DARREN BRITTEN: Welcome, everybody, and thank you for joining us today for this ADCET webinar. My name is Darren Britten, I am the National Assistive Technology Project Officer at Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, that is ADCET for short.

I'm a white male in my 50s I like to think early 50s, moving towards mid-50s. I have short greying hair and a grey beard, and some blue rimmed glasses. I'm wearing a blue collared shirt and a black jacket today because it is a little bit cold in Melbourne where I'm coming from.

Just to let you know this webinar is being live captioned. To activate those captions you can click on the cc, the closed captions button, in the tool bar that's located either at the top or the bottom of your Zoom screen. We also have captions available via a web browser, for those who would like to use that, which will now be added to the chatbox. There is a link you can get access to.

ADCET is hosted on Lutruwita, which is Tasmanian Aboriginal land, and in the spirit of reconciliation ADCET respectfully acknowledges the Lutruwita nations and also recognises the Aboriginal history and culture of the land, and I pay my respect to elders past, present and to the many Aboriginal people that did not make elder status. I would like to also acknowledge I'm coming from Melbourne, from Wurundjeri lands of the people of the Kulin nation. I would also like to acknowledge all other countries and lands from participants in this webinar, and also acknowledge their elders and ancestors, and their legacy to us and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People joining this webinar today.

Speaking of today's webinar, Inclusive Placements for Students with Disability, which will be presented by Associate Professor Amani Bell who, alongside student co researchers, co-developed solutions to the interconnected challenges of placement poverty and placement exclusion. So riveting stuff, and I can tell by the crowd we're going to have lots of discussion around this today.

But before we begin, a few more housekeeping details. This webinar is being live captioned by Helen thank you from Bradley Reporting and will be recorded and put up on to the ADCET website in the coming days. If you have any technical difficulties, you can email admin@adcet.edu.au and we will try and solve those if we can.

This presentation will run for around 45, 50 minutes, and then at the end there will be 10 minutes or so for questions. Throughout the presentation, feel free to use the chatbox with us and each other, but please select and choose the "everybody" option so that everybody can read what you have to say.

Amani is happy to answer all your questions at the end. If you do have a question, we'd ask you please use the Q&A box to put that question into rather than the chatbox so we can keep them all in one place. With that being said, thank you. Welcome everybody and welcome, Amani. I will throw over to you.

AMANI BELL: Thanks so much, Darren. I'm Amani Bell. I am an Egyptian/Australian woman. I've got curly hair, and I'm in Sydney, and it's cold here as well, so I have my little dog, little black dog on my lap who is a very good lap warmer. As Darren mentioned, the slides are available if you want to follow along via the link that's in the chat.

On this slide is a photo of some beautiful flowers near where I live on Kiamai land in Sydney. We're always learning and we're always on country. I would like to pay my respects to elders’ past, present and future, extending that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People here today.

This work is from a year long Fellowship that has wrapped up fairly recently that was funded by the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success. And I wanted to look at work-based placements which are a form of work integrated learning which are compulsory in several degrees, including allied health, teaching, social work, nursing, psychology, dentistry, vet science and medicine, and impose financial hardships on students known as placement poverty.

Students also sometimes encounter racism, ableism and other forms of discrimination during their placements which further impacts their wellbeing. So as a consequence, students may drop out of their degrees or they may defer their degrees, or enter the workforce already burned out exacerbating workforce shortages. Given the benefits of workforce diversity, it's really critical that we can make placements more equitable.

So to tackle these inequities, in this Fellowship I conducted participatory action research with students and educators to co-develop and explore solutions to tackle placement poverty and to make placements more inclusive.

So in this presentation, I'm going to focus on the issues and solutions related to ensuring placement inclusion for students with disability. And if you're interested in the full findings of the Fellowship, there will be a final report available soon.

