GABRIELLE O’BRIEN: Hello, everybody. Thank you for joining us today for the ADCET webinar. This webinar is called Words Matter, developing inclusive language guides in tertiary education settings. My name is Gabrielle O'Brien, and my pronouns are she and her. I'm the senior project officer for ADCET, which stands for the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training.

This webinar is being live captioned by Jason from Bradley Reporting. To activate the captions, click on the CC button in the tool bar, which is located either on the top or bottom of your screen. We also have captions available via your browser and Jane will add that information to the chat box now.

I'm joining you today from the lands of the Turrbal and Yuggera people in Meanjin or Brisbane, Queensland. I pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and I extend that 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 what country you are in the chat and share where you are. You can also add your pronouns to your Zoom signature or in the chat box if you wish.

Before we begin, 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, with the presentation slides as well. Throughout the presentation feel free to use the chat box with us and each other but please remember to choose everyone, so that we can all see and read what you have to say. If you have a question that you would like to ask at the end for our presenters, please use the Q and A box. If you have any technical difficulties, please email admin@adcet.edu.au.

It's now my great pleasure to introduce today's speakers, Stevie Lane and Kay Barnard from Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. It’s quite early there compared to where everybody else is on the east coast. Stevie works as an equity practitioner at ECU on a range of initiatives to address inequality and systemic barriers that impact people who identify as LGBTIQA+ and people with disability. Stevie also has significant experience in external LGBTIQA+ organisations as a trainer, communications consultant, videographer and writer to educate and advise on national policy.

Kay recently joined ECU as an equity project coordinator, including initiatives for students and staff. Again, Kay has extensive experience as a disability advocate in projects for young people with disability, centred on employment, self-advocacy and educational rights.

Both our speakers have expertise and lived experience to draw on which is why we're delighted to have them speaking to us today. I will leave you with Stevie and Kay to share what their lived experience and expertise can tell us about inclusive language initiatives in tertiary education. Thank you, Stevie and Kay.

STEVIE: Hello and thank you so much for having us here today. My name is Stevie. As was mentioned, I use they/them pronouns. We'll be talking a bit about today of words matter, developing inclusive language guides in a tertiary setting, and we'll be drawing throughout the presentation on our lived experience and hope that through doing that we will be able to contextualise some situations and help in whatever practice you are doing in your day-to-day working setting as well. Thank you again so much for having us. Firstly, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which myself and Kay are coming from today, the Whadjuk Noongar people and pay respect to Elders past and present. This was and always will be Aboriginal land and sovereignty was never ceded. I extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. I also acknowledge a lot of what is happening at the moment, particularly in the Noongar community, and send out my condolences. There's a lot of violence happening in the community and has been since colonisation but particularly at the moment. I would like to acknowledge that in the Noongar community; there will be a lot of mourning happening at the moment. I wanted to acknowledge that.

In the presentation we will be talking about some topics that may be sensitive or may be upsetting to some people. So just wanting to put that out there at the moment. Those kind of topics are brought up within the inclusive language guide as well. So there is a content warning in the guide itself, if you have read it already; if you haven’t, we do encourage you to read it. We will be talking mostly about the development of the guides as opposed to the content of the guide itself, but we do really encourage you to go read it if you haven't already. I will pass over to Kay now.

KAY BARNARD: Thank you, Stevie. So why are we talking about an inclusive language guide and why has ECU decided to design and release an inclusive language guide. An inclusive language guide is really important because it goes beyond acknowledging someone's lived experience to affirming the way they see themselves and they see the communities that they are part of. So in my context, for people with disability, often we are told by service providers and doctors the way we should see ourselves, the way that we should describe our lived experience and the way we should build community and having an inclusive language guide that is built on the lived experiences of people with disability takes back that power, it gives us power to say this is the words we use to describe ourselves, this is the way that we see ourselves, our community and how we fit into our society as a whole.

So having an inclusive language guide at a university goes beyond just acknowledging that we have students with different lived experiences and part of different equity groups. And we see them, and we acknowledge them, and we believe the way that they describe themselves and the way that they see their communities. As a university, we have a responsibility to create safety and equity for students and we also need to acknowledge that the way that our university is set up to have systemic power over people and students in these equity groups. So having an inclusive language guide we have an agreement for the way we see people with disability, people from different equity groups, the queer community, people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the way that we talk about them and how we set up that power dynamic in the university.

And also because we look at the lived experience of people, ensuring people have autonomy over their communities and over their stories. Language also reflects society and culture. As a society, the way we have used language historically has put together particular representations of equity groups and also perceptions that we have about the capacity and the value of people. So as a disabled person -- and I think I speak for all of my disabled peers on the webinar today -- things I often hear as a person with autism are things like, "You’re brave for just existing". Terms like that really reflect the way that people think about disability as something horrible and something unmanageable and something you need to be brave to see through. Also, things like let's focus on ability, those kinds of micro aggressions and those kinds of nuanced emotive language, when we talk about disability, reflect the way people see us and people see our value and our ability to exist within society.

