DARREN BRITTEN: Hi everyone and welcome to this ADCET podcast. In this episode, we’ll be bringing you the audio from a fantastic webinar titled: LGBTIQ+ inclusive practices for people with disability, presented by Dr Lynn Jarvis and Ana Pike. Dr Jarvis is the Chief Executive Officer of Working It Out Tasmania’s diverse gender, sex and sexuality support service and educational provider. Ana is an LGBTIQ+ with lived experience of disability. This webinar was an introduction to the issues facing LGBTIQ+ people with disability and the ways inclusive practices can make a difference.

LYNN JARVIS: Thanks, Darren. It's great to be here. I'm coming to you today from the land of Nuenonne people in the south east nation of Lutruwita, Tasmania. And also pay my respects to the Aboriginal people who are the Aboriginal custodians of this land and acknowledge their ongoing fight for justice. So, just as background, for anybody who is visually impaired, I'm a 60-plus year old female. I'm wearing a black jacket and a white shirt with some colourful pink flamingos on it, and behind me is a couple of posters on the wall. I am not a person with disability, although I do identify as a lesbian. However, the information that I'm talking about today is information that comes directly from research into the lives of LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities or from our own consultation process that we did in 2020 as part of developing a resource for disability sector workers. And we'll hear from Ana a bit later in the presentation. We had a bit of trouble with our slides so Kylie is going to drive the slides for me - next slide thanks, Kylie. We're just going to start with a little bit of background. I would like to acknowledge that many of you might understand this stuff but it's always good just to go through some basics, because what we often find is people aren't quite as au fait as they think they might be. The LGBTIQ+ acronym is a bit of problem; it gets bigger and there are variations of it and it's hard to say. I acknowledge that. I'm plugging for diverse sexuality bodies in gender as an alternative, but it hasn't got there yet. I'm going to talk very broadly about a few identities here, but if there are some that you want to know more about, please juyst put a question in the Q&A section and hopefully I can provide you some information or links to that later on. One thing I would like to to talk about - and this is where sometimes people get a bit confused - is there's actually three key differences in that acronym. There are some words that describe people's sexuality, like lesbian, which is women who are attracted to women. We have the word 'gay', which in this acronym means gay men. It can also mean gay women, but in this it means gay men, and bisexual, which are people who may be attracted to either sex. They may have a male partner or a female partner. And that's about people's sexuality, which is different to people's gender identity. I'm a cis gendered female. Cis gendered means that I identify with the sex that I was assigned at birth. That term cis gendered sits in opposition to the term transgender, or trans and gender diverse, which means that people have transitioned from the sex they were assigned at birth to a gender identity that they feel is their authentic self. A transgender man is a person who was assigned female at birth and has transitioned to be a man; and a transgender woman is a person who was assigned male at birth and has transitioned to be a woman. Sometimes people confuse sexuality and gender, but they are different things. Obviously, transgender people can be heterosexual, they can be homosexual, they can be bisexual, lesbian, gay and so on. The other one there is intersex, which is a little known about community. Intersex people have innate characteristics that do not sit at either end of the binary of sex. Not completely male or not completely female; they exist somewhere in the middle. It is not seen as a different sex in itself. So, most intersex people would see themselves as male or female, but acknowledge that they have some variations of sex characteristics as well. And of course intersex people are not transgender people and should never be confused as such. The letter Q in the acronym can stand for lots of things. Commonly it's queer. Queer is a term that has an an interesting history. It was originally seen as very abusive but like some other terms we have got has been reclaimed by members of the community and now is used quite commonly and quite proudly, particularly amongst younger people. Some older people can still feel very traumatised and offended by the word, however. It's something to be used a bit with caution. And Q can sometimes means questioning. The plus is used commonly to accommodate a lot of other identities - nonbinary, which is people who don't identify as either male or female; pansexual, which is again a broader understanding of sexuality, people are attracted to people, not particular male or female; asexual is a group of people that don't typically feel sexual attraction to anybody. There is lots of stuff in there that can be explored. My advice to people is, when you hear something new you don't understand or you're not familiar with, like I do in my job all the time, I just go to Google and have a look and find out what it is; it's not that hard. Sometimes I find people seem to get stuck when they come across language they don't understand. It's like they don't have any capacity to find out what that means themselves. But I assure you that you have. Next, thanks, Kylie. I will just say a couple of words about identity. If you take a few seconds to have a think to yourself about any time you might have felt that you were invisible, that you have been discriminated against or even just been left out. Just take a couple of seconds to have a think about any such experience. We do this exercise a lot in our training and we find many people have experiences. Some people say they never have. Lucky them. But a lot of people have in very different ways. What we understand when we think about this is that it doesn't feel great to be left out, to be discriminated against or to be invisible; that we all like to be seen. Identity is one way of us being seen. Some people criticise what they all identity politics, which is where people try to find a language and perhaps a label that suits them. There can be new language and new labels emerging all the time because people are always searching for their space, their group, and to be seen. Not everybody likes those labels. Not everybody wants to use them. But for those that do I think they can be very useful. Identities can also be used to help us advocate for rights. This is a short video. Hopefully Kylie can make this one play.