So it was important that the project team brought diverse perspectives and experiences to the project and that it included students. On this slide is a photo of the project team, and I will say a bit about each of us. I'm a higher education equity researcher and I teach placement subjects in health sciences. I also bring my experiences of having an ethnic and religious minority background. The four student co researchers were Mena Hilcan, Tina Tran, Tara Sones and Lachlan Siber. Mena Hill is an international student studying dentistry, Tina is a social work student bringing her perspectives of having a low socio-economic background and supporting other equity deserving young people as an ambassador and mentor. Tara is an arts and social work student and brings a social justice lens to the project. Lachlan is a proud Kamilaroi man, as well as being a high school teacher and completing an honours degree in history.

Heading now to a bit more about the project background. So we know that placements are valuable learning experiences and that they can be particularly beneficial for equity deserving students. Denise Jackson and colleagues found in their recent analysis of over 151,000 graduates in the National Graduate Outcomes Survey that students with disability perceive that placements prepared them for future work and that this is, indeed, the case. Placements are linked with full time job attainment for students with disability, as well as for other equity deserving cohorts.

On the flipside, however, students with disability face significant inequities with placement experiences. They've been found to access placements at lower rates and to encounter stigma, lack of accessible placements and difficulties seeking accommodations. Concerningly, a recent review by Lawlis and colleagues that despite some progress, challenges, concerns, attitudes and behaviours towards students with disability and creating equitable work integrated learning experiences have not changed over the 12 year review period. So that was from 2005 to 2022.

We also know that students with disability often cite limited work experience as a major barrier to securing meaningful employment. Also, of course, many students belong to multiple equity deserving groups, yet intersectional issues in work integrated learning remain under explored in both research and practice.

So in this project, this was our approach. We've been inspired by two key concepts in this project. The first is work integrated learning for social justice, which is based on Jan McArthur's idea of assessment for social justice. Rooted in critical theory, McArthur's perspective highlights the connection between individual and social wellbeing. At the heart of this approach is the idea of mutual recognition of individuals, their identities, action and intrinsic value. McArthur challenges us to reflect on students' lived experiences and to question how can we make sure the conditions for equity deserving students to thrive in work integrated learning genuinely exist. And on this slide is an image of the cover of Jan McArthur's book, Assessment For Social Justice.

Another concept we have drawn on is lived expertise, the idea that people's experiences can develop into expertise that comes from sharing and reflecting on those experiences and connecting them to wider systemic issues. Lived expertise highlights and uncovers complex issues that are hard to capture via quantitative research.

So together, these two concepts of work integrated learning for social justice and lived expertise have informed our research methodology, especially our approach to use participatory action research which is a scholar activist research approach that brings together community members, activists and scholars to co create knowledge and social change.

So the next phase of the Fellowship was we hosted a series of four co design workshops with students and educators. Many participants contributed their expertise related to their research, practice and advocacy about placements. So to make sure that these workshops were accessible across Australia, they were held over Zoom and each round of workshops was repeated three times to allow participants to choose the most convenient date and time for them.

We were fortunate to have participants from many disciplines, mainly from a range of Australian Universities, and one from Aotearoa, New Zealand, and one from Canada, who were invited due to their expertise in placement poverty and inclusion. Some of the educators were based in Universities and others were in placement sites.

We didn't collect participant demographics. However, many participants disclosed various aspects of their identities and experiences during the workshops without prompting. These included low socio-economic status, indigenous, international, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQA+, disability, neurodiversity, rural and regional, having caring responsibilities, minoritised religious beliefs, being an older student, and so on. Participants often belong to more than one of these groups and often spoke about their intersectional experiences.

In our first workshop we aimed to establish the project and get to know each other. Each participant introduced themselves and shared their experiences of placement poverty and inclusion. We posed two key questions: what are some solutions to placement poverty? And what are some solutions to placement exclusion? We were fortunate to have several participants share deeply personal experiences that they had undergone during their placements. Having such a diverse range of participants allowed people to discuss their ideas collaboratively and generate creative and practical ways of addressing the issues.