Having an inclusive language guide, it also needs to be nuanced. So we need to think beyond black and white perceptions of this language is inclusive and this language is not inclusive, and the way people may use different language in different environments around different people in different situations and for different purposes. From my own lived experience as an autistic person, often the idea of identity first and person first language is a question I get asked about a lot. The question isn't just black and white, preferring identity first or person-first language. For me it's really context dependent. When I go to the doctor it's really important for me to use person-first language because when I use identity first language often the way I see myself and the way my symptoms are seen by my doctor is then chalked up to the fact that I'm autistic instead of really acknowledging that, yes, I might have autism but I'm beyond my disability able to have symptoms that don't fit within my autism profile. So I might move between different ways of describing myself, and have different comfort levels around the way that I use identity first and person first language.

Personally, I use identity first language to acknowledge that as an autistic person, my experience of autism is not separable from my experience of personhood and what it's like to be a person existing in an autistic brain. My autism shapes all of the interactions I have with people, the way I see myself and see other people and build community. So acknowledging that different things can be true at the same time, a different inclusive language can be right in different contexts.

What is inclusive language and why is it important? Inclusive language is a sign of respect and reflects how far we've come. I can speak in particular on a disability context from the disability rights movement of the 1960s and the tireless advocacy from disability advocates. We've got to a point now where disability and the way we see disabled people in society is completely different from the way we viewed disability 100 years ago, and also legislative changes in disability have trickled down into society, and also words that we use to describe communities. So things like the Americans with Disabilities Act of the 1990s, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, and in an Australian context the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, all of these legislative changes have really come from all of the tireless advocacy from disability advocates around the world. Also it's trickled down into the way we see disability now and the way disability is constantly evolving. Historically, we have seen a lot of charity models of disability, as seeing disabled people as something that should be pitied, or people should feel sorry for, or that it must be horrible to be a disabled person. But now we see disabled people have autonomy over their lives, have that self-determination.

It's important when we talk about language at a university level that we reflect this as well, that we reflect disabled students have autonomy over their experiences at university but also over the words and content their lecturers and tutors present to them.

Inclusive language also promotes mental health and wellbeing. For trans students, almost – sorry, content warning about suicidality. For trans students, 50 per cent of young trans people have attempted suicide in their life. However, when we use their affirmed name, or when we use their affirmed pronouns, that drops by 65 per cent, so reflecting that they are experts in their own lived experience and that we believe that they are who they say they are, is really important for mental wellbeing for students who are trans and gender diverse.

It also makes sure we avoid stereotypes we have about people and also acknowledging and thinking about why we think particular ways about people. In a disability context -- for me, when I was at school, we didn't talk about disability all that much. I went to a segregated school that separated disabled students from nondisabled students and floated in between both of those streams. So we have separated disabled students in a really crucial period when children are learning about what it's like to exist in a diverse society. So when those students then grow up, they might not understand disability or how normal it is to have disabled students in your class, how normal it is to have a diversity of experiences within your cohort. And then that reflects into adults who might not understand different diversity groups, because they have never been exposed to it before. So that brings all of those stereotypes and disrespectful discrimination from a lack of ignorance or understanding around what it's like to be a person in a diverse body.

When we think about setting up an inclusive language guide, it's really important that we think about how language is formed and changed through colonisation. And how the views of diversity is reflected in historical inequalities and colonisation in Australia, in an Australian context. Colonisation still has a devastating experience on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It impacts the language and understanding on which we have -- when we describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For example, from the British we have adopted very Western ways of thinking. And even reflecting in our inclusive language guide, a lot of the language we talk about is still very much from the Western perspective. Things like in a disability context when we talk about the medical system, and the medical understanding of disability, as disability being a deficit or divergence from normal, and that there is a normal way or usual way of existing and people with disability diverge from that; so that's a very Western way of thinking about disability.

That's not reflected in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities now or even before colonisation. That's not how these communities understand disability and understand diversity. Things like binary systems of gender, it's again a very Western way of thinking about male and female and having only those two options, only those two diversities in our society; that's also a very Western way of thinking and it doesn't exist in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and reflects that very colonised perspective. We need to be inclusive, and we need to acknowledge the way that colonisation has changed and affected the way that we think about difference diversity topics.

