GABRIELLE O'BRIEN: Hello, everyone. Thanks for joining us today for the ADCET webinar, leveraging students' voices to strengthen student support. My name is Gabrielle O'Brien. My pronouns are she and her, and I'm one of the Project Officers and Content Developers with ADCET, which stands for Australian Disability Clearinghouse for Education and Training. This webinar is live captioned today by Michelle from Bradley Reporting. To activate the captions, click the CC button in the toolbar that is located either at the top or bottom of your screen. We also have captions available by your browser. And Jane will add that to the chat box. I'm joining you today from the lands of the Turrbal and Jaggera people in Mianjin, or Brisbane, Queensland, and I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. And I extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today and acknowledge their ongoing connection to country, land and sea. Feel free to put your country in the chat to share where you are at the moment. I also want to acknowledge that this week is NAIDOC Week, which is a special week for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to celebrate their culture, history and achievements. This is a great week for non-Indigenous Australians to learn more about the world's oldest continuing culture and provide allyship and support. Before we begin, just some minor housekeeping information: please ensure your mic is off and phones are on silent. This webinar is being recorded. The recording will be available on the ADCET website in the coming days. Throughout the presentation, feel free to use the chat box with us and each other, but remember to choose everyone so that you can all read what you have to say. If you have a question you would like to have answered by a presenter today, please use the Q&A box. If you have any technical difficulties, please email admin@ADCET.edu.au. So, today's webinar is presented by a PhD candidate, Elizabeth Hitches, who is located with the University of Queensland, but staving off floodwaters in Sydney today. So we have her backup mentor Dr Stuart Woodcock with us today. Thank you, Stuart, for your support. Hopefully, Elizabeth will have no technical difficulties, and it'll be all smooth sailing. Elizabeth's webinar today draws upon a study of university students' voices to explore what makes for effective student support and the ways in which we can all enhance and improve that support. Elizabeth's findings talk about going beyond the tangible and assisting students to feel empowered through effective support with often minimal resourcing. Thank you, Elizabeth, for your time today, and I'll now hand over to you.