We compiled and organised participants' ideas into 40 solutions. 20 related to placement poverty and 20 related to placement inclusion. Workshops 2 and 3 were dedicated to expanding these ideas. So workshop 2 had a placement poverty focus and workshop 3 had a placement inclusion focus. And we asked our participants how might these solutions work in practice and who should fund them, what are some barriers that may emerge, and how can we overcome these barriers? And then in workshop 4 we discussed how to my clicking has gone there we go. We discussed how to communicate the solutions to different audiences and how to continue the momentum of the project.

In the workshops we used collaborative tools like Padlet and Google Docs. On this slide is a screenshot of one of our Padlet’s which looks like a digital noticeboard. However, we mainly focused on a conversational approach in small breakout rooms each facilitated by a student co researcher or me.

So turning now to our findings, and I will focus here just on the findings related to students with disability. So as I mentioned, participants shared really personal experiences in the workshops and I will discuss first the challenges that people shared. So students with disability shared their difficulties in accessing accommodations for their placements, with one student sharing, "My academic adjustment plans for disability always get declined when it comes to placement without even any discussion around it, because the idea is that's how industry works after you graduate and you should learn how to survive."

Students with disability also shared having to continually prove their disability to the University, with one student sharing, "It's massive amounts of paperwork and proof, and I had to have a letter stating that I had a disability, which is genetic, mind you, and it had to be within the last three months. And I'm like why, it's genetic. It's not going away. Why can't I use the one from last year so I don't have to go and see my GP who has a two month waiting list and costs me 50 bucks."

Another student agreed, "The burden of proof, the amount of times I've had to resubmit evidence that I still have ADHD. We have to stop embedding the student responsibility into academic and bureaucratic processes." The same student went on to elaborate, "The burden is falling on students to create accessibility for themselves to prove their disabilities and just mould ourselves into the typical mainstream accessibility model. I agree with there being student led disclosure, but I have an issue where the responsibility for ensuring accessibility falls on the student. Sometimes it's not safe to talk about disability. Sometimes you don't feel comfortable. This is another tick for universal accessibility because if we're working towards that, then we're working away from this individualistic, 'Well, that was on you, you didn't tell me, you didn't disclose to me all about what's happening in your body or your brain, and that's your fault.'"

People also discussed the framing of disability in University systems with a student sharing, "Some of the language of the application can be confronting, and whenever I open my portal there's a summary on top saying the stuff you cannot do. It's like my name cannot do this and that."

Students found that some placement educators did not know how to support neurodiverse students, sharing that, "We're really losing out on diversity of students when supervisors don't understand the different ways people learn and produce work. I had my supervisor say at my final check in 'you just seem really bored', and I was like, 'Okay, that's a really strange thing to say', because I don't think they realise that people with certain neurodivergences can show up inconsistently. That doesn't mean they don't care about the placement; it just means they don't always show up the same way."

Participants discussed that due to power dynamics, students may prefer to speak about placement issues with someone not involved with assessing them. One student advocate described speaking at a student placement workshop and being inundated with students wanting to speak with them about placement issues, but they felt they could not discuss with their supervisors, and that it really intersected quite heavily with culturally and linguistically diverse people and people with disabilities.

Participants also discussed that there's a grey area about who is responsible for ensuring access to placements for students with disability with a student discussing that, "In the disability space, the disability standards for education, which are under the Disability Discrimination Act, are the primary vehicle through which students are given their adjustments to do their study. But all of a sudden when we get into placements and there's an employer involved, both the hosting employer and the educational institution kind of just point at each other and be like 'no, it's your responsibility'. So there's this gap of like is it the disability standards for education that apply here and is the University responsible, or is it the disability employment standards and is the employer responsible? It would seem like if you're not getting paid then it's the University that's responsible. So, yeah, just clearer guidelines and actual enforcement around who is responsible and who students need to go to when things aren't going right. In my experience, work integrated learning staff don't always have the skill set to be able to look at what workplace adjustments look like and be able to give advice to the hosting employer."

