

Is Disability a Dirty Word? Conceptualising disability within the tertiary sector.

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Do words discriminate... Small steps towards inclusion?

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Session Outline

- Welcome and Introductions

Matthew & Helen

Samantha & Joanna

- Views from a 'helicopter'

- The language
- The report
- The survey

- Views from a 'field'

- The need for action
- The change of name
- The response

- Facilitated discussion

- Summation/key points



Context

Disability Prominent

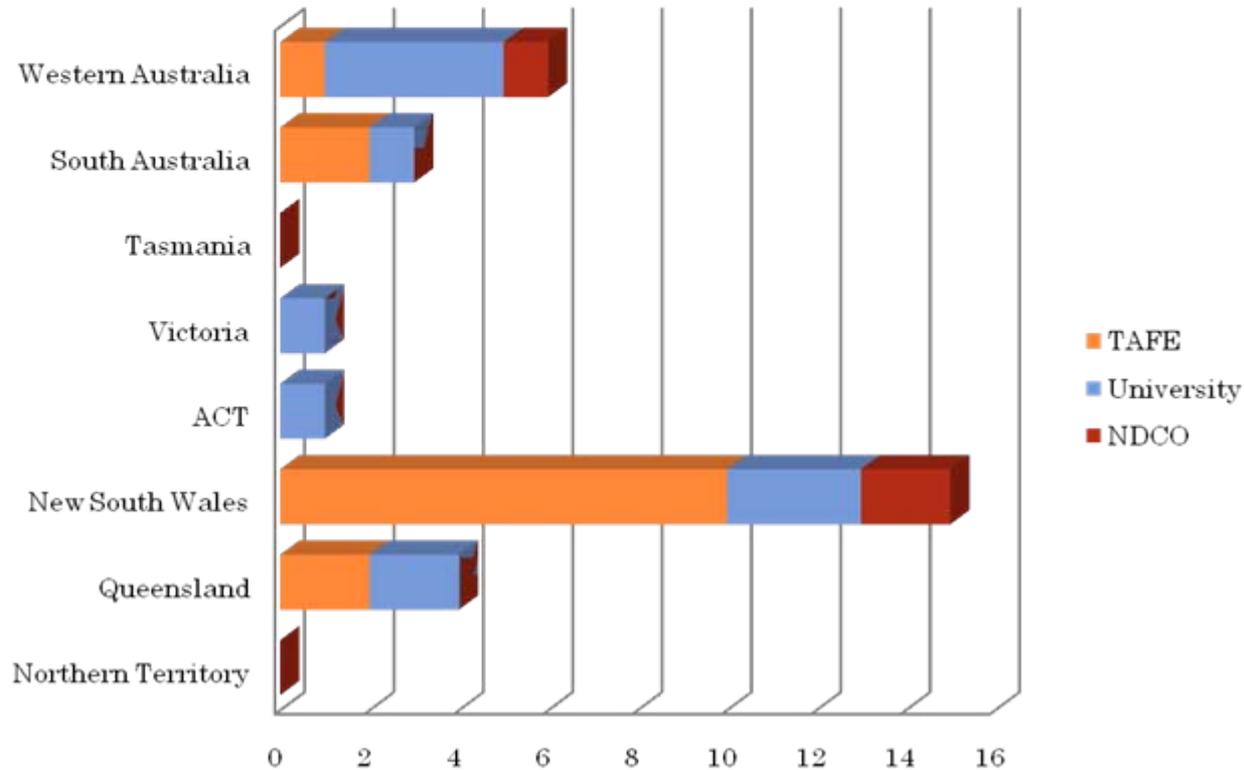
- o Convention Rights of Persons with disability
- o National Disability Strategy
- o Ministerial profile