[VIDEO]: I'm Michaela Moody. I'm a 28-year-old disfigured trans queer woman. For me it felt like I could only have one thing, and that had to be my disfigurement and disability. And that was what ran through my head when I was 13 and thinking it would actually be really nice to be a woman. But at that point I thought I can't, 'coz I've already run that well dry of care and sympathy. And I can't just choose something else. So, I ignored it for 10 years until I couldn't. My social dysphoria can be pretty bad. Because there's obviously the expectations that come with being trans of, you know, certain ways that bodies present, faces present, but then I have the extra added bonus of being disfigured, as having this face which is different. Sometimes it feels like there's nothing I can do. I'm still going to be a guy. I'm glad that I'm a disfigured trans gay woman. I have a wonderful partner who is amazingly supportive. She's fantastic. I want the people who are abled, who are neurotypical, who don't experience chronic pain or chronic fatigue, who are straight-size thin, who are not disfigured, who are LGBTQ+ to be seeing us more and listening to us more. And regarded as we're not so scary but also that we deserve our place in the broader community.

LYNN: What Michalea was talking about there is something I'll talk about shortly - is that sometimes LBGTIQ+ people with disabilities can struggle to fit in both mainstream society but also LBGTIQ+ communities. We're very fortunate in Australia, we've had some great pieces of research done in the last few years that are very extensive, very large scale. Private Lives 3, which looks at the experience of LGBTIQ+ people over 18, and Writing Themselves In 4, which looks at the experience of younger people. I would encourage people to have a look at both studies. They're amazing. There is so much in them. Both of these have sections on the experience of LBGTIQ+ people with disabilities. Private Lives 3 at section, and in Writing Themselves In 4, section 16. Again, I'd just like to take a moment to ask you to reflect and think about, what do you imagine the percentage of LBGTIQ+ people with disability or a long-term health condition is. What percentage do you think it is of the general LBGTIQ+ community. And then have a think about whether this is more or below or above or the same as the national average and why that might be so. Feel free to put your reflections in the chat. I'm not expecting right answers here, by the way. Okay. I see somebody is doing their research. It is nearly 40 percent of the LBGTIQ+ population who do identify as having a disability or a long-term health condition. That's compared to 17.7 percent of the general population. There's a lot more people in the LBGTIQ+ community that experience disabilities than the broader population. And the next slide - thanks, Kylie. We can see here that there's a broad diversity of disabilities and long-term health conditions that people experience, but chief amongst those are mental illness and psychological distress. I think it's important to put that, particularly the mental health statistic, in a context. And, Kylie, if you can show the next slide. Okay. What this one tells us - and this is only verbal harassment. What we know is that LBGTIQ+ people in general, and particularly LBGTIQ+ people with disabilities, continue to experience high rates of verbal abuse, harrassment, assault and exclusion. This is the underlying cause of significant psychological distress within the community. We can see here that, within the last 12 months, 52 per cent of the respondences, LBGTIQ+ people with disabilities, have experienced verbal harassment, and 71 per cent had a lifetime experience of verbal harrassment. That's really important to keep in mind and why we need to create spaces that are inclusive and safe for people. Next slide, Kylie. Those ongoing experiences create very high levels of psychological distress for people. So, we can see here that - sorry. LBGTIQ+ folk without any disability or long-term health condition have already a very high level of psychological distress, so high or very high, at about 41.7 per cent. But when we go right over to the other side, the right hand side of the