Turning now from the challenges to the solutions, we co developed 20 solutions related to placement exclusion which I've grouped into themes. These relate to overall forms of exclusion. So I will go over these but then I will go into some more specific details related to students with disability. So participants recommended reflective sessions with an educator at least once a week while on placement to discuss learning and issues, and that peer mentoring was particularly helpful.

Students are often uncomfortable speaking up about issues of exclusion on placement because their placement educator is marking them and may provide them with a reference letter. So participants suggested having an independent person who can advocate for students.

Participants agreed that more mental health support is needed in Universities, alongside providing students with some proactive, preventative strategies to cope with stressful placement situations.

Participants also recommended training for placement educators about inclusive practices and that this should be built into existing workplace training, if possible, and into University level education.

Under the curriculum design theme, participants called for consistency within each University on how placements work, aligned with work integrated learning quality frameworks. One example of a solution related to inclusive practices is that we had a great discussion about the possibility of assessing the cultural safety of a workplace. That could be by providing incoming students with feedback from previous students as well as a set of evidence from the site about their policies and staff experiences.

Finally, flexible placements such as part-time placements, were recommended as particularly helpful for students with disabilities and who have caring responsibilities.

So turning now to specific suggested solutions for making placements more inclusive for students with disability, educators stress that Universities need to ensure disability standards for education are being met on placement and students need to know that.

Another educator suggested the work health and safety team at the placement site may be helpful in making adjustments for students with disability asking, "How are they looking after their employees and catering for disability within their workplace? Because when a student comes in, they should be catered for just the same. So if they have a really supportive, inclusive workplace, a student would feel comfortable to share their disability and say this is what I need."

Similarly, another educator shared the suggestion of reminding placement sites that it's the same as making accommodations for staff and that they have the policies and procedures already in place, so they realise they're not reinventing the wheel.

One creative solution from a student was that placement sites may value having some sort of grant to be able to invest in tools to take on more students with disabilities. An educator extended this suggestion, "Yeah, if the Universities could offer like five grand for this accessibility upgrade with the agreement that you will take X number of students over however many years, that seems like a really cool way to work it for both parties."

Participants felt there was a role for Universities to showcase success stories about the benefits of a diverse workforce to placement sites. An educator acknowledged the barrier of understaffing of disability services within Universities and that perhaps it would be helpful for there to be disability officers embedded in the work integrated learning partnership offices at Universities, or the other way around, because these things sit quite siloed from each other and would benefit from some cross placements.

The discussions also included the need to review inherent requirements for degrees with an educator sharing that, "Sometimes I talk to other academics and they say, 'Well, that's an inherent requirement that a graduate be able to do blah, blah, blah, and if you have this kind of disability, you won't be able to do that', and sometimes I go 'when was the last time those inherent requirements of the profession were examined'? You know, was it 10 years ago? 20 years ago? 30? It's incumbent on us to revisit the inherent requirements because they act as gatekeepers to the profession."

Many participants suggested that part time options for work integrated learning and flexible hours are needed. Yet, these were not commonly available options, indeed with some degrees not having this option at all.

Another solution which was discussed several times during the workshops was professional learning for staff involved with placements. This professional learning could be available to University educators, placement educators and professional staff involved in work integrated learning. Also staff supporting students with disability to apply for accommodations and staff who provide scholarships and bursaries. One student shared that, "Supervisors aren't trained to work with students with any form of disability. This assumption that just because someone's a healthcare practitioner or a teacher, or whatever, they're automatically a brilliant supervisor and teacher is just a little bit silly. Even if you do disclose to supervisors, sometimes they can be quite confused and kind of expect you to create your own adjustments, which is a lot to put on a student who's already trying to figure out how to do placement. Much better training for supervisors would be brilliant."