ELIZABETH HITCHES: Thank you so much. Thank you, everyone, for joining here today. I think it's really exciting to know that we have so many people who are passionate about supporting students and that we're all connecting in this same place together. I'd also like to thank ADCET for inviting me to connect with you today. I really appreciate that. Sorry. My slides just aren't shifting. There we go. Okay. I'd like to also acknowledge that I'm presenting this webinar from the lands of the Darug people. And as Gabby mentioned, I'm in one of the Hawkesbury regions. So my thoughts are also with everyone in the Hawkesbury and other regions that are experiencing flooding at this time. I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we all are joining from today and to recognise their valuable contributions to Australia and global society. I pay my respects to their Elders, ancestors and descendants, who continue those cultural and spiritual connections to country. And I'd also like to acknowledge and thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are joining this webinar today. I'd also like to just say feel free to take a break at any time throughout this webinar. I know it's a topic that we can be quite emotionally attached to and quite passionately invested in. So feel free to take those breaks, check in with yourself, and take time for that self care. We have some contact information down the bottom of the screen for lifeline. They are a confidential, free, 24-hour service. So if you're feeling any discomfort, please feel free to reach out to them. You can call them on 13 11 14, or there are also options for text and web chat. So multiple ways that you can engage with them, and those details are going to be placed into the chat. So please keep an eye on that. I'd also like to make a note on the language used. So you'll hear me use person-first language today, but I'd like to recognise and support individual personal preferences, including those preferences for identity-first language. I'd also like to draw our attention to the fact that sometimes we use that term 'disability' and all of the students who might be grouped under that term, not all of them may identify as having a disability. So that's an important point to recognize; as language in this space is really important and it's also always evolving and dynamic, conversation in this space is really welcomed. And I think it's only through that kind of conversation that we can build that truly inclusive society that we all want to be a part of and engage in. In terms of the terminology use today, you might hear me refer to students with additional needs and/or disabilities, and that term encapsulates everyone who is eligible for those academic accommodations or that accessibility support at university. So that's not just limited to those students who identify as having a disability, but it also includes those students who might identify more with having learning difficulties, chronic illness, illness, or difficult personal circumstances, whether that be, maybe caring for an individual or going through some challenging times. So, let's think about the importance of equitable access and opportunity for all. And when we mean all, we mean all students in our environments, whether or not they have a disability, but there are some points we need to consider. So within the structures and the timeframes of our universities and some of the processes, the way things are done, the way that people typically engage, there might be some challenges presented for students with AND. So, for example, there might be challenges accessing learning resources. So, for instance, if you're a student with vision impairment and your learning materials are not provided in an accessible format, that's going to present a barrier to your learning and you are being able to access that material. There can also be challenges participating to your full potential. So, for example, if you're a student who might have a chronic illness or might have high levels of social anxiety, when you are engaging in your classes, there might be times where the way that the activities are set up or the different modes that you're engaging in may not support your full participation and may not give you those moments to really show your best learning and your best performance. Students may also face some challenges performing at the level that they're capable of. So, for example, if you were a student with dyslexia and the exams are set with very tight timeframes that don't give you any extra reading time, then that can also prevent you from achieving your best and showing everything that you know in the time available. So we need to be thinking about how we can provide that equitable access and opportunity for all, and be sure that those barriers that might be in our learning environments aren't impacting students' learning and aren't impacting what they can achieve. So why is it that we should ensure equitable access and opportunity for all? Well, the first point is that universities are legally required to provide these accommodations and these reasonable adjustments. So it is legally inbuilt that we need to be doing this and making it equitable, but it's much more than that. So it is in all of our best interests that students can actually achieve their full potential and be able to learn to the best of their ability. For students when they graduate from university, we know that there's often a higher likelihood of them gaining employment and many other positive aspects that come with that completion of a degree that can positively impact across the lifespan. It's also really useful when individuals have these personal aspirations and these career goals that they can meet those goals, because then they get to contribute in ways that they're really passionate about to our community and to our broader society. So it's in all of our best interests that we're supporting students to succeed. So what do we know about student support in post-secondary education? So what do we know about how we support students in university environments, for example? In terms of accessing student support, we know that these services can be in very high demand. So there might be a number of students who are requesting these accessible options. And particularly around assessment times, these services can get very busy. We know that there can also be limited resources. So when we look at the number of students who are accessing these services and the number of staff who are working with these students, we can have a very high student to staff radio. And in terms of consultations that are available, if many students are looking for these consultations around similar times, we may have limited consultation times available, which can be quite challenging if students want that in-depth interaction. What we do know as well is that accessing support from accessibility services often requires either that medical evidence or that health professional evidence. And it's not always easy to get this. So it may carry financial costs, particularly if you're seeing specialists and medical professionals that charge a sum, or if you have to see them regularly. And we also know that it's not always easy to get that final evidence. You might be undergoing diagnosis. So in the case of autoimmune conditions, at times, it can take about 8 to 10 years to go through that process and have these conditions diagnosed. And until that point of diagnosis, these students may not be able to say, this is my particular condition, and this is why I need to access these services. So there can be some challenges around accessing support. We know too that for students themselves, when they have limited knowledge of what's available, or they might believe that the services don't cater towards them, that may actually hinder them