Less prominent disability focus

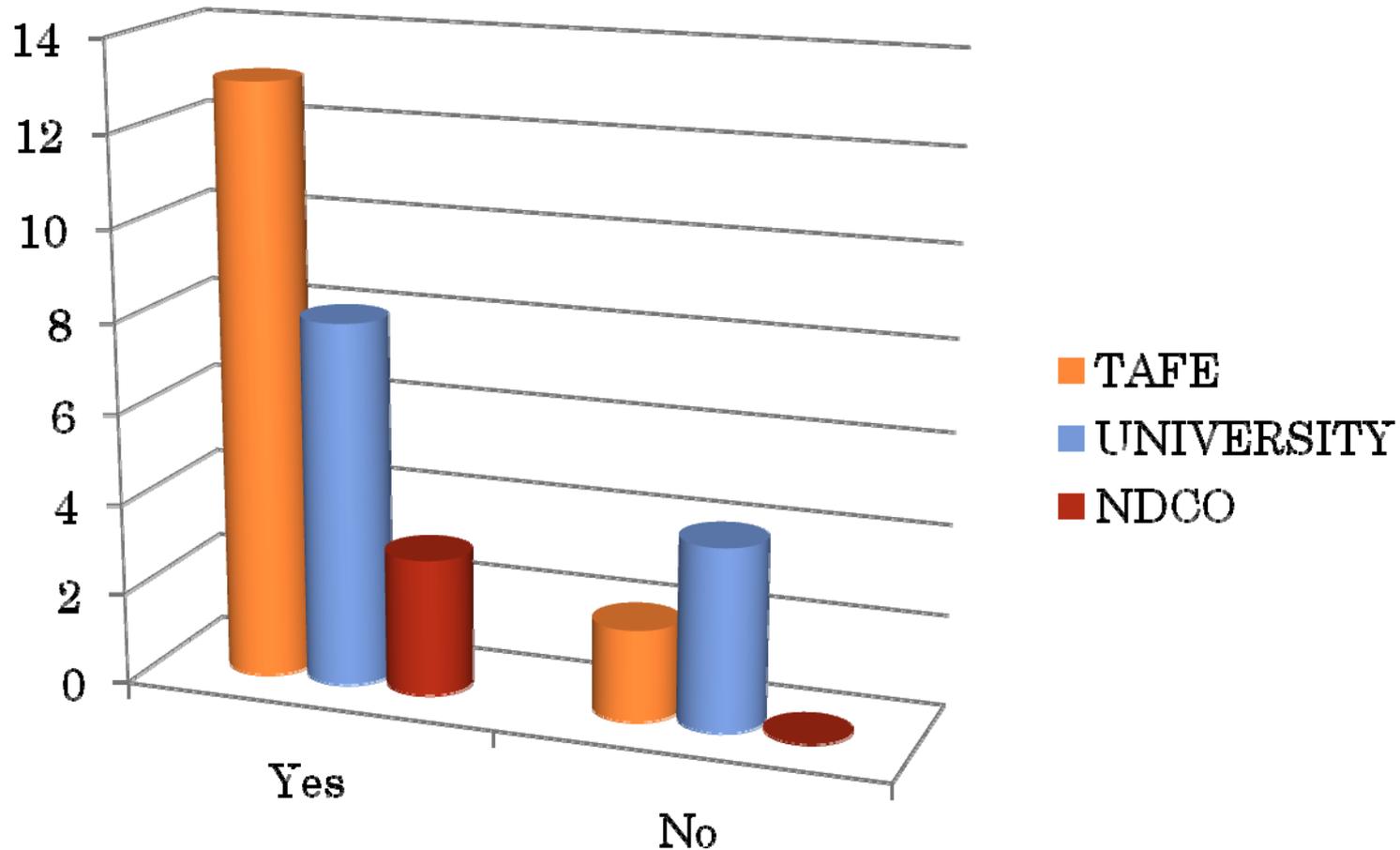
- o Bradley Review
- o Social Inclusion
- o AccessAbility
- o Discrimination legislative review
- o All Abilities



Survey Respondents



Are You Comfortable with Definitions of Disability?