For example, in the disability perspective, when we think about the medical model of disability, that is a very British perspective. During the reign of the medical model of disability, people with disability were seen as monsters, or freaks, or things that needed to be fixed, and disabled people, including disabled children, were often institutionalised in asylums or homes and they were forced to take medication that changed the way their body moved, the way their brains thought about things. We can still see that Western perspective now in things like in the autism space, things like applied behaviour analysis, where children often, but also adults, are treated in a way to remove that neurodiversity, to remove those traits and become more normalised or become more neurotypical and be praised for appearing more neurotypical independent of the harm that might be causing them.

It's also a similar idea with sexuality and the idea that homophobic laws are very much a Western way of thinking and a Western construct. We all see that now as well when we talk about intersex communities and the idea that intersex children will have these unnecessary operations that are incredibly harmful to their identities against their will to become more normalised or become less diverse.

STEVIE LANE: I'm going to talk a little bit now about the development of ECU's inclusive language guide, now that we have gone a little bit into why and the context behind it. In terms of the development itself, I think it was really important from an ECU perspective for it to be a really collaborative approach and for it to be driven through lived experience and professional expertise but putting that lived experience at the forefront of what we were doing was really important for us, particularly seeing as language itself can be so empowering to diverse communities. We wanted to reflect that in what we were putting together and ensure people were able to take the inclusive language guide, apply it and be able to empower, you know, in classrooms be able to empower students or within the staff environment be able to empower other staff members, so again, as Kay was mentioning, we're able to take things away from that very medicalised, very clinical kind of way that diverse communities are often contextualised and thought about and were able to actually give people different ideas and the understandings of what it means to be a queer person or a disabled person or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

So it was really important for it to be collaborative and run and driven by lived experience. That included staff and student lived experience. For myself, I'm a trans and gender diverse person and a queer person, and I have also started recently identifying as a disabled person as well. So I was able to, within our equity projects team, coordinate that and utilise the lived and professional expertise of other people within the project’s office as well as people from around the university. For example, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander section was written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from our Centre of Indigenous Australian education and Research. We tried to ensure that throughout it was written by people who belonged to those communities, because really as much as we tried to understand other communities, it's only those people within those communities that could really understand what is in group language, what is appropriate to say within communities, and what is appropriate for people to say outside of those communities and what is a respectful way to address particular communities.

We also had input from our Athena Swan team who looked at gender specifically and our international office who looked at how we approach diverse communities, particularly our international students from that particular context as well.

We had input from our subcommittees, our Pride at ECU, and our disability access and inclusion subcommittee which, again, had that lived experience at the core of it which proved really helpful in putting the information into the guide. We also tried to ensure that it was aligned with other documents that existed within the university as well which was really important. Aligning things with our corporate communications team to ensure any kind of existing content that talked about diverse language is in alignment with what we have within the guide. And there's nothing that really sort of, I guess, goes against what is in the guide. So it all kind of aligns throughout.

Something that I think often gets missed when it comes to developing any kind of document is that we have a lot of people who have extensive knowledge and lived experience and so on, which really does need to be at the core, but we forget we need to test out the documents we create and the resources that we create to ensure that it's understandable by people who might not have as much knowledge and as much information and experience with that.

It was really important for us to actually have staff as part of the process who didn't have that particular knowledge, who didn't have that exposure or extensive ideas and knowledge around inclusive language so we could sense check it before putting it out to the wider community.

What we found is it has been a really valuable part of the process, to ensure that we're not conveying information that can't be understood by the average person, ensuring that we're not talking about language in a way that people can't necessarily understand that language or understand the meaning behind why that language has been used.

In terms of the different aspects of the inclusive language guide, it's been split up into a number of different sections. However, we were adamant that we had to include at the start of the document and acknowledge the intersectionality that exists between each of these areas as well. That's originally why -- as part of starting the inclusive language guide, we originally started looking from an LGBTQIA+ perspective of doing one for the queer community and looking at inclusive language from that perspective. But it didn't seem like quite enough. It seemed like we needed to talk about inclusive language more broadly and acknowledge the intersectionality that exists within a lot of these communities. Because without doing so, it didn't really seem like we were providing a full picture of what inclusive language is for the whole of the communities that exist within ECU but also within any university or any society more broadly.

The first edition or version that we released had Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, age, disability, sex, gender and sexuality, race, ethnicity and culture and religion and belief. After putting out the guide, it was realised we definitely needed to a mental health section as well because there's a lot of marginalisation of people who experience mental illnesses or mental health issues, so we needed to have some language in there to talk about inclusive language from that perspective as well. So that was added later on.

Something that we acknowledge in having the document publicly available is that it is an evolving document. We acknowledge that language is always changing and evolving. So we encourage people to reach out to us if they find language is becoming more outdated and something needs to change or if there are any obvious gaps we have missed. As much as we tried for it to be a collaborative process with lots of different people involved, there will always be things that are potentially missed. We are open to receiving that feedback and we really encourage anyone we share the guide with that if there is anything missing or if anything seems off to please contact us so we can include that in the next round that we're going to release whenever we update it the next time, which we try to do relatively often or we're going to try to do relatively often.