seeking that support. Students can also feel a sense of guilt about accessing support and reaching out, or they might have a fear of stigma. And that fear of stigma could even be that there might be negative repercussions even into their career if they access these particular services. We also know that some students will only seek support when they're experiencing that severe level of distress. So it takes that build up of those barriers and a build up of those challenges to get them to that point where they say, okay, I need this support. So if we look specifically at Australia and what students' experiences might be, unfortunately, there are actually limited studies that are looking at student support for students with AND in an Australian context. But what we do know from those studies in this area is that the support services can help a number of students and they are helping a number of students. So it's helping students to succeed during challenges, it's helping them to progress with their studies, and something that I think is really important, it's also supporting students wellbeing during these times. And I think over the last couple of years, we've all realised just how important it is to be supporting each other's wellbeing. So this is a wonderful finding that these support services are doing that. We do know though that whilst it's effectively accommodating some students, it's not sufficiently catering to others. So there's a mix of experiences. For some students, it may be only partially catering to their particular and individual needs, or there might be some inconsistent or limited targeted support. So it caters to some of their needs, but not in a consistent way, or it may limited in what it can do for their particular circumstances. So what these studies then advocate for is a more student-centered approach. And the way that we can do that is listen to students' perspectives, which is where this study comes in, leveraging students voices. So before I talk about how this study came about and what the findings were, I'd firstly like to thank all of the students who anonymously shared their experiences with us. I know that in some cases, it can be really challenging to do that, and it's making yourself quite vulnerable in some respects to share those experiences, but it can also be really empowering. And we had some students who broke that anonymity and chased us down after the surveys to say thank you, and wrote thank you notes in their survey responses, just saying that, you know, it's really nice to be asked and it just shows how important it is to privilege students' voices in this space. I'd also like to thank my mentors during this study. So Associate Professor Stuart Woodcock, who is with us here today and also Dr. Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan and Dr. John Ehrich. So about this study, what did we do? Well, we had a student survey and it was really important that this survey could be anonymous. So students could tell us everything that was positive, everything that was negative if that was happening, and even if the experience was just neutral, they could share that really honestly and without that fear of repercussions. And we ended up having 60 students who responded that they had sought support with the services even now or in the past. And they also had experiences with AMD either currently and in an ongoing way, or perhaps in the past. And for some students, this was only one type of AND, or it might have been a combination of different types. So it might have been something like disability and chronic illness or having illness in difficult circumstances. So what we did is we had some really broad demographic questions just to make sure that students did still feel anonymous. So we had broad age categories. We asked students for their gender, the year of study, and what type of AND they experienced. But what we really were interested in here were the following open-response questions where students could really share their experiences. So we asked students to explain how effective the support was in accommodating their needs, what the positives and the negatives of that support were, if they felt that there was anything that was not offered that would've been beneficial to them, and then if there were any areas of support that could be improved upon. And these are the findings from today. So beginning with what students thought was effective and/or positive. Students' responses fell under three main themes. So we could see that students were saying it was effective or positive when it was personalised or student centred, when it was accessible, and also, when it fostered student agency and empowerment. So we're going to go into detail on these now, and I have some example quotes to show you. And that was probably the hardest part of preparing this webinar today was having to narrow down all of that data just to a couple of quotes that gave these examples. It was really wonderful to have all those experiences that students shared. So whilst you may only see a couple of examples on each slide, know that these are just some of the quotes that best capture what students were saying out of that whole set of 60 students. So in terms of effective or positive support, in terms of how it was personalised and student centred, students said that it was really effective when they felt that their needs were understood by the staff and when they were responded to in an individualised way. So when it really catered to their particular needs. So what students mentioned was feeling understood and being accommodated for, a personal plan, feeling that my issues were recognised, saying that it was fair, that it was flexible to my needs and was understanding to the circumstances. We also saw students say that it was really positive when they had a feeling of care. So they felt that the support service staff and the service showed that they cared and were compassionate to their situation. And one of the points that really fed into this was receiving some personal communication and follow up. So students mentioned it was very effective. I received regular check ins to see how I was travelling, or they said personal contact and care. So is that really strong emphasis on it being personalised for them. In terms of those more tangible accommodations, so students were saying it was really positive when they had those assessment accommodations that catered to their particular needs. And these could be things like when it came to exam time, having quiet rooms with fewer people, extra time, having software available like computers to take their exams, or even having a reader writer. Now, outside of these particular accessibility accommodations, we also have students mentioning the importance of extensions. And in the context that this study was run at this particular university, the extensions were managed by a service outside of the accessibility services. So students were saying that having these extensions provided time for them to complete their work. And as one student says, "Alleviating the pressure for me and allowed me to have enough time to recover as well as still do well in the subject." So it's helping students to still achieve and complete that work, but it's also taking the pressure off them to some extent, it's reducing that stress and giving them time to recover as well without feeling that it's going to impact their grades. In terms of what was accessible, so accessible support being effective. Students mentioned that it was really positive to feel that staff were approachable and willing to help. So as one student said, "I felt like the staff member was there for me and wanted to help." And what we saw in the data was this repetition of words like friendly, nice, willing, supportive. Students were really making note when we asked them what