DARLENE:  Hi, everybody. It's Darlene McLennan here, the Manager of the Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training and also the NDCO for North and Northwest of Tasmania.

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge that I am on Aboriginal land and I'd like to pay my respects and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Palawa people.

I want to pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and I'd also like to acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal community for continually maintaining their identity, culture and Aboriginal rights.

Thank you, everybody, for joining us. This is a first for us, to actually run a panel discussion like this. So, it's a bit scary and daunting. I was trying to sleep last night, going, “Please don't worry about it, brain.” I'm glad it’s here, because it will soon be over but also for the fact that it's a great topic. It's been probably one of the things that has been really requested from the sector, having discussion around this topic. It's fantastic.

Just a little bit of housekeeping before we start. If you want to activate your closed captions, you click on the CC button, which is on the tool bar, which is either located at the bottom of your screen or at the side or at the top depending on how you have your Zoom is set up.

You can increase the lines appearing in the caption box. You just need to click on the small arrow on the right-hand side to do that.

If you're having any technical difficulties, you can email us at [admin@adcet.edu.au](mailto:admin@adcet.edu.au).

Today we'll do an introduction of our panel members. They will provide a bit of an overview of their role, and Kerryn will give us an overview of her project, and then I’ve got some set questions and a case study. Then we'll open up the floor to questions.

We won’t be able to ask people’s individual questions by raising hands, because we can’t guarantee that your sound and so on will work, but I will ask them.

David Swayn, who is the NDCO for QLD, is managing the questions, and he will shoot me questions as we go.

The reality is we are not going to get to all the questions, because we've probably already had 15 questions prior to this.

As I said, it's a really exciting topic that people are wanting to engage.

Just another thing to remember when you do ask questions, if you can do that in the chat box. You can actually choose to either ask panellists or a panellist and attendees. I encourage you to do that with the panellist and attendees so everybody can see your questions. This way we can have a really interactive session where some people may be able to answer your questions who are joining us today or it may just start some networking opportunities for you to catch up with each other or to have some discussions offline today.

That's all of the housekeeping over and done with. Now I would like to welcome our panel members. Today we have Michelle Campbell, who is a Senior Manager for Student Equity and Support at the University of Newcastle. Welcome, Michelle.

We also have Michelle Anderson, the Manager of Access and Inclusion, Student Engagement Uni, at the University of South Australia.

We have Kerryn Lester-Smith, the Director of an NDIS Project with The Gordon. And Meredith Jackson, the Lead Vocational Teacher from Disability Services in TAFE QLD. We are well represented across the states and territories, which is great. Thank you, all, for joining us. A special thank you to Meredith, who is sick today. She has dragged herself off her sick bed to join us.

What we are going to do is just go through each of the panel members. Michelle Campbell has suggested that I call her ’Chelle so that I don't get confused. At one point we actually had another Michelle lined up to be a part of it, and that was going to be really complicated. I'm glad we haven't. But we might start with you, Chelle Campbell, and if you could just talk a little bit about your role.

CHELLE:  As the Senior Manager of Student Equity and Support, I have a wide portfolio of staff, including the staff from the accessibility team, who support students with disability.

My teams also look at the intake for counselling, at students loans and welfare. I have an equity and diversity coordinator and someone who looks after threatening, concerning and worrying behaviours.

In terms of accessibility and our interface with the NDIS, my experience here is having supported students through planning meetings and then follow-up meetings with Local Area Coordinators as required.

DARLENE:  Great, thank you, Chelle. It's hard to call you Chelle. I will have to practise. We might hand over to the other Michelle, Michelle Anderson.

MICHELLE:  Thanks, Darlene. I'm the Manager of Access and Inclusion at Uni SA, South Australia. That means I manage the access and inclusion team, people who work directly with students to develop access plans and advise around their accessibility needs and supports. I also have responsibility for developing our LGBTQI+ initiatives as well.

I have a background in disability and I also worked for the NDIS for three years here in South Australia as an assistant director of service delivery. I have that background knowledge, as well as the interface with now higher education here at the university. We have not had a lot of students disclose their plans to us, but we do know that they exist and we have had some people we've referred on to the scheme.

DARLENE:  Great. Thank you. Over to you, Meredith.

MEREDITH:  Hi, everyone. Thanks, Darlene. Meredith Jackson. I coordinate the disability support for TAFE SkillsTech, which is our large trade TAFE.

I work across four campuses. I work on the front line with the student establishing their plans. I organise the support for them. I'm an educator. I do a lot of education with our teachers on supporting our students. I'm also the TAFE Queensland ATEND rep.

