STEWART: Well, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all here today. My name is Stewart Mailer, as you can see from the screen there. I am your host, MC, maybe you like to call it. We do have a packed schedule today, so let's get into today's proceedings.

Before we begin, we acknowledge that Country for Aboriginal Peoples is an interconnected set of ancient and sophisticated relationships. The University of Wollongong spreads across many interrelated Aboriginal countries that are bound by this sacred landscape and intimate relationship with that landscape since creation. From Sydney to the Southern Highlands to the south coast, from freshwater to bitter water to salt, from city to urban to rural, the University of Wollongong acknowledges the custodianship of the Aboriginal peoples of this place and space that has kept alive the relationships between all living things. The university acknowledges the devastating impact of colonisation on our campus’s footprint and commit ourselves to truth-telling, healing and education.

Now, just a little bit of quick housekeeping before we get into it. Emergency evacuations, very simply, folks, out the door, turn left to the end. Turn right and you're into the car park. Okay. So that's basically the emergency point. Bathrooms, the opposite, out the door, turn right to the end. Turn right again. You will see the bathrooms just on your right again. So basically, they sit behind that wall. Water refill. You have a water refill station just here outside the room. Lots of food options. We do have lunch being delivered for each of you. If you didn't put your lunch order in, if you have specific dietary requirements, please make us aware of that but we do have lunches coming for everyone. Coffees have already been ordered and received, but there are multiple coffee options and drink options around the university. The closest will be, basically if you come out here, you can either go into the bottom of building 17 across the car park, or again down, turn left, go out here, turn left, then right down the stairs and you'll be at the central hub. Bins are located there. We're supposed to also have recycling bins, but they haven't been delivered. They're coming. Beautiful. Thank you very much.

So it now gives me pleasure to introduce Dr Janine Delahunty. Dr Delahunty is an Honorary Fellow at the University of Wollongong and the School of Education. And Janine will be introducing our key speaker for today and to overview the CDL Hub project. So please join me in welcoming Janine Delahunty.

JANINE: Nice to see you all today and also welcome to the people online. So I'm also the project manager for this project, although I came into the project quite late, so I've taken over from another very capable person, Dr Olivia Grove. So I just want to acknowledge that, first of all. So the national hub for careers development learning was part of a national career development learning grant - or sorry, National Careers Institute Partnership grant, which the team received in 2020. So for two or three years the team has been working on this project. The chief investigating officer leading the project is Professor Sarah O'Shea. I think she's on line today. She couldn't be with us in person today, but she's also an Honorary Fellow at University of Wollongong.

The project involved quite a number of universities, four altogether. And so each of the four universities did a particular project which was based on best practice principles in CDL. So each day we've heard from one of the teams and today we're going to hear from Professor Sue Kilpatrick from the University of Tasmania, and Sue's going to talk to us about the VET careers pathways for school students living with disabilities, and particularly working with employers on that. So it gives me great pleasure to hand over to Sue now.

SUE: Thank you, Janine. So we'll move on to the slide for my project. So as Janine said, this presentation today is focused on VET career pathways for school students living with disability. I should acknowledge my colleague, Dr Sarah Fisher, also from the University of Tasmania, who's been working on a project with me. I'll tell you a little bit more about the project, but first I would like to reflect on the country on which this project was actually conducted. I come from Lutruwita, a beautiful island of Lutruwita, home of the Palawa people, and I acknowledge and pay my deep respect to the traditional owners of the land, particularly the elders, past and present, but also in an educational context, the emerging elders, and the way that the elders have traditionally passed down knowledge from generation to generation as they care for country. And I've chosen an image here from my university where we had a smoking ceremony last year to welcome students to country.

So about the project. So as Janine has already said, this is part of a bigger project. But the term CDL - I don't know if that means something to you or not, but for me it was a relatively new term. But this is not from just this project. This is part of a series of projects that most of the team from across the country are working on this project. We've previously worked together on other projects which have led to this concept of career development learning, which is really what you guys online and here in the room are doing with your students. It's not just advice anymore, it's about teaching and learning. The idea of didactic advice, I think we're well and truly past, or at least I certainly hope so.

So the opportunity to do some work on students with disability came up because of some various projects that members of the big team had done together. Sarah, my colleague Sarah, and I had previously done some work with students in higher education and success for students in higher education, what universities can do to to assist that. Other people have worked on different aspects of that, but for this project then, so the National Careers Institute, a bucket of Commonwealth money - it's really timely to reflect upon the fact that governments are funding projects for people with disability and thinking about why, the background to this.

So part of the reason, part of it is social justice reasons, but part of it is actually economic. And the focus of this project takes that into account. I'll tell you more about that later, but I think it's worth thinking about both the social justice aspects of working with students with disability, but also the economic impacts, not just on the students but on the whole economy.

