46	1.58	0.73	3.46	0.248
Trust in university	0.45	1.57	0.57	4.30	0.383
Fear prejudice at university	-0.40	0.67	0.34	1.33	0.253
Fear prejudice after university	-0.31	0.73	0.39	1.37	0.325
Data confidentiality concerns	-0.39	0.68	0.36	1.28	0.234
Do not want to be labelled	-1.02	0.36	0.12	1.11	0.075
University does not need the information	-0.64	0.53	0.27	1.03	0.060

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Est(B)</i>	<i>Exp_est (B)</i>	<i>LCI</i>	<i>UCI</i>	<i>p</i>
Do not know why should disclose	-0.53	0.59	0.32	1.10	0.094
Do not know how to disclose	-1.79	0.17	0.08	0.33	<.0001***
English proficiency					
Level of English proficiency	-0.14	0.87	0.65	1.17	0.362

* Significant at the .05 level, ** Significant at the .01 level, *** Significant at the .001 level.

Interview Responses

Face-to-face and over-the-phone interviews with disclosing and non-disclosing equity students produced a wealth of data and insight into the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of equity students. In total, useable data was taken from 58 student interviews. Of this figure, 25 students had a disability, 14 students were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and 18 students were NESB. Students were interviewed according to semi-structured interviews revolved around 11 open-ended questions. These questions revealed some general trends that are presented below:

Student interviews were analysed and coded in two steps using NVivo software. Initially, codes were divided into three categories: Indigenous, SWDs and NESB students.

Table 33: Codes for Indigenous students

Code	Description
I_Shame	Shame in identity (e.g. "they are in my opinion ashamed of who they are" "Dues to shame")
I_Lackno	Lack of knowledge about self/identity (e.g. "do not know their identity themselves")
I_Discrim	Fear of discrimination by non-Indigenous others (not otherwise explained)
I_Outperc	Rejection of perceptions held by non-Indigenous others. (e.g. non-Indigenous students "may question Indigenous students' Identity" or perceive "'benefits' that Indigenous students receive".
I_Spectreat	Rejection of perceived special treatment (e.g. "Fear of labelling "you only got in because you are black""; "...labels that may come along with it (e.g. they get into uni easier, they get an unfair advantage"
I_Notrustuni	Distrust university administrators' motives (e.g. "we are there for our skin colour - uni management tokens- instead of our brains")
I_Pastex	Past experience of prejudice (e.g. "past stigma they may have encountered")
I_Indisc	Discrimination by other Indigenous students (e.g. "I had several aboriginal people tell me I'm too white to say that I am")
I_Conven	Convenience of non-disclosure (e.g. "It's just easier not to")
I_Nobenefit	No benefit is seen to disclosure, or disclosure makes no difference
I_Tokenism	Fear of being the 'token' Indigenous student

Table 34: Codes for students with disabilities (SWDs)

Code	Description
D_Spectreat	Reject special treatment (e.g. "They don't want to be judged for their disability rather than their abilities.")
D_Rejlabel	Reject the label of "disability" (e.g. "I still don't categorize myself as disabled")
D_Acaddiscrim	Fear discrimination by academic staff (e.g. "Oh it's that *disability* kid again putting his hand up")
D_Percep	Fear of perceptions (such as weakness) or ignorance/misconceptions around how a person with a disability will be perceived (e.g. "they fear judgement from staff or students should such information be released.")

Code	Description
D_Profrep	Fear of disclosure affecting professional opportunities (e.g. "it would impact my reputation and job opportunities with the university if i disclosed.")
D_Lackno	Lack of knowledge/education in benefits or reasons to disclose, or how this information will be collected or used (e.g. "I feel uncertain of how to go about finding this support and am concerned about any potential costs of which I am yet unaware").
D_Fearimp	General fear / anxiety over the implications of disclosure (e.g. "I... am concerned about any potential costs of which I am yet unaware.") includes risks to future employment or professional opportunities (e.g. "it would impact my reputation and job opportunities with the university if i disclosed.")
D_Stigma	Fear of stigma attached to disability, general or specific
D_Conven	Convenience – the perception that the process of disclosure is too troublesome
D_Pastex	Nondisclosure based on previous negative experiences (e.g. "a past of telling someone and being hurt or not getting any help provided before in school or otherwise?")
D_Shame	A feeling of shame surrounding a disability (or disability in general)
D_Discrim	Discrimination
D_Qual	Not being certain whether a condition counts as a disability – owing to lack of severity or definition (e.g. "my brother has "proper" physical and intellectual disabilities, so I sometimes feel like mine doesn't really count")
D_Distrust	Distrust in the university (e.g. "isolated, uni won't do anything about it) – includes fears about breaches of confidentiality (e.g. "[there is no] reason to believe that [personal information] will be handled with the required care").
D_Nobenefit	A perception that there is no benefit to the student in disclosing, or no reason to do so. Includes comments that the effort outweighs the benefit. (e.g. "If there are no further adjustments/supports available, there wouldn't seem to be a need to tell anyone at the university as there is nothing else to do")
D_Express	The student does not know how to broach the subject or communicate their needs. (e.g. "Yes. Mine is very personal and I don't even know how to bring it up and discuss it")

Table 35: Codes for NESB students

Code	Description
NESB_Noreason	Disclosing because there was a box to be ticked
NESB_Isolated	Disclosing to access other NESB students
NESB_Access	Disclosing to access NESB services

Following initial coding, codes were aggregated for transferability. These thematic codes were:

- Fear Academic Discrimination
- Fear General Discrimination
- Fear In-Group Discrimination
- Concerns Regarding Confidentiality
- Inconvenience of Disclosure Process
- Distrust of university
- Problems Expressing Equity Issue
- Fear Implications of Disclosure

- Lack Knowledge of Equity Services
- No Benefits to Disclosure
- Negative Previous Experiences with Disclosure
- Outsider Perceptions of Equity Group
- Fear of Professional Ramifications of Disclosure
- Do Not Understand Qualities that Constitute Equity Status
- Reject Equity Label
- Shame Associated with Equity Status
- Reject Special Treatment Associated with Equity Status
- Fears of Stigma Associated with Equity Status
- Fears of Tokenism
- Disclosed to Access Services
- Disclosed Because Isolated
- Disclosed “Just Because”
- Disclosed to Represent and Overcome Stereotypes
- Issues with Service Quality
- Cultural Reasons for Non-Disclosure

Table 36: Frequency of codes

Code	Students with disabilities	Indigenous students	NESB students
Fear Academic Discrimination	7	-	-
Fear General Discrimination	11	-	-
Fear In-Group Discrimination	-	4	-
Concerns Regarding Confidentiality	6	-	-
Inconvenience of Disclosure Process	8	4	-
Distrust of University	10	1	-
Problems Expressing Equity Issue	1	-	-
Fear Implications of Disclosure	5	-	-
Lack Knowledge of Equity Services	8	3	-
No Benefits to Disclosure	4	-	-
Negative Previous Experiences with Disclosure	10	1	-
Outsider Perceptions of Equity Group	6	4	-
Fear of Professional Ramifications of Disclosure	2	-	-
Do Not Understand Qualities that Constitute Equity Status	7	-	-
Reject Equity Label	6	-	-
Shame Associated with Equity Status	8	1	-
Reject Special Treatment Associated with Equity Status	5	1	-
Fears of Stigma Associated with Equity Status	10	-	-
Fears of Tokenism	-	1	-
Disclosed to Access Services	-	-	1
Disclosed Because Isolated	-	-	1
Disclosed “Just Because”	-	-	2

Code	Students with disabilities	Indigenous students	NESB students
Disclosed to Represent and Overcome Stereotypes	-	-	3
Issues with Service Quality	6	3	2
Cultural Reasons for Non-Disclosure	5	1	3

Graphed Results

Radar charts show patterns of codes in interviews with students of the three cohorts. As the chart below indicates, Indigenous students note in-group discrimination and outsider perceptions, but do not mention stigma as an issue.

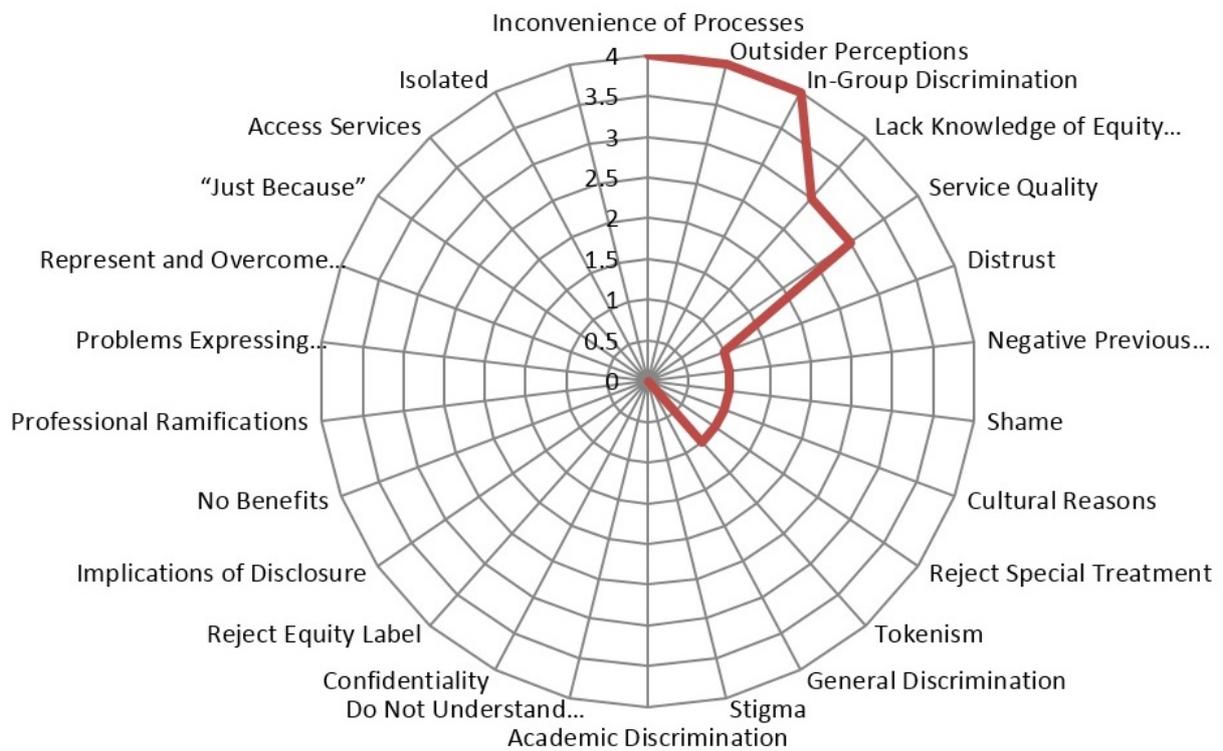


Figure 8: Radar chart of Indigenous students' codes

In contrast, students with disabilities are most concerned with issues of discrimination, stigma, processes and distrust.

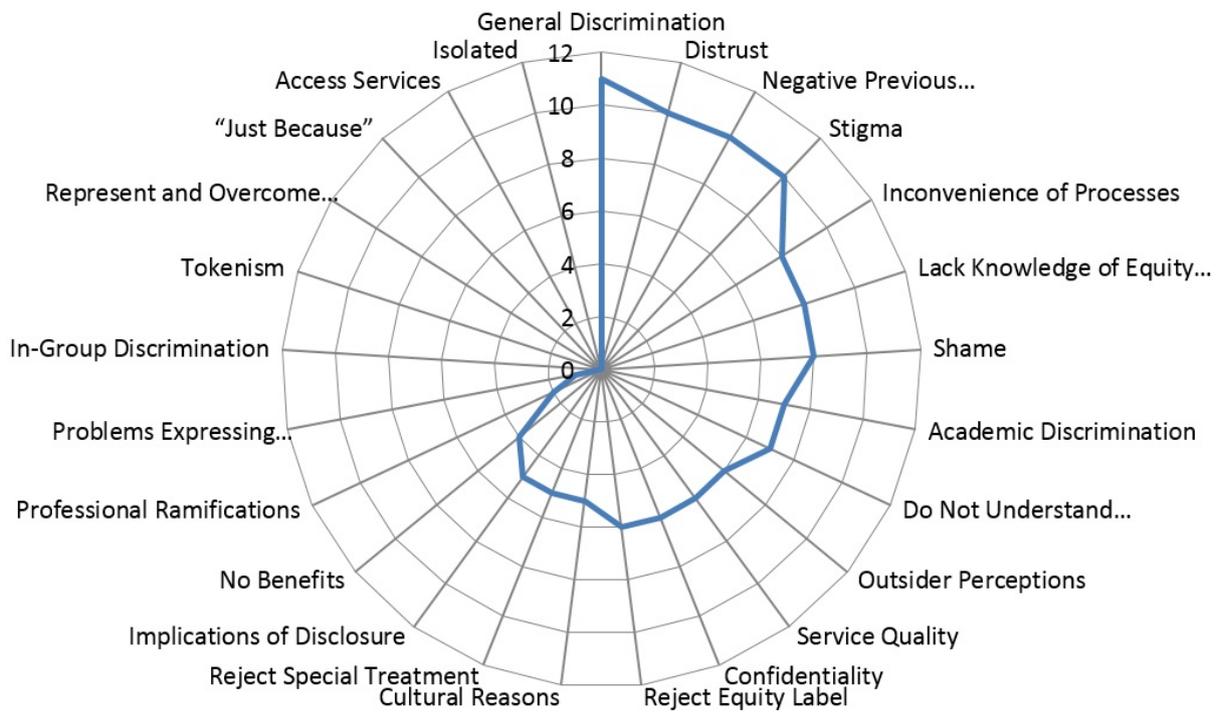


Figure 9: Radar chart of codes from students with disabilities

The main distinguishing feature of the NESB students was the “just because” motive. Equity group status is not a significant part of the self-image of most, and the information is not considered of great interest or significance.

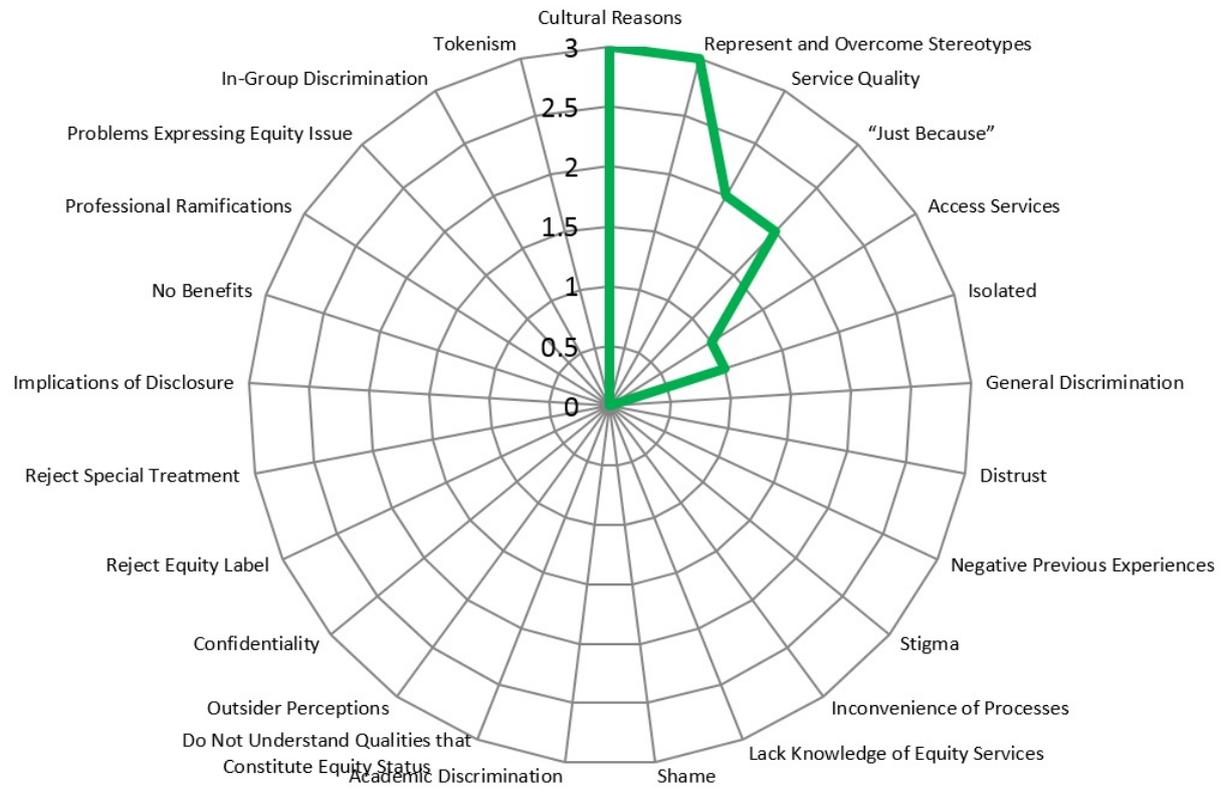


Figure 10: NESB Students' codes

Comparison of the three groups shows the contrasts—the wider circle of the SWDs indicates greater levels of concern and greater distrust of processes. Cultural reasons (for non-disclosure) stand out for the NESB group and inconvenience for the Indigenous group.