A large part of my role is in the educational side of it and working very closely with the students in identifying what the expectations are of the courses that they're going into and ensuring that the reasonable adjustments are in place for them.

We've got a team of about 10 that I manage that go out in our classrooms and provide that support. Thanks, everyone.

DARLENE:  Brilliant. Thank you. Finally over to you, Kerryn, if you could explain your role and what project you're working on.

KERRYN:  We've been working across the TAFE network in Victoria for about a year now looking at the TAFE response to the NDIS in particular. We're based at the Gordon in Geelong, but we're working across the TAFE network in Victoria. There are 16 TAFEs in Victoria with multiple campuses.

My background is as an OT and I have worked in the social insurance sector for the last 12 years. The basic overview of our project is to look at collaboration and increasing opportunities for industry engagement for the TAFE network and also to look at students with a disability and increasing inclusive and accessible education for students with a disability, and also looking at TAFE as an inclusive workplace.

DARLENE:  Brilliant. Sounds like a fascinating project.

KERRYN:  Yeah.

DARLENE:  Great. Thank you for that. We have been chatting by email, the group of us, about some of the questions that we might ask. As I said earlier, there's probably thousands of things we can kind of ask. I suppose the first one we're wanting to focus on: have you noticed any changes or any benefits, negative or positive, for students with disability in your universities or TAFEs with the introduction of the insurance scheme?

I don't know if, Chelle, maybe you can answer that one?

CHELLE:  I would think that we have a number of students with high support needs and high care needs who have been more readily able to attend university, because of the support they've been given through the scheme. For example, previously a student who would require personal care on campus might have had to have been met by a parent, taken off campus, only done one subject at a time, whereas now with someone to attend to personal care needs and to be able to come onto campus, these students can be carrying out a part-time or in some cases even a full-time load, thanks to the supports that are in place.

DARLENE:  Brilliant. Does anybody else want to answer that question at all?

MEREDITH:  Hi, it's Meredith here from TAFE. As Chelle said, we've had an increase of external support workers that are coming onto the campus and providing that additional support to the students outside the scope of our role as educators, and that's been a really positive sight to see.

We've just found as the educational provider we've had more call to provide information around the scope and the role of the external worker and develop some guidelines around that, just to ensure that they understand what their role and responsibility is. Workplace health and safety, and what being a participant in a TAFE environment is.

One of the other areas that I've noticed myself is an increase in people that are actually case managing or advocating for the students, calling up and making contact with me about the supports available from the educational perspective at TAFE for the student, which has been positive, but I've also noticed that some of the organisations that they come from are not familiar to me. I think there's been an increase in service providers working with the students in regard to putting educational plans together and advocating and making these calls on behalf.

I've also experienced quite a gap in understanding. This is probably more of a negative that I've come across; the people that are ringing up and advocating don't have much grounding in what a vocational educational course is all about and what the inherent requirements are. That to me has been a concern.

We're in a fortunate place where we do pre-entry enrolment before they enrol. We are capturing them and navigating students at times into a more appropriate course.

DARLENE:  Further to that is the issue around the role of the staff employed by the TAFE and then staff employed through a person’s NDIS package.

You said you're often having to teach -- well, inform the NDIS funded staff about their role but also about, has there been need to clarify what the role of your educational staff is and what your role as a support person to the individual has been?

MEREDITH:  Yes. That's quite common still, to get that clarification. It can be very grey. I've had situations where the student has been in class with a support worker on one side and then an external support person on the other side. So, we've just had to get some clear grounds there on what the role is.

As well in situations where we've got a student coming in with an external support worker funded through NDIS, we've had to be very transparent and clear with our communication with our educators to make sure that they understand what the role is there. I have had some good feedback and then I've had some questions around, you know, what is the role of those people coming in. I've had feedback at times that the external support people have been seen to be providing educational assistance. There's been a little bit of a challenge there. It's just continued education with our teachers as well so they're managing it respectfully in the classroom.

DARLENE:  Can you give us some ideas of the NDIS funded roles? Do you have some examples you could give people?

MEREDITH:  It could be as far as helping the student to get to transport, helping the student navigate transport, get into the classroom, helping the student settle into the class environment. So, some personal socialisation skills. You know, monitoring how the student's wellbeing is, being available there to support them if they need to with, you know, personal needs, dietary needs as well and then also, I guess, communicating anything appropriate to our staff as well whilst they're on campus.