was effective and positive, that this was really crucial for them. Now, when these services can be really busy, it was also important that students had timely access and that they were seen rapidly. And as one student mentioned, it was a great help when I desperately needed assistance. So when we think back that some students only access support in moments of extreme distress, we can imagine that in those moments, how important it must feel to have that timely access. We also have students mentioning that when the service communicated with teaching staff, this also helped to enhance accessibility and it aided how that support was delivered. So students mentioning that the service contacted the unit coordinators for them and contacted the conveners for them. So there was this idea that the service was managing this on their behalf, and students were finding that a really positive and effective experience. And something that's really crucial for us all to remember is that these university support services provide free and credible support to students. So it's really well summarised in the students quote, where they say that it's a free service. It's very unlikely I would or could have used it otherwise with educated practitioners. So when we think about the challenges of gaining support, sometimes the financial costs that are associated with it, it's really nice to know that we have services that are aware of the higher education environment, aware of accessibility, and of course can cover that overlap between the two. They're perfectly positioned for that. And it's nice to know that students recognise this. Now, students also mentioned that it was really effective or positive when this support enabled student agency and empowerment. So for instance, when it facilitated their informed decision making, and when it enabled them to take those steps that they needed to take. So one student mentions, it gave me some informed opinion and perspective, and another mentions that it was helpful contacts and advice for short term action. So it's very much tied to that decision making and that action taking. So supporting students to act with agency. Students also mentioned that it was about developing a strategy or a plan with the service. So it was very effective to, as students say, gave me go-to for issues, had to plan. And these were not just short lived. One student mentions strategies I can work on for the rest of my life. So that support that they're receiving at university could have many positive effects that extend beyond that period of time that they're with the university too. An interesting finding was that it helped to reduce or manage stress. So when students had their needs effectively accommodated, it was helping them to manage stress. So we have students saying, it's a big improvement over the semester that I saw them. It took a lot of stress off, which allowed me to focus on my studies more. We also have some really interesting things coming out about self efficacy. So students having that confidence and that belief in themself and their ability to pursue their goals. So students saying it helped me to believe in myself. And it encouraged me not to give up on my degree and goals in life. So there's some really excellent aspects of wellbeing coming out of this support. Now, in particular, for students experiencing difficult circumstances, it also provided an outsiders' perspective or a non-judgmental listener, which students appreciated. So it was about having that neutral third party with no bias, a different perspective, and someone to listen and not to judge. Okay. So onto the ineffective or more negative experiences. And you'll see that there's a very close alignment between what was effective and positive and what was ineffective or negative. So it's almost like whatever students were saying was effective and positive for them. When that was lacking, that's when the support was not as effective as it could be, or was providing some negative experiences. So we have that lack of personalised and student-centered support. We have challenges to the accessibility of that support and also where there's limited facilitation of student agency and empowerment. And let's take a look at those in more detail. So in terms of that personalised and student-centered support, students were saying that it was not as effective, or it was more negative when that support was generalised. So it was more general. It didn't suit their particular needs. So students were saying, quite generalised, didn't actually suit what I was struggling with, wasn't accommodation for different strategies, an assumption that all illness of one type is the same. So it wasn't catering to their particular needs. In particular, for some students with chronic illness, they also mentioned that they felt that they were feeling that they needed to fit into the certain predefined boxes to access support. So one student mentions that there was a category which I didn't meet of being able to get lecture or tutorial notes because the condition I had didn't involve not being able to write. This was not fair, because even though I can write, my condition meant that I couldn't even get out of bed in order to make the notes that I needed. So the students recognising that there's this particular accommodation or support that is available, but feeling like because they don't fit the boxes to be eligible for that support, that's why they're not getting their particular needs catered for. And this is echoed in a few other students' comments as well, but here's another example here. So when first getting support, I felt there was no compassion, basically, do I fit the services boxes? So they're feeling like rather than that really personalised and student-centered support that caters to their needs, they feel more like they had to fit what was available rather than what was available catering, particularly to them. We also see that students are mentioning there was a lack of accommodations beyond exam provisions. So this particular says, it didn't help me during the semester, often needed to take a day off from tutorials, no support in getting any missed notes or information. So when they're having absences from class, there's no way for them to have access to those learning materials. Another student mentions, I was meant to have morning classes, but this was outside of the services control. So in this particular case, when we think about maybe student's energy levels or symptoms, sometimes there might be particular times of day that a student performs best in or can participate best in. And this student was saying that there wasn't that accommodation for their particular needs. In terms of the challenges for accessibility, this one, unfortunately, is not surprising, the waiting time. So I've kept a few other quotes in here rather than narrowing it, just to show the scope of what students are experiencing. So students mentioned, they show that they cared, but responded so late that it was hardly useful. They were clearly really busy and didn't have a lot of time to help. So there's that sense that there are so many students accessing this service and there isn't time to suit their particular needs too. And when we think about how long that waiting time might be, we have one student here saying it was a long waiting time, two weeks plus. And when we're in those moments of distress, or we're actually not able to access our learning materials or what to progress with our studies, two weeks can feel like a very long time. We also have students talking about the non-availability of appointments, so needing that consultation time, but not having those appointments available, and unfortunately, for some when they reached out for support that their emails weren't returned. We also have mention of difficult processes when initially accessing