So there were four case studies as part of the project. And if you want to go back to the Zoom links or tune in online tomorrow, you'll hear about all four of them. The project you're about to hear about, the University of Wollongong, they looked at access, transition and engagement out of – well, La Trobe’s engagement and re-engagement, and Curtin also looked at transitioning out and re-engagement. I'm just letting these people do things here. I presume that's going to make things better.

Okay. So what am I going to do? The overview is - so I'm talking mostly about students with disabilities. I'm going to talk about the project under the stage as you can see there, but perhaps I should tell you a little bit more about myself, and I've already perhaps suggested some of the things where I'm coming from. But in addition to the experiences I've just talked about in my regional development work, I've previously been a Pro Vice-Chancellor in two different universities and I've had the Disability Coordination Unit in my portfolio at the University of Tasmania. I currently have a PhD student who's living with disability, who's interested in training for support coordinators, and my own son has a medical disability and has ducked in and out of education since he became ill at 16. He's now 36. So I have - I'm coming at this from quite a few different perspectives.

So let's start with a bit of background to the VET students with disabilities. So these are school students we're talking about. So the background, well, we know the economy is changing. And nationally there have been - you know, there was that series of reports about strengthening careers pathways that were funded mostly by the previous government over the last four years or so. They all talk about strengthening vocational pathways at a national level.

Now, vocational pathways do include those to university but I'm not just interested in university. I'm also interested in VET as an end point as well as a possible transition point.

Why do this in Tasmania? Tasmania actually has the highest rate of disability in the country. Have I got that down there? No. Yes, I do. 28.6% of people in Tasmania are living with some kind of disability. Nationally it's 18%. And if you're looking at the age group that you guys are potentially interested in, nearly 10% of 15 to 24 year olds. So 1 in 10. Think about the students that you look after. So it's well worth thinking about it. And also Tasmania, like a lot of the country, is currently experiencing a worker shortage. So one of the things that we did on this project is we partnered with the Chamber of Commerce in Launceston, the city I'm based in, because they were interested in growing the workforce.

So I've talked to you about where I'm coming from. Now I'd like you to reflect on your table groups, or Stu, I think you can put some people in -those of you online, you should be randomly allocated to a zoom room where I hope you'll find other people to talk to. And if you're by yourself, I'm sure Stu will sort that out. So I'd like you to reflect about students with disabilities. Do you ever facilitate a work placement for them, either work experience, or if you've got VETing schools at your school, do you have to facilitate work placements for students with disability? How do you go about it? What do you think about? How do you prepare for it? How do you prepare with the student, maybe with their family or carers? But what I'm particularly interested in in this presentation, but they're all important, is what about the work placement host or the employer?

So I'd like you to talk about your own experiences, compare notes in your little rooms, maybe put something in the chat if you're online, or if you've got people in your zoom room, you can just talk about it. And a warning, I'm going to ask for a couple of tables in the room and at least one zoom room - yes, Richard. Yes. There's a member of the audience here who's already enthusiastically said he'll volunteer to report back from his group. Just watch out. But I may or may not choose Richard. So just have a chat amongst yourselves. I'll give you about, what, five minutes maybe to have a bit of a chat. And if you're still not finished, I'll give you a bit longer.

Okay. Right. So there was some great chat happening. So that was really great to hear. So I'd really like to hear from a couple of people. And are we thinking that we can be heard from the tables? We'll try it and see ---

STEWART: Tables should be able to be – if everyone else is quite we should be able ---

SUE: For the people online, so we’ve got speakers. This room has wonderful technology. So who would like to share some reflections from their table, or do I have to pick somebody? I know Richard's anxious. All right, let's have Richard first, but I'm going to ask somebody else as well.

RICHARD: All right, look, this is an area that I work in anyway with Future Kids with our program at Canberra College. But look, it is - in terms of work experience and finding work, it's very much a team work approach that we have. It's not one person, it's actually not manageable with one person doing this. From my experience, it's about working as a team, and that is with students with disabilities, getting the school to help, and we have a very flexible program. It doesn't matter that - we can do whatever it takes for them to go out, whether it's one day a week or a week program, it doesn't really matter. We'll work around that because by year 11 and 12, parents are really worried about what's going to happen afterwards. And I think that's a priority. And I don't think it's recognised at schools and within the department as a priority, but it should be. And so that's what we do. And I work with - try and get parents to look at NDIS funding, if they have NDIS funding - and some don't and they should - but if they do, and looking at some SLES funding, which is this additional funding, or DES, but also getting service providers to help support the person in the workplace if it's needed. It's not always needed, but sometimes it is.