DARLENE:  Thank you. Does anybody want to add to that at all?  All good? All right. That leads us into the next question around the grey area. I think this is often one of the grey areas that we kind of come up with in terms of the intersectionality between the NDIS and further education. I think one of the grey areas may be perceived as that communication. Especially as a further education provider, there is an expectation that a student comes ready to learn and able to participate fully, and then often especially somebody on the autism spectrum, for example, may really struggle to understand the hidden agendas or to communicate effectively with lecturers or teachers.

Is there experience you've had in those grey areas?  Michelle Anderson, you've kind of popped up there.

MICHELLE:  Yes. So, there is some confusion we found with families around what they can use their funds for and what they can't for those who are on the spectrum and who have a plan. We do provide some level of participation assistance support from the university, but that's quite limited in what we can fund. So, we do talk to the parents around how they might like to use some of their support funding to support -- or to the student themselves. We find that the students on the spectrum still have significant parental and family involvement, as they should, in terms of supporting them and that's been a struggle for some levels of the university, accepting that this person doesn't come ready to just pop into an adult learning environment with all the prerequisite skills that they're expecting. So, yes, that's a big grey area for us, I think.

DARLENE:  We probably jumped too much into that. That's kind of the case study we're looking at today.

MICHELLE: Sorry.

DARLENE: No, it’s my fault. That is one of the grey areas. Are there any other grey areas people are thinking that they could identify at this stage?

MICHELLE:  I notice that Meredith made mention of assistance with transport. I just want to note that, as soon as the student crosses the threshold into the university grounds, transport within the grounds of the university is the responsibility of the university. In our case, we've just purchased a new van. It can carry two wheelchairs and six passengers and it is staffed by students who are our mobility bus drivers, and we've now got a new campus in the city. So, sometimes we're transporting even between campuses. Because travel training the student to catch the shuttle bus like everyone else is not always possible.

So I just need to note that, yes, it’s a student's responsibility to get here. But after that it's our responsibility. I think, Darlene, that might lead us into potentially a conversation later around transport while on placement as well, which is going to prove difficult for a number of us.

DARLENE:  Any other grey areas as well?

MICHELLE:  Probably just for us is where it crosses the line into -- and this was touched on before -- where a support worker crosses the line into academic support, and assignment writing, assisting with breaking down an assessment task, proofreading assignments, things like that. That quite a murky area as well.

Often we get asked for tutor support for assisting with those things that we can't necessarily provide but could be provided in their NDIS plan.

DARLENE:  That's that challenge too. For people to succeed in their study it comes back to that sense of, without that -- the reality is universities can't support 30,000 or 40,000 students with individual unpacking of assignments. They might have bulk sessions of individual sessions that students can book into for 15 minutes or half an hour. A student on the spectrum, for example, might need more support than that.

I understand you could name that up as tutorial support -- not tutorials, mentoring support. That may be another way that people need to frame that so it's not actually academic support; it’s actually mentoring the students, which does come under the insurance scheme. So, it's not necessarily academic support.

The impact for somebody on the autism spectrum with their executive functioning, the disability impacts on their executive functioning. That's where you can fight with the insurance scheme, but it's still a very grey area. That's good. Are there any areas or services or supports that you feel neither are kind of taking on? Are there any gaps in those areas? No-one is doing that?

MICHELLE:  Not here.

DARLENE:  Yep.

CHELLE:  I was just going to say, I think one of the big problems that we continue to see, remembering that the Hunter region was a trial site back in 2014, is the increase of young people who aren't ready for university. And not so young people sometimes. This is not the right place and the right time, but the increase in those people being questioned and necessarily referred potentially by NDIS staff saying, “The university provides really good support. Maybe you should go to the university and they'll be able to help you.” So, it's that expectation building that might have happened with a planner and then the student lands here, and that creates an awful lot of additional work for us to communicate just what we can provide and what is reasonable.

DARLENE: It's quite frustrating, isn't it?

KERRYN: I would echo that from a Victorian TAFE perspective as well.

MEREDITH:  Certainly TAFE as well.

DARLENE:  Probably the outcome for that is some more development around the planners and LACs, would be good. While we're having this break, we do have a poll that we're just going to ask people a question. So, what we'll do in that time is we won't talk, we will put the poll up on the screen for people to -- are you right to do the poll, Jane?  Hopefully she's not dealing with too many back-end problems here.

JANE:  Yes, I am. If you could read out the question?