Amalgamated Equity Groups

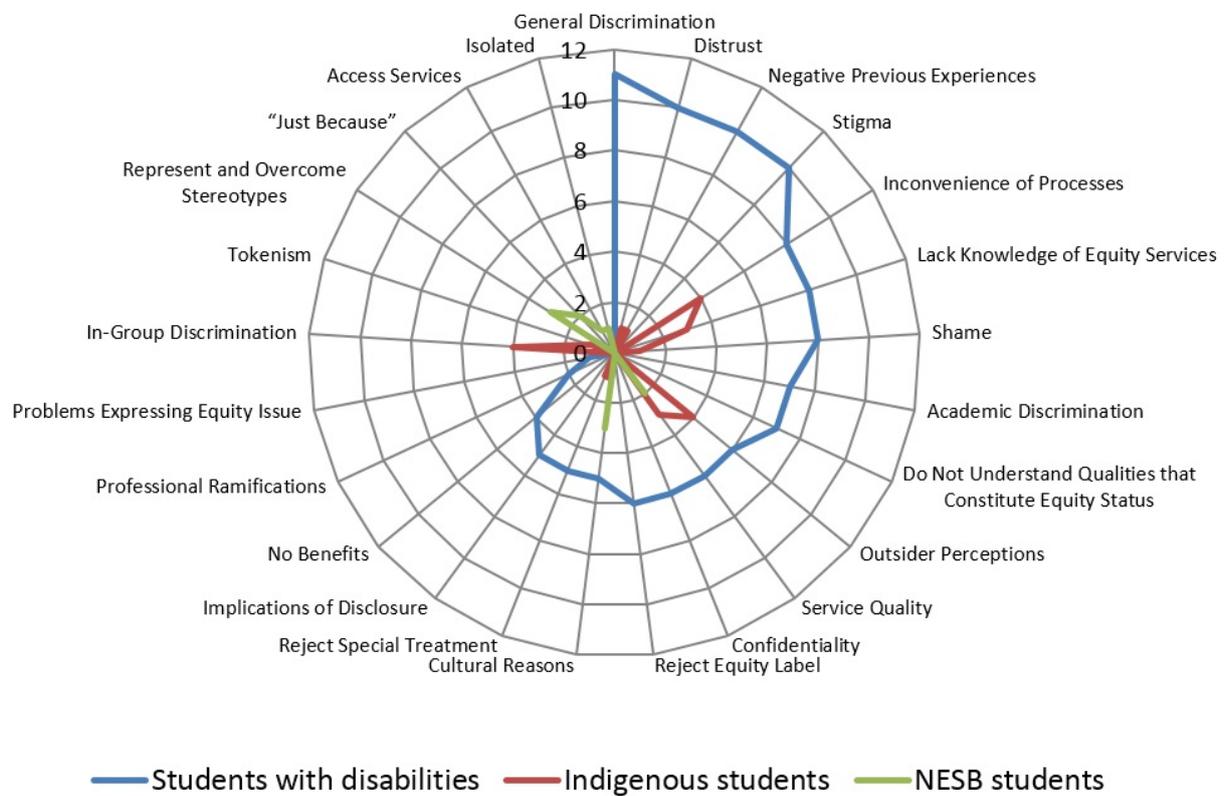


Figure 11: Comparison of equity group profiles of concerns

Discussion

Summary of Findings

In this national study, we examined three equity groups as identified in the 1990 Department of Education and Training report, *A fair chance for all: National and institutional planning for equity in higher education*. These included (i) students living with disabilities, (ii) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and (iii) students from Non-English-speaking Backgrounds (NESB). Students from these groups participated in the study through an online survey and through face-to-face and over-the-phone interviews with researchers on the project. The research focused on four broad questions:

- 1) How many students in the three equity groups do not disclose their equity status?
- 2) How do students disclose in Australia's tertiary sector?
- 3) Why do students choose to disclose their equity status?
- 4) Why do students choose not to disclose their equity status?

Expanded on below, the findings of this study provided a key insight into the experiences and opinions of students from these three equity groups.

Essentially, it was found that around 11% of the combined equity population either did not disclose their equity status to the university, or withheld disclosure until reaching a critical point and needing immediate assistance and support. It was found that students disclose at all stages of their tertiary careers, and for different reasons at each stage. Some of these include accessing key benefits and programs, others are to access special considerations and accommodations, and others are related to identity, accessing other equity students, or simply because they are asked and have no reservations with disclosing. Students chose not to disclose for a wide variety of reasons, including fears of stigmatization and differential treatment, lack of confidence in the university's handling of private or sensitive information, fears of repercussions in their post-university and professional lives, and a lack of knowledge of the presence of assistance programs or benefits associated with disclosure. This offers suggestions for improving disclosure channels in Australian universities, which are expanded on below, but briefly include building greater awareness of disclosure processes and outcomes, rights and confidentiality awareness, participatory disclosure processes, and streamlining assistance services with other university networks. In short, while these equity groups present different attitudes and experiences with disclosure processes, broad and promising improvements can be drawn from their data.

Research Answers

How many students do not disclose?

Roughly 11% of the surveyed population do not disclose their equity status to their university. Of this number, 6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reported not disclosing, as have 11% of students living with a disability, and 18% of NESB students. 13% of the total population surveyed reported being unsure whether they have or have not disclosed. This includes 1.5% of Indigenous students, 0.4% of students living with a disability, and 23% of NESB students.

How do students disclose?

Of 1108 students surveyed a number of trends were identified regarding how students choose to disclose their equity status. Students also disclose through various means, so that some of these figures overlap. On average, 45% of students disclose via a tertiary administration centre. 41% disclosed at enrolment. 34% disclosed when registering with a support unit such as a disability unit, Indigenous centre, or language service.

Why do students choose to disclose?

Students in each group saw implications for disclosure. This is reflected in the feedback from the student surveys. All groups, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, NESB students—report that disclosing equity information to the university benefits students (4.1; 4.0; 3.4 respectively¹²) also report a high degree of trust in the university with their equity information (4.1; 3.9; 4.0). The three groups had similar attitudes to concerns regarding the confidentiality of their disclosed information (2.3; 2.8; 2.5). Students with disabilities expressed the greatest desire not to be 'labelled', (4.1), followed by NESB students (3.9), and Indigenous students (3.7). NESB students expressed the highest rates of the university not needing to know their personal information (2.8), as well as the highest rate of not knowing why they should disclose this information (3.1), as well as not knowing how to disclose (2.7).

Why do students choose not to disclose?

Overall, these results suggest crucial differences between equity groups regarding what factors matter when disclosing, and what factors possibly inhibit disclosing. Research by Mullins and Preyde (2013) on disability disclosure suggests that much of this apprehension also involves the nature of the disability (hidden disabilities such as dyslexia are considered as less widely understood and accepted). Furthermore, much of this involves the private nature of disability: “many participants said that they will only disclose in close relationships or when necessary, such as in an attempt to receive understanding for their specific challenges or to be able to receive certain accommodations” (2013, p.155).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students indicated similar concerns regarding differential treatment and in-group discrimination. Doubts regarding one's level of Indigenousness appeared in many interviews, especially of light skinned Aboriginal participants. Ethnographic interviews with Aboriginal staff and students at Australian universities performed by Rochecoste et al. (2016) offers some indications for why these items are concerns; “as one participant explained, not all Aboriginal students have dark skin. Nonetheless, another interviewee reported a persistent expectation among non-Aboriginal lecturers of overt or traditional (stereotypical) indications of Aboriginality” (p, 6).

Likewise, research by Holt (2011) offers insight into attitudes towards this differential treatment that parallel this study's own findings in many ways:

“(Kooma female, aged 48), the thought of an Aboriginal middle-class society doesn't appeal to me one bit. I come from a family of workers, where we have always worked to provide for our kin and have always looked after one another. It is insulting to think that just because there are Blackfellas who work or own a

¹² Measured from 1.00 (strongly disagree) to 5.00 (strongly agree)

car or own their own home that people can then feel good and sit back and judge and think: 'oh well, they must be different to the rest of them' or 'they must be middle class'. After all what white people think is their middle class will never be equal to what they believe our middle class will be. I know who I am, and I know where I belong. A middle-class society is not my idea of success". (quoted from ANU document – Aboriginal Professionals: Work, Class and Culture).

In other words, this research project and others suggest a great degree of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reluctance to disclose is related to perceptions in-group discrimination and of tokenism (2011, p.35).

Overall, this study found that each of the three equity groups had different rates of disclosure, different reasons for disclosing, and different anxieties and fears surrounding disclosure. For this reason, general guidelines are offered, follow by recommendations proposed thematically according to each group. Finally, peripheral recommendations are offered, which are derived from secondary research that took place in planning this project and in writing the literature review.

Conclusions

This study has presented research conducted across Australian universities regarding the disclosure experiences and perspectives of university students and staff. Three equity groups were focused on, identified according to the 1991 *A fair chance for all: National and institutional planning for equity in higher education*: students with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB).

Results indicated a strong concern of university students and staff with confidentiality and privacy when disclosing. Results also indicated that students disclose via different channels before, during, and after enrolment. Students with disabilities in particular are shown to wait longer before disclosing, and to disclose during a stressful period or a crisis.

Across the equity groups surveyed there were several disclosure related issues that were common: students were concerned with privacy and the confidentiality their equity information was handled with; students feared prejudice from university staff, other students especially in the case of hidden disabilities, and other equity students especially in the case of light skinned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; students were reluctant to disclose for fear of labelling and tokenism; finally, students were concerned with, aware of, or had experienced stigma and discrimination related to their equity group.

Students in this study reported significant concerns over peer and staff perceptions of preferential treatment. Many students in this study and in others (Clement et al. 2014; Cole & Cawthon 2015; Morris & Turnbull 2006) reported either complete nondisclosure or concealment of equity status until disclosure was necessary to access assistance and support, because of such perceptions and self-stigmatization.

To overcome reluctance to disclose, some university services have presented policies that overcome this problem. Monash University adopts a process of disability disclosure that offers students an option to partially disclose their condition: "have the right to disclose to Disability Support Services only the information they feel comfortable to release – a student can limit the information they provide Disability Support Services or choose not to provide

consent to share particular information, although this may restrict Disability Support Services capacity to provide reasonable accommodations” (Monash University, 2017). Likewise, Griffith University offers a semi-staggered process of disclosure, which offers students the opportunity to disclose what their relevant conditions are, and what accommodations they may require (Griffith University, 2017).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

Students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds were most likely to disclose at enrolment (59%). They were highly likely to disclose via a tertiary admissions centre (47%) or through an Indigenous unit (41%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were the least likely to not disclose overall (6%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students also reported a high degree of trust with the university’s use of their information, and saw benefits for other students in doing so. These students expressed a wish not to be ‘labelled’, however. Interview data offers further depth on this selection:

“I guess there might be social risks. I know, it’s fairly diverse at [university], fairly open... It’s fairly progressive there on campus and all that. But I guess there is also, telling people who are not particularly culturally sensitive [inaudible] stereotypes and what not. Those could be one of the social factors, being singled out as being the token in the class. You can usually find a community to be a part of when you disclose that you’re indigenous” (Interviews: ‘Participant 49’).

In other words, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students trust the university to use their information with discretion, there is also a sense that their presence may be interpreted as tokenism. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were more likely overall to disclose either before or during enrolment. This may be due to the nature of Indigenous access schemes at Australian universities, which offer benefits typically in terms of lowering entry standards and offering access to key services and resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Hence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are likely to disclose as a means of entry and access. This also offers some explanation for the low rates of non-disclosure (6%) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, however, also expressed fears of in-group discrimination, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that do not meet the physical description of a ‘typical’ ATSI individual, in the words of Participant 43, “not black enough”.

Amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, highest rates of reluctance to disclose were fears of being seen as receiving perceived special treatment (15%), fears of discrimination from non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers (15%), fears of having the ATSI status being questioned or doubted (13%), concerns of being judged by other students, fears of being labelled as the token ‘Aboriginal’ student (12%), rejecting the label of ‘Aboriginal’ (12%), fears of discrimination by academic staff (12%), shame associated with identity (8%), and inconvenience of disclosing (7%).

For these reasons, we recommend adopting awareness programs of heterogeneity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Awareness of heterogeneity amongst Indigenous students in particular is crucial to building a safe and inclusive environment for Indigenous disclosure, especially for students from multi-racial families and for light-skinned Indigenous students. Indigenous students are more likely to disclose either before

enrolment, or through an Indigenous unit. Hence, although Indigenous students have low rates of non-disclosure, that Indigenous units are one major pathway for disclosing. Awareness raising and opening pathways to disclose at these points may assist in encouraging Indigenous disclosure.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities were far more likely than other equity groups to disclose via a registered support unit. This is discussed in student interviews. Students typically mention hitting a 'crisis' or critical point at which they disclose through the registered support unit, for example: "I had an assignment during the crisis and I couldn't submit it on time and I put in a special consideration" (Interviews: 'Participant 2').

The regression model in this study suggests that the greatest barriers to disclosure are perceptions that universities do not need to know, distrust in the university and fears of breaches of confidentiality. Conversely, belief in the benefits of disclosure is likely to encourage sharing of this information.

Results also indicate that students with disabilities prefer to disclose to the unit itself, rather than through university administration: "I would want the choice of whether I disclose or not. Like disclosing to disability services is one thing but having to disclose to my faculty is another thing. Because what if I go a whole semester without needing those adjustments because mine are only needed when I'm really unwell." (Interviews: 'Participant 6'). Essentially, the reasons for high rates of support-unit disclosure and comparatively low rates of pre- and during enrolment disclosure may indicate a desire amongst many students with disabilities to be as 'normal' as their peers, and when they reach a point that assistance is needed, they disclose directly for immediate support.

Students with disabilities presented far more concern with not wishing to be 'labelled', albeit for wholly different reasons. Rather than fears of tokenism, as with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disabilities expressed concerns for being seen as receiving special treatment: "I wanted to just be like normal obviously, like you don't need extra help or support, also admitting to yourself that there is a problem is a really big step" (Interviews: 'Participant 34').

Students living with disabilities reported the greatest fear of perceptions of weakness and misconceptions about their disability(ies) (18%), were concerned with stigma attached to disabilities (14%), rejected special treatment (11%), rejected the label of disability (8%), or feared discrimination generally (7%), or academic discrimination (7%), anxiety over the implications of disclosure (6%), lack of certainty concerning what constitutes a relevant disability (6%), a perception that there is no benefit to disclosing (6%), lack of knowledge of benefits or reasons to disclose, or how disclosed information is collected and used (4%), perceptions that the processes of disclosure is inconvenient and troublesome (4%), feelings of shame surrounding a disability (4%), distrust in the university regarding issues such as confidentiality (4%), and previous negative experiences (2%). Overall, students with disabilities had the greatest reservations around issues of being seen by peers as less able and as receiving benefits associated with their disability(ies).

Essentially, students with disabilities were far more likely to disclose later, to a support unit, after hitting a stressful or crisis point. These students were also more likely to fear stigma

and differential treatment associated with their disability, and to reject special treatment and reject the label of disability. Because of this, we recommend that university disability services offer and advertise open access to disclosure procedures, limit any impediments or obstacles to disclosing equity status, and centre themselves as disclosure hubs. That is, they should offer easy disclosure processes, and advertise their presence and the value of disclosing at critical stress points for students in the university calendar, such as during assessment and exam periods.

NESB Students

NESB students reported differing results to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disabilities. NESB students reported less concern with prejudice, as well as less confidence that their disclosure benefits students. Generally, results from interviews with NESB participants reflect no reluctance to disclose because that information is noncontroversial (34% of interview codes). Some NESB student reported fears of perceptions of other students (14%). NESB students reported a lack of benefit for disclosure (9%), and others chose not to disclose because they reject the label of NESB (7%).

Relatively few NESB students feared the implications of disclosing (3%) and distrust of the university (3%). A small number of students reported cultural disinclination to disclose NESB status (3%). The smallest number of students reported shame or embarrassment associated with their NESB status (2%). In other words, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students living with disabilities had high rates of concern regarding stigma, discrimination and differential treatment related to their equity status, NESB students reported higher rates of ambivalence or lack of benefit associated with their equity status, and much lower rates of stigma, discrimination and fears of differential treatment.

NESB students were most likely to disclose via a tertiary admissions centre (52%), and were highly likely to disclose on enrolment (40%). NESB students were least likely to register with a support service (5%) and were most likely to not disclose at all (18%). NESB students were also most likely to be unsure whether or not they had disclosed (23%).

NESB students thus present a different case to students living with disabilities and ATSI students. Where the other two groups withheld disclosing due to fears of special treatment or discrimination, NESB students were far more likely to withhold disclosure due to ambivalence and simply not seeing a 'point' in disclosing. Disclosing NESB status for this group is simply seen as less beneficial in terms of individual gains. This study recommends implementing new questions to lend depth to NESB status. As discussed in *Definitions of Non-English-Speaking Background* (p. 24-25), NESB status offers limited insights into English proficiency, and has little predictive value of the success of a student. In light of this, this study recommends asking questions about self-reported confidence and proficiency in English, and whether students feel they need to access English classes and language support services.

Disclosure at university

In the course of this research, it was found that some university services have presented policies that overcome many of the issues surrounding reluctance to disclose. Monash University adopts a process of disability disclosure that offers students an option to partially disclose their condition: "have the right to disclose to Disability Support Services only the

information they feel comfortable to release – a student can limit the information they provide Disability Support Services or choose not to provide consent to share information, although this may restrict Disability Support Services capacity to provide reasonable accommodations” (Monash University, 2017). Likewise, Griffith University offers a semi-staggered process of disclosure, which offers students the opportunity to disclose what their relevant conditions are, and what accommodations they may require (Griffith University, 2017). These and similar processes offer students a sense of control and involvement in their disclosure process and are recommended.

Students also reported gaps between equity service providers and academic staff, in particular when seeking considerations and accommodations. Students reported having to defend their own positions and rights, in some cases being denied consideration and accommodation by academic staff. Some students have felt strongly about the role of disability services in advocating for considerations and accommodations for students directly with academic staff: “it’s very hard for students who are really you know don’t have resources are really affected by staff, don’t have time. It’s really hard for those students to advocate for themselves continuously and effectively, so something like [the disabilities unit] could provide an advocacy as well as support function, and it definitely doesn’t do that at the moment” (Interviews – Participant 72).