Something that I think from my perspective, as a queer person, and as a trans person, was particularly interesting is in terms of how we categorise things was the section on sex, gender and sexuality. So we went through and looked at lots of different existing inclusive language guides from universities but also outside of the tertiary sector as well. And often as is the case with talking about these issues more generally, we talk about LGBTQIA+ people and gender equality for women as two separate issues. So, when we were looking at putting together this inclusive language guide, we were trying to figure out a way to, I guess, acknowledge the gender inequalities that exist for both women and trans and gender diverse people as well. They are both talking about gender, but it's often talked about in different contexts. We ended up coming to the conclusion it was really important for us to include sex, gender and sexuality within the same context and talk about gender from a women's equality perspective but also talk about gender in terms of trans and gender diversity because there is so much intersectionality between the two. As I mentioned, when we are talking about gender and gender equality, we need to be encompassing and talking about the diverse and nuanced experiences of women and of gender diverse people without separating the issue too much because there is so much intersectionality that exists within those communities, and there is a lot of women that exist within both. There is trans and gender diverse people impacted by gender inequality so it's important to bring those two topics together.

In terms of some feedback we've received and ways we have tried to update the inclusive language guide, as I mentioned before the mental health section has been added which has been a really valuable part of, I guess, talking about all communities. Realistically, we know that because of discrimination experienced by lots of different communities, there is higher rates of mental health issues and suicidality. So it's really important from a mental health and wellbeing perspective to look at that within the context of diverse communities as well but also with people more broadly.

In terms of things that staff and students have been able to do in terms of using the guide itself, people have been able to use the guide to embed inclusive language into their curriculum. And I think that can be a really empowering thing because it means we can empower our students to be more inclusive in whatever practice, whatever area of study that they're in. We can really sort of display that language and show by example what is appropriate and how to have respectful conversations about diverse communities.

In terms of from a student perspective, we have had feedback from students saying they've been able to use the inclusive language guide in their assessments and also that they have been able to use that to advocate for inclusive language within the classroom as well. So there are a lot of students, quite often, that are kind of more progressive and more knowledgeable about the kind of language that they want to use in relation to diverse communities, but also in relation to themselves. So it's important that we really take that on, and really learn from people's lived experience and it's really good to hear that students feel empowered enough by the fact that a document that is an ECU document exists; that they feel empowered enough to be able to then use that to advocate for themselves within the classroom. A lot of the time, and it's still sort of quite, I think, common within an academic environment for quite clinical and medicalised language to be used, particularly when we're referring to older articles or the older texts and even current day texts as well. So having this kind of resource that is available, not just as like a staff resource that is sort of kept in the background, but available to students and available to people more broadly has been really helpful in empowering people to advocate for themselves and the language they use for themselves but also language used for other diverse communities as well.

A lot of people have also reached out to us around developing their own guidelines, and so we have been able to open up discussions and talk about inclusive language with people from other universities, people from other organisations more generally. Sometimes people aren't necessarily even interested in developing their own guidelines; they're just interested in being able to use the resource itself. So it's been really great to see people wanting to be able to use that resource. It's been really exciting to see that people are excited to see this work happening.

I think sometimes when you're in the work that you're doing you don't realise sometimes, straightaway at least, the impact your work is having. To see people really appreciate that the guide exists is a really good indicator, I think, of how much it was needed and how much more work we have to do in terms of how we respect and talk about diverse communities.

One of the big bits of feedback – I say “big bits of feedback – but one of the bits of feedback, I guess, we have had with the guide, being that it is a little bit longer than just a couple of pages -- we've been asked a couple of times about whether we can make the guide into a quick guide, like a quick refer to guide that people can look at if they need to as they go. We have talked about this in our team a bit back and forth. We were worried, I guess, that by doing so people wouldn't necessarily understand the nuance and the context of the language that is used in different situations. So throughout the document there are a couple of tables that say, “instead of using this, use this”. But we thought it was really important to have that background, to have that context and that education around that language as much as it was to have the literal language itself to use. And there's so much language that can be used in different contexts as well. As Kay was mentioning before, it's not quite black and white. It depends on context, it depends on whether it's in-group language or out-of-group language. It depends on the type of community we're talking about. There are also communities within communities. It really was more nuanced than, I think, just having a quick table to look at to see what to use, could potentially provide.

So essentially, we decided to not make a quick guide, because it was really important for people, in order to understand inclusive language, to have that context behind the communities that they're referring to.