DARLENE:  That's fine. I'll read out the question and then we won’t talk for a little while. So, people who are needing the captioning, we won't talk each either until we complete. Are you right?

Do you feel you are well informed about what NDIA should fund and what the further education sector should fund to support a student to succeed in further education?  So, it's a yes or no answer. So, if people could take the time to do that and we'll just wait for one minute.

Okay. Hopefully you've all had a chance to vote. Are you able to share the results, Jane?  Have you learnt that part yet?

JANE:  Just wait on a sec. Just a few more still coming in.

DARLENE:  Okay. Just while we're waiting for that, this grey area around transport on campus -- I think it's really clear around if you are going to a -- you were studying land care, for example, at the university and they were heading off on a field trip and you're in a wheelchair, yes, they would need to provide transport, accessible transport, to that for you. The university would have to be responsible.

So, Michelle, have you had clear guidance around this? I suppose the question is about orientation and mobility. So, for people who are blind or vision impaired, where does orientation and mobility end and start for NDIS and the university versus the physical needs of a bus to get you around campus or a moped to get you around campus?

MICHELLE:  The way I look at it is just compare it to whether another student requires it or not. If you are doing a course and part of that course requires you to attend a field trip somewhere and it's part of your responsibility as a student to do that independently, then you could in theory use your NDIS plan funding for that, because it's not being provided by the university as a standard. Does that make sense?

Whereas if the university is providing a bus or some sort of transport to the field trip then it's the university's responsibility to provide whatever accessible transport that person might require. Other people do not require mobility or orientation. That is purely related to a person's eyesight and disability condition for which they're eligible for the scheme -- then that is, in my mind, very clearly an NDIS responsibility. Because no other students are getting mobility and orientation.

CHELLE: You’ve just taught me something.

DARLENE:  Sorry, Michelle?

CHELLE:  I said Michelle has just taught me something then, because from my experience orientation and mobility training I would still contact Guide Dogs and they would come out and they would spend time prior to the semester and during the semester and even in the second semester when classes change, would come back and do some further orientation to new classrooms, new spaces, et cetera.

DARLENE:  And you would fund that?

CHELLE:  No. Guide Dogs would just say -- and at the moment we haven't had an instance where we've been asked for payment of any kind by either the participant or us. It is just a service that they provide.

DARLENE:  Previously they did, because they were bulk funded. Previously. Now that they're not bulk funded under the insurance scheme they are individually funded, there have been some questions raised. We certainly asked NDIA to clarify around this issue, and they've come back saying, no, they do see that the NDIA are actually responsible to fund that.

MICHELLE:  Good. So they should.

DARLENE:  And that it sits under the principles. Jane, there are principles. There's two kind of important pages that you can access. There's the COAG agreement, which provides the principles of agreement between the further education sector and -- all mainstream services and the insurance scheme. And then there's also some operational guidelines, which we discovered today again. So we'll put that into the chat box for people to access. It will kind of unpack some of these grey areas. Not all of them, but it gives you a little bit of the principles behind some of the thought about who is responsible as a mainstream service.

MICHELLE:  When they're decision-making, the NDIA always go back to the series of questions. If a support answers yes to all of those questions, then it's clearly with the NDIA's plan to fund.

DARLENE:  Okay. Just another question around study goals. So often as practitioners, you know, you may come across students with disability and you may need to provide advice on how they can ensure their plan actually meets their need. What study goals do you see working well in students’ plans, if you've actually worked with any individual students or seen anybody's plan?  Are there any generalist principles?  Chelle, have you come across anything in this?

CHELLE:  Thanks for putting me on the spot, Darlene. That's okay. Look, I think there's been a great variation in students who have had additional, let's call it, mentoring support included in their plan and those who haven't.

The variation, I think, exists in terms of those who are self-managing as opposed to those who have a coordinator of supports, which from a meeting I was at with a participant last week, they're being minimised. So, plans are going to be either agency managed or self-managed. If you're self-managed, there's a lot more flexibility in how you use some of those funds. I'm talking about ethically using them. I'm not talking about doing anything to undermine what they're there for, but there is some licence, I suppose, in looking at what is in each of those categories and how do I best use that funding to support my need, whether that be my educational goal or whether that be capacity building in some other form.

So, it depends what that initial conversation has been like, how good the plan is and then how creative the student is about how to use what's in that plan, but also how to effectively use the on-campus services that exist for everyone regardless.

DARLENE:  Anybody want to add anything to that?  You're all good?