SUE: Okay. So some good points there about being flexible and about accessing funding and talking to the parents. Now, is there somebody on another table who thought a bit more about my last - perhaps the most tricky point there, employers and work placement hosts? Or did you all just talk about the school and the parents and the students?

- I’ll have a go. We talked about the importance of SLSO, having support around that student, especially in the early stages, like the first day or first couple of days, whatever it takes, and how that person often has a better rapport with them than what we might, especially if we're in a large high school.

SUE: Yes. Yes. So somebody who really knows the student supporting the student into the workplace. So managing that, helping with that transition. Yeah, that's really good. And at the back there. Yep.

- Yep. I find that - we come from a small community, but building those relationships with employers that you can actually ring up and you know the employer well enough or the establishment to make a suitable match for that student. So, you know, we can personally ring somebody and say, “Look, I've got this young student with these needs. You know, we will accommodate them”, and that really helps.

SUE: Yeah, and that ---

- And then the employer, they understand that they're assisting the school with giving opportunities.

SUE: Okay. So that was a good range of responses. Now, how about those of you out there in Zoom land, somebody like to say something?

JONATHAN: I'm happy to go.

SUE: Unmute. Yes.

JONATHAN: Hi, I'm Jonathan. I'm a careers consultant at RMIT University working specifically with students living with disability. And so this is a bit of the daily for me and I’m very, very fortunate to be able to do that. And a lot of the work I do is with the student but also with the employers. And students have got the ability to be able to have an equitable learning plan at RMIT University, and most universities around something similar that call a different name. But we're integrating WIL, or work experience, or placement as part of that as well to make sure they're supported and there's that side of things that it's known to the university.

The other big bit of work that we've been doing is leveraging our space within the employment market. When people come to us and say, “We want your graduates”, is actually reverse engineering that and saying, you know, “Would you be open to students from different equitable learning backgrounds or different equitable and equity backgrounds?”, and then opening up that dialogue for, you know, “Would you support a student with disability? I notice you're a member of the Australian Network on Disability?” or, you know, Job Access or something like that. And then to be able to say, “Well, here's what you what you need to know for this student”, helping them communicating that to the employer if that's their choice as well about the reasonable adjustments they might need, but also understanding the inherent requirements from the university and the employer perspective to make sure that they're still able to do. Yeah.

SUE: Yeah. Thanks, Jonathan. So that really builds nicely on the last point. It's about employer relationships. Okay, so that's really good. So we've thought about our own experience. So now I'll tell you a bit more about what we did in the pilot. So just so you get some idea of where I'm coming from when I'm talking about it. So a lot of these are academic ease. So basically what we did was we partnered with the Launceston Chamber of Commerce and also the Tasmanian Department of Education, which has since changed its name to something quite complex, but Department of Education that was at the time was also doing a project on students with disability and VET, with pre-VET and with school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. So we had this three-way partnership. We worked together.

So we interviewed - basically we had an expert reference group who were very informative of people from those - plus the NDS as well, and we identified employers to talk with. So these were people who either had experience employing school-based students with disability or with employing young people with disability because the school VET, it's mainly quite embryonic and we weren't expecting...some actually really phases four and five. We came up with some guidelines for employers because there's a gap in the market. You know, we all get together - look at the number of careers advisers with this kind of experience in this room today, plus online. How often do employers get together to talk about employing people with disability in their workplace, especially small and medium businesses who don't really have time for any of that learning. Right. So we saw there was a big gap in the market and so did the Launceston Chamber of Commerce. Most of their members are small and medium businesses too, so we're trying to help focus on those groups.

So we came up with some draft - after those interviews and talking with people, some draft guidelines about what employers might need. And then we took that to our reference group and made some changes, put it out for a bit of a survey for some other feedback, and we came up with some final guidelines which we validated with another survey, basically to check that people liked those. Those, Janine, will be available any minute on the Australian Disability Clearinghouse for Education and Training. ADCET. Are you familiar with ADCET? If you're not, you should become familiar with ADCET. It's a national clearinghouse, happens to be based at the University of Tasmania. In fact, these people were in my portfolio when I was Pro Vice-Chancellor. They are absolutely fantastic. There's a whole range of resources there that are really useful for you, for families, for students and even for employers.

- How do you spell that?

SUE: A-D-C-E-T. I don't have a slide about it. Janine.

JANINE: Everybody will be sent the link. There's going to be a whole lot of resources in a hub housed on ADCET, so everybody who's registered will be sent a link when that's ready in the very near future.

SUE: Right, so it will come. But if you Google ADCET, and perhaps - it should come up, especially if you add the word “disability” to it. They also run great webinars. An ad for ADCET whilst I'm about it.