the service. So that need for evidence that highly detailed medical history, lots of paperwork, but what really stood out and what students were really saying was that there were difficult processes accessing extensions, and those disruption to studies requests. So students saying, having to provide constant medical certificates for the same condition when I needed extensions or students saying, I was in hospital, but if you submit your disruptions late, you can't get extensions. So these students saying that particularly when you might have ongoing needs, ongoing requirements, having to repeatedly provide evidence for extensions can be really challenging. And when you've also got a lot happening in your life, having to provide this within limited timeframes can also be a challenge. And students are also calling for that help to locate and fill out the documentation, particularly when they were registered with the service. So what this really raises concerns about is that we know that this is obviously a challenge across the system, because we have students reporting that rather than going through those difficult processes, we actually have teaching staff who are providing alternatives. So teaching staff providing a low-key arrangement, which is working well or students sending in that request just to the teacher and the teacher accommodating that request themselves. So we know that we need to look into those processes if we've got a number of parties recognising that it's difficult, not just our students. In terms of other ways that accessibility was challenged, students mentioned that it was really quite difficult when they thought that they disclosed to the service and didn't sense that there was that communication of their needs between the service and the teaching staff. So as one student mentions, it feels like a waste of time and energy because there's no communication between conveners or tutors, or didn't coordinate well with other services, like helping me contact the services to get extensions. So students are reaching out to the accessibility services and hoping that when they disclose their needs there, that covers everything that they don't then have to go on and disclose to other areas of the university if they don't have to. So that limited communication was deemed ineffective by them. Some students also mentioned that it felt like it was accessible in the short term, but there wasn't a sense of ongoing support. So a feeling that it concluded and had no follow up or that it was a short term fix, and it didn't feel like the support was extended across a long period of time. We also have students mentioning that sometimes they felt a bit intimidated or felt that services were unapproachable. So a bit intimidated, uncomfortable, sometimes, not meant to be judgement , but judgement . So it's good to recognise that when seeking support, it can be an empowering experience for some, it can also be quite a challenging experience for others. And so some of these negative feelings can be a challenge for accessibility. And then we have that aspect coming up again about student agency and empowerment. And what students were saying is that the support was ineffective or negative when they received limited informational guidance. And that made it difficult for them to make those informed decisions or take the actions that they needed to take. The students mentioned things like there was no extensive knowledge of how to fix my problems at uni. They seemed as in the dark as me, needed more guidance on what best to do in my situation, or support was there, but I was still left confused as to what to do. So they're looking for that information to be able to help them make those decisions and move forward. So what does students suggest as improvements? It may not be as surprising to see that we have these similar themes coming up again. But to me that validates it, these are obviously quite important for students if we're seeing that effective support has personalised and student-centered care built into it, that it's accessible, that it supports student agency and empowerment. And when we look at what students are asking for more, it's about that personalised and student-centered care that improved accessibility and supporting student agency and empowerment. So students are suggesting that we have that increased level of understanding and responsiveness to students' particular needs. So this is in contrast to that more generalised support and that feeling that their needs were understood just in a more general sense and not in that individualised sense. So students are talking about that they'd like to have a more personalised plan and more personalised special considerations offered, or perhaps more understanding from that first contact. So when they're sick and they're already stressed, having that extra level of understanding, sorry, I think I'm losing my voice. The students with chronic illness or illness, they were mentioning the need to increase that support when the students were unable to attend classes. Sorry. So as one student mentions, the need to be able to do make up work or access notes, an option for flexibility on tutorial attendance. So this student says that one time I fainted before class and I lay on the floor just so I didn't fail. Sorry. I'm going to be just one moment. Okay, take two. Students also suggested that we examine the eligibility criteria for accommodations. So look into those categories that people fall into more closely, not at a superficial or generalised level. Look at how we can have a meeting with students to ensure that their needs are being catered for. Okay. So just a content warning that the next slide contains the material, which people may find distressing. So if you want to take a break, make a cup of tea, this will only take about two minutes to get through, but feel free to take a break if you need to. And of course we have those lifeline services if you need to reach out. So please take that up as an option if you feel discomfort. So in terms of that personalised and student-centered support, students are asking for that personal communication and follow up. So a follow up of people who access the service, to check on their progress and to provide additional support if needed. Students also suggested having someone to catch up with them to make sure that they were okay. And the part that seems quite concerning is that we have two students who mentioned that they were going through some really challenging mental health times and didn't receive that level of communication that would probably be appropriate and would've supported them through that time. So students are suggesting a callback, especially for people who might be suicidal and don't turn up to a session. So this student has disclosed that they have those feelings, has ended up missing a session, and then no one's checked in to be sure that they're okay. We have another student mentioned that when students are disclosing that they have severe issues and might be on the verge of harm to themselves or others, that they need that checkup after sitting and hashing out those issues. So how can we increase the communication for those students? In terms of improving accessibility, it was about that timely access. So how do we ensure that we have the speed of the processes there to help students in the most timely way possible, that we also have that time to help. And as one student points out this may, in some ways, be linked to more staff. Students also mentioned that need to improve those processes for receiving extensions. So having extensions offered without getting a medical certificate every single time, and also improving that paperwork required so students don't have to go through all that repeated evidence provision. I'm sorry. I'm really starting to lose my voice now.