Awareness has been another factor that has been a significant theme in the research. Many students have reported not being aware of equity services on campus, or not being aware of whether the service was available to them. This suggests that university equity services need to be made more visible in the lives of students and staff, and need to offer clear, concise, and straightforward information and advice to students who are disclosing or are considering disclosing equity information. Students have reported wanting to have a clear idea of the types of considerations and accommodations they may receive and wanting to have a clear sense of what lay ahead in their disclosure process and what their rights and responsibilities are as a student when accessing equity services.

This research has highlighted in particular the diversity of equity services and processes across Australia’s tertiary sector. While legislation ensures that some sort of equity service for students is a requirement of every university, and Initiatives such as the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), it is largely up to the institutions to decide how these services will be provided according to the needs of their student populations and their resourcing (NCSEHE 2017). Initiatives, workshops and conferences between equity service providers are recommended as one way of encourages cross-university innovation and improve service quality.

Proposed Guidelines for Higher Education Providers

Education and teaching methods should widen participation in education by recognising the diversity of backgrounds, abilities and preferences of students. While disclosure is the primary route to obtaining support, it is not the primary goal of widening participation. Disclosure as a means to receive adjustments or accommodations of particular needs entails special treatment for some students. This may be unavoidable for students in certain circumstances, such as those with less common disabilities, but for some common situations, such as students that find it difficult to follow spoken lectures, there may be practices that can be made available to all without the need for disclosure.

Where disclosure is necessary, it should be in a university community that understands the need for equity and is sensitive to the needs of minority students. Universities should actively protect students' interests, allow them control over their own information, and respect their differences. The guidelines below seek to create such environments.

1. Adopt inclusive university practices and procedures

This study proposes that universities adopt inclusive practices that maximise access to the university community and educational content by those with diverse needs into university teaching and course design, such as close-captioned lectures, screen reader software and accessible online materials so students that choose not to disclose are less likely to reach a 'crisis point' where circumstances force them to disclose. Moreover, if such adjustments are available to everyone, their use does not constitute special treatment or reveal private information about the student. Inclusive practice focuses on individual needs rather than labels such as "disability" or "non-English-speaking background".

These interventions may involve incurring expenses for some universities that do not already offer closed-captioned lectures, or lack advanced and accessible online materials. However, such expenses serve to make universities more inclusive and accessible for equity students and are essential for easing access for equity students.

Implementation: The authors of this study are aware that changes made to meet this recommendation across the sector, such as closed captioning lectures and adapting course design may be difficult and expensive for universities to adopt during the initial stages. However, the university sector has made great strides in the use of technology in recent years, and the recommendation may involve only moderate to existing processes and procedures, and minimal change to course structure and design.

Risks: The risks of inclusive practice would be minimal, but there would be associated costs of technology and facilities. Currently, where inclusive practices are not universal, these are born by universities in conjunction with disabilities or other support units. While inclusive practices would be more expensive, there would be economies of scale and benefits of increased student retention.

2. Offer options of disclosure channels and times where students retain control over their information

This study has shown student-process interactions to be key sites of stress and anxiety for equity students. One factor in this stress is a sense of a lack of control in the disclosure process. These and similar processes offer students a sense of control and involvement in their disclosure process. Staggered and alternative options for disclosure are thus recommended as a means to encourage students to disclose equity status, and to offer students a sense of greater control of the disclosure process. Students with disabilities in particular are diverse in terms of their needs for equity accommodations and assistance. While most universities offer online disclosure options at point of enrolment, online tools are useful for inclusive and effective disclosure pathways throughout the academic career. Tools such as UNSW's *NavigateMe* online tool offer students an anonymous pathway to explore disclosure and its implications, based on their goals, and suggest ways to access other university services. This lowers the threshold for commencing a disclosure journey and is less confronting than making an appointment with a support service. Similar online

tools are recommended as a means of staggering disclosure and offering anonymous assistance where students prefer anonymity.

Such measures may involve disclosure options at the course level, as at least one regional university has trialled, but this must be done sensitively, without pressure and with options for nondisclosure.

Implementation: Alternative and staggered disclosure options require a reformulation of disclosure procedures in favour of basic information needed to recognize equity status. Essentially, diversifying disclosure processes would involve little change to existing processes, but would lower the threshold for disclosure to the most essential units of information required.

Risks: The most significant risk in this practice is ensuring that confidentiality of personal information is protected at every level. For example, if information is disclosed at the faculty or program level, it must not be leaked to others, and it must be clear that disclosure is voluntary and not a condition of enrolment.

3. Explain equity programs and services to students at university, with clear guidelines of benefits, confidentiality and the disclosure process

According to the quantitative and qualitative results of this study, students are more likely to disclose when they see benefits in doing so and trust the university. Students are also dissuaded from disclosing where it is unclear why they are disclosing, where the university is seen as not needing the information, and where students are unsure of how to disclose. These concerns suggest that students who more aware of the benefits of disclosure and the safety and handling of their information are more likely to disclose.

Moreover, many students have reported not being aware of equity services on campus, or not being aware of whether the service was available to them. This suggests that university equity services need to be made more visible in the lives of students and staff, and need to offer clear, concise, and straightforward information and advice to students who are considering disclosing equity information.

Hence, this study recommends training equity staff and service providers to clearly and accessibly provide information about the rights of equity students, their right to confidentiality and the ways their private information will be used and where, and the outcomes of disclosing for the student. Furthermore, in admissions and enrolment processes, where this study has shown there to be differing rates of disclosure between equity groups, this study recommends providing clear information on why equity-related questions are asked, how this information is being used (whether it is de-identified and used for statistics purposes, or whether students may be followed up using this information), and offer a 'prefer not to answer' option in cases where one is not already provided.

Implementation: Informing prospective students, current students, and university staff of the benefits of disclosure would involve little change to existing processes or procedures. Equity services and methods of disclosure can be advertised on university websites, linked to during enrolment processes, and revisited when enrolling in courses with little expense or difficulty. This recommendation is perhaps the cheapest and easiest to implement of these guidelines.

Risks: In general, there are few risks associated with this recommendation, and in general universities already do this to some extent. Targeting of specific students at risk should be avoided as this may constitute profiling.

4. Adopt clear, consistent and easily understood definitions of equity groups for applications, enrolment and support

Some students with disabilities in this study reported being unsure of whether their disability merited disclosure. This was also found by other studies, especially in the case of students with less-visible disabilities (Cole & Cawthon 2015; De Cesarei 2015; Mullins & Preyde 2013). As discussed in the 'definitions' section of this report, Australian universities employ multiple differing definitions of disability. Some of these are derived from federal and state legislation, while others are ad-hoc. Some are medically based, while others are limitations based.

Similarly, some Indigenous students expressed fears of both inter- and intra-group discrimination, especially those that do not conform to a stereotypical image. The ABS definition (identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by a community) is clear enough, but there appear to be differences between universities' requirements for certification.

As discussed in the methodology section, some students are also unsure over their NESB status, which in the popular imagination may be confused with foreign citizenship. NESB status is seldom identified as such, and the current Department of Education definition is a statistical construct based on multiple data points that does not reflect student needs. A possible addition to enrolment forms might be an additional question such as "Do you require support in English language proficiency?"

Adopting clearly understood definitions of equity groups, including what constituted 'disability', 'NESB', and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is recommended to overcome ambiguity. These definitions should be familiar to all staff, both academic and professional. They should not be so restrictive as to deny assistance to students that may need it.

Implementation: This guideline would require standardised definitions across Australia's tertiary sector and require a re-writing of university policies and procedures. Students from non-English speaking backgrounds also face significant ambiguity because of differing definitions between institutions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have less issue with this, despite myriad definitions, because of stringent requirements to present evidence of Aboriginal status. Adopting standard sector-wide definitions would require consensus between universities and university service providers. While this presents an immense challenge, it also offers opportunities for greater clarity for students and service providers.

Risks: Adopting standard definitions is a long-term goal. The most obvious risk is that some deserving students may be excluded by restrictive or narrow definitions, or others may be included when additional support is not warranted.

5. Encourage a wider understanding of equity group membership among staff and students

In addition to definitions, there is a perceived need for a broader understanding of the diversity of students in these equity groups, who may not conform to an image projected by

the press and news media. It was suggested by participants in this study that some equity services—and academic adjustments—appeared to be reserved for stereotyped cases of an ‘ideal’ equity student.

For example, some Indigenous and NESB participants feared in-group discrimination as a result of disclosing. Moreover, students with such less obvious conditions such as cognitive or social/emotional disabilities felt their condition was seen as less genuine than physical or sensory conditions. This report has shown a correlation between fears of discrimination and non-disclosure. It encourages a wider view of ‘equity’ as open, diverse, and inclusive. This may involve promotional materials targeting a wide variety of equity students and the general university community.

Finally, universities should use positive language to frame equity group membership in a manner that respects differences in culture and recognises contributions of diverse groups to university community. Universities should avoid language that implies deficit, alludes to charity or tokenism, or otherwise indicates accommodations for the sake of accommodations, rather than a genuine equity accommodation. Instead, this study recommends reassessing the language and images associated with equity services, where possible removing associations with disability and deficits, and towards student rights, equality, and meeting student needs.

Implementation: Promoting a wider understanding of equity group membership is a complex task that involves challenging stereotypes, educating and training support staff and teaching staff, and challenging students’ own understandings of equity group membership. Hence, encouraging a wider understanding of equity group membership involves a significant investment of time and resources to create an ideological shift regarding equity membership. The authors of this study consider this to be the most challenging recommendation of the seven, however, if implemented properly, a wider acceptance of equity membership may also encourage significant growth in numbers of disclosing students.

Risks: There seem to be few risks involved in better staff education. However, responsibility for decisions regarding equity support should remain with specialist staff to ensure that universities’ duty of care is consistent and respected.

6. During application and enrolment, explain requests for relevant equity group information, and allow non-responses for students who prefer not to answer, with later follow-up

During this study, it became apparent that some enrolment forms do not have alternatives to ‘yes’ and ‘no’ for questions regarding equity group status. One question (Universities Admissions Centre) appears with the heading “do you have a disability or illness?” and a question on whether the student requires support. The question on Aboriginal / Torres Strait Island identification has “neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander” as a default. In the former case, the student may not know if they require support or what support is available. The latter creates a situation where a student in the respective equity group must either lie or disclose. Both questions suggest that equity group membership is a straightforward yes/no situation.

Students who prefer not to answer may be sent information about equity status or disclosure (as mentioned in other Guidelines) to reassure and connect with reluctant disclosers.

In addition, questions on NESB status are only useful to students in regard to cultural adjustment or language proficiency. Universities should consider options for students with language difficulties to make disclosure useful.

Implementation: Addition of question options to application and enrolment forms seems relatively easy but would require coordination across state admission centres. This should be a positive choice to tick a box onscreen rather than a default option, and should be followed up in a sensitive manner. Universities would need to prepare materials for later email to non-responders and allow changes to personal information in student profiles. This is likely to be of moderate difficulty.

From an equity standpoint, there should also be a purpose for disclosure beyond “statistical purposes”. This may be simply to inform the university and government of the needs of students, or it may be linked to support measures. This is particularly evident for NESB students, for whom in a number of universities there is not particular benefit in revealing their background. Creating strategies for language support if they do not already exist would require considerable investment, but costs could be reduced by the use of peer-led volunteer programs, online courses (such as Massive Online Open Courses) or agreements with private or other organisations to provide support.

Risks: This recommendation is perhaps counter-intuitive because it creates a risk that students may not disclose. However, it is consistent with Guideline 2 in that it respects students’ control over their own information and may provide confidence in universities’ good faith. It may increase the level of self-disclosure if followed up adequately.

Limitations to the study

While this study has presented data gathered nationally, and interview data with equity students, there are a number of limitations that were encountered during research that offer future research pathways. The largest of these is that this study could only consider a relatively small sample size. In total, 1108 students responded to the survey, 52 students were interviewed either face-to-face or over the phone, and 130 staff members took part in the staff survey. Respondents were drawn from 29 Australian universities, including Go8 universities, regional universities, and smaller urban universities. Despite the numbers, this only represents a small proportion of students.

The low response rate from equity students is not unexpected, especially considering the nature of this research—investigating *non-disclosing* equity students. This was a study of students who were suspicious of universities, conducted by university staff. There was a relatively small incentive for students to respond to survey invitations in a tertiary environment where many research surveys are sent to students, and the research team faced the difficulties of conducting a national project through multiple university networks involving vulnerable groups concerning ethically complex issues.

While the response rate is small, it is not statistically irrelevant. Bayesian analysis techniques have proven abilities to draw accurate and predictive trends from relatively smaller sample sizes. UNSW statisticians confirmed that the sample sizes for the survey were useable and could be used to produce valid models. Moreover, the student survey is supported by triangulation of methods, with staff surveys and coded student interviews used. That similar trends were identified by all three methods lends confidence that the results reflect genuine trends among equity students.

Another limitation is that at each university it was apparent that no single unit or organisation had a comprehensive grasp of equity issues in relation to disclosure. Each organisation was familiar with its own constituency, but knowledge of rules, practices and procedures was limited among staff, and their interpretations varied such that staff members from the same university could report different practices. One might report that the university had language support measures, another that it did not. We have attempted to support staff reports with information from websites, but this prompts Guideline 5, that equity programs should be more widely explained to staff and students, so that students should not miss available support because staff members are unaware.

Implications for future research

There are avenues for future research suggested by this relatively small exploratory study. This study covered three disparate groups but there is scope for more intensive research on each one.

Indigenous students proved to be the most difficult group to investigate because of very low response rates. Future research, if led by an organisation for Indigenous Australians, may have more success in gaining responses.

One topic for research on all three groups is the intersection of equity statuses. It was notable that the 'low SES' variable was significant for NESB students, and it raises the question of how socioeconomic status affects disclosure.

Second, our study respondents were overwhelmingly female. If male reluctance to respond to the survey is reflected in reluctance to disclose equity status, it may be necessary to differentiate measures to encourage disclosure by gender.

Third, if the guidelines in this report are adopted, a follow-up study may determine how successful these are in improving access to education or encouraging disclosure.

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Appendix 1: Indigenous Support Units

University name (abbreviation)	Indigenous unit	Contact details
Australian Catholic University [ACU]	Indigenous Higher Education UNIT (Strathfield Campus North Sydney Campus) known as Yalbalinga (Place of Learning) (Strathfield and North Sydney Campus)	Yalbalinga (Place of Learning) 02 9701 4258 Email: yalbalinga@acu.edu.au Danielle Dent Indigenous Higher Education Unit Coordinator (Strathfield and North Sydney Campus) 02 9701 4723 Danielle.Dent@acu.edu.au
	Indigenous Higher Education UNIT Canberra Campus Dhara Daramoolen (Earth, Spirit)	Dhara Daramoolen Earth, Spirit 02 6209 1231 dharadaramoolen@acu.edu.au Richard Jameson Student Support Officer (Canberra Campus) 02 6209 1222 Richard.Jameson@acu.edu.au
	Indigenous Higher Education Unit Jim - baa - yer (To Learn - To Teach) (Ballarat Campus and Melbourne Campus)	Jim - baa - yer To Learn - To Teach (Ballarat and Melbourne Campus) 03 9953 3004 jimbaayer@acu.edu.au
	Indigenous Higher Education Unit Weemala (Distant View) (Brisbane Campus)	Linc Yow Yeh Coordinator (Ballarat and Melbourne Campus) 03 9230 8178 Linc.YowYeh@acu.edu.au Weemala Distant View (Brisbane Campus) 07 3861 6122 weemala@acu.edu.au Kate Wragge Coordinator (Brisbane Campus) 07 3623 7701 Kate.Wragge@acu.edu.au
Australian National University [ANU]	Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre	Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre Reception tjabal.centre@anu.edu.au +61 2 6125 2363 Fiona Petersen Centre Manager fiona.petersen@anu.edu.au +61 2 6125 4038
Bond University [Bond]	Nyombil Indigenous Support Centre	Jason Murray Manager Nyombil Centre ☎+61 7 5595 5617 ✉jamurray@bond.edu.au
Central Queensland University [CQU]	The Office of Indigenous Engagement	Professor Bronwyn Fredericks + 61 (0) 7 4923 2045 b.fredericks@cqu.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	Indigenous unit	Contact details
Charles Darwin University [CDU]	Office of Indigenous Student Services (OISS) Gurinbey Centre - Casuarina Campus Office of Indigenous Student Services (OISS) Akaltye Centre - Alice Springs Campus Office of Indigenous Student Services Yangan.garr Centre - Katherine Campus	Gurinbey Centre (08 8946 6479) Esther Browne Assistant Manager - Academic Support Casuarina Campus 08 8946 6401 esther.browne@cdu.edu.au Akaltye Centre 08 8959 5411 or 08 8959 5390 Lorraine St Clair Indigenous Academic Support Lecturer Alice Springs Campus 08 8959 5411 lorraine.stclair@cdu.edu.au Sharon Donnellan Indigenous Academic Support Lecturer Alice Springs Campus 08 8959 5390 sharon.donnellan@cdu.edu.au Yangan.garr Centre 08 8973 8348 or 08 8973 9922 Natalie Ellis Indigenous Academic Support Lecturer Katherine Campus 08 8973 8348 or 08 8973 9922 natalie.ellis@cdu.edu.au
Charles Sturt University [CSU]	Indigenous Student Centres Winan-Gidyal Centre (Albury-Wodonga) Wammarra Centre (Bathurist) Barraameilinga Centre (Dubbo) Maliyan Centre (Goulburn) Ngarralbaa Centre (Port Macquarie) Ngungilanna Centre (Wagga Wagga)	Justine Everaardt, Manager managerISC@csu.edu.au
Curtin University [CURTIN]	The Indigenous Department within the Curtin Student Guild	(08) 9266 3150 or Guild Reception on (08) 9266 2900 indigenous@guild.curtin.edu.au
Deakin University [Deakin]	Institute of Koorie Education	613 5227 2538 1800 063 383 ike@deakin.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	Indigenous unit	Contact details
Edith Cowan University [ECU]	Kurongkurl Katitjin, Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research	<p>Executive Officer Ms Leanna De Biasi (61 8) 9370 6689 kk@ecu.edu.au</p> <p>Professor Colleen Hayward Head of Centre +61 8 6304 6773 c.hayward@ecu.edu.au</p>
Federation University [FEDUNI]	Aboriginal Education Centre	<p>Ashlee Rodgers</p> <p>Aboriginal Liaison Officer (SMB Campus) (03) 5327 8471 a.rodgers@federation.edu.au</p> <p>Rhianna Milliken Mt Helen Campus Aboriginal Education Liaison Officer Ph: (03) 5327 6894 Email: r.milliken@federation.edu.au</p> <p>Nicholas Johnson Gippsland Campus Aboriginal Education Liaison Officer (03) 5122 8075 n.johnson@federation.edu.au</p> <p>Abbie Lovett Horsham Campus Aboriginal Liaison Officer Ph: (03) 5362 2642 ag.lovett@federation.edu.au</p>
Flinders University [FLINDERS]	Yunggoorendi Student Engagement, Office of Indigenous Strategy and Engagement,	<p>1800 641 811 yunggoorendi@flinders.edu.au</p>
Griffith University [GRIFFITH]	GUMURRII Student Support Unit	<p>(07) 3735 7676+61 (0)7 3735 7676 gumurrii-admin@griffith.edu.au</p>
James Cook University [JCU]	Australian Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Centre (School of Indigenous Australian Studies)	<p>Professor Martin Nakata Pro Vice-Chancellor, Australian Indigenous Education & Strategy (07) 4781 4676 martin.nakata@jcu.edu.au</p>