Okay, so what did we find? So what I'm going to do now is I'm going to talk broadly about what works, and then I'm going to go into some of the quotes from employers that we've actually got in our - working down to our guidelines. So some of these things - and the things in brackets are the interviews. So “EMP” is employer 1 and “TEA” is teacher. I can't even remember what that stands for. So the person who did - school person who does the placement. Sarah my colleague came up with the - but yeah.

So first of all relationships and connections. So Jonathan online talked about this, and a table at the back over there talked a bit about relationships and connections with employers. So having individual champions who are employers who would say to other employers, “Look, you know, I've got somebody here on a work placement and it's working really well. I'll take other people.” You know, that helps. Interestingly, employers will - perhaps not interestingly - employers with a personal connection to disability. Now, I've said that in Tasmania, you know, 28.6% population have a disability. Nationally, it's 18%. Chances are most employers either already have somebody in their workforce with some sort of disability -because remember, disability is these days neurologically diverse. You don't necessarily see them. You know, you say you're a bit OCD sometimes, don't you? Are you on the spectrum yourself? You know, it's a whole spectrum. But people who have a personal connection with some kind of disability are much more likely to take a student, an employer, than somebody who doesn't because it's a bit more of a known entity. What else works? Communication. Three-way communication. We heard some of that back from the room. Really clear communication. The employers particularly want clear communication. They don't want jargon. And for an employer to sit down with the student at the beginning of each day or have somebody on their workforce, you know, making sure that the student knows what they're doing and they know what the student's doing.

So what you're trying to do here is put - what I'm wanting you to do is to imagine you're the employer and the student that you've placed with them, you know, what do you want the employer to do? What should the employer do? What hints can you give to the employer about what might help for a successful placement for the student and the employer? Debrief at the end of each day. These are things employers said, but for the student, realistic information about what the workplace is like, the warts and all. Is it going to be noisy? Is it going to be busy? Are you going to be sitting by yourself? All those kinds of things that, depending on your student, might make a difference to how comfortable they feel.

But one of the really tricky ones we came across was students who are clear on the barriers and are able to communicate these, because there's a tendency for - I think it's probably fairly widespread for students either not to disclose or to prefer not to disclose because they fear discrimination. So they may even not have disclosed to you that they have a disability. And particularly like one of the people at the table I was sitting on, who doesn't actually work at the same school as the student she places, you don't know the students who haven't disclosed, you have no idea. So there are probably - does that ring true that there are some students you think may have disability when you think about it, but they haven't disclosed? I'm seeing lots of nods for those of you who listen to this later and can't see.

- Well, possibly parents. The students not even knowing themselves and their parents have just kept it from them as well.

SUE: They haven't bothered to find out to get a diagnosis in case, you know. Yeah. Or they just haven't - yeah, they didn't – “Everyone in the family’s like that. So why would you go for a diagnosis?”, you know.

- Or they deny it.

SUE: Or they deny it. Yeah. Really clear. And this has implications for the success of the work placement, doesn't it? Yeah. Okay. And students also need to be made aware of the support options available so they make sure that the student - so somebody talked about I really like the idea of making sure that somebody from the school went into the workplace the first couple of days. But not everybody has the resources to do that. But there are - I think Richard mentioned accessing NDIS supports. Okay. What else works in the workplace? Employers who just recognise that everybody's different, and lots of employers - a couple of them said to us, “Well, actually, when I think about it, we're already doing this. You know, we know so-and-so is really quiet and likes to work over there and we know so-and-so is all bubbly and we put her front of house, you know. So we're already doing that.” Yeah.

And the idea of having - if you've got a student out there, then having a dedicated person they can go to if there's an issue or you can check in with a dedicated person, especially in a big site. There are some policy things, policy and system things. A small group of - who was it who mentioned the small group of employers. So you develop relationships with employers who you know will take students with disability, cultivate them, look after them, you know, nurture them. And I also heard short-term work experience prior to a longer placement, certainly on the table I was sitting on. So give it a bit of a try. Don't send them out for a whole week first off. And there are some government incentives that have already been mentioned. So that's the enhancers I always like to put them before the barriers, which I don't like but we have to acknowledge.

The biggest barrier we found to successful VET placements for school students was lack of knowledge of disability. People were actually afraid of saying the wrong thing. I would actually go so far as to say they feared. Employers feared that they would say or the other employees would say or do the wrong thing. Right? Real fear. But I can't emphasise enough that that was out there. It's not nice to recognise but I think you need to recognise it. And there were - it was all too hard because they might upset people. And they're wary of taking on additional workplace risks. You know, I heard that one up - I don't know if it's one of the quotes here but, you know, some student who leant over a machine or - I don't think it was a student, but an employee who leant over a machine and got caught in - damage to themselves, not good.

