DARLENE MCLENNAN: Okay, firstly I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, custodians of the country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. I pay my respects to all of them and their cultures and to elders both past, present and emerging. Afternoon all, my name is Darlene McLennan and on behalf of ADCET I would like to welcome you to this webinar on meeting the needs of Indigenous students was disability. Sharon Kerr is currently undertaking her PhD at the University of Sydney focusing on the needs of Indigenous students with disability. Today Sharon has kindly agreed to present to us a presentation that she gave to the Pathways 14 Conference, last year; it seems like a lifetime ago last year. So we just thought some people were unable to go to Pathways or some people may have missed the presentation while they were there. So this is a good chance for us to catch up on that. For those who want to access the captioning, you can find that in the ribbon which is either at the top or the bottom of your screen. And you can turn the closed captions on. If you have any technical difficulties throughout the presentation, please feel free to email us at admin@adcet.edu.au. Sharon will be presenting for around 50 minutes and then we will allow for questions which I will ask. So if you have questions throughout the presentation, please feel free to add them into the question box or the chat box, either one. We haven't quite worked it out yet. This is only our third webinar using Zoom so we haven't quite worked out the best way to go so we're trialling both. We think with the chat pod you can actually choose to either chat to us or the chat can go to everybody if you want everybody else to see your questions. Alright, so that's about it. So now I will be handing over to you, Sharon. So thank you very much.

SHARON KERR: Thank you very much, Darlene and hello to everyone. White Questions, Black Answers and this is the topic of my PhD that I'm doing with the University of Sydney. Many of you will have..., well I have worked with many of you over the years while I was working at Macquarie University with MCATs and through other various programs that I have been working with. Like Darlene, before we start I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet. That's for everywhere that we are. And I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the knowledge which I'm going to share. In particular I would like to acknowledge Dr John Gilroy, who is an Indigenous academic and is one of my supervisors for my research; and the members of my Indigenous advisory group, I have Roslyn Sackley, Maria Robinson and Naomi Carolin and they continue to provide guidance and insight with regard to Indigenous knowledge and cultural safety; and the people who have generously shared their stories with me for this research. So let's go. As a teacher, and as a support practitioner I have had a number of questions that I have set out to find the answers for. When I was at Macquarie University, we were providing support right across Australia to students with disabilities. It was actually many hundreds of students a year that we would be providing support to. One of the big concerns that I had was why was it that Indigenous students with a disability weren't presenting for support. Now, this was back in 2008. It was at a conference in Melbourne that I met with Roslyn Sackley who heads up my Indigenous advisory group. She very soon after came and worked with me and together that started a 10-year pursuit of research together. So, the questions were, and for my research, why is it that Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders with disabilities are not presenting for support? What are the barriers both real and perceived for students who need support? And how can we mitigate the impact of these barriers? When we look at the barriers, some of them are so huge and you think okay, here I am in my TAFE, here I am in my university, what can I personally do to mitigate the impact of these barriers? Hopefully today we will address some of these. I would like to draw your attention to a report that was compiled by the Australian Institute of Health. Now we're on the fourth slide for those of you who are following with the PowerPoint. The AIHW in 2011. And they were examining the data and responses for Indigenous adults with a disability. And asking them what were their attitudes towards further study. Now, what I found really interesting here was that 30 per cent of those Indigenous Australians aged 18 to 64 with the most severe level of disability had wanted to pursue further study in the 12 months prior to the survey. And 13 per cent of them were unable to do so because of caring or for family reasons. When I started pursuing this study, people were saying to me, "Oh, why would it be that Indigenous people with a disability would want to undertake study?" And the truth is that 30 per cent in that survey said, yes, they wanted to undertake study. And 13 per cent were unable to do so because they themselves were carers for other people. So, myth 1 is that Indigenous people with a disability don't want to study. And maybe the next thing is that they don't have any other responsibilities. Quite often our Indigenous students themselves are caring for other people with disabilities.