KAY: We'll just go over a case study as well. I will read out the case study. An autistic undergraduate psychology student attends a lecture on the topic of developmental disabilities. The lecturer starts talking about autism and how devastating a diagnosis of autism might be to a child's family. They go on to show a video of an autistic child having a meltdown in a shopping centre and negative reactions from onlookers. The lecturer talks negatively about what they describe as low functioning autistic children. Then they show a picture of the character Sheldon Cooper from the Big Bang Theory and say people with Asperger’s’ syndrome can be very intelligent but struggle socially.

DARLENE: Sorry, Kay. Could you slow it down a little bit, please.?

KAY: Sure.

DARLENE: Just challenging when you read it out. It goes a little fast. Sorry to interrupt.

KAY: The student leaves the class early and upset. She was initially excited about covering the topic but is now not interested in engaging with the content. So the first question we have is: What kind of language did the lecturer use that was not inclusive or outdated? So please feel free to respond in the chat, if you can.

From Tracey, low functioning or Asperger’s, which is correct. Low functioning -- devastating as well. Low functioning is often a term that's used outside of the autism community to describe someone who has autism with an intellectual disability. Then the term high functioning is used to describe someone with autism without an intellectual disability. That's not really correct, because the idea of functioning can change in different situations.

When we talk about low functioning or high functioning, it's often the perception of outsiders looking in at an autistic person having a really hard time and assuming that, oh, this person is low functioning, or this person is high functioning, but the idea of functioning is the ability to respond to and cope in your environment. Often the way that people function is dependent on the environments they're in or part of. For me, in particular environments I might be seen as high functioning but in particular environments seen as low functioning dependent on the amount of sensory input I can see. Someone who might not be accommodated for, although might not be a person with autism with an intellectual disability, might appear to be low functioning or assumed to be low functioning in different environments.

However, the idea of functioning as well, like what is it like to function as a person, people go through hard times, people go through really happy times, and so the ability -- it doesn't describe the ability for an autistic person to cope in certain scenarios and is often defined on outside perspectives. It doesn't explain how an autistic person might feel internally and feel in their different environments, but more the idea that it's the effect that an autistic person has on the people around them. We don't use the term low functioning or high functioning; we can describe someone as having autism with an intellectual disability or having autism without an intellectual disability or just describing someone as autistic or having autism.

So comparing with a fictional character, yes, completely agree. There are some fictional characters that are good representations of autism and authentic representations of autism. A recent one is Chloe Hayden who is an autistic actress, who plays Quinnie in Heartbreak High. That’s quite an authentic representation of autism because the character is played by an autistic actress and the character is an autistic character. It doesn't rely on those harmful stereotypes about autistic people to get laughs or to get the storyline to go ahead. Characters like Sheldon Cooper often perpetuate quite harmful stereotypes of autistic people as being inflexible or not having that lived expertise, or being difficult to live with, or things like that, or being mean. Those are the kinds of perceptions we have about autistic people that are not real. Jim Parson who plays Sheldon Cooper is not an autistic person and doesn't quite understand what it's like to be an autistic person and it perpetuates those harmful stereotypes that we have about autism.

Everyone loving Chloe and Heartbreak High in the comments. The emotive language, as well. Having a devastating impact on the child's family is not right. Autism is a diagnosis. The child was autistic beforehand and is autistic now. It doesn't a devastating impact on the child's family; an autism diagnosis allows a family to make sense of why their child is the way they are and how to best support their child. But saying that it's devastating for someone to be diagnosed with autism makes it seem like autism is a burden on that family or that it might be difficult for the family to accept that their child is autistic, but that doesn't mean it's devastating to a family to have an autistic child.

So Asperger’s is in our inclusive language guide. It's a difficult one to talk about, because although it's no longer diagnosed for children now or adults are no longer diagnosed as having Asperger’s syndrome, originally they were. The term for the differentiation between an autism diagnosis and an Asperger’s diagnosis was a difference in a child not having a language delay or having a language delay. But colloquially it's become understood that having Asperger’s syndrome is a smart person with autism or an intelligent person with autism. That's not right. Anyone with autism can be intelligent. Asperger’s is based on a list of criteria that are quite ableist to start with but also have -- the term Asperger’s has a history that is quite antisemitic. So we don’t use the term Asperger’s anymore. However, if you are a person with autism and you describe yourself as having Asperger’s syndrome, or being an Aspi, it's an identity term you can use and it's valid for you to use an identity term that best fits with your lived experience.

Even historically for people who are diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, that can be a community term or a way for them to find people that are like them. So it's not as easy as saying it’s wrong to use the term Asperger’s, or it’s right to use the term Asperger’s in different contexts.