GABRIELLE: Elizabeth, while you are having a bit of a water break, I'll just remind everybody that they can add some questions to the Q and A, and then we'll have those questions covered in about five or seven minutes.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much. We're worried about technical difficulties, but didn't think about voice difficulties today. I'm obviously not used to talking this much, so thank you so much for bearing with me. Okay. So students with chronic illness also mentioned that need for that ongoing support. So that long term assistance, particularly when their needs are chronic in nature, they're going to be ongoing for a period of time. So building in that long term assistance. In terms of improving accessibility, it was about that communication with teaching staff and university staff once students had disclosed to the services. So students mentioned communication with the university, so you don't have to explain yourself every other day, or coordination, that everyone wanted to help, but they often didn't work together well, like people organising my extensions, then communicating with my tutors. And as this student mentions, wouldn't have to explain myself as much and lecturer could more easily understand what educational support I need. So students are hoping that with that one disclosure to the service that their needs can then be communicated to the teaching and other staff. Students also mentioned that in improving accessibility, it's about that approachability too, and sometimes students are saying there's something quite professional as sterile about the offices that can make it intimidating to go in and ask questions. So we could also be thinking about how our environments are being welcoming and feeling approachable for students. In terms of student agency and empowerment, it was about providing that information so that students can make those informed decisions and take those actions. So students mentioned it would've been beneficial to have been told the correct information from the outset or to improve the information given. So students are really wanting that information to give them that agency and empowerment in their situation. We also have an implied need to support student agency and empowerment. So when we ask students, is there any support that you didn't receive, which would've been beneficial to you, what we were really hoping is that this would open an opportunity for students to say, yes, like, this is exactly what I need. Can we please do this? And many students were able to do that, but for some students, there was actually this implied need that we support their ability to do this. So as one student answered, yes, a lot, but I can't think of anything specific. It just simply isn't offered. For someone who doesn't know, it's not explained. So what they're saying is without knowing what's available to them and what's on offer and what's possible, it's really hard to actually advocate for your own needs and know what to request. So this is something really important for us to keep in mind. So then how do we leverage these student suggestions and experiences and what can we explore to enhance and strengthen student support? Well, first of all, I want to say, why leverage? So we have this idea of high leverage versus low leverage. If you imagine that we have to move this car, there's a car on screen, a yellow car, if we have to move it and we all got behind it and just pushed it, there would be a lot of effort on our part. And there would probably be very little gain, especially if I'm pushing it on my own. This would be a case of low leverage where we are putting in high effort, but not getting substantial gains. If instead, we look for the high leverage solutions, the way we can put in small effort for large gains, this is where we can really make some really good positive change. So in the case of the car, it would be turning on the ignition and pressing the accelerator. Small effort for a big outcome. And this is where the insider's perspective really comes in. So listening to students' voices, we can start to unearth those high leverage solutions. So I'm just going to have another water break, sorry. Sorry about that. Okay. So taking on those suggestions from students, how can we strengthen and enhance the available support? We can continue to provide the effective accommodations that students are saying are really catering to their needs. So things like exam provisions. We can also provide a feeling of care. And we know that this is supported through personal communication and follow up with students. We can ensure that we're catering to students' specific and unique needs. So really taking that time to understand and respond in an individualised way. And what can really feed into this are those ongoing discussions with students to assist in not only recognising those needs, but being sure that we're catering for students' needs in a really individualised way. We also need to consider how we might organise accommodations, which assist students with chronic illness when they're absent from class and teaching staff may be key to this. So students were asking for that flexibility and for those notes and that information. So perhaps if we take a UDL approach, if we think about how we can make our resources accessible, how we can provide flexible options for engagement, this might be key. We can also provide that feeling of approachability and a willingness to help. And we can also consider how that communication between students, the service, and teachers can aid support delivery. So how can we ensure that what's being communicated that students are aware of it and what level of information's being communicated. And this can also help students to reduce that feeling that they need to disclose repeatedly to others, particularly if this is an experience that they find distressing. We need to also consider how we can streamline those difficult special consideration processes like extensions. So if students are already registered for ongoing support, how do we make it easier for those short-term solutions like extensions to be given? Are there simple ways that we can grant those? How also can we improve those processes so that they as timely as possible, and that we are responding to students in a timely way. In terms of student agency and empowerment, we need to think about how we can provide the information and guidance that enables informed decision making and action taking. So what really fed into this was having that plan or those strategies in place so that students know when challenges occur, this is what I need to do and this is what I can do. This could also help support that feeling of ongoing support. We can also look at how we can support stress reduction. So we know that effective accommodations and extensions are doing this. And we also know that that effective support is helping students with their self-efficacy growth, having that confidence that they can achieve their goals and pursue their passions. So what are some key takeaway thoughts? We know that effective support goes beyond the tangible, so it's not just those tangible accommodations like exam provisions, it's also feeling cared about and supported. So feeling that the support suits your particular needs, and also that people really care. We know too that we can gain really deep insight into students' experiences when we listen to students' voices. So let's provide opportunities for this. And the final key takeaway is how might we all, all key stakeholders work together to strengthen student support. So working with students, working with support service staff, working with disability officers, teaching staff, administration, we all have this shared goal to increase inclusion, to provide equity, to support students to achieve, and to thrive in our learning environments. So how can we work together to do this? Now, this takes us just as some further exploration or extension on the findings. So thinking about the fact that effective accommodations reduce stress. When we actually have a look at some of the numbers and look at students who are receiving support and those who aren't, they are still experiencing similar stress levels. So that means they're having higher stress than their peers without AND. So we still have a problem with academic stress, and we know that this can not only impact student's wellbeing, this can also impact their learning and performance. So at the moment, the current research that I'm involved in in collaboration with Associate Professor Stuart Woodcock, Dr Melissa Johnston and Associate Professor Dean Dudley, is looking at how we can further support students to reduce their academic stress and thinking about how this can be done in a universally designed way and in a non ableist way and how we can actually develop this in partnership with students and also the stakeholders involved. So I'd like to say thank you so much. And thank you for bearing with some of the voice difficulties that I experienced throughout this presentation. If there are any follow up questions, even in a week or a year's time, feel free to get in touch. If you enjoyed the webinar, if you have thoughts on how we can support students, please feel free to get in touch. And my information should also be in the chat. Any follow up references are available too. So please feel free to browse those.