All right, I'm on page 5 of the slides now. This is a chart which is looking at the results of the 2015 survey of disability, aging and carers. It has a lot of data on it but there’s two particular things here I wanted to draw your attention to. Arrow 1 is looking at the experiences of discrimination, okay? So, the experiences of discrimination due to disability were almost twice as likely than non-Indigenous people.This is what they actually experience. So when we're thinking why aren't people putting up their hand saying, "I'm having a disability", the reality is for Indigenous people with a disability, discrimination for them is double that of the general population. The other thing I want you to have a look at is the second arrow down here, it's pointing to the graduation rates or the students coming through with disabilities past Year 11 in High School standards. Now, in 2012 that figure was 39 per cent. In 2015 that figure rose to 52.7 per cent. So that figure is increasing. The Indigenous students with disabilities who are getting higher levels of education and coming into our TAFEs and universities are on the increase. This is why it's very important that as practitioners, teachers, support workers, that we are aware of this significant increase occurring.

Next slide. White questions, Black answers. Now, looking through the literature, and I'm going to look at some of these barriers today, it is evident that multiple barriers exist for Indigenous students, multiple barriers exist for students with disabilities and at that intersection of being Indigenous and having a disability there are enormous barriers. Now, the important thing is that these are different for each person. Thus, there is a real need to listen to your students and identify their needs. This webinar is going across Australia. The experiences that are being experienced by students on the outskirts of Sydney will be different to those being experienced by students in Kalgoorlie. We must listen to our students and identify what their needs are. All right, from the literature, barriers include poor access to quality education from preschool to year 12. Now, the implication here is that if you haven't had that strong foundation in education, then you haven't got the foundational learning skills, learning how to learn. One of the things that I have been involved in for the past two years, my husband wasn't well so I went back to the classroom, and I was working in local schools. And it was so evident when children had had no access to early childhood education, how they presented in the classroom if they didn't have that foundational skills of learning how to learn. So, that's the first one, if a child hasn't had access to strong foundational educational experiences, then that puts them behind the 8-ball to start with. Unemployment. This is another barrier which has major implications for our Indigenous students with a disability. For our students both the world of education and the world of work may be foreign not only to the students but also to their families. Students may be studying in an environment of economic stress. So much of what our students actually get is from their families with families talking about, “Okay, well, maybe you should do this subject or that subject. Maybe this career path is something that would be of interest to you. I notice that you are very good at this. Perhaps you could do this sort of work”. If there's unemployment, unemployment is the experience of the family, there is no capacity to be able to do that support and that mentoring at home, or knowing where to reach out to. Incarceration. Now, in response to the call-out for this webinar, I had one of the attendees who is here today, he actually sent quite a long response through and I'm going to periodically call out, I will call him "Peter", Peter's responses. He wants to stay anonymous because it's giving his experience as an Aboriginal support worker and I think it's quite valid to hear his voice here. At the Pathways 14 Conference I asked people to put up their hands and say how many of you are supporting students who are incarcerated? I was really quite surprised to see that a good 50 per cent of people had their hands up in the air. Our incarcerated students, and they are our students, our incarcerated students may not have access to the internet or to the learning resources and the support of other students. That is a big barrier, if you are an Indigenous person with a disability and you are in prison. Also, too, personal, family or community experience with incarceration may impact on a student's personal confidence of succeeding at studying and transitioning to employment and a career. Now, I am just going to read this from Peter, which is the name I'm giving him, and he is saying that our jails are brimming with Aboriginal people with disability compared to the resources and funding required to support Aboriginal communities in prevention and more recently the percentage of Aboriginal women being sent to prison has risen. More data to justify why funding should be directed to non-Aboriginal organisations whose headquarters are 150 kilometres away in large regional centres and I think that's tongue in cheek there. But this is a real problem. And as support workers in universities and TAFEs we need to be aware of the needs of our incarcerated Indigenous students with disabilities. Another barrier is poor health and access to health services. Now, the implications here may be that students are impacted by either their own poor health or the health of their family members for whom they carry carer responsibilities. Now, remembering back to that survey we were looking at previously where 13 per cent indicated that they were caring for other people. So, if you're sick, if you're not well, if you've got major health problems, that impacts on how you engage with your study and your capacity. If your children are not well, if your family are not well, that has a big impact and it's a barrier to your success.