The second question that we have is: how might this lecture impact the student beyond their initial response? Also, someone has brought up the meltdown video. This is something that even when I was doing a psychology unit was shown, showing a child in a shopping centre having a meltdown. A meltdown is something that autistic people can experience when their ability to cope with a situation is overcome or their ability to regulate their sensory input in a situation is overcome. It's quite a vulnerable moment. It's quite scary to be an autistic person having a meltdown in a public area. When parents or caregivers film children having a meltdown or a vulnerable moment and posting it online, the understanding of awareness of autism, it's really showing an autistic person at their highest level of distress. And that might not reflect an autistic person's lived experience. It's not very helpful when we talk about autism to just talk about autistic people in distress. And although there are lots of autistic people that are in distress, often when an autistic person is accommodated for, we can reduce the ability for them to be distressed. I think that focusing so much on autistic distress and not thinking about other ideas around autism is quite harmful as well.

So Dani: the student can experience flashbacks to the classroom incident. That could be traumatising or impact their sense of self in a negative way. Yes, especially like this is a situation that is a real-life situation. A similar situation happened to me when I was studying a psychology unit in my undergraduate, and we were talking about autism and the floor was dominated by people who didn't understand what it's like to be autistic. I felt unsafe to go back into the classroom because I assumed I could not disclose the fact that I was autistic because people had harmful ideas about autism. It might influence how other students -- sorry. Scrolled up a bit. Influence how our students and language they may perpetuate. Exactly. The student may feel not worthy or not valued and they might not want to go to class. Thank you, Dani. Yes. So that might impact the student beyond just this lecture. But also impact how the student might feel about continuing on with their course or how safe they feel at university or how respected or valued they feel at university.

The third question we have is what kind of language could the lecturer use instead?

Thank you, Lyndal, for sharing. There is a bit about Dr Hans Asperger’s if anyone wants to read about that.

What kind of language could the lecturer have used instead of words like “low functioning or high functioning”? Yes, and the student might avoid the lecture instead of seeking help where needed. Just using the term autism or using the term disabled student, or just talking about autism in a way that gives autonomy and self-determination to autistic people, so maybe sharing information from an autistic advocate, maybe sharing information from a personal story from an autistic person, instead of putting together all of these stereotypes about autistic people to describe what it's like to be autistic. Atypical... or it's a spectrum. Exactly. Thank you, Naomie. It's different, people with autism can experience different things. Unconscious bias. Or neurodiverse or neurodivergent. Neurodiverse describing a population of people who have different neurotypes and neurodivergent describing an individual who has a neurotype that differs from what we think is a typical neurotype. Thank you very much for all of the responses in the chat. I will move on to the second scenario and pass back to Stevie.

STEVIE: The second scenario we have is about a nonbinary student. A nonbinary student is participating in a volunteer peer mentoring program which assists new students to the university during orientation. When the student registers for the program they are assured by administrators that their affirmed name has been noted and will be used in all interactions and communications moving forward. When they arrive at orientation they notice the program coordinator has printed their program materials and name tag with their legal name which some trans and gender diverse people may refer to as their dead name. The student tries to quietly explain the issue to the program coordinator who says their legal name out loud while trying to rectify the situation, explains it's not his fault and tells the student that he understands because people use his full name instead of his nickname all the time.

So what kind of language did the program coordinator use that was not inclusive or might have been outdated, is the first question that we have. Yikes, from Tracey. Pretty much. Yes. It's not an ideal situation. Again, elements of this story is taken from personal experience, my personal experience as well.

And I think… I’m just looking at the chat here, insensitivity to the fact that this is not a preferred nickname. Yep, definitely. Sometimes people try to relate to other people which I think can be really well intentioned, but it can come across and certainly can be quite offensive when a nickname versus someone's affirmed name and the implications of not using someone's affirmed name for a trans person is very different to someone using a nickname. You have the potential to out someone. You might be putting them in an unsafe situation. It's really important to not do that and to make sure that you are affirming someone. So maybe trying to use a student number instead to correctly identify a student or something like that. It might be more helpful than using their dead name, particularly in a social setting.

If you do have to, for clarity reasons ensure you have the right student, maybe in a private setting explain to them that they do need to just understand that they are talking about the same person and they really do apologise for having to bring up a dead name, for example. But making sure that is in a private situation if that was the case. Most of the time you can say, okay, sorry about that, and change things. And there's not necessarily a need outside of maybe just referencing a student number to make sure that it's the same student that you're talking about or something like that. That could be really helpful. Or even just saying, "Do you still go by this name? Do you still go by your legal name?” Even just referring to legal name or affirmed name, can be really helpful because the person will know what you are talking about if they need you to be using their affirmed name instead.

Someone said indiscreet, no need to speak loudly about a sensitive issue. The student tries to explain quietly and the coordinator then broadcasts it. Yes. Definitely really a horrible situation for that person to be in, especially when they have gone to the lengths they have to try to stop that situation from happening and to get that assurance from a staff member, and I'm sure we can all, probably within the university setting, testify to how difficult it is to get that consistency with things like names and affirmed name across lots of different systems. I completely understand that is a really difficult thing to do, which is why I think ensuring we treat every person as potentially trans or gender diverse -- obviously not everyone is -- but treating everyone as they may potentially be and being sensitive regardless of whether we perceive that person to be trans and gender diverse or not.