An educator suggested that this training could be national, free and online, and for both campus based and placement site educators. Not every individual University needs to develop its own training resources.

Overall, there was a very clear message about the need for disability processes that are easy to navigate and that students are supported and do not need to prove chronic conditions over and over. Finally, there needs to be follow up. Are the accommodations students require actually being provided? What's the feedback from all stakeholders? And how do we act on that to improve things?

I will turn now to some overall recommendations. So there are five overarching recommendations related to addressing placement exclusion. And on this slide is a photo of an artwork by Keo de Souza. It's a chalkboard with a simple chalk drawing of a seesaw. The words "teacher" and "student" are on either end of the seesaw, and the seesaw is evenly balanced. This first recommendation is that partnership is a way that everyone involved in placements to discuss and understand systemic barriers.

So in this project by involving students from equity deserving cohorts, together with University and placement educators, demonstrates that it is a productive approach to co-developing solutions. Including students in these partnerships to tackle placement inequities helps balance the uneven power dynamic of students versus educators who can fail them by giving the students a platform to suggest solutions.

An added benefit is that by involving students as co-workers, this helps them to develop research, networking and communication skills, as well as insights that may change their perspectives. It was so important in the workshops to have participants with lived expertise of disability involved in sharing their challenges and in co creating the solutions.

On this slide is a photo of a colourful slinky, a bendy toy in the shape of a spring. It is to represent that Universities and placement sites should offer flexible placement options such as part time schedules or shorter days. Flexible options help alleviate placement poverty by allowing students to maintain their part time paid work while also supporting those with caring responsibilities, health conditions and/or disabilities.

So flexible placement models suggested by our workshop participants include part time placements, shorter days, online placements, and shorter placements overall with a focus on achieving competencies rather than a set number of hours or days.

Participants also suggested more recognition of prior learning and current work. As mentioned earlier, a partnership approach is so helpful to identify possibilities. Flexibility, of course, does not always align with the needs and cycles of placement sites, University deadlines, and professional accreditation requirements, and yet there are options that may not yet be fully explored. For example, a workshop participant identified that sometimes placements may be able to match part time students with part time supervisors, yet such options are not always widely known or made available to students.

This slide shows a photo of several University students wearing graduation gowns throwing their mortarboard hats into the air. A whole of degree approach to inclusive work integrated learning means that students are gradually prepared for placements throughout their studies. This includes embedding inclusive practices into the pedagogy of educators and practices of the professional staff who manage placements and disability accommodations. A strengths-based approach should guide this process helping students and educators recognise, value and develop student strengths and learn how to apply them during placements and in their future careers. This approach should extend to placement sites and educators supporting them to create inclusive environments, such as LGBTIQA+ friendly, neurodiverse affirming, disability accessible and culturally safe spaces.

As part of this whole of degree approach, we need to look at ways to make sure that students with disability don't need to reapply for accommodations each semester or each placement, and that we understand their needs and then source supportive placements well ahead of time.

This slide has a photo of a large fig tree with expansive branches and intertwined aerial roots. It's to illustrate that work integrated learning is an ecosystem that needs to be resourced. So work integrated learning works best when everyone involved is well supported. When resources, systems and people are over stretched, everyone has a bad experience. But if staff are well supported in their placement education role, that creates a climate for a proactive culture of suggesting and acting on solution. So work integrated learning needs real investment from governments, Universities and placement sites, including recognising the relational work that makes it all possible.

We need enough staff, fair compensation and strong support systems to prevent staff burnout and, just as importantly, we need increased support for student wellbeing, like disability support and counselling services.