University name (abbreviation)	Indigenous unit	Contact details
La Trobe University [LATROBE]	Office of Indigenous Strategy and Education	Albury-Wodonga (02) 6024 9626 / 0428 059 946 Bendigo (03) 5444 7812 /0409 439 513 Melbourne (Bundoora) (03) 9479 5806 /0432 138 621; (03) 9479 3817 / 0434 609 854 Mildura (03) 5051 4046 Shepparton (03) 5820 8629
Macquarie University [MACQUARIE]	Walanga Muru, Office of Indigenous Strategy,	Emily Sutton Team Leader of Indigenous Support Services (02) 9850 4209 emily.sutton@mq.edu.au
Monash University [MONASH]	Yulendj Indigenous Engagement Unit	Jason Brailey Manager Indigenous Programs (03) 9905 1507 jason.brailey@monash.edu
Murdoch University [MURDOCH]	Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre	(08) 9360 2128 kulbardi@murdoch.edu.au Rosey Feehon Student Support Coordinator (08) 9360 6649 r.feehon@murdoch.edu.au
Queensland University of Technology [QUT]	Oodgeroo Unit	information.oodgeroo@qut.edu.au Kelvin Grove Head Office 3138 3610 Gardens Point 3138 1548 Caboolture 5316 7447
RMIT University [RMIT]	Ngarara Willim Centre	ngarara@rmit.edu.au +61 3 9925 4885
Southern Cross University [SCU]	Indigenous Australian Student Services	Coffs Harbour: 02 6659 3796 Gold Coast: 07 5589 3010 Lismore: 02 6620 3377 free call number 1800 769 763 iass@scu.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	Indigenous unit	Contact details
Swinburne University of Technology [SWINBURNE]	Indigenous Student Support	ndigenous@swin.edu.au Lea Jones, Indigenous Liaison Officer t: +61 3 9214 6965
Torrens University [TORRENS]		1300 575 803
University of Adelaide [ADELAIDE]	Wirrtu Yarlu Aboriginal Education	Wirrtu Yarlu Reception (08) 8313 3623 wirrtu.yarlu@adelaide.edu.au Port Augusta Campus (08) 8641 9418
University of Canberra [CANBERRA]	Ngunnawal Centre	Ngunnawal Centre 02) 6201 2998 ngunnawal@canberra.edu.au Anthea Mahoney (02) 6201 5894 anthea.mahoney@canberra.edu.au
University of Melbourne [MELBOURNE]	Murrup Barak- Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development	General enquires need to be made via the following weblink http://murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au/contact-us
University of New England [UNE]	Oorala Aboriginal Centre	Oorala Student Services 1800 622 384 or +61 2 6773 Mr Darin Gorry Student Services Manager, Oorala Aboriginal Centre +61 2 67733474 dgorry@une.edu.au
University of New South Wales [UNSW]	Nura Gili	61 2 9385 3805 nuragili@unsw.edu.au Michael Peachey Student Services Manager 02 9385 1082 m.peachey@unsw.edu.au
University of Newcastle [NEWCASTLE]	The Wollotuka Institute	61249216863 wollotuka@newcastle.edu.au
University of Notre Dame [UNDA]	Nulungu Research Institute	61 8) 9192 0670 nulungu@nd.edu.au Associate Professor Sandra Wooltorton Director of Nulungu Research Institute Sandra.Wooltorton@nd.edu.au
University of Queensland [UQ]	Aboriginal and Torres Islander Studies Unit	(07) 3346 7511 atsis@uq.edu.au.

University name (abbreviation)	Indigenous unit	Contact details
University of South Australia [UniSA]	Wurringka Student Services	<p>Mr Eugene Warrior Manager: (City West Campus) (08) 8302 4662 Eugene.Warrior@unisa.edu.au</p> <p>Mr Dylan Hunter Aboriginal Student Engagement Officer (City East Campus) (08) 8302 2316 Dylan.Hunter@unisa.edu.au</p> <p>Ms Anna Strzelecki Aboriginal Student Engagement Officer (Magill Campus) (08) 8302 4691 nna.Strzelecki@unisa.edu.au</p> <p>Ms Kylie Ellis Aboriginal Student & Community Engagement Officer (Mawson Lakes) (08) 8302 5303 Kylie.Ellis@unisa.edu.au</p> <p>Mr Mark Lovett Aboriginal Student & Community Engagement Officer (Mount Gamber (Campus)) (08) 8302 8907 (08) 8722 8907 Mark.Lovett@unisa.edu.au</p> <p>Mr Michael Watkins Project Officer/Aboriginal Student & Community Engagement Officer (Whyalla/Port Augusta/Port Lincoln/Ceduna Campus) Michael.Watkins@unisa.edu.au</p>
University of Southern Queensland [USQ]	College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research	+61 7 4631 2100 1800 007 252 study@usq.edu.au
University of Sydney [SYDNEY]	Koori Centre	Douglas Josif Director Operational Reform Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Strategy and Services douglas.josif@sydney.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	Indigenous unit	Contact details
University of Tasmania [UTAS]	Riawunna Centre	Riawunna.admin@utas.edu.au. (General enquires) Tanya Wells Administration Officer: (Hobart Centre) 61 3 6226 2772 Marcia Humble -Administration Officer: (Launceston Centre) 61 3 6324 3491 Mikayla Schleich -Administration Officer (Bernie Support Only) 61 3 6430 4505
University of Technology Sydney [UTS]	Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning	1800 064 312 atsirecruitment@uts.edu.au
University of the Sunshine Coast [USC]	Indigenous services	61 7 5456 5889 Indigenous@usc.edu.au (General Enquiries) Nicole Copley Student Adviser, Indigenous Services 61 7 5456 5889 ncopley@usc.edu.au
University of Western Australia [UWA]	School of Indigenous Studies	(+61 8) 6488 3428 1800 819 292 sis@uwa.edu.au
University of Wollongong [UOW]	Woolyungah Indigenous Centre	(02) 4221 3776 wic-enquiries@uow.edu.au Michelle Rush Senior Manager 02 4221 3907 mrush@uow.edu.au
Victoria University [VU]	Moondani Balluk	61 3 9919 2891 61 3 9919 2836 moondani.balluk@vu.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	Indigenous unit	Contact details
Western Sydney University [UWS]	Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education	<p>Carissa Willoughby Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Information officer (Bankstown Campus) c.willoughby@westernsydney.edu.au</p> <p>Dr Joanne Buckskin Academic Literacy and Learning Advisor (Campbelltown Campus) j.buckskin@westernsydney.edu.au</p> <p>Danielle Gould, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Information officer (Parramatta Campus) d.gould@uws.edu.au</p> <p>Kerry Licastro, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Information officer k.licastro@westernsydney.edu.au</p>

Appendix 2: Disabilities Support Units

University name (abbreviation)	Equity/diversity unit	Contact details
Australian Catholic University [ACU]	ACU Disability Services	Ballarat: disabilityadviser.aqu@acu.edu.au Brisbane: disabilityadviser.mca@acu.edu.au Canberra: disabilityadviser.sig@acu.edu.au Melbourne: disabilityadviser.pat@acu.edu.au North Sydney: disabilityadviser.mak@acu.edu.au Strathfield: disabilityadviser.mar@acu.edu.au
Australian National University [ANU]	Access and Inclusion	Access and Inclusion (Reception) access.inclusion@anu.edu.au +61 2 6125 5036 Julie Harrison Manager julie.harrison@anu.edu.au
Bond University [Bond]	Medical, Psychological and Disability Services	Appointments: +61 7 5595 4002 disabilitysupport@bond.edu.au
Central Queensland University [CQU]	The Inclusion and Accessibility Service	61 7 4930 9456 accessibility@cqu.edu.au
Charles Darwin University [CDU]	Disability Services	Administrative Officer (Casuarina Campus) 08 8946 6288 equity@cdu.edu.au Maddy Dack Disability Liaison Officer (Casuarina Campus) 08 8946 6288 E: disability@cdu.edu.au Chris Shilton Disability Liaison Officer (Tuesdays and Wednesdays) (Alice Springs Campus) T: 08 8946 6288 F: 08 8959 2582 E: disability@cdu.edu.au
Charles Sturt University [CSU]	Disability Support Services	disability@csu.edu.au 1800 334 733
Curtin University [CURTIN]	Disability Services	Disability Services, Bentley Campus +61 8 9266 7850 disabilityservices@curtin.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	Equity/diversity unit	Contact details
Deakin University [Deakin]	Deakin's Disability Resource Centre	<p>03 9244 6255 (Burwood Campus) drcentre@deakin.edu.au Amanda Bailey Disability Liaison Officer (Burwood Campus) 03 9244 6255 amanda.bailey@deakin.edu.au</p> <p>03 5227 1427 (Waterfront Campus) Steven Morgan (Waterfront Campus) Disability Liaison Officer 03 5227 1427 steven.morgan@deakin.edu.au</p> <p>03 5227 2834 (Warren Ponds) Nicole Downes (Warren Ponds) Disability Liaison Officer: 03 5227 2834 nicole.downes@deakin.edu.au</p> <p>03 5563 3256 (Warrnambool Campus) Rita Jennings (Warrnambool Campus) Disability Liaison Officer: 03 5247 9320 rita.jennings@deakin.edu.au</p>
Edith Cowan University [ECU]	Student Equity, Diversity and Disability Service	9370 6960 studentequity@ecu.edu.au
Federation University [FEDUNI]	The Disability Liaison Unit (DLU)	Ballarat & Wimmera campuses - 03 5327 9470 Gippsland campus - 03 5122 6425 Apprenticeship & trainee - 03 5327 8323 disability@federation.edu.au. Drew Burns, Project Coordinator - Disability Support Services
Flinders University [FLINDERS]	Student Disability Unit	8201 2118 disability@flinders.edu.au
Griffith University [GRIFFITH]	Student Equity Services	<p>Gold Coast campus (7) 5552 8734 +61 7 5552 8734</p> <p>Logan campus (7) 3382 1159 +61 7 3382 1159</p> <p>Mt Gravatt campus (7) 3735 5669 +61 7 3735 5669</p> <p>Nathan campus (7) 3735 7470 +61 7 3735 7470</p> <p>QCGU South Bank (7) 3735 7470 +61 7 3735 7470</p>

University name (abbreviation)	Equity/diversity unit	Contact details
James Cook University [JCU]	AccessAbility Services	<p>(07) 4781 4711 +61 7 4781 4711 1800 552 713 (Townsville Campus) accessability.tsv@jcu.edu.au</p> <p>(07) 4232 1150 +61 7 4232 1150 1800 552 713 (Cairns Campus) accessability.cns@jcu.edu.au</p>
La Trobe University [LATROBE]	Equity and Diversity (La Trobe University)	<p>Melbourne and City Campuses 61 (0) 3 9479 2900 equity@latrobe.edu.au Mr Evan Nathanson (Melbourne and City Campuses) Senior Manager, Student Wellbeing +61 (0)3 94796877 e.nathanson@latrobe.edu.au</p> <p>Marita Quaglio (Albury-Wodonga Campus) Senior Disability and Equity Advisor (Tue - Fri) 61 (0)2 6024 9628 m.quaglio@latrobe.edu.au</p> <p>Bendigo Campus +61 (0) 3 5444 7223 equalitybendigo@latrobe.edu.au Ms Shannon Kerrigan Manager (Bendigo Campus) +61 (0)3 5444 7410 s.kerrigan@latrobe.edu.au</p> <p>Mildura Campus Ms Janet Nunn Disability Advisor (Mildura Campus) +61 (0)3 5022 3629 j.nunn@latrobe.edu.au</p> <p>Shepparton Campus Ms Hilary Mayne Senior Disability Advisor / Counsellor (Shepparton Campus) 03 9479 8631 H.Mayne@latrobe.edu.au</p>
Macquarie University [MACQUARIE]	Campus Wellbeing and Support Service (Disability Service)	<p>(02) 9850 7497 campuswellbeing@mq.edu.au</p>

University name (abbreviation)	Equity/diversity unit	Contact details
Monash University [MONASH]		9905 5704 disabilitysupportservices@monash.edu Thomas Perry Coordinator 9905 5704 thomas.perry@monash.edu.au Please phone (03) 5122 6425 for information and appointments
Murdoch University [MURDOCH]	The Equity and Social Inclusion Office	(08) 9360 6084 equity@murdoch.edu.au
Queensland University of Technology [QUT]	Disability Services	student.disability@qut.edu.au Gardens Point 3138 2699 Kelvin Grove 3138 5601 Caboolture 3138 5601
RMIT University [RMIT]	Disability Liaison Unit	61399255000
Southern Cross University [SCU]	Student Access and Inclusion	Lismore Campus 02 6626 9131 Gold Coast Campus 07 55893001 Lismore Campus 02 6659326
Swinburne University of Technology [SWINBURNE]	AccessAbility Services	(03) 9214 8483
Torrens University [TORRENS]	Disability support	61 8 8113 7817 student.support@tua.edu.au
University of Adelaide [ADELAIDE]	Disability Support Services	8313 5962 disability@adelaide.edu.au
University of Canberra [CANBERRA]	Inclusion and Engagement Centre	6201 5233 academicclubs@canberra.edu.au
University of Melbourne [MELBOURNE]	Student Equity and Disability Support	13 MELB (13 6352) equity-disability@unimelb.edu.au
University of New England [UNE]	Special Needs Support	02 6773 2897 disabilities@une.edu.au.
University of New South Wales [UNSW]	Disability support services	9385 4734 disabilities@unsw.edu.au
University of Newcastle [NEWCASTLE]	Disability Support Service	4921 6622 student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	Equity/diversity unit	Contact details
University of Notre Dame [UNDA]	Academic Enabling and Support Centre Disability Support Services	Nicky Ashfield Disability Support Manager (Broome and Fremantle Campuses) +61 8 9433 0950 Nicky.Ashfield@nd.edu.au Fiona Darcy Disability and Equity Support Officer (Sydney Campus) +61 2 8204 4283 Fiona.Darcy@nd.edu.au
University of Queensland [UQ]	Disability Services	+61 (7) 3365 1704 disability@uq.edu.au
University of South Australia [UniSA]	Disability Hub	1300 301 703 8302 8999 disability@unisa.edu.au.
University of Southern Queensland [USQ]	USQ Disability Services	61 7 4631 2372 Student.Services@usq.edu.au Toowoomba Student Services 61 7 3470 4400 studentservicespringfield@usq.edu.au (Springfield Student Services and Ipswich Student Services)
University of Sydney [SYDNEY]	Disability Services	61 2 8627 8422 disability.services@sydney.edu.au
University of Tasmania [UTAS]	Disability Services	(03) 6324 3787 or (03) 6226 2381, Disability.Services@utas.edu.au
University of Technology Sydney [UTS]	Special Needs Service	61 2 9514 1177 special.needs@uts.edu.au Manager, Special Needs and Financial Assistance Service Liz Penny (Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays) +61 2 9514 1177 Liz.Penny@uts.edu.au Fiona Robertson (Thursdays and Fridays) +61 2 9514 1177 Fiona.Robertson@uts.edu.au
University of the Sunshine Coast [USC]	Disability and Equity Services	DisabilitySupport@usc.edu.au ` 61 7 5430 1226 (Sippy Downs Campus) 61 7 4128 5200 (USC Frasier Coast Campus) 61 7 5456 5800 (USC Gympie Campus) +61 7 5409 8600 (USC SouthBank Campus)

University name (abbreviation)	Equity/diversity unit	Contact details
University of Western Australia [UWA]	Uni Access Disability Services	61 8) 6488 2423 or contact Student Support Services on (+61 8) 6488 2423 Deborah Allen Disability Officer +61 8 6488 5893 deborah.allen@uwa.edu.au
University of Wollongong [UOW]	Disability Service	(61 2) 4221 4942 disability_services@uow.edu.au
Victoria University [VU]	Victoria University Disability Services	61 3 9919 5400 disability@vu.edu.au
Western Sydney University [UWS]	Disability Service	(02) 9852 5199 disability@westernsydney.edu.au.