As a nonbinary person, thank you for using this example. That's very cringey indeed. Yes.

ADCET has released ICT guidelines for accessible ICT procurement. That's helpful to know. There’s a link there. Thank you for sharing that, Gabrielle. That should read saying its nickname or a preferred name as well as saying it's not my fault and broadcasting it. Yeah, good point, Kerri. All really good points that everyone has latched on to already.

I will make mention as well, I'm not sure if I mentioned it in there, the different situation between saying "preferred" or "affirmed", or even when it comes to pronouns as well. I think old language really looks at preferred pronouns, preferred name. Whereas when we talk about trans and gender diverse people, we need to be sure we're not invalidating their experience, because realistically if someone says that's their name and someone says these are their pronouns, they're not preferred, they just are, which is why we sort of use interchangeably at ECU preferred or affirmed name because it might be preferred for some people. It might be a nickname. For other people it might be their affirmed name. It's really not a preference, it's the name they want you to use, that's their name. I think it's really mindful to be really careful around using that term “preferred” and ideally not using the term “preferred” at all. It's just what is your pronouns, what is your name, kind of thing? What name would you like me to use for you, kind of thing.

So how might this have made the student feel? I think we have clarified a little bit that it's a really shocking situation and it wouldn't have made the student feel well at all. Alienated, unsupported, put on the spot by it, unwelcome or even safe. Definitely. Especially when they were assured this wouldn't be the case, that their affirmed name would be used. Like I said before, obviously there are lots of different systems within a university context. It is hard to assure a student consistency across the whole thing. I think being really transparent about that and saying “we have transferred your name into these particular systems. This doesn't necessarily flow into all systems so your legal name may still appear in other systems.” But using that sort of affirming language and having that conversation with someone, if they are trying to get that clarity, I think can be really helpful as well, so people know what to expect.

Even if this situation did happen and their legal name accidentally did appear here, they understood that potentially that was going to be an outcome and they might have been able to try to get that sorted out beforehand or that staff member might have been able to support them to sort it out beforehand as well.

How could the program coordinator have approached the situation differently? Again, I think there might be some in here already. Someone said the Administrator should have followed up. Yes, definitely. If there is a way for you to be able to, you know, get in contact with the people, as a staff member, get in contact with the people that are going to be running a program or for a staff member -- I know within our team we have the student success team, which is an amazing team that supports our students to do various different things and to essentially have a successful time at ECU, and they have been really integral to supporting trans and gender diverse students to reach out to staff members to say this person is a trans person or this person is a nonbinary person and they go by this name, but this name is maybe what appears on the roll. And just ensuring they have that linkage with lecturers and things like that to stop that situation from happening, stop that dead naming from happening before it does happen.

If you have systems in place to be able to support students to do that -- some might take it up, some might not -- but if you have those systems in place to ensure that lecturers and tutors are using that language and mindful of that language beforehand, that could be really great as well.

That's it from us. I will -- there we go. That's our information here. If you want to get in contact with us. We really appreciate you being so engaging, being so engaged and listening to our presentation. Thank you so much for having us. If you have any questions, either about the situations, the scenarios we put forward or just about our presentation in general, please do let us know.

GABRIELLE: Thank you, Stevie, thanks, Kay. That was really fabulous. I can see from all of the comments and hearts and thumbs up that people have really appreciated it. Does anybody have any questions that they might have put in the Q&A chat that they have as burning questions? There was one question that I have answered already about where to find the ECU language guide. And we have a link from it from our ADCET page as well.

The other open question we've got -- Bobbie says, this is slightly off topic, I loved Extraordinary Attorney Woo, but I do wonder what others in the group think of this series. Is it a fair portrayal? I haven't seen it myself, but I have heard good things. Maybe Kay or Stevie can talk generally about the portrayal of people with disability or LGBTIQ+ people in films and TV which are perhaps representative of those communities.

STEVIE: I haven't personally seen it either, unfortunately, sorry. But I can maybe speak to -- I'm not sure of the character but I can probably speak a little bit to queer representation and trans representation. I think it sort of very much follows a similar line to what Kay was saying about disabled communities, in that often it is very much perpetuating those stereotypes about what it means to be queer, what it means to be trans. If I can talk specifically to trans and gender diverse people, often there is very much that portrayal of tragedy, trauma, pain, all of these negative things which can be part of someone's experiences as a trans person but is definitely not the only part of that experience. What we're seeing more of in representation is lived experience which is really great. So lived experience of trans and gender diverse people acting and writing and releasing books, and things like that, so we have those accurate portrayals because it's drawn from their lived experience, but also story lines that are focusing on the difficult but also the joy that comes with being part of these communities. There is a lot of joy in being able to identify a particular way, being able to find community, being able to reject, I think, what it means to be normal and what it means to fit in. Because quite often that is quite difficult depending on where you grow up and what context you grow up in, it can be quite difficult.