Our final recommendation is that educators, students and other stakeholders should continue to build on their collective efforts towards placement inclusion. Advocacy, activism and research have been crucial in raising awareness of placement poverty and pushing for effective solutions, and also placement inclusion. So part of that is also translating research findings for a wider audience. So one way to continue this momentum is to join us at the Work Integrated Learning Equity Collective. This slide shows a logo of the Work Integrated Learning Equity Collective where three human figures hold up a heart with the initials WEC inside it. We've made some short videos that are available on our YouTube channel. We do have an Instagram as well. It's looking a bit sparse at the moment but more is coming soon. And also we have a LinkedIn group which is a great place to share ideas.

So we found that the workshops were a place where participants could share their own initiatives, research and advocacy and invite others to join these. One example is an interdisciplinary cross institution research collaboration between Monash and Western Sydney Universities where Rosemary Herbert and Natalie Whitewall are conducting research to better understand and support disabled and neurodiverse students during work integrated learning. And I know so many of you have so much expertise on this topic. So please do join and share your own initiatives and projects.

And just turning now to some thank you’s. So this slide contains a photo of a vibrant painting full of different sized hearts and small circular shapes. And my thank you’s are to the expert reference group for this project, Kylie Austin, Christine Morley, Tai Peseta and Isaac Wattenberg, and the mentor for this project is the wonderful Cathy Stone. Also a big thank you to the ACSES team and Fellows. Thanks especially to the workshop participants, some of whom may be on this call, perhaps. Thank you so much for generously sharing your time, your stories and your ideas. You were the heart of the project. And if anyone is interested, the slides do contain the references that I've mentioned through the talk. So I will stop sharing there. Thank you, all.

DARREN: Excellent. Thank you very much, Amani. Look, so much to unpack, I think, in this. I will give people a few moments to get some questions in there. Todd has got one. We will get to that.

I was wondering what struck me, given you had student co researchers there, in terms of you spoke earlier about how that helped direct, I suppose, some of that research having them there, but also was there anything surprising that came out of the research for yourself or for, you know, having the student co researchers there that they were surprised by?

AMANI: That the students were surprised by?

DARREN: Yeah, or yourself?

AMANI: Yeah. So particularly the four student co researchers I worked with closely, it's always surprising to hear such a range of experiences from a lot of people. So it is always about that going beyond your own experiences. Some of the stories people shared about their placement experiences were pretty heartbreaking, and I think we don't always hear those stories and it's really important to hear those stories. I think some of the student co researchers were surprised that not more is being done. So I guess coming up against those systemic challenges is always hard and, you know, I think it's important to be optimistic about what we can do, but also realistic about, you know, why haven't all these equity issues been solved already, were things we talked about a lot.

DARREN: I suppose with that, as a quick follow up, were there some positive experiences out of there as well that some students have had? Does a lot of that come from having that advocacy, having somebody there that can help with that and help with that education role as well again so that student is not having to repeat this consistently and constantly and needing to justify all the time?

AMANI: I think what was inspiring was to see the student advocacy and activism. So I think we didn't necessarily hear a lot of positive stories about educators helping, but there were a lot of stories about students advocating for themselves and people are writing in the chat yeah, about how it has inspired them to their own advocacy and efforts, which I think I found really inspiring.

DARREN: Yep. Fantastic. I will jump over to some of the Q&A. Todd has asked could supported employment providers be contracted to use their expertise?

AMANI: Yeah. Would love to hear more about that idea. It sounds fantastic.

DARREN: We don't actually have the ability for Todd to say something else. We can get to that, Todd. Feel free, you have details there to get in touch with Amani. I'm sure she will be more than happy to continue that invitation. Mia has asked "I wholly support these recommendations but systemic changes would take time. Do you have suggestions what we can do in the meantime, either as a University and/or as placement host?"

AMANI: Yeah, thanks, Mia. That's a great question. It is quite overwhelming, and in the project we found that ourselves because we came up with 40 solutions, which is a lot. It is almost that UDL idea of starting with one. So just pick one thing to try first, whatever works in your context. For me, two really big ones for this issue is students not having to request accommodations every semester or every placement. So that might be something a University could work on. And the other big one is part time placements. So what can we do to find more part time placements.