MEREDITH:  Sorry. At TAFE we work under our RTO standards, which do require us to undertake pre-entry enrolment and interviews with our students. So, at that first point of contact we're all about informing the students to make the right choice, identifying whether the entry level’s appropriate, establishing a good entry level. In TAFE Qld we have career counsellors that the students can access to assist them to formulate a plan. If they are students that are working with our team and they have an accessibility plan, we establish what their short and longer term goals are in regard to their education. Part of our team's role is also to be tracking and making sure they are working through okay and achieving their goals. Like any student, all of our students are provided with that opportunity to get that feedback and make adjustments to their plans in education as necessary.

DARLENE:  Brilliant. I might take this opportunity to do a plug. Hopefully a lot of you know that on ADCET we actually have a resource called -- it's ultimately called Getting the Right Support at the Right Time from the Right People. So, it's an NDIS pre-planning toolkit for people with disabilities entering into further education. That's an NDCO developed resource. It's broken into eight booklets for the different disability types. The main disability types. It kind of unpacks what your expectations should be around what’s the university or TAFE providing you, and what the expectations are around NDIS. We'll put that in the chat pod. If you haven't heard of that, take a look at it.

We might move on to the case study now. We have talked a little bit about autism, and it is a student on the autism spectrum. We probably have answered some of these questions, but maybe something else might fall out of this.

Jack is a 20-year-old student on the autism spectrum and is an NDIS participant. He's received an offer to study at a university next year. He will live on campus. His mother is concerned that Jack doesn't manage his finances very well or cook for himself. The impact of his disability means Jack has poor organisational skills and, if focused on a task, can go a day or so without eating or drinking. Jack finds it hard to understand the unwritten rules and nuances of social communication. He struggles to start and finish conversations and can come across abrupt and rude to others.

He has a keen interest in science, microbiology and biological chemistry, and plans to start a science degree doing three subjects a semester. Despite his passion and knowledge of the subject, it is identified in his planning meeting at university before starting university that Jack is going to struggle with long lab classes. He'll may find it difficult to align time with questions in exams. He can become overwhelmed by what to study. He will struggle being in an exam room with others as noise and activity would distract him, and also he has hypersensitivity to people, lights and noise.

Jack also will find it difficult to work in small groups. He won't approach academic staff if he has issues, and he doesn't manage his time well. He becomes overwhelmed with new information and he struggles to make friends as he can't initiate conversation and he feels people judge him harshly.

So, just over to the university stuff for the moment, what kind of things would you put in as a university to support Jack to succeed in his study?  So, Chelle or Michelle?

CHELLE: Luckily we have a specialist peer mentor program. So, we've trained students who are in their second, third and fourth years of OT, teaching, psychology degree to be peer mentors for students with autism and related conditions. Those students are paid by us. We have regular meetings with them for supervision purposes, and they also run a social group. The case study talks about the academic side for Jack as well as Jack struggles to make friends. The mentor who can be available to talk to Jack for up to an hour each week, and will also do some social stuff with him, can support that.

Anyone that's living on campus and struggling to cook, to clean, et cetera, I would say NDIS can be providing support through funding someone to come on campus and help with some capacity building for Jack, whether that be daily -- we know we have students who have someone come to them each day, make sure they get up, make sure they take their medication and make sure they get ready in a timely manner to come to campus. That depends very much on the evidence that that person has gathered to say that that support is required. There are cases that I know of definitely where those things have helped and have made an awful lot of difference to the student's attendance and their ability to function within the new learning environment.

DARLENE:  Michelle, anything for you?

MICHELLE:  Yes. Similarly to Michelle, we have a student transition and retention STAR, mentor program. Again, that's paid students who we assign to new students, particularly those on the spectrum, and they provide support for orientation around campus, for social connections, for all of that kind of beginning process.

We would also talk to that person about considering a reduced study load. We have an opportunity to offer them an alternative exam venue, alternative exam arrangements around his anxiety in those situations. We've started putting in participation assistance, particularly for students on the spectrum who go beyond what the STAR person does. Participation assistance is focused more on the academic planning, what it means to map out all the assignments and things you have for the term or the semester, looking at setting target dates of when things need to be done by. All of that executive functioning stuff that they struggle with.

I agree with Michelle in terms of anything related to activities of daily living would be -- are supposed to be assisted with funding from the NDIS.

DARLENE:  So with participation -- I suppose for me those participation supports, that's once again that grey area where, through your plan, you actually could get mentoring support to help you unpack, to help you communicate with your lecturers and so forth. But the university is also looking at supporting with that or is it more in class?