screen, and we can see people with severe disability, for example, we're getting up to nearly 86.4 per cent of that population feeling extremely stressed or distressed. I think that's really important to think about when you perhaps have students who are LBGTIQ+ people with disabilities - they are quite likely to be experiencing high levels of distress. Just for comparison, the general Australian population is 13.3 percent. You can see the large disparity between those two figures. LBGTIQ+ community members also have very high rates of suicide ideation and suicidality, unfortunately. Next slide, Kylie. One of the findings in the Writing Themselves In report is that LBGTIQ+ people under 25 often felt unsafe and uncomfortable in their education setting due to their gender or sexuality. Ppeople with disabilities experience this at a higher rate than people without disabilities. I wouldn't like, though, to paint LBGTIQ+ people as a community that is just about statistics and psychological distress, because in fact if you have an LBGTIQ+ person with a disability in your educational institution that means they're a pretty amazing person, and have shown considerable resilience and strength to overcome many of the obstacles that stand in their way. I'd like to go from a strengths based perspective; it's important to know what issues people face but that doesn't define them, and we need to see these people as great resources in our learning institutions. We have one such lovely person here today with us, Ana. I'm going to invite Ana now to come and chat to us. Ana is an LBGTIQ+ identifying person with a disability and Ana is currently studying a certificate IV in community services at TAFE. I will turn my screen off for a minute and we will hear from Ana.

ANA PIKE: Thank you, Lynn. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for coming to this webinar. My name is Ana Pike and my pronouns are she/her. For a visual representation, I am a cis gendered woman with blond hair that is up in a ponytail. I'm wearing all black, sitting in a wheelchair and I have rainbow dangly earrings. Firstly, I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Mouheneenner people, the traditional custodians of the land that I am on today in Hobart. I acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. I was asked to come here today to talk a little bit about my experience within the education system being both a disabled person who is also part of the LBGTIAQ+ community. And what systems are currently in place and what could be done better for future students. My experiences have been mixed. I have experience being a student back when I was walking and had not come out yet, and my current experience is being a wheelchair user. While the culture on campus is one of inclusion, I find that it is mainly driven by a very small group that is the Rainbow Action Group, which unfortunately means there are gaps. What I mean by that is intersectionality is something that is missing, which means that people from more than one background - for example, someone disabled and queer - we don't see ourselves reflected within the system. Having the chance to work in a supportive and inclusive environment makes a big difference in our experiences as students, as it means that we can just focus on our studies and not have to worry about being discriminated against or face any kind of prejudice in relation to our identify. In turn, this makes us feel welcome and that we belong. Making changes doesn't have to be a very big thing. Little things can go a big way to feeling included. For example, seeing a poster on a notice board of a disabled person in a same-sex relationship. Diversity training is currently offered in both the community services course and as a standalone training course. The problem, however, is that it is not mandatory, so time and time again you just see the same groups volunteering to participate, which is great. However, they aren't really the target audience. I believe if we provide more training and visibility to marginalised communities that will go a long way to educate the public and help build understanding and close gaps. Thank you very much for having me today and I will pass back to Lynn.