And they need more help understanding the needs of individual students. And the information needs to be easily accessible. ADCET has a fantastic online learning module for employers, but how many employers have an hour to work through that?

- But then that's not individual, is it like ---

SUE: No, and it's not. It's based on what - so that gives you the background info, but you're absolutely right, it's about individual students. And one boundary a sceptic employer says that projects haven't made a big difference. I'm trying to do a little bit better on this. I'm hoping – well, expecting to go back to the Chamber of Commerce this year, now that the year's got underway, and sit down with them and say, “Well, how about we” -they have networking events – “How about at a networking event”, where they’re there with a glass of wine, which attracts them, “we stand up and talk a little bit about this project?”, so that they can get it in a like a friendly, non-threatening environment. Employers sometimes don't have enough time to train their staff to look after students or the students themselves. And for the bigger businesses, we found when we talked to like the local branch of something big, head office said, “Oh, there are great financial incentives to get involved in this. Send the students”, and then local branch says, “Heavens, what are we going to do with this student? We haven't got time.”, right? So that's a workplace factor you probably can't do anything about. And there are places where there are, potentially, unsafe physical environments, which probably are the easiest to be aware of and deal with, actually. Lack of funding, lack of awareness of policies and incentives. How many people would think of using NDIS funding, for example? And employers are very sceptical about policy. Surprise, surprise.

Okay, so we came up with some best practice suggestions. Now, just as a warning, so you don't go to sleep, there's another reflection coming up after this. So the suggestions are really the reverse of this. So knowing about disability and about communication. So communicating with the employers, with the students. Clearly tailored to the individual, as the point was made over here. Employers, though, don't really - I think this is probably a community thing. People don't necessarily understand the whole spectrum of disability and what it really means. But one employer said you need to also know what signs to watch out for an undisclosed disability so that you can then act. And a lot of - several of the - this is actually from one of the school - the actual quote, but case studies of what's worked, you know, employers, it's back to the point about champions. This really worked. The system just needs to be basically clearer with user-friendly guidelines. And the idea of setting up a support network of employers, students and co-workers was suggested by one of them.

So what does all that mean for a student you know? So I've chosen a neurodiverse student, because I think they're harder than one with physical disabilities, I don't know, but I'd like you to reflect on your table, or in your zoom room, Stu, if you could put those online people back into their zoom rooms. What would you be looking for? So think of a persona. I haven't given you one. I'd rather you draw on your own experience. What would you be looking for? So you'll need to explain the persona of your student to your other table members. And what would you say about that student to the workplace host, bearing in mind all those fears and what you can and can't say? And what would the workplace host really need to know? So talk about it and we'll give you about another, what, five, ten minutes, or something in between, and we'll come back and we'll do as you did before. And I'll turn off the sound so that the people online aren't...

Awesome. Good discussion there again. Okay. Right. Okay, We're back. The Zoom people are back.

STEWART: They are. Yes.

SUE: Yes. Everybody's back. Okay. So I certainly heard some really good discussion there about your own context with a couple of tables that I listened into. Who would like to report back on what some of the interesting things that were said on their table about? Not this part of the room, the right hand side as I face you, didn't say as much last time. What about the great big table over there against the window. There are lots of you. You must have had lots of exciting things to share.

- I think the first thing we were thinking of is this takes a lot of time for each individual student and we're just a one person career adviser for the whole school, and that we need support in these areas.

SUE: Yeah. Now that's an interesting point. In some of the other tables I listened into, though, I heard about how can you work more as a team to do this? So it's ---

- What do you mean as a team?

SUE: Well, some examples from over here?

- Learning support teacher to you, and the learning support teacher is actually part of the process that helps to organise work placements for -we have a disability unit and, yeah, we have a learning support teacher that takes some of that load.

- Is that for VET subjects or are you talking about all students?

- No, we're just talking about for work experience and ---

- That's the distinction that we sort of discussed. There's the work placement, which is more for the VET subjects, which is where I think you're coming from, whereas a lot of careers advisers also - they have more experience with work experience where they're talking about ground roots stuff that we've all brought up about relationships, etcetera, whereas we've usually got a provider for the work placements that caters for the subject areas. So there's ---

SUE: Right. So this I think is relevant to both. Obviously we focused on the - we deliberately chose the pointy end, the VET, where you have to have a work placement and there's much more around it to focus on. But as we work through it, it's clear that a lot of this is relevant to even the work placement. And if you think about the student journey, they might start as - I'm sure somebody over here said start with the work placement, then they might work through to a VET placement. And also in our project, a lot of schools had what they called pre-VET and this was just as relevant for pre-VET as for actual traineeships and apprenticeships. Richard, did you want to say something?