MICHELLE:  We try not to do in-class support. There's been a number of academics who are struggling with the behaviours that some students are exhibiting in class. We offer lots of training and support to them, but obviously they don't tend to take that up. Certainly not before. They might later, but certainly not before.

We've had a couple of situations where a student has been so-called banned from a classroom because the lecturer refused to let them back in without side-by-side support. So, we've had to negotiate through that.

DARLENE:  But you still wouldn't see that as NDIS, because I suppose often behavioural support -- especially in the TAFE environment, if someone can't manage their behaviour or whatever is -- it's up to the NDIS to support.

MICHELLE:  We would support them accessing that external to the university, and then we kind of do a phase back in approach in terms of support. But we try to give them the participation and mentoring support outside of the classroom wherever possible.

DARLENE:  Okay. That's great. Well, a year later Jack hasn't done as well as he'd hoped. He got a distinction in one of the units with the area of interest, but he failed two other units that were more generalist. He decided he wants to study ICT now and is looking at attending his local TAFE.

So now, Meredith, Jack is coming your way. What supports and adjustments will you be offering Jack and what suggestions can you make to help him manage his NDIS plan?

MEREDITH:  Okay. The first thing I would do with Jack is meet with him, arrange to meet with him, sit down and have a conversation and get some more information regarding his career interests.

I mean, I would be digging down to find out why is it that he's wanting to pursue a pathway in ICT. We don't know whether that was the area that he succeeded in at university. You know, often we get students come in that want to go down a particular pathway because they've got a friend or relative or someone has encouraged it. I'd have that conversation with him. I would be referring him to go and meet with our careers counsellor, who would do some further work in that area just to really gauge what it is that he wants to do and is it ICT. Also at that time I would look into where his core skills are. So, you know, having a look at what was it that impacted on his success in the university. Possibly he's got some gaps in his skills with his reading, writing, numeracy, his learning as well that are impacting on his learning. So, not just the impact of disability.

Once we determine what it is that Jack wants to do, and if it is this ICT pathway, I then look at how the course is actually delivered. What's our timeframe, what modes of delivery? Where? Is he on campus? Is he external? I get verification of disability and I also ask for any previous educational plans that he's had. It could have been through school or if he's got something from university that enables me to determine and have conversation with him around what worked well for him. It's all about building their awareness and confidence as well to advocate for themselves and talk about what is it that they feel needs to be put in place to support them.

Then would formulate a learning plan using similar educational adjustments Michelle mentioned before around planning/time management, you know, whether we need to put supports in place regularly, having some disability support tutoring or whether it's just around that engagement and planning with the teacher.

That's pretty well how we would handle it. Also determining whether they've got the NDIS plan in place and what supports there that he feels outside of our educational role that would be an enablers for him.

DARLENE:  Kerryn, anything you wanted to add to that one, about the scope of your project?

KERRYN:  When we were researching one of our projects, the common areas in TAFEs, whether that be canteens, courtyards, et cetera, that the staff in those areas, whether that's in the bookshop or those other areas around the canteen, et cetera, that they all have sufficient training and awareness of interactions with students with disability. That's made a huge difference for some TAFEs in Victoria.

DARLENE:  Brilliant. Excellent. Well, thank you for that. I'll let you know how Jack goes in his journey to education. And his journey with NDIS.

We're just now going over to the questions. Before we do that, we might put up the second poll, Jane, if you're right to do that.

JANE:  Yes. With the first one, 66% said no and 34% said yes.

DARLENE:  Very good. Okay.

JANE:  So that's sharing it. You should see it all.

DARLENE:  Did you feel you are well informed, 66% said no and 34% said yes.

Now we'll get the next one up. While Jane is doing that, there is a question here around if people are registered with NDIS as a provider. So, we might ask that after we ask this question. Do you think planners and LACs are well aware of the supports students could have in their plans to support them to succeed in further education? So, once again, it's a yes or no answer. Do you think planners and LACs are well aware of the supports students could have in their plans to support them to succeed in further education? I'll just give you a -- so I've been stopping talking because I was worried that the captioning doesn't work, but it appears to keep working so that's good. Yes. So, are people registered as a provider?  Is the university or TAFE a registered provider with the NDIA?  Michelle Anderson?

MICHELLE:  Not yet, but I know that it is in consideration.

DARLENE:  Michelle?

CHELLE:  Not something we've considered, no.

DARLENE:  Meredith?

MEREDITH:  No. TAFE Qld aren't considering it, either.