Appendix 3: NESB Support Units

University name (abbreviation)	NESB (domestic) unit	Contact details
Australian Catholic University [ACU]	Academic skills unit	academicskills@acu.edu.au
Australian National University [ANU]	Academic Skills & Learning Centre	Academic and Learning Centre Reception academicskills@anu.edu.au +61 6125 2972 Tess Snowball (Manager) tess.snowball@anu.edu.au Phone +61 2 6125 2972
Bond University [Bond]	Student Learning Support learningsupport@bond.edu.au	+61 7 5595 4783 learningsupport@bond.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	NESB (domestic) unit	Contact details
Central Queensland University [CQU]	Academic Learning Centre	<p>Brisbane 07 3295 1122 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Bundaberg 07 4150 7135 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Cairns 07 4970 7211 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Gladstone 07 4970 7211 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Mackay 07 4940 7855 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Melbourne 03 9616 0611 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Noosa 07 5440 7000 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Rockhampton 07 4970 7211 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Sydney 07 4970 7211 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p> <p>Townsville 07 4970 7211 alc-advice@cqu.edu.au</p>
Charles Darwin University [CDU]	Academic Language and Learning Success Program (ALLSP)	<p>(08) 8946 7459 (Casuarina Campus) allsp@cdu.edu.au</p> <p>(02) 8047 4123 (Sydney Campus) Joshua Dymock Academic Language and Learning Lecturer (Sydney Campus) joshua.dymock@cdu.edu.au</p>
Charles Sturt University [CSU]	Academic support service	
Curtin University [CURTIN]	The Learning Centre	61 08 9266 3825 tlc@curtin.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	NESB (domestic) unit	Contact details
Deakin University [Deakin]	Language and Learning Advisor	03 9246 8250 (Melbourne Burwood Campus) Geelong Waterfront Campus (Book an appointment with a Language and Learning Adviser via the online booking system https://www.deakin.edu.au/students/studying/study-support/ask-us Geelong Waurnd Ponds Campus) Book an appointment with a Language and Learning Adviser via the online booking system https://www.deakin.edu.au/students/studying/study-support/ask-us 03 5563 3256 03 5563 3600 (Warrnambool Campus)
Edith Cowan University [ECU]	Centre for Learning and Teaching	(61 8) 6304 2554 clt@ecu.edu.au
Federation University [FEDUNI]	CALD Student Support	Mee-Ling Doon Student Support Worker Ph: 5327 8089
Flinders University [FLINDERS]	Student Learning Centre	(+61 8) 8201 2518 slc@flinders.edu.au
Griffith University [GRIFFITH]	Learning@Griffith	
James Cook University [JCU]	The Learning Centre	learning@jcu.edu.au Contact the Learning Centre via the website https://www.jcu.edu.au/students/learning-centre/contacts
La Trobe University [LATROBE]	Student Learning Support	Albury-Wodonga SL.AW@latrobe.edu.au Bendigo SL.Bendigo@latrobe.edu.au Melbourne LS.Melbourne@latrobe.edu.au Mildura SL.Mildura@latrobe.edu.au Shepparton SL.Shepparton@latrobe.edu.au
Macquarie University [MACQUARIE]	Macquarie University Learning Skills	Carol Floyd carol.floyd@mq.edu.au Vanessa Todd vanessa.todd@mq.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	NESB (domestic) unit	Contact details
Monash University [MONASH]	English Connect an organisation at Monash University design to help students further develop and improve their English language skills.	+61 3 9902 0485 english.connect@monash.edu
Murdoch University [MURDOCH]	The Centre for University Teaching and Learning	Mr Jeffery Asselin Learning Innovations Officer 9360 221 j.asselin@murdoch.edu.au
Queensland University of Technology [QUT]	Academic Language and Learning Services	Gardens Point Phone: 3138 6717 Email: alls@qut.edu.au Kelvin Grove 3138 3963 alls@qut.edu.au Caboolture 5316 7666 alls@qut.edu.au
RMIT University [RMIT]	The Study and Learning Centre	studyandlearningcentre@rmit.edu.au City Centre 61 3 9925 5000 Bundoora +61 3 9925 5000 Brunswick (03) 9925 5000
Southern Cross University [SCU]	Centre for Teaching and Learning English language programs	Centre for Teaching and Learning 61 2 6626 9262 Academic Skills 61 2 6626 9262 academicskills@scu.edu.au http://scu.edu.au/scucollege/index.php/7/ (Weblink is for English language programs)
Swinburne University of Technology [SWINBURNE]	Student Equity	Vera Smiljanic Equity Project Officer, Student Equity (03) 9214 4362 vsmiljanic@swin.edu.au
Torrens University [TORRENS]	Learning and Academic Skills Unit (LASU) Torrens University Language Centre (TULC)	1300 575 803
University of Adelaide [ADELAIDE]	The Writing Centre	618 83133021 writingcentre@adelaide.edu.au

University name (abbreviation)	NESB (domestic) unit	Contact details
University of Canberra [CANBERRA]	Study Skills	(02) 6201 2205. studyskills@canberra.edu.au
University of Melbourne [MELBOURNE]	Academic Skills	13MELB (136352) academic-skills@unimelb.edu.au
University of New England [UNE]	Academic Skills Office	asohelp@une.edu.au 02 6773 3600.
University of New South Wales [UNSW]	Personalised English Language Enhancement is a 10-week program that is run by UNSW Arts and Social Sciences to help UNSW students improve their English language skills. The Learning Centre	Jason Heffernan (Personalised English Language Enrichment) jason.heffernan@unsw.edu.au 02 9385 2060 (Learning Centre) learningcentre@unsw.edu.au
University of Newcastle [NEWCASTLE]	Centre for Teaching and Learning	4921 5350 ctl@newcastle.edu.au
University of Notre Dame [UNDA]	Academic Enabling and Support Centre Academic Support Service (Broome and Fremantle Campus) Academic Enabling and Support Service, Academic Support Centre (Sydney Campus)	08 94330950 fremqantleaesc@nd.edu.au (Broome and Fremantle Campus) sydney.aso@nd.edu.au,
University of Queensland [UQ]	Learning Hub	61 (7) 3365 1704 ss@uq.edu.au (St Lucia Campus) +61 (7) 3381 1011 ssipswich@uq.edu.au (Ipswich Campus) +61 (7) 5460 1046 ssgatton@uq.edu.au Gatton Campus)
University of South Australia [UniSA]	Study Support	08 8302 6611
University of Southern Queensland [USQ]	USQ Learning Centre	61 7 4631 2751 tlc@usq.edu.au
University of Sydney [SYDNEY]	Learning Centre CALD Program (open to students enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing (Advanced Studies) and Master of Nursing (Graduate Entry).	Camperdown/Darlington Campus 02) 9351 3853 Learning.centre@sydney.edu.au Cumberland Campus (02) 9351 9319 marie.mcinnis@sydney.edu.au (1800 793 864) Student Centre (Student Nursing School)

University name (abbreviation)	NESB (domestic) unit	Contact details
University of Tasmania [UTAS]	<p>English Language Centre University of Tasmania offers a number of English language programs to university students</p> <p>Student Learning: Learning Development and Student Advice</p>	<p>61 3 62267214 ELC.Reception@utas.edu.au (General Enquiries)</p> <p>61 3 62267214 (Hobart Campus)</p> <p>+61 3 6324 5472 (Launceston Campus)</p> <p>student.learning@utas.edu.au. (General enquires)</p> <p>Cradle Coast campus student.learning@utas.edu.au +61 3 6430 4949</p> <p>Hobart campus student.learning@utas.edu.au +61 3 6226 7595</p> <p>Launceston campus student.learning@utas.edu.au +61 3 6324 3787</p> <p>Services are also provided to Sydney students. Please either email student.learning@utas.edu.au or call (03) 6226 7595 for more information.</p>
University of Technology Sydney [UTS]	<p>Equity and Diversity Unit</p> <p>Higher Education Language and Presentation Support (HELPS) provides non-credited English language and academic literacy support to UTS undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students</p>	<p>+61 2 9514 1084 equity@uts.edu.au</p> <p>(02) 9514 9733 helps@uts.edu.au</p> <p>Andrew Pyke Manager, HELPS 9514 9257 Andrew.Pyke@uts.edu.au</p>
University of the Sunshine Coast [USC]	<p>Disability and Equity: Equity Groups</p> <p>Academic Skills Advisors</p>	<p>Student Equity and Diversity Adviser 61 7 5430 1226 studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au</p> <p>For information about Academic Skill Advisors contact Student Central on 61 7 5430 2890</p>
University of Western Australia [UWA]	Student Support Services	(+61 8) 6488 2423
University of Wollongong [UOW]	Learning Development	(61 2) 4221 3977
Victoria University [VU]	Academic support	studentlearning@vu.edu.au 61 3 9919 4744
Western Sydney University [UWS]	Equity and Diversity Unit	Dr Sev Ozdowski Director Equity and Diversity 0413474744 ozdowski@westernsydneyedu.au

Appendix 4: Measures to encourage disclosure – Indigenous unit staff

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure or identify Indigenous students?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
Charles Sturt University	Promotion of Indigenous services, reminder emails to equity groups, informal discussions between staff and students	Ok/Good. Most students who want additional support have self-disclosed however, there are still many who do not.
Charles Sturt University	It is largely dependent on the enrolment information provided. Indigenous student support officers may make contact if advised otherwise.	Not very to capture those who don't disclose however the majority of Indigenous students do identify.
Charles Sturt University	The opportunity to access scholarship and tutorial assistance	Somewhat
Central Queensland University	I am not sure as there would be other more suitable people more directly involved in supporting Indigenous students	N/A
Curtin	Targets students specifically prior to enrolment through pathway courses / high school outreach	OK for those students engaged with Uni prior to entering an undergraduate course but not for those coming from mainstream pathways.
Monash	Ask as part of the enrolment process.	
Newcastle	Nothing really We provide little to no culture to help with Identity We used to run an excellent camp where the students would go to Canberra for a camp and track their family tree	The camp run by our old Librarian was very effective!!
Queensland University of Technology (QUT)	Not sure that they do anything	Not effective
QUT	I am not sure. If they have not 'ticked' the box with their application and do not bump in to someone that they know that can support them through the process I guess they never disclose and therefore our numbers are not truly reflected.	Not overly effective
QUT	Additional support offered to ATSI students	D/K
QUT	The websites as well as our Oodgeroo Unit assure privacy, confidentiality and cultural safety to our Indigenous cohort of students.	Pretty effective

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure or identify Indigenous students?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
RMIT University	We have a Reconciliation action plan, strong management support. A dedicated support unit. Connections with indigenous groups outside the university. A place dedicated to recognising the local indigenous students. Reconciliation events.	It is helping to recognise and support indigenous students.
RMIT University	Dedicated unit reaches out to communities to inform potential students of the available support. Has a strong presence at University events, especially orientation activities	Seem to be effective but I'm not the right person to assess that.
RMIT University	There is a greater emphasis on building strong relationships in this space which allows students to see the value of revealing the info - if they choose.	Growing effectiveness every day.
RMIT University	We do a lot of outreach around Victoria to speak to students before they get to the University level - people of all ages. We promote our supports and talk potential students through the importance of accessing the supports and how to identify at the SEAS application level but also through a separate from on our website (especially for mature age or early school leavers)	I think that they are effective however we can't reach everyone and there is still a large stigma facing lighter skinned Aboriginal students who struggle to confidently identify and make use of the systems and supports
RMIT University	I think the Ngarara Willim centre does a pretty good job of making disclosure something that's OK to do with a particular group, but then allow students to still choose who else they want to disclose to. It's almost like they can have the support without the label (if they so choose), in a way? Given how some of my colleagues are, I fully respect this as a very legitimate way to approach things.	I think that this is probably one of the best ways to support indigenous students, because I think that there is still a lot of ignorance and prejudice. I know I'm still way more ignorant than I should be, for example. Given what I know about some of my colleagues, I think it makes the most sense to have a dedicated indigenous liaison unit, where the students know that the support staff are knowledgeable, 'get it' and won't be judgemental. They can then interact with individual academic staff on a case-by-case basis, as they get a sense of each person.
Southern Cross University	Makes it a part of 'normal' business, provides information about the services available to Indigenous peoples	On the whole, pretty effective.
The University of Notre Dame	Ask a direct question on form that's about it, we are all inclusive	Not very effective
University of Newcastle	a friendly culturally sensitive environment for students	somewhat effective

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure or identify Indigenous students?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
University of Newcastle	Advertised encouragement and notifying students that the Uni provides assistance with documentation.	
University of Newcastle	We have specific programs encouraging Aboriginal students to seek higher education	I do not have enough data to draw a conclusion
University of Newcastle	Actively promote the support services available to students when they identify	unknown
UTAS	Provide enriching services and that incentive to an optimal standard.	Perfectly effective enough.
	I understand there are financial incentives such as ABstudy.	Indigenous people don't want to be viewed as welfare recipients.

Appendix 5: Measures to encourage disclosure – Disability unit staff

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure by or identify students with disabilities?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
Charles Sturt University	Access to services	Limited
Deakin University	Students are encouraged to disclose to disability services by information provided in handbooks, orientation, early lectures and periodically to students and staff. Most students are referred to disability services from other staff (academic and other student services) after they disclose to them, and in response to relevant special consideration applications. I don't have any quantitative evidence, but I would say that more students are being referred to disability services, rather than having their needs met by the person or service they initially disclose to.	We have experienced a large growth in numbers and so I would say they are very effective.
Flinders University	Confidentiality is stressed in all publicity (web, information sessions, O-week, handouts)	They reassure some students, but not others.
Griffith university	Personal conversation after enrolment and when in contact with Disabilities Service	No. But the University has no control on the information identifying disability at enrolment - it is set by Aust Govt - categories and text.
Griffith University	Promote our service throughout the University through as many avenues as possible	Somewhat effective
Griffith University	We discuss this with students in appointments	Minimally as in busyness of work a support officer also forgets this crucial bit - as focus is upon the student and their needs rather than this adjustment to record statistics
Griffith University	Promotion, referral services, awareness amongst academic staff, embedded in orientation, outreach activities to partner schools, widening participation activities targeting SWD	These are standard approaches all universities apply but students who are happy to disclose and seek early notification and those who tend to delay will always delay.
Griffith University	Promote in Course Profile and on central system e.g. myGriffith portal	reasonably effective
Griffith University	We talk to students and encourage adjustment to disability information - but after receipt of services this is not a concern for students	marginally effective - it depends upon the student

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure by or identify students with disabilities?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
James Cook University Cairns	Information in O week. Encourage academic staff to refer. AccessAbility student mentor. Information (including video) in website. Word of mouth from existing students.	We do see a significant number of students with a disability in AccessAbility and these students have the option of further disclosure or confidentiality.
Latrobe	We try to promote our service is as much possible such as giving talks during orientation and participating in open day events	What we find is that students who do not need the service at the time tend not to remember about it when they do need it, so there are always students who could benefit from the service but report that they don't know about it.
QUT	Information is provided when they disclose to QTAC and at orientation time. Assurances about confidentiality is provided	Pretty effective
RMIT	Students are asked questions, given information about support all the way through the processes such as enrolment etc.	They are effective as they can be, unfortunately people don't always want to be labelled or disclose, they have this idea that they should be able to cope. Cooperation in these processes to support them is difficult. If you add to that cultural issues as well as family pressure these can prevent students disclosing. It's not until problems with studies and noticed behaviour and the student is concerned and that comes to our attention can we suggest services and explain carefully how the students can use them that you get them to utilise
RMIT	Information on website regarding services and supports. Information on confidentiality re disclosure Some academic staff give information about support services to classes / individual students.	Somewhat. Simple measures such as posters around campus would also be helpful. This is not occurring at present.
RMIT	Ask students at enrolment if they need any additional support. Service providers actively promote their services at Orientation activities	Significant number of students fail to disclose, so maybe not effective enough
RMIT	Encouragement/awareness by communication including emails, letters, face-to-face (when students come onto campus), text. Also info available on the uni website, and many subject coordinators advertise this information at the first lecture of each semester	In my experience quite effective. We have a high volume of students who access the disability support services.

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure by or identify students with disabilities?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
RMIT	Beyond the usual emails & website presence - Not a lot, they tend to rely on academic staff (or advisors) to recommend services to students.	Poor
RMIT University	1. Has the Equitable Learning Services group.	I think the ELS is somewhat effective. However, there are issues with having too many appointments at the beginning of the year, and not having specialist liaison staff (e.g. for vision impaired) students hired early enough to have appointments in a timely manner. Also, academics don't get resources to the centre in time for students to have them converted into formats that they can access more readily on their assistive technology, etc.
The University of Notre Dame	Ensure that we post information that there is a private and confidential services	They are not as often when the Disability Support Manager is off sick or on holiday a stand in is usually just a casual member of staff who has little or no experience with disability support.
University of Melbourne	- Provision of information through website, subject-specific webpages (i.e. students must seek out)	Limited effectiveness - the university is not proactive in identifying students/encouraging disclosure. Many students only disclose/seek assistance when impact of disability is severe.
University of Newcastle	don't know	not effective
University of Newcastle	Informing students of the benefits of registering	not enough data to draw a conclusion
University of Newcastle	there are leaflets around and people are notified at orientation.	Not effective at all
University of Tasmania	Promotional flyers during orientation week	Very effective
University of Tasmania	Posters, recommendations if brought up in conversation and announcements.	Somewhat effective, often if the person with a disability is told directly by a member of staff that they are entitled to something, they feel a bit more inclined to seek out such information.
University of Tasmania	They offer Disability Services and in order to get them you need to disclose your condition(s).	Not sure yet.
University of Tasmania	Provide information for support online.	Effective, although I believe there could be more awareness spread of these support systems.
University of Tasmania (UTAS)	Makes sure all students are aware of the support services	Fairly effective
University of Tasmania	Provide a half decent support and accommodation service.	Fair enough.