GABRIELLE: Thanks, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much.

GABRIELLE: Thanks very much for that. That was great. I totally understand the dry air that makes you have difficulty speaking. So we'll just give you a few moments to catch your breath. There are some questions that have come up in the chat. I'll just start to look at some. I really appreciated that you've got those three key things around personal centred care, accessibility, and empowerment. And I think the thoughts from the disability practitioners was about trying to balance the things that they do like personalised and student-centered care and support and accessibility and empowerment against the pressures of resourcing and staffing, especially in the current climate. So there were quite a few comments around that, but the first question that we've got here is from Karelle. Is it okay to mention suicidal support in class through Lifeline, but also asking students to reach out? I'm thinking of passing a presence list to make sure that all students come to lectures and tutorials, but explaining what it is not to judge them, but to support them.

ELIZABETH: I think having broader conversations around wellbeing is really important. I'm not sure about mentioning specifically words like 'suicide'. I'm not sure in case it could be a bit of a trigger for some students who may actually be experiencing that. I think what is really crucial is for students to know that there is support available and to know where they can reach out for that support. And that if you notice a student in distress that you can be someone who refers them onto those services. And in regard to knowing how to manage things like that, something I found really useful was a Mental Health First Aid course. And that taught me how to respond in really positive ways when I might be confronted by students experiencing distress, how I can respond in a way that supports them and also supports my wellbeing too. So this is not a paid advertisement for Mental Health First Aid, but I highly recommend that course. It gave me the confidence to know that I can do my best in those situations and help to support student wellbeing.