RICHARD: Look, I just - probably two things. Just some kids aren't capable of doing a Cert II or III and it would be worthwhile just noting that, and particularly challenging, I think, in that way. And the other thing that I would say is that, you know, as I said, it's a team environment and there's a lot of pressure if you take on the whole thing of managing work experience as well as doing career interviews. And that's where I get service providers to help us with that. But I'm very conscious that, you know, there's vested interest in service providers because they need clients and they don't always offer the same services. And so it's about vetting that and being careful with how that's structured and making sure that if they do come on board, that they are supportive with the school environment and that they meet what they say they meet, because some don't. They talk but they don't always deliver that. That's my experience.

SUE: I'm seeing some nods around the room, for those of you who can't see the room. Yes.

- You can get really good ones. And there are providers that also do the transition to work for those students with disabilities, so that they're at school, but also doing a day and building on that in order to make the transition easier. So that - there's a huge array.

SUE: So you really need to understand the landscape for the students in your school and where there are resources, what the resources are and, dare I suggest, the quality of those resources, because they're not all the same. I think this is pretty clear. Any other points from the room before I ask the Zoom room? Is that a little hand over there or somebody just about to scratch their nose?

- I was thinking about this one down here where you talk about, you know, what does the post, the people taking on that person, you know, they need to know things like learning styles and special equipment and, you know, just the ins and outs of how a student might get there, or what have you, because, you know, I don't look after them like you guys do.

SUE: Yes. So somebody over here.

- Yeah. Just on that point, too, we're just talking about like - so a student that is neurodiverse, I had one recently, and he actually - we got him a job after his thing and then he's lost it. But it's a front of house environment and it's busy and they're overloading him with too many jobs at once. So, you know, having an understanding that, you know, three or four jobs, but those same three and four jobs every day, you'll have quite a successful work placement student not expecting them to do everything that a front of house person would normally do.

SUE: Yes. Yes. So you'll find some employers might have expectations that are too high and others may have expectations that are too low. Richard.

- Sorry, I don't want to take over, like, I don't want to do all these answers. I am enthusiastic of this, though. It's good that we're talking about this. But I just want to acknowledge Joe, because I hadn't thought about this, but we have an ILP for schools and that tells us what adjustments to make and the individual traits of the student. And, you know, Joe was just talking about this idea that it might be worthwhile having elements of that ILP, like a workplace ILP where the workplace can actually – and, you know, permission of parents and disclosure and everything, but an ILP workplace so that you've got all of those things written down that you can easily, you know, cut and paste into another document. You want to minimise, you know, your workload too and that's a bit extra work. But a workplace ILP is a fantastic idea that I've never thought about and that's Joe, so I might ---

SUE: Well, thank you, Joe. But yes, actually - yes.

- It's interesting you actually say that as well, but if you go back to like your work experience forms and lots of stuff, there's actually like a part of the form actually that is - that is there in the parent section for information to go in there. And I think that's probably almost the first point of contact with those forms, actually, is seeing how the parents have actually addressed that question and actually taking it from there as well, whether you need to backtrack and actually go, okay, what else do we need to include in this, and actually - because that's when you actually have to go, “Okay, wait a second. I need to go back and talk to the parents about this information before we talk to the employer”, and all those sorts of things. So there's lots of – like, that's actually why that information is actually there in regard to, and that actually can make a successful placement. But it's also about making sure the employer knows that information is there as well because, let's face it, they're all pretty - sometimes they're pretty good at reading just what they need to sign and ---

SUE: And not doing it all

- Sending it off as well.

SUE: Yes.

- Also, when students are doing eVET courses, it is important to be able to take especially that - that I deal with the most - need to know if we're ticking a box on the eVET system that says the student has a disability, we need to acknowledge that and give the TAF the information, so they can then - and I've had that over the years many times that the TAFE then contact - or the provider; it doesn't necessarily have to be TAFE - but the provider then contacts the parent or the student to have a discussion with them so they feel comfortable when they're going off to the eVET course. So we utilise like a system where we document all the information, asks parents if they give permission, and then most of the time we can pass it on to the TAFE. So then they have a good understanding of what's required instead of box ticking everything as well.

SUE: Yes. So in Tasmania, I mentioned that the Department of Education was doing a project about students with disability, and in VET and things, and one of the things that they came up with was what they called - I can't remember -it's a four-way something or other form, which was the parent, the student, the school and the employer. And they all had to sign off on it. And all had – it was an information exchange thing. So that sounds – I think that must vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction what you need in terms of that document. But that is a useful way. But just make sure it's not all lost in the fineprint. There's not so much fineprint that you miss. You know, so-and-so doesn't like loud noises, or whatever, might be really important in the form. Yeah, but that's one way of communicating.