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure by or identify students with disabilities?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
University of The Sunshine Coast	promotion, education re benefits of and that discrimination will not occur	moderately
University of Wollongong	brochures, creates inviting space, promotes confidentiality, online registration	very effective. big increase in disclosure.
UNSW	There is information online and staff that know about the services provided information on how to apply.	I can't tell.
UNSW	to gain access to disability support you have to disclose	Effective if disclosed however many issues are not fixed by services alone e.g. part-time load is not approved for youth allowance
UNSW Sydney	Marketing and promotion of disabilities service as well as a peer mentoring service offered to students Speers (that may have not disclosed).	Somewhat effective- although I am not sure of the number of students who disclose because of this.
UNSW Sydney	I believe there is readily available information given at Orientation Week. Information is also available on-line. Each School has a person nominated to look after SEADU students,	I believe it is.
USQ	disability awareness days, outreach events, visits by staff to classrooms and student groups, publicity etc	good - but again, difficulties are faced.
	It offers a program whereby special conditions may be approved to facilitate study and help overcome disadvantage on presentation of a standard form signed by a physician providing evidence of the condition. NB conditions such as time extensions to complete work do not extend to postgraduate research.	Relatively effective for those who seek support, however they are then made more highly visible as a person with a disability and may suffer discrimination or other ill treatment by others e.g. other students who are not given similar special consideration in assessments or possible future employers.

Appendix 6: Measures to encourage disclosure – NESB support staff

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure by or identify students from NESB?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
Charles Sturt University	English language assistance	Not effective
Curtin University	Nothing that I am aware of	
Federation University Australia	Encourage disclosure: Promotion of Language-specific support services available. Other than that, I'm not sure there is anything. Identify: through the application/enrolment process and data analysis	They probably don't capture 100% of students who need them. Our area is unable to access accurate data on students from an NESB, and so the communication of services is inadequate.
Griffith University	engagement with our transition programs and joining clubs and societies, cultural diversity initiatives e.g. harmony day, racism it stops with me etc	yes, the sense of belonging and engagement students appear to have is good. high engagement and sense of freedom to interact with students from similar backgrounds as well as students from other backgrounds
Griffith University	promote equity program and English language programs	reasonably effective
Latrobe University	we try to promote our service is as much possible such as giving talks during orientation and participating in open day events	What we find is that students who do not need the service at the time tend not to remember about it when they do need it, so there are always students who could benefit from the service but report that they don't know about it.
RMIT University	There are support services: Study and Learning Centre - workshops before and during semester, drop in centres, counselling, well-being officers, teaching and professional staff support and encourage.	They are effective as they can be, students can be very reluctant to engage with the services offered for cultural, fear of being labelled. Afraid to ask for help, thinking that this is a weak thing to do.
RMIT University	Not sure	
RMIT University	Language workshops/study learning centre services are advertised online, via blackboard announcements, face-to-face, campus posters etc.	
RMIT University	Not a lot, as far as I can tell!	Given that there doesn't seem to be any, I'd say they're pretty ineffective.
UNSW Sydney	Language support classes and professional development opportunities offered through AHEGS accreditation.	Somewhat effective as it is challenging to find the students who may benefit from some support.

University	What does your university do to encourage disclosure by or identify students from NESB?	In your view, how effective are these measures?
USQ	question on enrolment form	Are they effective at gathering numbers? perhaps. effective at providing required support - not at all
University of Tasmania	Provide a minimal service.	Somewhat.
Victoria University	Provide options on forms	Limited

Appendix 7: Disclosure Survey Advertisements

 **UNSW Student Development** 8 June · 🌐

Are you in an 'Equity Group'?
Win one of five \$100 Visa vouchers.

Student Life is investigating disclosure of equity status to universities. This project includes three groups:

- Indigenous students
- Students with disabilities
- Students from non-English speaking backgrounds

If you identify with one of these equity groups, we want to hear about your experiences.

You can have your voice on equity heard, simply fill out the survey via:
<http://tiny.cc/UNSWequity>



Have your voice on student equity heard!

Win one of five \$100 vouchers by filling in our survey.



Are you a Uni Student? Part of an Equity Group?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
Students with disabilities
Students from non-English speaking backgrounds

Win 1 of 5 \$100 Visa Prepaid Gift Cards
Complete our survey below!

Appendix 8: Emails for survey distribution

Enhancing Self-disclosure of Equity Group Membership

Win one of Five \$100 Visa Prepaid vouchers!

I am writing to invite you to complete a survey to assist in a research study being conducted by UNSW Student Life.

This research is being done to learn more about the reasons for disclosure and non-disclosure of equity group membership. The research will contribute to nation-wide improvements to equity disclosure processes and procedures, so your responses contribute to real change.

Whether or not you have disclosed your equity situation to the university, we are particularly interested in students who identify as (or may be considered by university administrators to be):

- Indigenous students (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students)
- Students from non-English speaking backgrounds (Australian citizens or permanent residents) who speak a language other than English at home)
- Students with disabilities

Information about non-disclosure of equity group membership will help us improve services for students and estimate the true impact of existing measures.

Taking part in this research study is optional. We are looking for people who want to take part in this research and who are:

Over 18 years of age

Are Australian citizens or permanent residents

If you decide to take part in the research we ask you to complete the survey accessed via the following link:

[Student Survey link](#)

Survey participants also enter the draw to **win one of five \$100 visa gift cards**. More prizes are on offer for taking part in follow up interviews and focus groups.

Please note that participating in this research is for research purposes only. Participation does not constitute disclosure and this information will not be added to your student record at UNSW.

If you would like more information or are interested in being part of the research study please contact the research team at earlyintervention@unsw.edu.au

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part. If you decide not to take part in this research, your decision will not affect your relationship with The University of New South Wales or Student Life.

[Participation Information and Consent](#)

This research has been reviewed and approved by The University of New South Wales Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or concerns about the research study please email humanethics@unsw.edu.au or phone +61 2 9385 6222 quoting the following number HC17109

Yours sincerely,

Colin M. Clark

Senior Project Officer, Student Life

earlyintervention@unsw.edu.au

Appendix 9: Facebook keywords

- Demographics > Education > Universities
 - Student
 - University of Sydney
- Demographics > Work > Employers
 - Disability
- Interests > Additional interests
 - Aboriginal title
 - Australia
 - Bilingual
 - Bilingual education
 - Disability.gov
 - Torres Strait Islands
 - University
- Demographics > Education > Field of study
 - English language
- Demographics > Work > Employers
 - Disability
- Demographics > Work > Job titles
 - Disability
 - Dosen
 - Faculty (academic staff)
 - Senior lecturer
 - Teacher
 - Tutor
- Interests > Additional interests
 - Accessibility
 - Cultural diversity
 - Disability rights movement
 - Faculty (academic staff)
 - Inclusion (disability rights)
 - Services for the disabled
 - Special needs education
 - Support for Special Needs
 - Tutor
- Demographics > Education > Education level
 - Master's degree
 - University graduate
- Demographics > Education > Universities
 - Macquarie University
 - University of Sydney
 - UNSW
 - UOW: University of Wollongong, Australia
 - UTS: University of Technology Sydney
- Demographics > Work > Employers

- Disability
- Interests > Additional interests
 - Accessibility
 - Bachelor's degree
 - School/University
 - Secondary school
 - Student
 - University
- Demographics > Education > Education level
 - Master's degree
 - University graduate
- Demographics > Education > Universities
 - La Trobe University
 - Macquarie University
 - QUT (Queensland University of Technology)
 - The University of Newcastle, Australia
 - The University of Western Australia
 - University of Sydney
 - UOW: University of Wollongong, Australia
 - UTS: University of Technology Sydney
- Demographics > Work > Employers
 - Disability
- Interests > Additional interests
 - Aboriginal title
 - Accessibility
 - Australian Aboriginal culture
 - Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Blue Mountains (New South Wales)
 - Indigenous Australian art
 - Indigenous rights
 - Katoomba, New South Wales
 - Rural area
 - School/University
 - Secondary school
 - Student
 - Torres Strait
 - Torres Strait Islands
 - University

Appendix 10: Sample Interview Responses

Students with Disabilities

Fear of academic discrimination

Participant 1: I felt that if I had to disclose, I didn't want [a]n easier road per say.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that, an easier road?

Participant 1: Basically, what I mean, I suppose more special treatment. I was aware that when you do disclose a disability to the University that usually you do get an extra week on assignments. You do get more special circumstances within exams and that sort of thing. I thought, one for all and all for one. Even though this might have gone wrong with me, I still should have the same pressure as the next person next to me.

Participant 2: I had an assignment during the crisis and I couldn't submit it on time and I put in a special consideration that was up to the program coordinator to, like it was like out of 20% or something and because it's only 20%, the program coordinator could decide if it was, if they could I've it to me or not, it wasn't like a University thing and so she decided no, I shouldn't get extra time because it's unfair to other students. And no one could help because the disability person said well it's up to her to decide, and I had told her exactly what had happened and everything but she decided that it wasn't a disability and I'm still considering fighting that

Interviewer: Did you have any reservations about disclosing?

Participant 3: Yep, because I had problems at [University]. I think it was my first year, one of the lecturers actually said to me well, you know if you can't hack it here then you shouldn't be here and that was because I was applying for adjustments on what she perceived was a small assignment and I was really unwell at the time, and she complained to disability services that I had been applying for these adjustments and she wasn't happy with it and things like that. It's complicated because all I'm trying to do is be on par with everyone else and when I'm really unwell I'm not on par with everyone else but they kind of see it as I'm getting an advantage and/because I'm not half blind, no limbs or something they can't see the affect that it has on my studies and so they're just like well you know, what model are you on, you've already got your 2 weeks extension, you've got more than everybody else. Like, it's that sort of an attitude. So, I find it hard disclosing it here as well, because I'm concerned that they're going to think that I can't hack the course or maybe they're going to think that if I don't know, I'm getting some sort of advantage over someone else if I get good marks as well.

Participant 4: I think when I clicked the box, and I felt quite conflicted about ticking the box as well. I think I said mental health condition and mobility issues but again I wasn't really sure what the point of that was and if that would then be on my record and then adversely affect my studies.

Confidentiality

Interviewer: And as the disability you've never ticked any boxes or registered with the disability services?

Participant 6: I haven't because I'm not sure that I can because I would like to seek [disability] help and just get help through uni but [umm] in terms of diagnosis and stuff like that but was never really comfortable disclosing. I deal with [disability] and things like that that can make management of everyday tasks really quite difficult and I've never been one to disclose that much. Also, if I may add, keeping things like that that are quite personal, particularly in terms of family relationships, I don't know who might gain access to that even on a family computer or something like that and they see that information and I don't particularly want them to know about that it can be a factor to that as well.

Participant 7: I would want the choice of whether I disclose or not. Like disclosing to disability services is one thing but having to disclose to my faculty is another thing. Because what if I go a whole semester without needing those adjustments because mine are only needed when I'm really unwell so. I want that flexibility and want more of the support them backing me when I'm asking for some of the adjustments. Like have a more formalized process, rather than sending through an email and saying, oh yeah by the way I'm calling in for this adjustment actually having a system, an online platform that says yes, I would like to use this adjustment for this assignment for this subject. Done. You know, it's formalized. Disability services know, my faculty knows, it's done. It's kind of a more direction from them, you must let this student have this adjustment because we've ok'd it. As opposed [to], as a student saying, oh by the way, they've ok'd it but I'm just checking it that ok with you? It's kind of... I don't know. I would want more support to know that they're there if something goes wrong. Because even like filling out forms... I had to fill out an application for an extension, I'm like why am I filling out an application for an extension? It already says that I get an extension and then they're like oh no, it's just a formality.

Convenience

Participant 8: Things are starting to get difficult and I've known that there was equity and diversity that you could sign up with but the old system at my university was that, you approached equity and diversity yourself and there was a delightful little portal online and you would submit and upload your documents to the online portal and it would, you know it was all up to you. And well, I do understand that people need to take responsibility and stuff for themselves. My particular disability is, well I don't actually, do very well with things like online forms and things like that. And once I was actually speaking with an academic in my second year and going well, look I've got a disability. No, I'm not signed up with equity because it's all just too hard. They went, oh well, you know I'll talk to them and I'll get them to talk to you. And then, I spoke to them and because my, all the people that I'd actually seen for medical treatment were all [external institution]. All of my medical stuff had like big lines through it so like you can only see like parts of paper. And the equity advisor who was on duty at the time went... , like that doesn't prove anything to us. I can see your name and we can see you know, but it's not good enough. And I went back to the professor and went well, you know, they want me to see... doctors and stuff and this is like all too stressful and I don't care. I don't see what benefit this is going to be to me. I'll just, you know take longer to get there or take less subjects or whatever. And, he [says] this is ridiculous, like it's is a government document. And they went backwards and forwards and, in the end, they used paperwork from a... doctor... I was actually at University 20 years ago and I can tell you, that the system works worse now than it did then. And so, the entire onus is upon people with disabilities and you've got to take into account that everybody has different types of disabilities. And, it's discriminating against people with my type of disability and whilst, you

know there might not be many other people like me in the community, you know of [university] out there, there's at least me. And they said, well what do you want to see happen and I said, well when you go to enrolment right, the original enrolment thing, you can get help from [university]. I said, there should be a box that says, I identify that I have a disability and I would like to be contacted by your disability service.

Participant 9: At [university], my GP had to give a letter and I had to make an appointment and everything with the disabilities people. And they've got an online platform that you pretty much mostly interact with so if you need an extensions or anything, you apply with the online system. They'll email your tutors with a letter and basically you don't have to disclose to anyone throughout the whole semester if you don't apply for extensions or any of your adjustments. So, if you don't need them that Semester, then none of your tutors have to know. Whereas here, everyone has to know every semester which really really sucks. So here was pretty much the same application process of making an appointment, and having to give evidence that I've got a disability. They send through... a really long letter that this student has these adjustments that they're allowed and at the beginning of the semester you have to notify your course coordinator and usually your tutors as well have to know. So I have to email all of them a blanket letter that is supplied by disability services and so they know upfront that I've got a disability but then if I wanted an extension or if I need adjustments for like say an exam or something, then I've got to email them again and say I would like to use one of my adjustments and I had so many problems in first semester trying to actually do that because I was like yep, I would like to use my adjustment and I don't know, it was just really complicated trying to get that... the process here is complicated and very exposing because I'm the one doing all the leg work and its isolating because I don't feel like I've actually got the support from the Uni. The disability services are saying yes, well yes, she's applied through us and I'm telling you, you have to give her this. It's like I have to keep referring back to the letter and saying oh yes, by the way do you remember that letter I sent you at the beginning of the Semester? I'm asking for this adjustment. Oh yes, by the way can I please have another adjustment for this.

Participant 10: We got to conversation and the paperwork process would be so draining on them and take up so much of their energy that it's straight up to them not worth the benefit they would gain out of it. And they're not wrong. It's that bad, it's so draining. I'm not surprised, like we have, it's harder to get into contact with them, but we have people here who haven't disclosed for the same reasons. I know at least five.

Participant 11: There is so much they need to be doing better. If they want their forms done in a specific way, they should make them downloadable. To start with, that is one very small thing. A list of services on their website would be great. Like, there are a hundred things they could be doing, that they're just not. And even the things like, the university needs to institute the policy that if [disability unit] says it's necessary, you have to do it. Because the amount of times is not very high, that I've had to fight for my provision, but one is too many. If I had been any other student, any other [disability unit] student I'm not sure I would've gotten them, because I had someone help me. In fact, I had someone from [Indigenous unit] and one of my best friends who does not have a disability, literally drafting emails for me, so that I could get them because I did not have the cognitive capacity to do my subjects and fight for my provisions. No one does. If you need provisions then you don't have the ability to do that. And it's just, it's... infuriating, because we're getting to the point like, some of the

other unis that I've mentioned, where it's almost not worth disclosing. That's bad. That's really bad.

Distrust

Participant 12: After talking to my tutor, she kind let made me realise that I could never tell my lecturers or tutors, just to use the word disability and not let them know what because if they think it's a mental health issue they treat you differently and they don't, they're not as nice or whatever. So, if you just say disability, I've found that they're a lot nicer. Which is sad, because I told my tutor because he was a clinical psychologist, I thought he would be able to help but I guess he was not as nice, maybe he thought I was weird, I don't know. And then the same thing happened with the program coordinator, who wasn't very nice so I figured it was probably stupid to tell them what was happening to me.

Expressing disability

Participant 13: I do think that, because of people like me who don't feel that its validated because I'm not currently seeing anyone, it seems that it's more for me about actually getting help particularly through the uni which I feel could be really useful because It's on campus, I'm here so many days of the week already and it could just be really handy to be able to disclose of that, I know that I suffer from anxiety, depression and with that underneath that there's OCD as well. These are my three main sort of issues and I feel like they're not really validated when they are disclosed without the supported documentation, like I have seen a psychiatrist or I'm currently seeing one, because I don't actually feel that I personally have access to that. In particularly on campus it's quite difficult for me to do it privately.

Participant 14: I think that the fact that it's taken me quite a while to come to terms with not to being able to do certain things, even around the house, even when it comes to mowing my lawn, I've got to get someone to help me with it. I think basically what all of this was, very slowly, coming to realisations that not being able to do certain things I knew. But I think for me to allow other people to see it, or other people to notice it was certainly something that I found very challenging. So I knew that if I did get the Disability Access Plan, I did actually disclose a whole lot of things... I think that reliance on having a profession that had very much left me, with the way that I was, and I'm not trying to come across like I'm feeling sorry for myself so I hope that that's not coming across that way.

Participant 15: I was going to say, actually for me the disability thing was pleasant but now that I think back, I was thinking, I guess I was a student if I was to register, I think the whole term Disability Services has a stigma to it and I obviously see Disability as just a thing. But I think, and I get discriminated against sometimes from people that think what's wrong with you? So, if I was in that frame of mind I don't think I'd feel comfortable, oh I have a disability, I'm going to register with Disability services, everything's just very labelled. I know that it's not our fault, it's just the reality.

Interviewer: Ok so if you decided to disclose the [disability], would you ever do that?