Next slide. I'm just moving this around here. So page 11. Accommodation. Now, this is a big one, and it's a big one in our cities where accommodation is so expensive. The ideal of having a nice quiet desk where you can sit down with good lighting, do your study, get your work done is not the lived experience for so many of our students generally, but certainly for our Indigenous students with disability it is a big challenge. Students they may not have secure or appropriate accommodation conducive to studying. So, when we're thinking about how we can mitigate those barriers, thinking how, okay, how can we provide better accommodations in our institutions to support the study? Okay. Limited expectations, and again this is coming through the literature. The implication being here that students may not have mentors in their family and community that believe in their ability to succeed in higher education or have the capacity to encourage them at times of difficulties. If people don't believe in you it's very hard to believe in yourself. And if people have got limited or no expectations of your capacity to succeed, then that in itself becomes a barrier to your life's happiness and your life's success.

Next slide, page 13. Cultural perspective of disability and the cultural interface with higher education support services. Now, the implications for this are that the students may not recognise that their particular challenge is labelled as a disability for which assistance is available. And the students may not wish to identify and adopt what they perceive to be a deficit label. Now, remembering back to that info graphic that we were looking at and that the lived experience of discrimination is double that with our Indigenous people with disability than it is with the general population. They're not imagining this. It is happening to them. And so is it little wonder that people don't want to be shackled with a label which they believe is a deficit label? I wear my glasses and I can see well with my glasses when I'm reading; I'm not disabled while I have got my glasses on. If I take them off I can't read at all. And if I haven't got $500 to pay for them, I haven't got the capacity to get the glasses to ensure that I can see. So, we need to be thinking about this when we're putting up barriers for the types of support that our institutions are prepared to offer.

Page 14, this is continuing with this. Students may find that the requirements for verifying their entitlement to support onerous. Think about your institution. Think about what it requires people to do. Think about the bureaucracy that maybe even your own office is creating for students and the barriers that that's causing for people to put their hands up. Students may not have undergone the testing required by support services. As I mentioned, I’ve just spent two years in the classroom, school with the little ones and you would see the children who had gone through the assessment processes and had diagnosis, that they had NDIS packages and they had been able to jump through the hoops for the requirements were getting at times one to one support. Whereas other children whose family hadn't been able to engage with the system and/or hadn't been able to afford the assessments were getting no additional support. Huge implications.

Okay, page 15. Remembering that our Indigenous students with a disability have a disability and there's access barriers that relate directly to whatever that disability is, be it both diagnosed or undiagnosed. And students may not be aware that their education provider has a legal obligation to provide learning materials in an accessible format. And therefore they won't seek alternate formats or text to enable access. Working with Ros back at Macquarie University, this was something that we saw quite often, of students just trying to cope, they saw that, okay, well, in one instance a woman was legally blind and was not getting any alternate formats at all. Because she just didn't know that other students who presented with the same disability were able to get either large print or e-text or access to technology. So, this is quite a considerable barrier. If someone has undiagnosed dyslexia for example, they may not realize that there is a reason why they can't read. They may just think oh that they're not academic, not recognising that other students who have the same/similar challenges are actually getting support and using text to speech technologies, et cetera. And that's what I have talked about here, about the assistive technologies, even knowing that those assistive technologies exist, knowing that even on their computers that they're using or their iPads or their phones, quite often that there's inbuilt assistive technologies that they can access if only they were aware of it. And as I mentioned, students may interpret their inability to engage with learning as a personal shortcoming rather than recognising that support is available for what may be a learning or sensory disability. Geographic location. Now, as this webinar is going out across Australia I'm sure many of you will have tales to share about this. But if students don't have access to good public transport, they may have issues about not wanting to leave their families to go and study, students may not have access to the internet, if they've got caring responsibilities and it's onerous to get back home quickly that may cause a major problem. Being a long way away from libraries or other support services, that can cause a major barrier for students.