LYNN: Thank you, Ana. It's always great to hear from people who are in the environments that we're talking about. And I think you know that point, which I'm sure people on this webinar already understand, that being able to bring your whole self to your learning experience not only supports that person to be more successful in that learning environment but it also means they have a lot to give to other people without them becoming always the person that has to explain everything. But their life experience will no doubt help with the any kind of work they're undertaking. Hopefully, at the end, if people have questions for Ana, they can ask them then. Thanks, Kylie. Next slide. Maybe just press 'enter' again. Okay. So, this one is what I've called the magic five. This is really five simple things that can be done to help people feel included and safe. I was just listening to another short video earlier on this morning that was being made and it was talking about LBGTI inclusion in sport. One of the people interviewed were saying you can never underestimate the importance of some sign of safety, because LBGTIQ+ people in general - I'm sure people with disability and LBGTIQ+ people with disability particularly - are always looking for signals that an environment is safe for them. A simple thing that people can do in their educational institutions - and I know many universities and probably TAFEs around the country have allie or pride networks. They are great for having symbols. Posters - Obviously I'm plugging Working It Out here with some of our posters that we have. Simple things like lanyards, a sticker on your door - they are really simple ways of saying you're safe here and you will be respected. Obviously it's important that this is backed up in reality. Having signs and signals without any of the other practices can be very problematic. But this is a very simple first step; signs of safety are important. Another easy thing for people to do is to put a little rainbow flag on their email signature, if you are comfortable doing that, or even including their pronouns in their email signature. Next, Kylie. Wherever possible it's great to use inclusive language, and that goes beyond LGBTIQ+ folk. But using gender neutral language is great because it doesn't make assumptions about people's gender. So, police officer rather than policeman. I think we're all getting better at that. Don't make assumptions about people's heterosexuality or being cis gendered. For example, as I said, I'm a lesbian. I think I look like a lesbian, but the number of times people have talked to me about my husband, just making assumptions that I'm somehow married to a man, is really offputting. And I'm put in the situation of thinking do I correct them or do I just go along with it. How do I negotiate this situation. So just being really mindful of perhaps not making assumptions about heterosexual relationships. But it is evolving. I'm married to my wife, and I recently had an experience where I introduced somebody as my wife, and then the person I introduced them to kept talking about my partner, and that was like also not acceptable, because I had clearly used the word wife and that's how I saw our relationship. And that was then not honoured by using the word partner. I get that it can be a bit complex but it's good to think about these things. As I said before, it's important not to confuse sexuality, gender and intersex. They're different parts of a person. Different people might have combinations of all of those things but they are not the same, and it's really good to make sure that you understand what some of those differences are. Ana - I put my pronouns in my title of the video there, and Ana gave hers, which I should have done but I forgot, when she introduced herself, which is fantastic. Signalling your pronouns is a really simple way sometimes of identifying your gender and also allowing space for people who perhaps don't identify with the gender that they maybe look like or you're not sure about; they can signal that, too. So, one way to do that is to be proactive. You might say, 'Hi, I'm Alex Smith. My pronouns are she or her or they or them or he or him, for example.' And you could ask: what pronouns do you use? I would recommend not to say 'prefer', because for people who are using pronouns we don't refer those pronouns, they are our pronouns. If you make a mistake you quickly apologise. Don't make a big thing of it because that then becomes about you and is a mistake. She said, sorry, he said; just get on with it and don't stop. One of the things - sometimes people talk about they/them pronouns, which is the common set of pronouns used for non-binary people. But there are other alternatives as well, which I won't go into here. They/them is common for that community. And some people have trouble with that because they think that they/them is only used to refer to plurals or more than one person. But we actually do commonly use they/them in our language to mean one person. For example, this person left their bag at the shop. I wonder if they are going to come back and get it. We tend to use they and them when we don't really know who the person is. Non-binary people have kind of just extended that current usage to say, well, we know who the person is but their gender is not one or the other; it's not in that binary space. If you can start practising using they/them pronouns, it can take a little while to use them correctly. As I say, practice makes perfect. We all makes mistakes. I find people in the trans and gender diverse community extremely forgiving and they appreciate where people try and where we make a mistake I always try to own up to it and keep going. Okay. We've talked about signalling safety. We've talked about using inclusive language. I can present probably two oor three days worth of information on this stuff. These are really just headlines that I hope people can go back to and do a bit more research about. It's really important that we have inclusive systems and processes. This can include things such as forms. It can include things such as policies and include things such as facilities. What I have here are a few screenshots of some ways that we could ask about people's gender and in a form, for