Participant 16: Very, very rarely because I also feel like that is a weakness and I don't like being seen as weak or dependant on something. I will disclose it if I'm in a highly stressful situation or only to like a close friend, I wouldn't feel happy disclosing to, let's say an employer.

Interviewer: Ok because you are afraid it will lead to...

Participant 16: to like thinking oh she's going to be dependant in the future or she's not capable of doing highly stressful things, so therefore I'm not going to hire her or I won't promote her because it might be too stressful for her to handle.

Interviewer: Did you have any reservations about disclosing?

Participant 17: um yeah, because I've never considered myself as someone with a disability, so it was kind of hard to admit that there was anything wrong. Admit to myself, even look like one of the people who need help, you know how they treat you differently and stuff so I kind of like wasn't sure if I wanted to do that.

Interviewer: Why do you think people from, people with disabilities might be a little reluctant to disclose, do you think it's just a bit of confusion like you had, or is there anything else you can lend insight into?

Participant 18: So definitely if they don't define what they mean by disability, you miss quite a few people. I also have friends that are just not aware of the services that were available and they kind of fit into that category as well. What else? Think a lot of it's got to do with defining what disability is and I guess probably making clear like why the uni wants that information. And like, that they can give services if you identify yourself.

Participant 19: the only reason I did was because I did at my last Uni and the only reason I did it at my last Uni was because my GP told me I should and that was a semester in. Because I kept thinking, well you know a student with a disability, I've gotta be in like a wheelchair and I can't get to my lectures or something. I didn't think that having mental health issues was something that constituted getting special adjustments for my assignments for exams and things like that.

Participant 20: I think, ummm there's definitely I guess a continuum generally, when you think about disability. But I guess, being someone with a disability it's really hard to put yourself somewhere on that continuum. In most situations I would say that I'm pretty independent and that my disability doesn't really impact me very severely, but there are definitely other scenarios where I would say it does. So, I would say somewhere in the middle... my [disability] is considered [disability], so I'm kind of clustered in that group... To me, I really don't know what that means, it's kind of hard to grasp to what extent I am disabled because I don't know the alternatives.

Interviewer: Were you aware of any services available when you disclosed?

Participant 21: No, I wasn't.

Interviewer: Did you have any reservations about disclosing at all?

Participant 21: A little bit because so I was 18 or 19 at the time and they didn't define what they meant by Disability which can include a whole range of things. Including mental illness and they hadn't really defined that so I think I had said no originally and gone back and changed it, now that I think about it.

Interviewer: Why do you think people from, people with disabilities might be a little reluctant to disclose, do you think it's just a bit of confusion like you had, or is there anything else you can lend insight into?

Participant 22: So definitely if they don't define what they mean by disability, you miss quite a few people. I also have friends that are just not aware of the services that were available and they kind of fit into that category as well. What else? Think a lot of it's got to do with defining what disability is and I guess probably making clear like why the Uni wants that information. And like, that they can give services if you identify yourself.

Lack of knowledge of services

Participant 23: I think they could be much clearer about the services they provide. I think whenever they ask for things like do you have a disability? They should tell students why they're asking and what benefits they will have from that. I think they should clearly link to services that available to students with disabilities. I think if someone asks for an appointment, then either make the booking system very easily accessible or put the onus on the disability support people to make the appointment with the student. I feel like I have to make every effort at every stage, and go out of my way multiple times and not have heaps clear benefit from that. I have a document that may or may not help.

Participant 24: I think that I also had to know what to ask for, I had to do my research and be like, ok well do I want this option, what is that option? I'll try and ask for this because when I had my appointment the person basically didn't say anything and waited for me to speak. So, then I had to say, I have wrist issues and I would like support from the faculty. Ok, what kind of support would you like? As opposed to these are the supports we offer. Yeah, very unclear.

Participant 25: I feel like lots of the time when people are in situations like that and very often when people come to [disability unit] they're in strife so they're not really thinking about expectations and best-case scenario. So, you know, people who are in really difficult situations are trying to get through from one day to the next, so I feel like I was trying to do that, and for that reason I wasn't kind of projecting expectations onto them

Participant 26: I feel like lots of the time when people are in situations like that and very often when people come to [disability unit] they're in strife so they're not really thinking about expectations and best-case scenario. So, you know, people who are in really difficult situations are trying to get through from one day to the next, so I feel like I was trying to do that, and for that reason I wasn't kind of projecting expectations onto them.

No benefit

Participant 27: I've gotten things that I don't necessarily need or want, that are associated with it and it was just sort of like an automatic list of things, that I automatically qualified for just simply because I magically filled out you know, enough to get joined up with them and dotted all the I's and crossed all the T's. So, it wasn't really specific to me. It was just, it was just the random thing that you get.

Participant 28: What would I change? Well, I've already partly changed it. I made my university get a check box that other people can, you know like that it's a sort of 2-way system now. That if you want them to help you with it, then they can. But, the one thing that I would really, really, really, really love to see is that, with the, like the learning access plans and whatever else they're called throughout Australia. Is that when that disclosure process happens, automatically you get offered whether or not you would like to actually have a part of your learning access plan assistance with university systems. So, my problem,

like the subject I took, I got a 91, right and most of my grades are within that ball park. So, I don't actually really struggle with the coursework. The nitty gritty for me is the problem, dealing with ...??? You know putting me in timetables and enrolling and getting sent books or like getting a student card, getting a student card took me all day and I needed assistance. So, I think there should actually be something in the disclosure process where they go, do you need help with basic university systems?

Past experiences

Participant 29: Yes, certainly. I think the biggest one was coming to terms, what happened was a couple, a few years ago now but it certainly took a fair while for me to come to accept what was going on. I've also... unfortunately my past employment, I been working there for a fair while and a new manager came along, and found out about what I could and what I couldn't do and at the first excuse.. I was also casual... all of a sudden, they just stopped giving me hours, stopped contacting me, so there was certainly a level of stigmatisation there and I think that that also made me more aware that this could be something that could happen again. And even though you know you'd expect a University would be a place where that wouldn't happen, I think that there's still a fear there. But you know, as I said, when you further on your degree etc., that that could be taken into consideration and they may go well, she's got this going on maybe she won't be able to undertake the amount of stress etc. that does go on within Uni so I think that, that was the most paramount.

Participant 30: I think that the fact that it's taken me quite a while to come to terms with not to being able to do certain things, even around the house, even when it comes to mowing my lawn, I've got to get someone to help me with it. I think basically what all of this was, very slowly, coming to realisations that not being able to do certain things I knew. But I think for me to allow other people to see it, or other people to notice it was certainly something that I found very challenging. So, I knew that if I did get the Disability Access Plan, I did actually disclose a whole lot of things.

Participant 31: Well I do remember when I was in high school it was the high school counsellor and I was particularly struggling so I really needed help. I went to this counsellor and it wasn't very great, they said they were keeping things private and they actually didn't, they talked to a lot of the office staff and things like that so the office would know and these are the people that are meant to be keeping it all as they said under wraps and keeping it all very private, that turned out to be quite a bad move on my part. And I also remember after seeing her you had to get a little slip in terms of you now when your appointment is and my mum found that slip as well and she wasn't happy with that, she doesn't like the idea of it going on your record or things like that. So, there was a chain reaction sort of thing from that and that was the only time that I sought help, so I would like to have that opportunity through the university to gain help in terms of counselling services, psychological services and things like that. After that I didn't really know how to privately seek help because it's hard to keep it away from your family.

Shame

Participant 32: I guess, I feel like I work and study but I feel like to me, looking and being competent is really important where I guess, having next to my file that there were things that I couldn't do or ways that I was limited. Although they shouldn't be embarrassing or stigma related, or it shouldn't be something that I should be worried about. I definitely was,

because I was worried that the teachers would know me as the person who has [disability] issues or the person who has anxiety, I guess I just wanted to be a student and not that.

Participant 33: To me, I feel like I become a bit more vulnerable by exposing things that could make me appear weak or make me appear that I need help. It also makes me feel a bit, I think it's a bit of self-realisation that actually yes sometimes I might need help and it's hard when you want to be really independent and want to help others that you have to admit to yourself that sometimes you also need help as well.

Participant 34: I wanted to just be like normal obviously, like you don't need extra help or support, also admitting to yourself that there is a problem is a really big step when you never wanted to think that there was a problem. Until you admit that there is something wrong and I do need help that's like a massive thing to deal with, then after you admit that you do need help it's like well do I want to be someone who gets extra time or those kinds of things it's like you never really considered yourself someone who needs extra time. In your mind you might think like you know it's not real if you need extra time it's not working as hard if you didn't need extra time.

Indigenous Students

Convenience

Interviewer: So, you didn't have to provide the confirmation?

Participant 35: No. I had to provide the confirmation for my scholarship but that scholarship was separate to the Aboriginal unit. For the purposes of the Aboriginal Unit it was basically just me explaining who my mob was and yeah, just basically self-identifying. They are changing the sort of identity rules at the University where they are asking for your confirmation of Aboriginality letter, or you know formal documentation as well as statutory declaration where the student has to explain you know, how they identify in the community as an Aboriginal person, how the community accepts them as an Aboriginal person, and I believe there's one other point but it's basically sort of, the student has to write a statement elaborating on how they are identified as Aboriginal.

Interviewer: So, they are making it a little more difficult or a little more...

Participant 35: Yeah, it's quite onerous and a lot of students have expressed concern over this process, particularly as there is talk that it will be retrospective. You know I'm in my final year of my degree but now I'm going to have to go through this process if the law passes where I have to sort of justify and explain my justification. And for myself, I am a proud woman but I feel like that is, it's quite insensitive having to justify through this paperwork trail how I am Aboriginal.

Interviewer: have you disclosed your Indigenous status to your University? So, have you told them that you're Indigenous?

Participant 36: Uh, yes, I have. But we're in the process like, they're changing it to make it a rule that we have to like, have like, 3 different documents to prove it. And I guess when they bring that rule in, I won't be considered Indigenous.

Interviewer: So, you are considered Indigenous now? But at least according to your institution when there's that rule, that will change, you won't be Indigenous?

Participant 36: Yeah because I don't have the documentation. I identify, I have identified for like a year or something since we found out but because I don't have the documentation – I won't be.

Interviewer: Ok. How's that going to affect your position at the University? Well, how will it affect you?

Participant 36: Quite a bit. Because I... at the moment I received tutoring through the Indigenous centre, which means I don't have to pay anything which is what helps me pass my units. I won't have access to that... I think it's a joke. Like, there's so many things like, there's so many problems with it. Like, as I said I've identified as Indigenous for 8 years. Just because I don't have... and you ask me about my declaration, I have declaration and all that but I don't have the council, original council forms or something like that. And so, they're going to cut it, because of that?

Interviewer: Do have documents that prove your Indigenous status? But

Participant 36: So, I have the statutory declaration which is the one, that I basically the one that I declare. But when they bring in the new rule. It will be that they have to, you have to have that declaration but we also have to have one of the either the council or some forms provided by the council or some forms provided by the, a non-for profit Aboriginal organisation.

Interviewer: Are you able to get your hands on any of those?

Participant 36: It's quite hard because I'm actually originally from Sydney. I don't have any connections up here.

Participant 37: I'm indigenous, it's something I've been part of for, forever. Um. But for example, my brother doesn't identify. Um. And that's got a lot to do with my mother being part to what we refer now to as the stolen generations, only found out she was Indigenous when my brother was four or five. Um. So he doesn't identify and neither do his three daughters. But I do. And it's things like that that sort of help you put these things in perspective, because there's a lot of complexity around them.

Discrimination

Participant 38: Ah well, for example when I first went to university it was for Medicine, right. We were all placed in one room and they told, and in front of the whole lecture theatre, we're told that we were all Aboriginal students and from there on tutors, as well as lectures told us to shut up in the tutorials because we all know how you got here.

Interviewer: Did you have any hesitation or reservations about disclosing?

Participant 38: Yeah. Yes. It's like caught between... if I don't say I'm indigenous, it's like being ashamed of admitting it but if I do tick the box, then it's, there's some people in the community, think well that's the only reason you got in. And then there's other people where, it's like well how is this going to affect me in regards to discrimination.

Participant 39: The university can't really do anything because all those things need to be changed and once all the things change as a... like there's such a plethora of problems that not one little thing would change everything. Maybe just if they were educated, the staff I'm talking about, educated in what is actually happening in the room, as opposed to your

genocide and the rest of it. More like, this is the aftermath of that, that's what's happening, that's why there the help and assistance instead of them having the attitude that we shouldn't really be there.

In-group discrimination

Participant 40: I am light skinned. There have been times where I've been in lectures, particularly education lectures and the topic of teaching Aboriginal kids comes up. I can always pick when a lecturer is going to say something, you know I can take as offensive. So, when they look around the room, they won't see anybody who, their physical appearance is that of an Aboriginal person then they will say something like, you know, Aboriginal kids... their parents don't care enough to read to them. Just passing remarks really shouldn't get me riled up but they do so I have always challenged back. I challenge that example by actually waving my hand and say it's not ok to be so lazy, we should share our stories, we tell our stories. And they're always taken aback, and well I go, I know this because I'm a Gamilaroi woman.

Participant 41: I have quite a close friend; it was actually in the same unit, we weren't doing the same unit at the same time but it was the same lecturer and like similar experiences. And she was quite light-skinned as well, she has challenged it but she didn't have the confidence to challenge that until probably until around her fourth year, and she did a six year degree so she had experienced quite a lot of those comments but hadn't had the confidence, or not knowing how to challenge the sort of assumptions made about Aboriginal people in the content of her unit.

Participant 42: I only recently found out about my heritage and it's been a very interesting journey. It's kind of weird, I'm quite pale and I think people have looked at me and gone, oh you're not indigenous, you're as white as the wall there, and it's like well you can't choose what colour you are. I just feel really weird. Some people know and some people don't know. And it's quite a closed link for our family and the rest of the family won't talk about it, they don't know anything about it, they just won't participate in it. And it's only since I've been doing my master's I've been really digging around and trying to figure things out.

Participant 43: I was concerned about the stigma around it and then once you get over the stigma, well like forgive me, but you're not black enough. And then you, I don't know, how do you respond to that? When people just saying I don't believe you, well why would I lie about it? And to, what benefit do I get from saying this... nothing.

Participant 44: My brother so he's Aboriginal too, but he hates it. He's actually one the people who have a go at me because I checked the box and so, he's more inclined, along the lines of all the white people that he works with, who believe the only reason Aboriginal people get into university or get is because they tick the box. There's also people within the university who, once they know that you're Aboriginal will have an attitude towards you. You can tell that they'll speak to you because there's everything in a forum, there's a certain level of how people talk to you but if they find out through conversation, that you're Aboriginal – then there's a real change in the way that they articulate themselves, either they just ignore you completely or they... there's a level of ignorance or hostility in the language.

Lack of knowledge of services

Interviewer: So, you didn't have to provide the confirmation?

Participant 45: No. I had to provide the confirmation for my scholarship but that scholarship was separate to the Aboriginal unit. For the purposes of the Aboriginal Unit it was basically just me explaining who my mob was and yeah, just basically self-identifying. They are changing the sort of identity rules at the university where they are asking for your confirmation of Aboriginality letter, or you know formal documentation as well as statutory declaration where the student has to explain you know, how they identify in the community as an Aboriginal person, how the community accepts them as an Aboriginal person, and I believe there's one other point but it's basically sort of, the student has to write a statement elaborating on how they are identified as Aboriginal.

Interviewer: So, they are making it a little more difficult or a little more?

Participant 45: Yeah, it's quite onerous and a lot of students have expressed concern over this process, particularly as there is talk that it will be retrospective. You know I'm in my final year of my degree but now I'm going to have to go through this process if the law passes where I have to sort of justify and explain my justification. And for myself, I am a proud woman but I feel like that is, it's quite insensitive having to justify through this paperwork trail how I am Aboriginal.

Participant 46:

Reference 2 - 4.12% Coverage

I think that the methods that people use to disclose need to, like they can't have a situation where it's like, what's going to happen here, where you sort of identify but then you sort of justify it. I think it's not only a laborious task, identity is a very fragile thing, people can come from a background of, you know they've been involved in the stolen generation and they weren't actually aware that they were Aboriginal, and they found out that they are Aboriginal but it's still a very fragile thing. So, to have that question, to have to provide you know... I think that that is going to be very hard for some people and I think that's putting up an immediate barrier because if it's not a straight forward case of identification like for me, like it is with me, people are going to be very hesitant to do that and that hesitance will turn into reluctance, and eventually turn into not disclosing and not following this process of filing out a stat dec to justify it.

Special treatment

Participant 47: Yeah it was part of my scholarship; it's also something I'm proud of. I've never sort of shied away from [not] disclosing that I'm Aboriginal and my own personal situation is that I'm half Aboriginal so my Aboriginality is from my mum's side but I am light-skinned. So, for me personally I always make a point of acknowledging that part of my identity and making sure people are aware because it's not immediately obvious. So, I think there's the aspect of being proud to identify why people can disclose their status but then I think some people, just from general conversations I've had, some people can be hesitant to disclose their status because you know, they're not really sure what will come of it or they're worried that they could be segregated from sort of the mainstream activities that the university has.

Tokenism

Participant 48: I think its knowing that you're a minority you have to say "hey, I'm a minority for their own data and statistics" so that you can be counted as one of those few within a minority who has been able to go to University. I guess that's one of the things, I guess also, added support whatever disadvantages come your way, anything cultural whether or not you have men's or women's sorry business, you can be like, this is why things are a bit harder. Reaching out for support is one of the biggest things, is why we're like, we're indigenous and we want the support and we'd like the support and we know it's there. So, it's telling them, I guess is one of our ways of just being really forward in like, we accept any help that you're going to give us or that you're allowing us to have.

Participant 49: I guess there might be social risks. I know, it's fairly diverse at [university], fairly open... It's fairly progressive there on campus and all that. But I guess there is also, telling people who are not particularly culturally sensitive [inaudible] stereotypes and what not. Those could be one of the social factors, being singled out as being the token in the class. You can usually find a community to be a part of when you disclose that you're indigenous.