DARREN: Excellent. Michael has asked "do you have any examples of an industry providing part time placements? I had never thought of attempting that and would like to pitch in."

AMANI: Yeah. I mean, they definitely exist. So I was mainly looking in this project at degrees with compulsory placements, for example education. So teaching or allied health, we do have part time placements. It's just a matter of finding part time staff as the supervisors of the students. And there are a lot of part time staff in a lot of professions, as we know. So it's about just making those matches or even, you know, it could be a couple of staff sharing supervision.

DARREN: Yeah. Lisa has asked do you know of any Universities currently utilising staff across inclusion and accessibility and WIL in careers to support students with their placement? So a kind of a whole of institution approach to support?

AMANI: Some Universities are kind of further along in that kind of whole of University approach and areas like careers getting more involved. It really did differ between different institutions, and I'm always happy to hear specific examples from people if anyone would like to share them.

DARREN: I would also love to know if you came across research of any institutions that were capturing where inclusive placements had worked, if they're capturing the data and using that for the next round of placements or, you know because we often see this support was put in place or these adjustments, and this was here and that worked, and it worked for that one student, and the longevity, the sustainability of it is gone with the student or the workplace because supervising staff change or something else, where we capture that good practice and can utilise it again?

AMANI: I think that's so important. I'm not sure which Universities are doing that, but I think it is really important to have that follow up. So that was a big suggestion, is have the accommodations been made that were requested; how did it go, you know, what's everyone's feedback; how can we learn and then how can we improve for the next time. That closing the loop is so important.

DARREN: It is like the placement finishes and the info finishes, that's now done and dusted and we move on to the next round, rather than what have we learnt; where do we take that time; and how can we build on that? You mentioned like the centralised you know, that centralised resource that everyone could kind of access and look at and see examples of where this works in other workplaces, even if they were deidentified to say, "This is possible, somebody did this over here and this is how this worked and it was quite simple to implement. This wasn't as time consuming and, you know, onerous as some may think."

AMANI: Yep.

DARREN: Okay. Just scrolling through, a few more questions have come in. Okay. Dallas has asked we do hear sometimes from academic units that the registration board requires placements to be full time, or to say 4 days a week at the minimum. So do the registration boards need to be included in this process?

AMANI: Yes, definitely. So that is important, and also in looking at inherent requirements, that was another thing that came up for the professional degrees. So yes, some degrees already have more of the focus on the quality of the work rather than the quantity. But I still think more can be done to shift away from that kind of hours or day based model to more of a competency framework.

DARREN: Yep. And Mia has asked a very similar question there with that part time. I'm just wondering, you know, as you mentioned, the difference between a lot of these organisations and industries have part time staff that are in there. That's just part and parcel. So I don't know if you want to expand a little bit more on that idea of hooking it into the employers that are there and how they currently make adjustments and flexibility for staff, and why that isn't available to students who are technically coming as staff into their organisation?

AMANI: Yeah, I thought that was such a great idea, to be doing more of that kind of work, absolutely.

DARREN: Yep. I suppose the sense of did students get the sense that they are there as students or as professionals, as staff?

AMANI: That's a really interesting one, Darren, and it came up more so around what the workshops revealed about placement poverty. So even though work integrated learning is set up as a learning experience, students often experience it as labour, as staff members, sometimes unfortunately they are being used to fill staffing gaps. So it is a tricky area and I think it's fantastic that the Federal Government is going to be providing some financial support for students in some degrees, but it really needs to be expanded to all degrees with compulsory placements.