DARLENE:  For --

MICHELLE:  Darlene, I’ll just qualify that. The section of the university that's considering it would be our health sciences division in terms of delivering services in a clinical setting on a fee-for-service basis.

DARLENE:  Very good. I think ours is as well.

KERRYN:  There's a couple of TAFEs in Victoria, but one in particular that has registered as a provider and actually provides personal support as a provider.

DARLENE:  I'm sure Tas TAFE won't mind me talking about this. We've had the NDIS here in Tasmania for about six years now. They started off as a registered provider to do just that, personal care and so forth, because previously the state government did fund some support workers on campus within TAFE, especially for the cert 1s they were doing for people with significant disabilities. They registered. But then they found the difficulty of permanency. So, if staff were working consistently over the time they would become a permanent state employee, but they may not necessarily have the students the next year they would actually be receiving the funding in their plan.

They now actually outsource it to an NGO to put the support in to the class, so they've got over that situation. Yes. Okay. Keep going. There's lots of questions. Thank you, everybody. We're not going to get to them all, but I'll ask a few now. Somebody has actually had some feedback from deaf students as well as Auslan interpreter providers that NDIS does not allow students to use interpreter funds on campus, even if it's for social events such as student clubs. Has anybody else had that experience?  About the social versus class support? No?

CHELLE:  I have paid for an Auslan interpreter to attend a social event, because they're so few and far between to me that little bit of additional assistance is good in terms of reputation for the university.

DARLENE:  Yes. I suppose it should be in the individual's plan, anyway. They should have that flexibility to be able to use their dollars to prioritise their Auslan, but it would also be good for you as an organisation, if you've got an event, you would hope you would be encouraging them to have Auslan interpreting if people have named it as that's what their needs are. But I still think if the individual is wanting to have a conversation in the cafe with his mates or her mates, that isn't the responsibility of the education provider. Okay.

Can NDIS cover content tuition and/or training in technology?  I think the training and technology, does anybody want to answer that one?

MICHELLE:  If a piece of technology has been purchased with NDIS funds, then any training associated with that should be paid for with the funds. That's pretty much the kind of basic way to work it out. So, if they only require the AT or software in a specific educational setting, then you might say that that's the institution's responsibility. But if it's something they already have and use in multiple domains, then it goes to the NDIS plan.

DARLENE:  Yep. Any other comments for that?

CHELLE:  No, other than if it's a reasonable adjustment it's obviously the university who are providing the training.

DARLENE:  Okay. Now, someone has asked: can NDIS refuse wheelchair support to a student as long as he or she is studying?  I don't quite understand that question. Do you think that would be more personal care or would that be assisting someone out of their car?  Can anybody interpret that question?

CHELLE:  Or is someone saying the student needs a new wheelchair in order to navigate the terrain of the particular university and a new chair isn't being funded? Because I do know of someone at the moment who has had a particular chair that they think they would require and that an OT has assessed them requiring has had that knocked back by the agency, and it's gone to appeal. I don't know what the question is asking, but it could be anything.

MICHELLE:  Contextual really.

DARLENE:  Yes. There's still a lot more questions around that divide between academic support and personal support. Describe the role of university employed assistants for students alongside NDIS supplied support workers?

Is there anything else people want to add to what we have already said about that to make it a little clearer? Or do you think we have covered it off?

CHELLE:  I would like to know how Michelle is managing to fund these student transition staff to work so closely, because we would have so many students that would require that it's just financially not appropriate.

MICHELLE:  It's only for those -- it's not for every student. We allocate between 6 and 10 hours only.

CHELLE:  Okay.

MICHELLE:  That's how.

DARLENE:  I've seen a lot of examples of people successfully receiving mentoring support. Being able to fund mentors within their NDIS -- have it in their NDIS plan, and that's to help them communicate with lecturers to help them unpack their study load. I think it's really important -- if that's going to set the student up to succeed and it’s over and above what universities and TAFES can provide, then the NDIS plan, you would hope, would be flexible enough to be able to utilise that. But it's using the right words, I think.

We’re talking about that prior to the forum today. Sometimes you have to know the right words to use, because if you went into your planning meeting and said, “I need tutorial support, the LAC or planner would say, “No, no. That's the university or TAFE's responsibility.” But if you say you need mentoring support to help you navigate, to communicate effectively, to manage your time and to unpack your assignments, they would probably fund that.

Helping students understand the wording that they use is going to impact on their thing. Okay. So, just finishing up, what about the communication lines between further education and the LACs? Has anybody had some good experiences or are people seeing how we can better facilitate more communication between the NDIS funded providers and the further education sector?