Page 18. Barriers for Indigenous students with a disability are multiple and real. And as institutions there is much we can do to support our students and mitigate the impact of these barriers. Now, I want us to quickly look at the current approach of our institutions in supporting Indigenous students with a disability. During the last election, I went through an audit of our websites of 40 universities to actually peel through the services that universities were providing so I could get a snapshot. I was going to re-run that during this year, during the election. However, with the increased number of private universities now, that task is beyond the scope of this research. But in 2016 I looked at the then 40 universities. And 35 of the university disability support services did not indicate support services available to Indigenous students. Of the five universities that did indicate support available to Indigenous students with disabilities on the websites, three of these achieved this just through a design element of having a link to all student services, including Indigenous student support services. It was just a design element that mitigated that barrier. But so few of the universities were actually doing that. So, if your university isn't doing that, that's something that can easily be addressed. One university actually had the acknowledgment of country on every page of the website which then hyperlinked back through to the Indigenous student support page. Again, a simple design technique that can direct students through to where assistance is available for them. Now, none of the 40 universities had information on their disability services website regarding the availability of Indigenous staff for students to contact. Now, I'm going back to Peter's response here because he actually mentions this as well. I'm just trying to see if I can get to the part where he talks about this. Here it is. He says, "I work as an Aboriginal disability consultant" and he goes on about how many people are doing this role, which is not terribly many, "I feel there is a need, there needs to be more skilled Aboriginal people advocating in full time permanent positions to support Aboriginal people to attempt or finish online or face to face technical education. I can support this statement by saying some Aboriginal students actually ask me or my colleagues if we are Aboriginal before they continue”. So, not having information or having those links with your disability support units for Indigenous staff is a real barrier and something that can be addressed and that's what is happening here. And 38 of the 40 universities had information about Indigenous support services so that they had something there, but again the link wasn't coming back through. And two of the universities didn't have any information. Now, the two universities that had no information about Indigenous students were actually the private universities. And the private universities are the ones that have gone through the roof now as far as being set up. And the changing nature of higher education in Australia is something that I believe is impacting negatively on our Indigenous students with disabilities. I'm flipping through this quickly so we can get to time for everyone to participate if they so wish. 33 universities did not indicate support available for students with a disability on their Indigenous support services page either, and none of the universities had information regarding male or female counsellors available for Indigenous students. When speaking to the participants in my research, this is something that came out from their lived experience, was that the women really wanted to speak to Aboriginal women, and that the men really wanted to speak to Aboriginal men. So, none of the universities did that. None of the universities had information regarding assistive technologies available to Indigenous students and only 7 of the universities had information regarding employment while studying for their Indigenous students. Now, there was a lot of positive things that was happening to the idea of having supportive spaces for Indigenous students, our universities and TAFEs are getting very good at that. Providing that academic and administrative support, again, very well done. The tutoring and getting that out, well done again, and support with finances, et cetera, as well and alternative entry pathways. But only seven of the universities provided the opportunity for the students with a disability to present directly for help without supporting documentation. Really, when you work in a university it's easy to think, well, this is what has to happen. There's this process and you have to go through it. And we lose track and lose idea of how onerous these processes we put in place are for students. 33 universities required students to provide documentation from a specialist medical or allied health practitioner prior to the process for support being able to commence. So 33 out of 40. Now, one university even noted a 10-step process for all students to proceed through in order to receive a learning action plan and then they noted that the action plan only went for 12 months and noting that once it lapsed they had to go through this 10-step process again and they would need to apply for and get that approved before they would get any further assistance. Now, I don't know how you feel about that but if it was me, I would just think this is just too hard, forget it, I'll try it by myself, I'll try without the support. And I believe the research that I'm conducting is showing this is exactly what's happening. People are giving up on the systems that we're putting in place and they're saying it's too hard. And they're suffering as a result of it. So, what can my institution do to improve support? Okay. I'm sure that's the question that everyone has come to this webinar with today. What can you do? What can I do, in my institution to make sure that we're meeting the needs of our Indigenous students with disabilities? Okay, when we're speaking with our Indigenous students and their support networks, we need to listen. That's the big thing, listen. And be committed to responding appropriately. Okay. So, if our processes and requirements for support are creating barriers, if we're really listening to that, then we're going to change them. You might say, “Well, I’m only at level 7 or 5 or whatever you are at the university or TAFE, I am not senior enough". And I say, yes, you are. If you're not, talk to your boss, talk to your boss's boss. We have to be advocates to ensure that the path is smooth to enable people to engage with the services that we offer. If there's a reluctance to be saddled with a deficit label don't insist on using them. Normalise the support requirements of the student. Offer assistive technologies, the same as you may for any other technology to support success. If you are teaching a student and they are having trouble with spelling you would say use spell check or Grammarly. You don't make them feel bad about it you just say, "Hey, did you know this technology can help you?" Why do we have to make it such a big deal to show people how to use assistive technologies that can make their life easier for them? Show them how they can use the speech to text technology so that they can start getting their assignments down without having to be able to engage with a whole lot of spelling upfront. Now, this is an important one. Work shoulder to shoulder with the Indigenous support staff in your institution. If you're joining this webinar as an Indigenous support staff member I’d say work shoulder to shoulder with the disability support staff. To ensure that support’s coordinated and responsive to the needs of your Indigenous students with a disability. Ensure that the disability staff and, for that matter, I believe it needs to be all staff of our institutions, our teaching staff, our administration staff, are committed to ensuring a culturally safe environment for Indigenous students with a disability. And be aware of the perspective of disability that may be held by Indigenous staff and students. Don't assume that just because someone is from an Indigenous background and that they are on staff as a lecturer that they will have an understanding of the disability support needs of the Indigenous student with a disability. And please, oh please, and I know I say this for Peter who is listening, too, don't forget the needs of part time distance and online Indigenous students with a disability. Our responsibility is the same to them as it is to our internal students. If you have students who are studying online, they haven't got the same opportunity to be recognised maybe by their face to face teachers and saying, "Ah, Harry there is having trouble seeing I notice, he may need additional support". We need to reach out more to those students who are studying remotely and we certainly need to reach out more to our Indigenous students with a disability who are incarcerated.