But remember, always remember - and remember. I'm thinking about employers - in fact, I'll just put the next thing up, because that reminds - it hasn't worked. Let me try again. What's happened to my buttons here? But hang on. I've got a mouse over here. I might be able to make this work. Stewart, you can help me because I think I did that before. I actually wanted to talk to it. So you have to remember that the employer hasn't got a lot of time to read these things. Yes.

- Can I ask, have you also addressed VET teachers and the head teachers of VET?

SUE: Well, these were some of the interviewees on the project. So they were schools ---

- Today – we’re careers advisers. Some people here do do VET.

SUE: Do VET, yes. This is equally relevant to - well, perhaps more, and school coordinators in Tasmania - and Tasmania has a very strange - we don't have careers teachers, but we kind of have a very strange system. But the VET - school VET coordinators who were basically doing the placements play a lot of that role and there are other people who have dual roles. But yes, it's relevant.

- But I’m saying in Sydney, Sydney in New South Wales, we – it depends on the size of school - we have head teachers of VET who do all the VET stuff and that's it. So that's not VET VET, you know what I'm saying? Yeah.

SUE: And it varies - and we've got somebody here from Canberra.

- Yeah. So that's all I'm saying.

SUE: So I think that was useful. But yeah, so every system is different and the idea of a team, so it might not be - sounds like some of you do placements, some don't, just understanding.

So the aim of this project to come up with was guidelines. And the employers we spoke to said, “We want to hear - we don't want to hear from the teachers, we don't want to hear from the bureaucrats. We want to hear from other employers. We want guidelines in our language from people like us.”

So our guidelines - I haven't actually got a picture of the guidelines, but what I've got here, they'll be on the ADCET website shortly, as Janine said, very shortly. Yes, yes, yes. So our guidelines are about communication being key. That was an overarching theme that I mentioned earlier, having an open and welcoming workplace culture. So you're an employer, what do you do? Then you need to understand your student, but particularly the spectrum of disability. You don't just want to know that they've got – they’re neurodiverse. You want to know a little bit more about them. But really important is that match between the workplace and the student. So the guidelines have quotes in them because employers wanted to hear from other employers.

Now, I don't expect you to read everything that's on there. But we've talked already about the importance of communication. But if I just read out - and you can read them yourself - but one of them said, “Look, you've got to talk to your students.” Ask them at the start, “What does your best day look like and what does your worst day look like?” And when you think about it, that's a pretty simple question. But they try to -what they're trying to do with that question is understand what the student might be -how do they know when they're doing well and when they're not, basically, and then you want - if you go to the bottom point, the student might explain - you want students to be able to feel comfortable to say things like, “My voice might go really flat, I might do nothing. I might hunch up and start flinching. When that happens, this is what you should do and what you can't do and what it means. I'm not mad. I just need a minute”, you know?

So you want am employer - that's the kind of place you want to get to. That's ideal. It's not easy to get there, to have a student who's comfortable saying this. But if you're an employer, that gives you an idea of what you might be aiming for. You've probably never thought about that before if you're an employer. Right. So that's the example of the quotes that we've got in here for employers. We've got it spread out over more pages than this. So it doesn't look so crowded.

So then the second theme was understanding the spectrum of disability. Stuart, you've got a ---

STEWART: Just had someone come through with a comment online.

SUE: Yes, what did they say?

STEWART: From CS Cooper: “Would have shared that is important to work with the individual students to develop their way of communicating with the employer. Students should visit the workplace and assist in identifying barriers. Don't give the employer too much info, just the impact on the workplace.”

SUE: That's true too, because employers don't want to know. They want to know enough but not too much. But getting the student and the employer talking to each other is important, but part of that is boosting the student's confidence. There are guidelines for employers, so that's why that was in the background stuff I've already talked about. But here we’re talking about the employers, right. So you need to look at the social environment as well as the physical built environment and just understanding it's normal to need adjustments for people.

But the second one, we met with the student and their case worker, was probably the school person, prior to them coming here, we go through it all. So this is CS Cooper's point here about going through it all in advance. So when they get there, it's not like unknown. You know how you feel on the first day at a new job. Imagine how you feel as a student with disability on your first day in the workplace, you know, put yourself in their shoes.

And we've heard before about, you know, like going there first. And there was one example. This is a physical disability. Simple thing. I need a cane. I've got to have somewhere to put it. So I'm low vision, so I don't want to put it where I might trip over it, can't see it. Just somewhere where I can put it and then I'm fine, you know. So they put a hook on the wall a she was away, she was right, you know. So simple things.

And so - this is from the ADCET website that I mentioned earlier. So there's heaps and heaps of categories of disability. No wonder employers are confused. Just look at that list. I'm not going to read them all out. Just the length of the list is enough, isn't it? That's the point I'm trying to make.