MICHELLE:  I was approached by one of our LACs here in South Australia earlier in the year. They approached me and said, “We'd love to come and meet you. Find out what your points of contention are, what you offer, what we offer, what the interplay could be.” I thought that was really great. They were really interested in understanding what we could offer as a university and how that would then interact with a plan perhaps. I was just going to say, only one provider has done that; none of the others have.

CHELLE:  Darlene, I think for those universities that have NDCOs working with them, there's a great opportunity for the NDCOs to start and open up those lines of communication with LACs.

I know I've got relationships with a number of LACs, but they change over time, and it's really hard to keep tabs on who they are.

DARLENE:  Yes. I mean, I suppose it's for the NDCO program, I suppose, looking at that strategically, too, at how we can work with the NDIA to ensure that their staff, as a broader thing, are skilled and have knowledge in this area.

One of the things I've recently discovered, I think there was data collected on outcomes for NDIS participants. I think 33 per cent felt that they couldn't study what they wanted to study or receive the supports. I'm probably talking out of school because I haven't got the quote, but the numbers were quite low in regard to people accessing further education. I think there's a lot of work that still needs to be done to ensure that people with a disability see that as a viable pathway in and can succeed.

CHELLE:  I suppose the other thing we ask when we register a student for support is, do you have an NDIS plan? Because for some they say, “No, what's that?” And then that opens up another opportunity for us to have a conversation, and there are quite a number where we've said, “It seems that you're eligible. You need to check your eligibility and here's how you can do that.” We ask that question specifically upon registration to either have that further conversation or look at whether what they've got -- and we won't go line by line through a plan, but we'll talk to them about those things that they might consider next time they go for another preplanning meeting.

DARLENE:  Michelle Anderson, do you ask if they've got a plan?

MICHELLE: We haven't been, but that's something I'd like to integrate into our system. We just can't record it. We ask verbally, but we haven't got a place to record that at the moment. It's just in a note.

DARLENE:  Yes. Meredith, what about for your TAFE?

MEREDITH:  Yes, I have been starting -- and I know some of my colleagues at the other campuses have as well -- starting to ask that with the students, and I also get in that position where the student or the parent if they're under 18 will actually say to me, “What is that?  I don't know what it is.” That is an opportunity to give them some information and refer them.

On the LACs and networks, I know my colleagues across TAFE have asked about improving on how we actually have opportunities to meet and get to know who our regional LACs are and work closer with them. I think that's a really great initiative.

DARLENE:  Excellent. Kerryn, is it something that your project is looking at at all, if TAFEs in Victoria are knowledgeable around who has plans and who doesn't?

KERRYN:  Yes. We've been working with the NDIA and our LAC providers, there are only three in Victoria, to see whether TAFE can provide training to the LACs. So, we are going through that channel as well through our project, but I've been actively talking to TAFEs about establishing the connection and relationship with their LAC and ECEI partners.

DARLENE:  Excellent. Looking at the time, it's gone quickly and I'll be able to sleep tonight. So, any final comments from people?  You're all good. We've got some fantastic questions we'll go through. If we haven't answered your question --

JANE:  It's Jane here. We will pop the poll up.

DARLENE: I have to get used to this. The outcome of the poll is, do you think -- interesting. No. So, 91 per cent of people think that LACs and planners don't have – are aware of what kinds of supports to help students succeed in their study. That's very telling. That's brilliant. Thank you, everybody, for participating in the polls. Thank you for putting in questions. I've noticed there have been answers as well. That's been fantastic. We've had over 50 questions asked. That's a huge interaction, which is fantastic. Thank you so much to the panel members. It's a huge ask. We've had lots of toing and froing, but I really appreciate your time. It's invaluable to start these discussions.

We will be sending out a survey. I hope this is just one of many. I think there are lots of different topics we could do in panel discussion, and we could probably even do more around the NDIA/NDIS space as well. So, thank you, everybody, for your time. Just a quick plug: our next webinar is on 17 October, which will be another panel discussion. Now that we've started we're not going to stop. We've actually inviting students who have a learning disability to talk about their experience within further education with learning disabilities. So really looking forward to that one. But I thank you the four panel members for letting me play in this space for the first time. It's something we haven't done. I always like challenging myself with new things each couple of years. Thank you, everybody, online. Thank you to the captioner as well, and Jane and David in the back end. It was fantastic to have you all join us and we look forward to catching up next time. Thank you.