Okay, page 26 is the references that I've used for this. Look, I'm just going to share a ..., Darlene, are you there?

DARLENE: I am indeed.

SHARON: Do we have any questions that have come forward?

DARLENE: Not at the moment. There’s just been one statement that I can share with you so if people have any questions for Sharon please put them into the question or chat pod and I will ask them. So do you want to just...?

SHARON: Yep, while we're waiting for that to come up, and if anyone has anything to mention, that’s fine. I'm just putting this up. I'm now working with the Centre for Disability Studies. I have been here a whole 12 weeks now and am absolutely loving it. We run a number of workshops. We're based here in the medical foundation building of the University of Sydney. The one I'm trying to..., so the website there is cds.org.au. I'm wanting to draw your attention to this workshop - Supporting and Serving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Who Have a Disability. This is going to be a half-day workshop. Click on event details on July 26th. The reason I want to show you this is because this will actually be presented by Indigenous people who have a disability. Roslyn Sackley who I have mentioned, who is my mentor and has been looking after the advisory group who is providing support while I do this study, she will be joining me. And also we're hoping Maria will be coming up from Canberra as well. So I would encourage people to register for that. And that will give people the opportunity to speak one on one with people who have actually gone through the systems. Their stories are absolutely amazing. Both Ros and Maria have been working towards various studies since the eighties so they bring to the table a wealth of information about that and there is a link here to a YouTube video that was a project that Ros and I worked on while at Macquarie University and it was using universal design to develop accessible e-books. So how are we going, has any more...?