example. One of the things I always talk about is, just think about whether we need to collect anybody's sex or gender. Sometimes it happens automatically and you think why the hell would they need to know whether I'm a female, a male or something else. That's always the first question to ask. But where you do need to ask it, it's good to be thinking about what is appropriate. The only problem that I can see here with these is that intersex isn't a gender, so I wouldn't actually be using any of those in the boxes. What I encourage everybody to do is refer to the 2020 ABS, Australian Burea of Statistics, standards for sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation. It's a comprehensive document. That document has been created with the assistance of the LGBTIQ+ community. LGBTIQ+ Health Australia helped formulate those questions. The idea is to try and implement a standard set of questions so that data can be collected and compared across different areas and sectors. So, yes, inclusive forms. Not only do we need a way for people to identify themselves accurately in forms, but we need a way for people to be able to change their forms if, for example, they need to, particularly in the case of trans and gender diverse people - there is nothing more distressing for trans and gender diverse people - well, I wouldn't say nothing more - but it's extremely distressing for trans and gender diverse people to be misgendered, to be called the wrong name, to have the wrong pronouns attached to them and not to be acknowledged and seen as the person they are. Having processes and institutions where people can make those changes is really, really important. That often is reflected in policies that those institutions might have to drive the change in practices, so ensuring that it's inclusive. Facilities can be important. Most of us don't have male and female toilets in our houses but somehow we've created a world where they are divided in male and female toilets in public. And, yes, it can be important that those facilities are safe, but we need to ensure that people in the trans and gender diverse communities feel safe as well. There's a very high rate of urinary tract infections amongst transgender people, because they avoid using bathrooms commonly till they're at home and so that's really problematic for people. Single cubicles are great where they are neither male nor female; they're just a toilet. Other options include gender neutral toilet facilities that everybody can use. If we want to be inclusive, and of course we need to be inclusive of people with disabilities, whether it be mobility disabilities or others as well. I think we have a long way to go to making toilets accessible for everybody, but when institutions, for example, are renovating, rebuilding or creating new facilities I think there's not much excuse now for not thinking through these particular things. Inclusion policies can include stuff like transition leave for trans people, trans staff or accommodating transition in some of the learning plans that students might have. So, looking at different ways that people's diversity can be accommodated. Alright. So, this one here is about affirm, celebrate and include. For a long time we talked about - I think even one of the politicians said in the last horrendous election - horrendous if you are LBGTIQ+, that is, because of the rhetoric that was public around trans people. But I think somebody said we're more tolerant than that. I guess a lot of people, and probably many people in this webinar, would challenge that word 'tolerant'. 'Tolerant' is a very low bar. It means, well, okay, you can be here and we'll put up with you. We champion affirmation and celebration. It's not just that we have to make spaces for people who may be LGBTIQ+ or LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities; we want to actively and proudly acknowledge that they're there. If an institution does something to be inclusive, then they should shout it from the rooftops, not hide it away and just quietly change things to be more inclusive. They should be shouting it out. They should be shouting out the lives of LBGTIQ+ people with disability, and in the way that many other lives are shouted out about and are acknowledged. Including people in curricula is important. They're not there because they're a LBGTIQ+ person with a disability; they're there because they're a human being and they're part of the diversity of humanity. I think a lot of case studies, for example, could just include people from diverse backgrounds without making any particular mention of them; they're just there, we get along, and that's life. I think that's a really simple way for educators in particular to be inclusive and make other people feel included. Then we can go to the more celebratory side of things, Pride Month at the moment - a bit of a North American import, from my point of view. But I will rest my case on that one and just go with it because it's out there. Doing things for Pride Month is something else we can do, participating in local pride parades is great, having days that acknowledge different identities is fantastic as well. There are lots of things that we can do to make sure that we're really celebrating the lives of diverse people and their various identities. I think I've gone from five to six, Kylie. Next slide. Sorry about that, folks. This should be No. 5, not No. 6. It's a great one so maybe it needs two numbers. People in this room, I'm sure they're all really respectful and it maybe doesn't apply to them, but it's really something that came out very strongly in our consultation with LBGTIQ+ people with disabilities, particularly around the services that they might get through care workers, NDIS and so forth. And that was about being respectful and thinking about what you would and wouldn't find acceptable as a human being. I worked in a university for a number of years and one very senior colleague of mine basically wanted to ask me about my sex life and how lesbians had sex. I kind of couldn't be disrespectful, but I wanted to be and I felt like saying 'Google it and find out'. But I couldn't do that. That was an intrusive and totally unnecessary question that I got, and I know that people, particularly