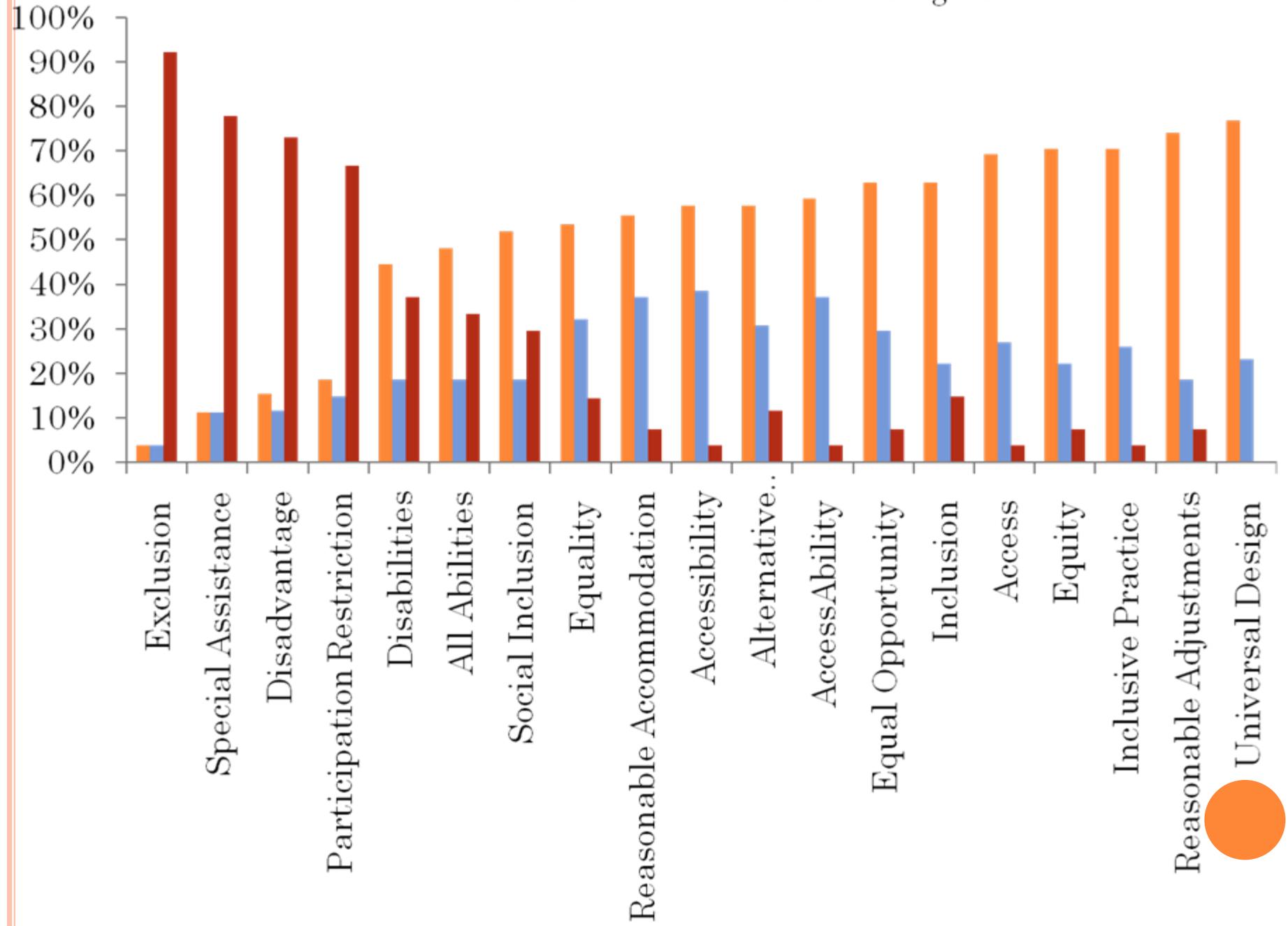


A revealing question

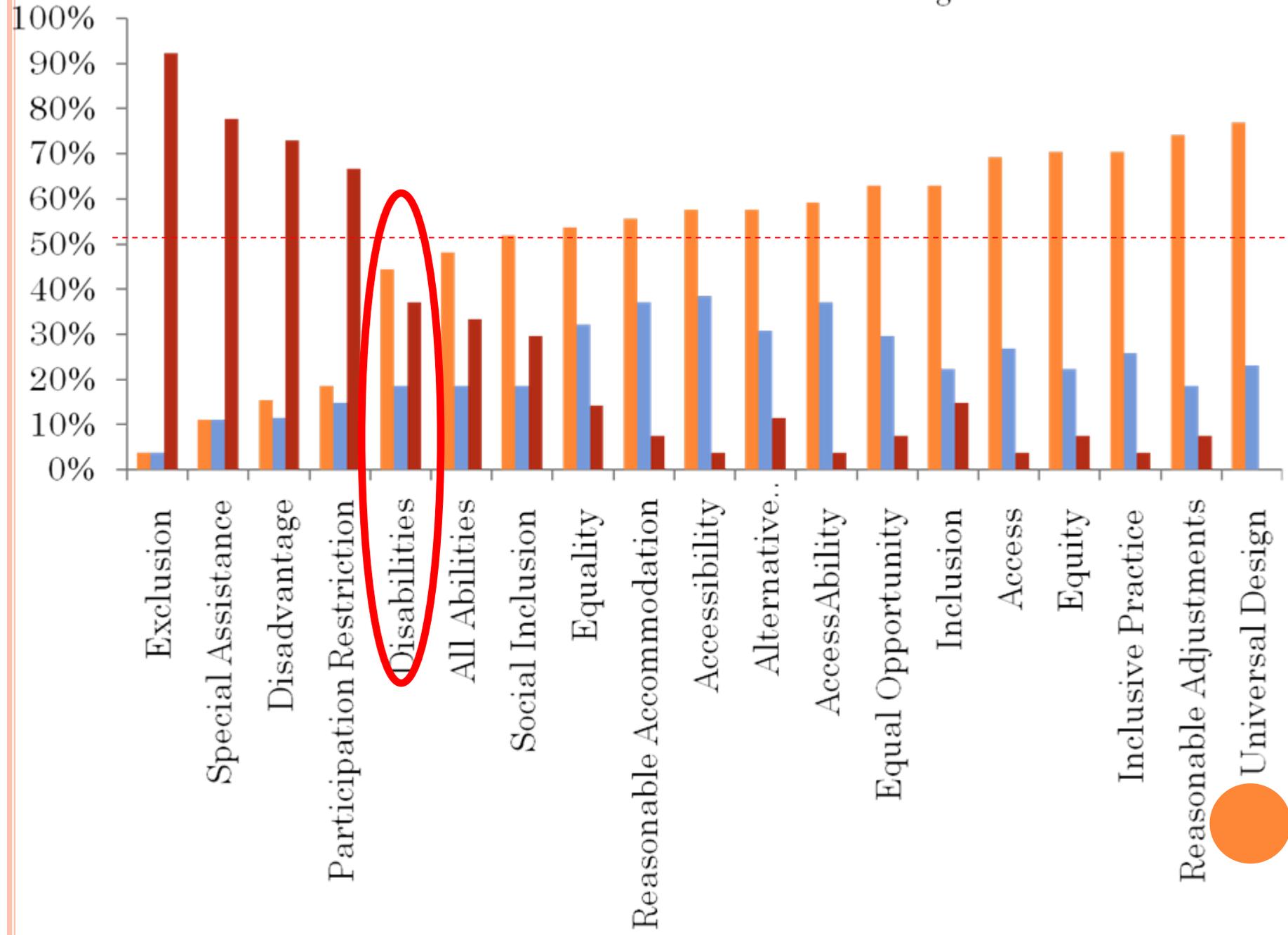
Please indicate (x) your opinion of the following terminology if it were used within your institutional approach for informing students about the presence of services that facilitate the provision of reasonable adjustments under disability discrimination legislation