Interviewer: So, its access to a community and the feeling of belonging to that community, that will be important to you. You said feeling like a token in a class, have you ever felt like that?

Participant 49: Only when indigenous, I get brought up within my classes... because I'm light skinned I don't feel like I get that as much as my dark-skinned friends, who put more on a pedestal and also feel like they have to perform their tasks because they're indigenous so they don't want to fall into those stereotypes.

Non-English-Speaking Background Students

Access

Interviewer: Oh. Um in your opinion why do you think people from non-English speaking backgrounds would disclose this information, so what sorts of benefits do you see to disclosing if you are or aren't from a non-English speaking background?

Participant 50: Umm, it could be because umm it's somewhat hard for us to sometimes understand the English being taught in classes or so because umm, even while when I was new here it was quite sometimes difficult for me to understand when people were talking so. We should be given a margin for that I would say.

Isolated

Participant 51: I mean it was more like to have that person to....oh well she went through the campus and showed me things so that was good, but I think more even, I actually suggested for the counselling service if we could have a support group for example, I never got a response though. Because I've noticed that even with other students that I got to know who are actually Australians and when we talk about assignments and even like when you do an assignment, the whole process of getting to understand the question to then find the paper then to like formulate the outline. How sometimes it feels like oh I'm the only one who goes through this, you know it feels really messy but it's like that for me too you know what I mean. Or someone to give like, in psychology for example if they are going to be so

pedantic about English why do they not offer in the first semester us a subject that is academic writing. I don't understand that, they just want you to know what is expected in report writing.

Participant 52: From my personal perspective, I actually think there might be more disadvantage than advantage for a person from a non-English background to disclose this fact. But, I think in regards to advantage or benefits, say fellow students, classmates or professors consider the factor that I don't speak English as my mother tongue, so if I make any mistakes in my essays they normally mark me, they [inaudible] as much as English speaking students. I'm just thinking other benefits I think there would be, is could potentially protected by University or workplace policy, anti-bullying or anti-racial policies, coming from a minority background you can be protected a bit more.

Interviewer: So you feel there's some element of discrimination?

Participant 52: I remember once, lots of professors through my, in my Master's program would encourage students to introduce themselves, to disclose a bit of why you chose this program, chose this subject, because of my obviously the name on my passport and the name I used to register with UNSW is the name on my passport and it just shows that I don't have a conventional English name and I just feel, probably because of my personality, I'm a bit shy, I feel a bit uncomfortable to tell people that I'm not sort of an Australian by name per say if you like. And I feel like people might have any sort of discrimination against me and not wanting to communicate with me or not wanting to interact with me in terms of, you know collaborative studies so. I would much prefer, when I introduce myself in such forums, for the blackboard, I study application, I would say I prefer to be called Christine to just sort of break the ice.

Participant 53: I have grown up to be very independent so I don't like asking for support, I feel like because Australia is to an extent racist, overtly racist. Like when I walk down the street there will be people yelling names at me so when I feel like if I ever do disclose that I am from a non-English speaking background it sort of makes me look like I am less Australian, so then I don't want to disclose it because it is like me saying I'm actually less Australian, it feel a bit weird to say things like I'm actually from a non-English speaking background, so that's why I tend not to disclose it.

Participant 54: I feel like international students get left out of things a lot. Definitely language barrier is a big thing, even when they are qualified to come to Australia and study they would have passed a certain level of English but then again, they still need support and help with that so any little language barrier that is presented to them they will probably tend to avoid it instead of overcome it. It's sort of like if you were given a menu in Chinese and English you would just look at the English you wouldn't care about the Chinese even though you have studied in China which would be the same thing for non-English background students, so if I saw a menu in English and Indonesian I would just look at the Indonesian or if there was Chinese and English I would just look at the Chinese so I think any little language barriers just makes it work a bit smoother. So, I think also if, I'm not sure because I have not visited recently but if there's receptionists at the disability services centre that could speak multiple languages or just a language other than English that would help students that are coming in who are a bit, sometimes it's a bit daunting.

Interviewer: So, why would you disclose a non-English speaking background?

Participant 55: I'd only disclose it to like other international students, so then they can at least relate, like we can talk about things. It makes them feel more welcome. So that's the only reason why I would disclose it.

Just because

Participant 56: I think it depends on the purpose of the disclosure, we need to know why it is important to disclose because we're going to get more support then yes. If it's just for the data collection to know how many they have, like whatever you know what I mean. Maybe they should..... I wonder what is the goal of disclosing.

Participant 57: Well the reason why I disclosed it was because it was a question asked of me and I was like this is the process you go through Um... presumably the same way that there are questions for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander questions, there's some sort of statistic thing that they want to keep track of and um, that's part of the statistic they keep track of

Overcome stigma

Participant 58: All the above. Sometimes it is hard to deal with stereotypes and I always feel that I must prove everyone wrong even though everything I mentioned is not true in my case.

Participant 59: No, I would still not disclose it.

Interviewer: Why not?

Participant 59: I feel like teachers and things... they don't discriminate but I don't want to be seen as someone with an ESL background because I feel like there's a bit of a difference, like they might think I need extra language help when I don't.

Service quality

Participant 60: My disclosure experience was crap. It was the worst thing ever because I didn't fit in a box. Academic staff got it before the university staff got it. And I was very, very fortunate that the first staff member I talked to about it actually is a history professor who like, he specialises in sort of terrorism and military sort of thing. Immediately he got it and that was just because of his particular niche of what interests him and he was like oh crap, we need to fix that. But then the whole disclosure process with the uni was just horrific because they were just not getting it, because I didn't really fit in any of the boxes and I got really angry in the end and I could have just hidden away at home or whatever but I just said, well instead of it being like this where I don't fit inside a box. You should be encouraging more people like me to be... like you're lucky to have me. You should actually be encouraging there to be, you know, every single night of the year, there's 3200 homeless veterans on the streets and how much more would that stop happening if you know, there were pathways into tertiary education like all sorts, and we were supported. So, I dunno, I'm just stubborn and angry, but initially the disclosure was pretty crap. If I had come out and gone oh well, you know I'm gay or I've got something wrong with me that fits into whatever you know, there's what they wanted to hear. Whatever you know, the thing of the moment for them in terms of like what I've got wrong.

Participant 61: I was also going to say, I think if there were more, I understand that there's a lot of support that goes on, but I think that if there were more support groups, I understand that Universities, some of them do have this but I don't see it often enough and I think that if there were actually support groups with disabilities that could meet once a week, and you don't necessarily have to confide in who you are or where you come from, or your name etc, or your identity, just to talk and sort of see that hey, there are other people with this going on and I think it's important for people that are getting into this process to see how others have gained positively from doing that. I think that would certainly encourage more students to feel more free to confide.

Participant 62: I think that it's absolutely excellent that you're doing these types of surveys and investigating it more, I think that's a really, really, really good thing. But, after the last phone call there was certainly something that I did want to put across and mention and that was what I first said in that, I think that that biggest issue here is you know mentors. Psychological disabilities can be quite a bit easier to not hide but overcome etc. where I think the psychical ones are certainly more, you stand out a little bit more, knowing that that is what's wrong with you is already a challenge. I think that now, but actually putting it out there, you already feel like maybe you're a bit different, so I think that I would really like to see that option there where even if you do have a disability, no matter what the disability may be you have that option to either have that week extra on the assignment, or have the special circumstance exam room or you can alternatively go for, hey now I want to have the exact same time as the next student next to me to complete this, or I want to be able to be in the same exam room, I think that putting those differences on students who have disabilities if anything especially, from example speaking from my own individual perspective, I think that was the biggest challenge for me. So, I think you're already are looked at as a bit different anyway, and that is the truth of the matter, it's not that I'm feeling sorry for myself or for anybody else within this sort of circumstance, but I just think that by being treated like the next person it certainly makes it easier. That would probably be my most beneficial point.

Interviewer: So, you didn't have to provide the confirmation?

Participant 63: No. I had to provide the confirmation for my scholarship but that scholarship was separate to the Aboriginal unit. For the purposes of the Aboriginal Unit it was basically just me explaining who my mob was and yeah, just basically self-identifying. They are changing the sort of identity rules at the University where they are asking for your confirmation of Aboriginality letter, or you know formal documentation as well as statutory declaration where the student has to explain you know, how they identify in the community as an Aboriginal person, how the community accepts them as an Aboriginal person, and I believe there's one other point but it's basically sort of, the student has to write a statement elaborating on how they are identified as Aboriginal.

Interviewer: So, they are making it a little more difficult or a little more...?

Participant 63: Yeah, it's quite onerous and a lot of students have expressed concern over this process, particularly as there is talk that it will be retrospective. You know I'm in my final year of my degree but now I'm going to have to go through this process if the law passes where I have to sort of justify and explain my justification. And for myself, I am a

proud woman but I feel like that is, it's quite insensitive having to justify through this paperwork trail how I am Aboriginal.

Participant 64: I disclosed it the first time I ticked the box. But when I saw a disability support officer 2 weeks ago, I found it so difficult to talk to the person about my wrists because she kept talking about her own wrists, her own issues and her own pain that I just couldn't be bothered then talking about my anxiety in case she then talked, made that about herself as well and basically to have to talk her through that as well. It's just exhausting.

Interviewer: Is there anything that your University could do to make people with disabilities more likely to disclose?

Participant 65: I think they could be much clearer about the services they provide. I think whenever they ask for things like do you have a disability? They should tell students why they're asking and what benefits they will have from that. I think they should clearly link to services that available to students with disabilities. I think if someone asks for an appointment, then either make the booking system very easily accessible or put the onus on the disability support people to make the appointment with the student. I feel like I have to make every effort at every stage, and go out of my way multiple times and not have heaps clear benefit from that. I have a document that may or may not help.

Interviewer: So, you had to be fairly determined to get the adjustments. And if it hadn't been an absolutely need, you might have been tempted to chuck it in.

Participant 66: I think that I also had to know what to ask for, I had to do my research and be like, ok well do I want this option, what is that option? I'll try and ask for this because when I had my appointment the person basically didn't say anything and waited for me to speak. So, then I had to say, I have wrist issues and I would like support from the faculty. Ok, what kind of support would you like? As opposed to these are the supports we offer. Yeah, very unclear.

Participant 67: It would have been very helpful to have a Disability support but I just didn't really know about it or think it was relevant to me, that my anxiety counted at that stage when it was quite bad.

Participant 68: I find it very interesting, to disclose or not to disclose. I think it should stay as a personal choice. I mean, it would be better just thinking practically from a funding point of view, if more students did disclose, and I think that's what's happening at the moment. I mean [inaudible] at the last census, we have heaps more Indigenous people identifying and I think that's wonderful. But I think it should just be less of an ask demand, more a disclose-or-not disclose and just be you are who you are, and you are who you are, and welcome and that's it.

Interviewer: Certainly, we can't force, nobody would suggest forcing people to disclose that because nobody wants to be defined as this or that... but I suppose it's about creating a safe zone that people can reveal that information or reveal the truth about themselves without being afraid of stigma.

Participant 68: Exactly. And I think if you don't make a big deal out of disclosing, more people will disclose. If you were actively pushing people to disclose or just saying you know

disclose... blah. That's still a push to get people to disclose, if you just leave it alone and make it a safe space and make it really encouraging and welcoming, then more people will do it because it's not a big deal, it's not difficult.

Interviewer: If you did seek help from UNSW what sort of services would you like, what sort of assistance would you like?

Participant 70: They probably do offer these things but I would love like counselling or psychological services that are maybe even in terms of having a poster here or there, around where student groups seem to gather just so you can really easily see ok I can go to this part of campus seek help from these people like psychological services, psychologists, psychiatrists just so I can really get help through that avenue, I found that was quite difficult for me to just find more out about, it just, yeah, the layout wasn't great and I didn't see much advertising of that, I think it's a really good thing to catch people's attention just even if you're in passing, if you see that.

Participant 71: I've generally become more confident in managing my situation external of [Disabilities Service], I definitely think they're ummm they have very high staff turnover even the stuff like the casualization of staff at their reception, like it's kind of disconcerting, as I've said like I've managed my stuff and moved more towards more self-reliant management, but you know like if you're a person who's going there in strife, and then you have to go there I don't know...three or four times the first month because the situation's really complex, and you see a different person at the reception each time I feel like that's a bit disconcerting. I feel like there's so many small things which are disconcerting and which have reduced the quality of service they provide and that's just my kind of observation not using them closely anymore just using them a bit so, ummm, and not many students are aware of that because not many students started using [Disabilities Service] in 2009 so they can't really track how it's changed, I think they must have less officers, I really think they must. I don't know.

Participant 72: I did the internship at the end of last year on disclosure and that stuff, which was... and ummm, I don't know like I can't remember... I'm also part of the disability champions advisory group which I feel is doing absolutely nothing. And first week there's only been two meetings in like a year, the last week I couldn't go because I was tutoring, the first meeting there was a discussion about what can [disability unit] do what can the university do in disability areas and ummm I think what would really help and one thing which came up in discussion there was hey [disability unit] should have some degree of independence from the university so it can advocate for students with disabilities instead of just providing support because there's not much advocacy, it's very hard for students who are really you know don't have resources are really affected by staff, don't have time. It's really hard for those students to advocate for themselves continuously and effectively, so something like [disability unit] could provide an advocacy as well as support function, and it definitely doesn't do that at the moment. How can advocacy occur when staff is changing every six months? There's no one to continue through campaigns ummm, so, I think that's like a major problem, and [disability unit] would be a major place to do it. The disability champions group isn't doing it well. So that might have been one other place...

Participant 73: I gave them uh, a document, five pages. And it's my medical, it's all of my medical stuff. So, it's filled in by my treatment professional. And it's, it's medical document,

it's incredibly personal. There's a lot of stuff in it. It's, it's a medical, it's a short hand of my entire medical file. And they sent that by plane post to my mother's house. And they didn't label it Miss [initial, name], just Miss [surname]. So my mother opened it. Now I'm lucky in that my mother doesn't care and is very open and I, I love my mother, and all of that. But if it had been someone who isn't open with their family and they are lots of kids like that. That's not acceptable, I mean it's not acceptable in me either, but it could have been hell of a lot worse. Regular post, no registered post.

Participant 74: There is so much they need to be doing better. If they want their forms done in a specific way, they should make them downloadable. To start with, that is one very small thing. A list of services on their website would be great. Like, there are a hundred things they could be doing, that they're just not. And even the things like, the University needs to institute the policy that if [disability unit] says it's necessary, you have to do it. Because the amount of times is not very high, that I've had to fight for my provision, but one is too many. If I had been any other student, any other [disability unit] student I'm not sure I would've gotten them, because I had someone help me, in fact I had someone from [Indigenous unit] and one of my best friend who does not have a disability, literally drafting emails for me, so that I could get them because I did not have the cognitive capacity to do my subjects and fight for my provisions. No one does, if you need provisions then you don't have the ability to do that. And it's just, it's fucking infuriating, because we're getting to the point like, some of the other unis that I've mentioned, where it's almost not worth disclosing. That's bad. That's really bad. And it's frustrating because I don't want anyone to miss out on provisions. Oh! I met kids the other day that didn't realise they were eligible for provisions despite having like, cognitive complications from [disability] so bad that they lose track of their sentence. They didn't know they were eligible because there is no information. In fact, I've met... I've met five kids so far, no six actually, who were eligible for provisions that hadn't applied because they didn't know they were eligible.

Participant 75: I disclosed it the first time I ticked the box. But when I saw a disability support officer 2 weeks ago, I found it so difficult to talk to the person about my [disability] because she kept talking about her own [disability], her own issues and her own pain that I just couldn't be bothered then talking about my anxiety in case she then talked, made that about herself as well and basically to have to talk her through that as well. It's just exhausting.

Cultural attitudes to disability

Participant 76: The second will probably be my cultural background, so as I said, I'm [nationality] and I think, even here in Australia we think very old school, and that was the way that I was brought up as well, very, very, old school. In other words, it's always mind over matter, you should work as hard as the next person and you shouldn't get any special treatment and I think that certainly has a very big impact on me as well, whereas I said, I didn't want to be looked at as different or I didn't want to be looked at as oh we need to give her a bit more time to do this in order for her to, because you know she's got this going on sort of thing, I didn't want it to be like that and I know, that these are the certain things that come with disclosing that. So, I think those were certainly the 2 most paramount things.

Participant 77: So, my dad's remarried, he has 4 kids and one of them, he is [disabled] because he talks like this and there's so many red flags and I've mentioned it and this was

years ago, but I barely talk to them anyway... yep but no he was just like nup. So, I can imagine that a lot of migrant children if they come home, I'm registering with disability services, the parents would be like excuse me, what? I don't have a child with a disability and I can see especially a lot of, at least from my experience, the migrant parents I have and the ones that have been exposed to... they've overcome a lot in their own countries and I think that, for them, it's a bit like, well you know back in my day I just had to suck it up so for them it's just life, so I don't think they sort of see it as something that you can treat or get help for.

Participant 78: And when it comes to mental health, in [country], or in [country], an African in general that someone who suffers from mental health, you're basically, an embarrassment to society. You know mental health is something that's not talked about very frequently in [country]... or anywhere within the region.

Participant 79: So, in [country] they also don't classify [disability] as a major mental illness, so a lot of students who may have it might think UNSW does have a great disability resources but my depression wouldn't count so I won't register with them because I don't have a disability because it's not classified in that area.

Participant 80: The only thing that might put some people off would be the language barrier because if I wanted to talk about something medical in a different language that isn't my first language I might find it a bit difficult to describe it and that extra effort of, let's say I'm an international student and I have a disability international students have visa requirement so they can work 40 hours, they will have to study and then during that free time trying to communicate that they've got a disability is something they probably feel uncomfortable doing so yeah I would probably just take it back to having a physical supportive presence.