Workplace hosts need to work towards understanding that not all disabilities are visible, and the fact that I've made - this was a Tasmanian pilot but there are lots of people in the community with disabilities. So just getting - even if all you can do with your employers is - this is really more for people like the Chamber of Commerce, you know, this is the starting point of where you might – it’s a low goal but where you need to be, perhaps not quite so relevant for you. So, you know, everybody's different. I think I've said that enough. And there's some employer talking about how different they are.

But something that I think I've mentioned but you need to be aware of is that Australia is a signatory to the United Nations. I can't think of the name of it now, but it's a statement about disability, and that says that disclosure is a choice of the student. So you can't force them to disclose.

So you're always working in this kind of slightly murky environment. But you need to make them feel comfortable so they can disclose so they're not feeling threatened and that they might miss out. Then you need to match the workplace and the student. So co-design work experience, if possible. Familiar with co-design? It's a big buzz thing at the moment. Yes, Richard.

RICHARD: I think that's one of the hardest things to do, to be honest.

SUE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RICHARD: We talk about having the workplace and knowing what sort of work the kids would like, but the parents have no idea and the kids have no idea. The kids need direction and the parents are struggling to figure out what to do. They've never done this before. Where we've been in this role, we know kind of where to go, but parents don't have any idea. And matching the workplace and the student, I think you could talk a lot more about how that's best done because that's what I struggle with.

SUE: Yeah, well, the person immediately behind you, I think you talked about developing relationships with employers, so you know what work placements are available. But just think about the modern world and the world that the parents of your students grew up in and what jobs were like then. And think about what you know about jobs now. This is just for any student, not just with a disability. Things are just so different. So you can't expect the parents to understand the opportunities that there might be for their students out there.

So co-design where possible. Not always possible. You need good relationships. This is ideal, I'd say where possible. So make times. Make sure that the students go to the work placement, ideally with somebody. And then later on the slide there are examples of what employers say. I like the bottom one, though. “The focus isn't so much on what they can't do but what they can do.” Capability is a big thing, right?

And the final theme was about opportunities from this study and the implications. So I've talked about the lack of willingness to talk about disability and the variety of fears. For me, this was the biggest learning from the project. Just how afraid and the fear from the employer point of view about doing the wrong thing, not knowing the risks, not understanding the risks, the fear of risks to their workplace. And that to me is not - that's a community issue, an employer peak body issue, an industry issue as much as it is a schools issue. And interestingly, as we interviewed our employers, you could see them thinking ticking, tick, tick, “Oh, yes. And oh, actually really do that. Actually, we could do it.” You know, you could see them thinking about their own practice and changing it. So just having the conversation is another opportunity.

And several of them mentioned the idea of some kind of form or mechanism to share experiences. So then we said, well, we've got to look at influencing organisations who can raise awareness of disability. And so we're working with the Chamber of Commerce to to do something of that just in one regional city, but one of the directions we could take from the learnings of this whole project is to move that up a bit and move the idea of students with disability and moving into workplaces with that. Remember at the beginning I mentioned the economic lens as well as the social justice lens, which in my view has been missing from the debate up till now. That's my last slide. Because I'm an academic, the next thing is references. If anybody's interested, I think this - let me move on to – we won't stand looking at that. That's a bit boring.

There is lunch in a minute but we've got a couple more minutes before we’re scheduled to finish, so we could - has anybody got any questions or comments or reflections that they'd like to share as a result of all of this? Or does anybody want to put something in the chat? Those of you out there in Zoom land.

STEWART: Someone's just asked, would you please go back one slide so they can get the copy of the ---

SUE: That one? They want that?

STEWART: They want that.

SUE: They can take a screenshot of it. Thank you very much, whoever that is. I'm really pleased to hear that. But there's a lot of work on it. But the takeaway from all this is there's a lot more work that can be done. And I think disability should be everybody's business. And I hope - yeah. There are no further comments. I hope you've all – it’s given you some food for thought and some things that you could.

- That bit that I was mentioning before about the VET teachers. I really think - I mean, what got me today, but I don't know if the others agree with me, I think you should be addressing the VET teachers and get on to the VET Teachers Association. VET Teachers Association. And see if you can present at one of their sessions.

SUE: Okay. Yeah, well certainly open to possibility. Yeah. I'll have a chat to you later, but these slides should be available, Stewart, somewhere.

STEWART: Yes. So we'll be making – everyone, you'll be receiving an email and that email will have either a link or this actual file. Probably just pdf it and forward it to you. Okay.

SUE: And please forward it to anybody you think might find it useful. So maybe you could all forward it to the VET teachers in your school. The head VET teacher. There’s a homework task for you all to start with. But yes, I'll come and have a chat. So thank you all for listening. And I do hope that you got something out of all of that.