DARREN: Yep. Fantastic. Look, and Ebi has put a nice reminder there into chat for everyone, a reminder that individual workplace or accreditation body cannot supersede or dilute the entitlement set out for students under the disability standards for education. There should always, always be pushback because not allowing students to access adjustments to placement, as long as they are meeting the total hourly minimum. I know that is certainly hard for students to advocate and push that, so I definitely like the idea of that. There is a centralised advocate that works between all of those things that has the authority of the organisation and somebody that they talk to within the organisations, et cetera, you know, that is doing some of that on their behalf that can point out there's legal obligations here within some of this.

I know I've seen doing placements where, again, good practice happened one time and that gets lost in the mix. And I suppose you have mentioned the frustration that's there and, what was it, 17 years of data looking at and have we really shifted the needle much in terms of creating more inclusive, you know, work environments for WIL to occur in? And out of the 40 recommendations, I suppose where would you want people to start, pick one or start on something? Where would you point people?

AMANI: Yeah. I think I would advise just looking through them and picking one thing to start with. And I think it's that whole idea of improving things for one cohort of students is likely to improve things for all students, for sure. So I do think that partnership approach is really crucial. So I think working with the placement providers, with the accrediting bodies, with students, with educators and other staff to find out what's possible, and to really build those long term relationships where we can slowly start to make changes and it's just difficult because often there are shortages of placements as well . So that can lead to that scrambling and just kind of accepting any and all placements, rather than focusing on those long-term collaborations.

DARREN: I know there's lots of myths that still permeate with WIL, et cetera. I know from some colleagues at Deakin that some employers really want to engage in this space, they want more information. You know, they're crying out for some education, you know, into this space and how can we assist. But if they haven't got the information and that's not there then it is really hard for them to make adjustments and react the other end as well. They're open to becoming better businesses, more diverse businesses, because they know the value that brings to the bottom line, it brings to their community, to their staff, to their organisation itself.

Look, we've got another question here from Lilibel, I think it is. Some of the issues around this is the unis set admin processes which makes it difficult to manage part time placements which often means the placements go for longer periods, potentially impacting the following study period. Have you got any ideas or advice around this?

AMANI: Yeah, that's such a great question, Lilibel. It came up in the workshops as well. So that's kind of why I like that idea, if possible, to focus on the quality of the student learning and what they can demonstrate, rather than the quantity. So that students who might need more time aren't penalised in that way that, "oh, it's just going to take them longer to get through their degrees" is not really fair. So, yeah, I think there's a lot more to look at in there of, okay, can we recognise more prior learning; can we recognise what students can demonstrate through their part time work or their own caring responsibilities? How can we just be a bit more creative about this?

DARREN: Yeah, it can be demonstrated in lots of ways.

AMANI: Mmm.

DARREN: All right. I think we've tied down on the questions. Look, again, thank you. Everybody, please join me in thanking Amani for the presentation today. It's been a wonderful insight. And thank you to the student co researchers as well. Please pass on our thanks for that. Really looking forward to diving in deeper to this one and the recommendations.

As you suggested, certainly welcome people to join into the community, et cetera, and all those links, et cetera, in the slides are available there.

The recording for today's session will be available on the ADCET website in the coming days. So you will all be notified of that, et cetera. So thank you also to Helen, our captioner for today, for keeping us up to speed and for keeping up with my pace as well. I do appreciate it, Helen.

There will be a short survey put into the chatbox for people to fill in because we would love to hear and get your feedback. It helps us improve these webinars and look at what the community's actually after.

One final reminder, please save the dates for a couple of upcoming webinars that we have that we put into chat, one is Meeting our Digital Duty of Care: Disability Data in Practice, and BlakAbility, Higher education's role in improving life outcomes for indigenous people living with disability. Details of those Kylie will be posting. Thank you for joining us today. Very insightful and hopefully something we can move the needle on. I think there's a lot of really good recommendations there that we can all build from. Hopefully we will be having a different discussion about this next time, Amani, with some improvements in the sector. But fantastic and valuable work. Really appreciate your time today. Thank you and thank you everybody for joining us.

AMANI: Thank you.