transgender people whose bodies may or may not have changed - not everybody goes through medical transition, but a lot of transgender folk get very intrusive questions about their bodies. I know people with disabilities also get very intrusive questions about their bodies, about how their bodies work, about how they have sex, how they relate to other people. It's just a really strong reminder about that basic element of respect in our relationships with LBGTIQ+ people with disability. My dad was a great one - sadly he passed away a couple of years ago. He always felt that his curiosity was permission for him to ask intrusive questions. And I did challenge him on this a number of times, but I sadly couldn't get him to change his mind. But that idea. And I'm curious about lots of people. I want everybody to have all the information on their forehead so I can learn about them. But that's just my thing. I have to keep that to myself. I think it's really important to understand that our curiosity is not a mandate to ask questions of other people. On that point, too, it's really great to learn about diverse people and their experiences, but we can't rely on them always being there to educate us. We have to take some responsibility for doing that research. And if you have an LBGTIQ+ person in your course or at your institution, you can talk to them about how much they might like to share but don't expect they are there to educate other people. That's not their job. Their job is to learn, so other people can be doing that work. Of course there's a range - one of the things, and we saw this in the election - LBGTIQ+ people's lives are highly moralised and highly politicised. Not all of them, many of them are fantastic, but there are some from faith based backgrounds that don't support inclusion of LBGTIQ+ people. My call to educators and others is that people aren't ever being asked to change what they think or believe, but you be asked to change what you do. Discrimination laws vary in different states. In Tasmania, for example, it's illegal to discriminate against anybody on the basis of gender, sexuality or their disability. It's illegal to do those things as well as unhelpful and unsupportive. So, just keeping in mind, and sometimes with your students perhaps depending on the course they're doing - sometimes how to negotiate those religious or political views can be really quite tricky and difficult. Finishing on that, really with this election just gone by where the lives of trans people were once again made a political football, I can only say that that has done such tremendous damage to the lives of trans and gender diverse people that it's really going to be hard to recover from that. Even with the same-sex marriage postal survey, we know that causes a significant rise in distress amongst the LBGTIQ+ communities, and I know these latest public debates will also have a tremendous effect. I guess this doesn't just relate to LBGTIQ+ people with disabilities; it's probably broader than that. But if your institution is ever in the space where it gets into these public debates I really hope people will stand up and say that's not acceptable and that it creates great harm. Lastly, I'd like to finish off with a note about history. Recently I did a strange thing; I did a radio interview in Darwin for Wear It Purple Day, which is a day for young people. The first thing the interviewer said was, 'Isn't it all fine now? What are we worrying about?' I had to say, no, it's not fine. We started from a very low bar and so things have improved but there's still high rights of discrimination, abuse, harassment and so forth experienced by LBGTIQ+ people. And still high rates of stigma as well. Whilst sam- sex marriage was great and it allowed some of us to get married, and so on, it doesn't bury the significant scars of past trauma and discrimination in legal processes. For example, Tasmania was the last state to decriminalise homosexuality in 1998. That means that there are many people alive today who would have grown up when being gay was illegal or cross-dressing was illegal. I know personally many people who have been exited from their families, who have been exited from faith based institutions, even had their children taken from them or have been physically assaulted. When we're dealing with LBGTIQ+ people in general - and I imagine when we talk about any generalised statistics - we know it's generally worse when people add in that intersectional disability or any other intersectional identity, we know it gets worse. So, understand that the people that you're talking to, even some of the younger people, might have had significant experiences. The notion that everything is fine now does reflect that things are getting better, which is fantastic, but it doesn't reflect the fact that not everybody's life is better and for many people they still carry around the legacy of the past. What this can mean is that sometimes people are hypervigilant, which can look like service avoidance, or it can look like they are overreacting to something or may be supersensitive to something. If you're seeing behaviours like that, stop and think, 'I wonder what's driving that. What is it about the experience of this person that has led them to take up this position?' That's a less positive note to finish on, I guess. But I would like to say that it's great that things are improving. We have fantastic webinars like this where fantastic people come along and want to learn more and do better. I would like to say thank you to everybody for doing that and coming along today. Hopefully I've given you a few pointers, very brief, very high level, but hopefully you've got some pointers. I encourage you to continue to do your own research and to learn more about this space.

DARREN: Thanks for listening to this ADCET podcast. We hope that you learned something new about making tertiary education more accessible and inclusive for students with disability. You can keep up to date with our future webinars and podcasts by signing up for our fortnightly newsletter at our website: adcet.edu.au/newsletter.

Thanks again for listening to this podcast from the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training. Supporting you, supporting students.