But also acknowledging some people do have positive experiences throughout as well. Any kind of like trauma or any kind of like difficulty isn't necessarily experienced by every single trans person or every single disabled person. Acknowledging the nuance in that as well. While a lot of trans and gender diverse people may experience a lot of difficulty, some people might have grown up in really inclusive environments where it hasn't been a consideration that they wouldn't be accepted by their family and things like that. Exploring that nuance, and we're seeing it more and more these days. Again, it's probably something we all know but really centring the lived experience to provide that really accurate portrayal I think is really important.

GABRIELLE: Thank you, Stevie. Another question is, is the inclusive language guide incorporated into a mandatory staff training that staff are required to undertake?

STEVIE: So, when we released the inclusive language guide, we a bit of a roadshow, and so through our equity and diversity committee, which sort of oversees equity and diversity throughout the university, are representatives from each of the different schools. As part of rolling out that, it was initially rolled out and approved through that committee, and then communicated to each of the head, director areas, to share with each of the teams so we could go around and actually present within team meetings about the release of the guide, about how it might be useful and to get any questions answered. So, I guess to answer your question, no, it's not in any kind of formal capacity included. However, it is embedded as well into existing training that we do deliver. We do have LGBTIQA+ ally training which it is embedded into, we have our disability access and inclusion training, and we have cultural awareness training that draws on and from existing language that we were already using and, in fact, were used to develop the guidelines in the first place. So there is that consistency with that there. But to answer your question, no, unfortunately it's not. There is no inclusive language guide or inclusive language training specifically that's available to staff. It's more embedded across-the-board.

GABRIELLE: Yes, I think that's really tough, considering all of the training that we're all meant to do. It's hard to slip in another one. But again on our pages we've got some reference to some inclusive language resources and pages. We've just got time for one more question. We know that many students’ experience can be made or broken when it comes to how an academic or teacher handles a situation of their lived experience of disability or gender identity. What would your advice be for those who try and may get it wrong? How can we empower them to try and try again to get it right?

STEVIE: Do you want me to go first? Okay. I think empowering -- sorry, empowering staff to try, keep trying. I think obviously training is a big component. It's obviously difficult when training isn't necessarily compulsory for all staff members. I think it can sometimes come back to relating it to the individual person. A lot of the time I think for me, because there is a lot of, I guess, controversy surrounding trans and gender diversity, or people try to push that there is controversy around it. So that can sometimes make it difficult to me to portray to someone else why it's so important to use someone's name and pronouns, or to respect someone’s identity because people are like, “Oh, it's just something new, that it's not necessary, and this didn't happen in my” – you know, those kind of – “this didn't happen in my day” kind of thing. Sometimes that can be really hard because of the negative perceptions about trans and gender diverse people not being valid.

I think relating it to the individual experience, being able to relate it to and talk about culture and race and religion, and getting people to be able to relate to it on a personal level and you wouldn't want, hopefully, someone to address you in a particular way or not believe you or not affirm your identity, not use your pronouns. So it's about that, I guess, respect.

GABRIELLE: Thank you, Stevie. That's great.

STEVIE: Kay, did you have anything to add to that?

KAY: I was just saying that I think it's important to acknowledge intent as well, even if it doesn't go the way that would be the most inclusive, acknowledging that intent and that needing to go from ignorance, or putting the effort into move from that ignorance into a more inclusive space. I know often when I go to different services, inclusive language mightn't be there from the get-go but if you are open to that kind of feedback, I think that's really important. But also as a disabled person, often I experience lots of different non inclusive language from different service providers. So having the openness to change I think is quite important.

GABRIELLE: Great. Thank you again, both, for your time this morning. Thanks to all of our participants. Saturday was the International Day of People with Disability. There was lots of discussion happening over the weekend and we'll certainly be providing some more information in our upcoming newsletter. This is our last webinar for the year, so don't cry, you can go back and look at all of our 20 or so webinars we have done this year. We really rely on you, as the community, to tell us what you would like to hear. If you've got any ideas over summer, let us know what topics you would like to hear from next year.

Once again, thank you, Stevie and Kay, and our live captioner, Jason, and Jane, of course, for organising and wrangling all these webinars. She’s going to put some links into the chat for a survey. Look out for our webinars for the new year. My cat has just decided it wants some lunch, and I think everybody else wants lunch as well. Thank you again, everyone.

STEVIE: Thanks so much for having us.