GABRIELLE: Oh, great. Thanks Elizabeth. The next one's from Sarah. Thanks for the amazing talk. She's a high school teacher. And when student disclose, we hear about it through a year advisor or similar person, can this or similar protocols be applied to the university context, or is it just too big and siloed? I think probably the school is the same as university, it's often the lecturers or the teachers that are the first point of contact, but how can those people make sure that their students are getting contacted by disability practitioners or being referred to disability practitioners?

ELIZABETH: Okay, so I think what I was taking from that question is how can some of these findings maybe be applied to that context, and I think, having that personalised support is really key and having that communication available. So if students are disclosing to particular people in the school, it's really useful when teachers get to know about that information, if teachers are being presented with that information, being sure that whatever support's available in the school is being employed to support that particular student. So if it's something to do with learning support, perhaps working with teaching assistance to work out the ways to best support that student, or if it's in terms of wellbeing, how they might be able to work with the counsellor to be sure that that student's one disclosure leads to that network of support around them and that they don't feel the need that they have to disclose repeatedly if that's quite a distressing thing to do.

GABRIELLE: Yes. Yeah, that is true. We've got a couple of questions around sort of process issues. So one of them is about, did I hear correctly extensions were managed outside the accessibility team? Are you able to share by what it was the team's process and another one around access plans, why were people needing medical certificates and requesting extensions? So these are probably very much related to those students that you were speaking about.

ELIZABETH: Certainly. So what happened in this particular context is that for students ongoing needs, they had access to the disability or accessibility services, but when they experienced some sort of increased need at a particular time, like needing to get an extension on an assessment task, that was dealt with a separate section of the university. So students had to provide evidence, upload that evidence to a more central portal. And it was that the staff working in that central portal that would then approve and pass that on to conveners. So it was quite separated from the accessibility services. And I think what students are saying is that it's quite interesting when you are validated for ongoing support with a particular service. And yet you struggle to get that short term support like an extension. So you're validated to be supported long term, but when the short-term needs arise, that's when the difficulties can present. So if we imagine a student, like a student with chronic illness who might have various moments throughout the semester where symptoms might flare up quite unexpectedly and unpredictably, having to repeatedly provide proof and repeatedly request extensions across their various subjects can be really time consuming. And if this does require a specialist to write that this extension's needed, then it can also be quite costly. So students were really asking for ways to simplify that process.

GABRIELLE: That's great. Elizabeth, I think there was quite a lot of comment about some of the systemic issues that universities are facing around siloing of activities and trying to maintain privacy as well as provide some seamless service to students. And I think probably these next couple of questions sort of talk about that. Nicole says there is a degree of inflexibility creeping into university systems due to workload. The inflexibility can be in the length of extensions. I'm wondering how others may be approaching similar situations in their institutions. Have you got any sort of insight from your findings?

ELIZABETH: I think what we see is that, you know, everyone's trying to do their best. And when we put these systems in place, it's with the intention that it's going to be timely, that it's going to really positively impact people's workloads and students' experiences. And so when we start to hear from either people in those systems or the students experiencing it that there might be difficulties, then that's when we really need to start, looking at well, what can we tweak to make this easier, not just for our disability service staff who are organising these accommodations, not just the students who are requesting them and not just the teaching staff who are enacting them, like how can we together to make this as easy as possible for each of us to reach that shared goal. And I think what that question also brings to light is that it's really wonderful when we can have our shared experiences and have space to talk about this together and learn about what's happening in different institutions. Does anyone have any ideas on how we can improve this? And this is a really nice forum to be able to do that and to start making some of those connections and thinking about how together we can all join together to improve student support.

GABRIELLE: Thanks Elizabeth. Well, I'll give ADCET a bit more of a plug there because we do have our AustEd list in our ADCET resources that we encourage practitioners to investigate quite a lot. I've probably just got time for one more question. Someone asked, did any students provide feedback on the trend towards students themselves being required to convert inaccessible learning resources so they can use them rather than a service or third party offering support?

ELIZABETH: No, we didn't have any students mention that. And I think that might link into that thought about, you know, how do we provide that information for student agency and empowerment. So if there are things that students themselves can do and also things that teaching staff can do, how can we be sure that students are getting that information to know how they can access those materials? And I know I benefited greatly from some of the ADCET resources, particularly prompts to make accessible PowerPoint presentations. And it was something as simple for me as being sure that titles were recognised as titles and that when it came to the reading order, that different parts of the content, if a screen reader was reading that content, that it knew what order to read it in. And they were really simple, really quick things that I could do. And yet when we think about accessibility, it's so important, it can make such a positive difference. So I think teaching staff can definitely play a big role in that too.

GABRIELLE: Thanks Elizabeth. Well, that's all we've got time for today. So just before we finish, just note our next webinar is coming up on the 9th of August. So please go to the ADCET website and put that into your calendar. Once again, thank you, Elizabeth, for your insightful presentation. We'll have links to the presentation and your publication and findings on our website. Thank you for all the participants and to our captioner, Michelle, from Bradley Reporting. We got lots of love hearts and applause and stars and things.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much.

GABRIELLE: So I think everybody really enjoyed it. And thanks, Jane, for organising and wrangling all the webinar information, especially for me as a newbie. Hopefully, this was a great presentation for everyone, and we'll see you next time.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much, everyone.