DARLENE: Yep, we have had a couple of questions come in, Sharon.

SHARON: Okay. Great. I was going to say, if I don't have the answers hopefully someone else who is listening in will have the answers and they can pipe up, remembering that I'm a non-Aboriginal woman here. Okay, let's go.

DARLENE: Great. So someone has just asked about have you had much feedback or requests for advice after release of the desktop audit results re: students with disability and Indigenous specific supports?

SHARON: Have I personally?

DARLENE: Yes.

SHARON: No. Has anyone else listening?

DARLENE: We will wait for that one to come in. Someone said, just a bit of a data question regarding one of your first slides. You mentioned that 30 per cent of the study participants did want to pursue further study and 13 had caring responsibilities. Was that 13 per cent of the 30 per cent?

SHARON: Yes, it was.

DARLENE: Do you know what the other responses were other than caring responsibilities?

SHARON: Hold on, I'm just trying to pull that one up. They were caring and family reasons.

DARLENE: Okay.

SHARON: Yeah, caring and family reasons. Which comes back to, you know, looking after your family and looking after other people in the family who may have disabilities.

DARLENE: That’s great. Just someone is letting us know, Marcia from Torrens University, is letting us know that they're working..., they actually recently hired a disability and Aboriginal liaison person.

SHARON: That is fantastic news.

DARLENE: Yeah, and working very closely with a strong focus on engaging with our online students through a yarning space led by Rochelle Kudawoo. We are certainly increasing information available for both areas of support, which is fantastic.

SHARON: That is fantastic from Torrens, too, that is just wonderful.

DARLENE: Yeah, and just another statement which I think a number of practitioners would find, that part of the issue of providing supports are the funding structures, where departments are competing with funds, i.e. the Aboriginal learning units and vice versa are not referring students to support services but trying to provide the services within their own unit and not a specialised service.

SHARON: I think that that is why I was bringing the comment in that there's..., we have to get together with our colleagues, we have to collaborate. And you know, we're in the same organisation, even if we're in different departments and different budget-lines. Even if you've got some disability support staff who are prepared to have their names listed on the website as contacts and vice versa so that at least that initial contact can be there. Having collaborative meetings so that if someone has presented to the Indigenous support and you have decided, okay, that's where the funding is coming through for this particular support, bring in a disability support person to sit in on that meeting to see if there is a no-cost solution that can be provided to that student.

DARLENE: Yep, definitely. All right, well that's all the questions we've got at the moment unless anybody wants to write another one. It was very informative and I think those last few slides, Sharon, has given us all some things to talk to our workplaces about. I think it's really important that we continue to challenge ourselves on how we are meeting the needs of students with disabilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. It's fantastic to have a moment to reflect on that. So I will certainly be searching the University of Tasmania’s website now, doing my own desktop audit.

SHARON: I wanted to, as I said to do the audit again to see how things had changed. And for those of you who have walked down this path of a PhD, it is a P-plate to be a researcher and you've got to make sure that the scope doesn't blow-out too much. And it was..., my preliminary was showing that things actually aren't going in the right direction and that even some universities are dropping off their acknowledgment of country, which is a concern, or watering them down which is a shame, too. So I think if everyone can do the audit of their own that's a good idea.

DARLENE: Excellent. Well, thank you for your time. Just before we go I would like to plug our next two webinars. We have one coming up on the 5th June which is the inclusion of people with disability in VET project, which is the overview of the project that was undertaken by PWC last year, so we will get a bit of the outcomes from that. And then on the 12th of June, we will have Troy Weller from Microsoft presenting on the inclusive classrooms. So both of those are coming in June. Hopefully you will be able to join us. We have had lots of feedback from people and we just got a thank you from Canada as well so Roberta excited to hear about what is happening. So thank you everybody for joining us, and thank you, Sharon for the very informative webinar and hopefully we will see you all at the next one. Cheers.

SHARON: Okay, bye.​