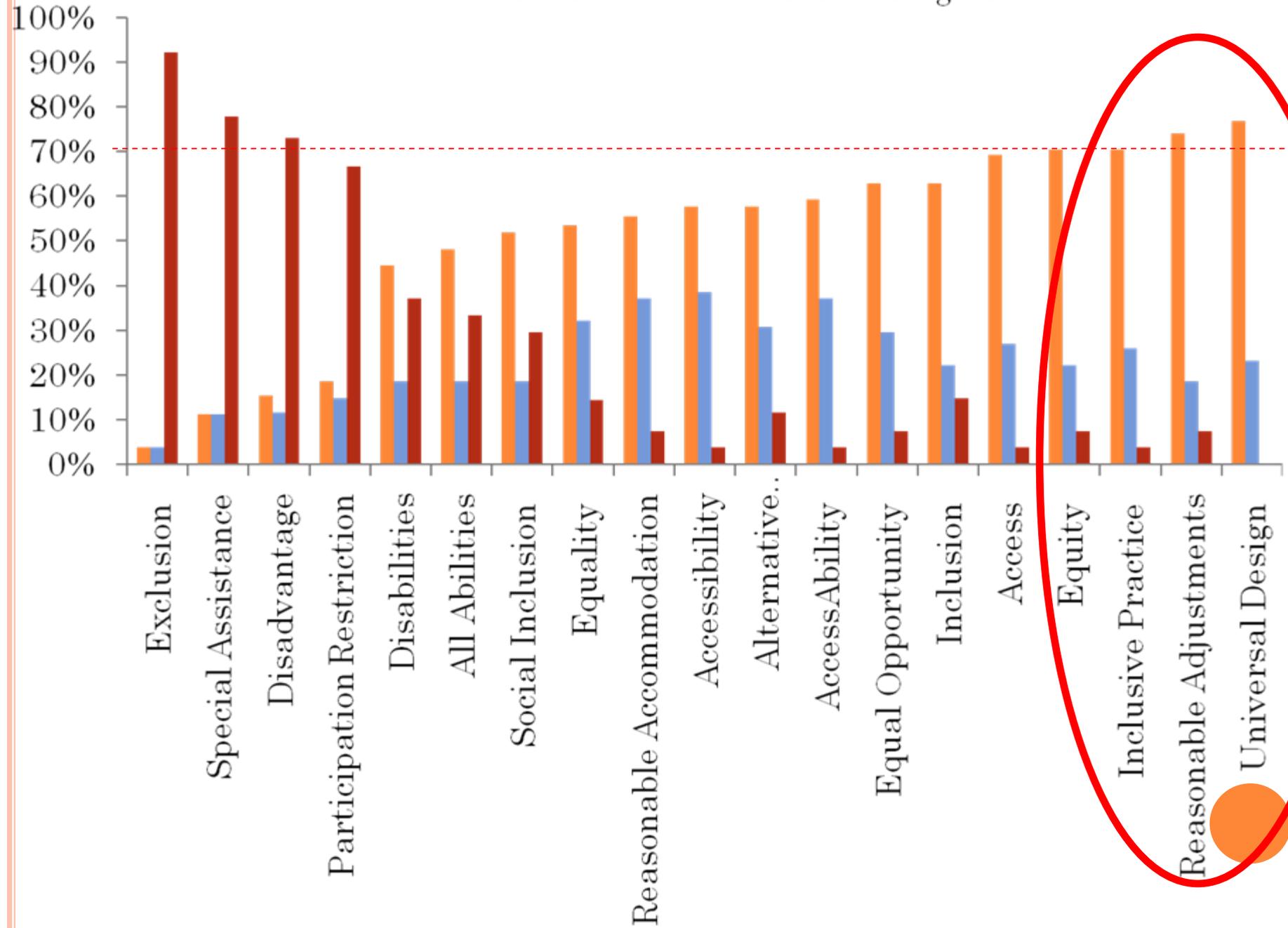
Positive Neutral Negative



Positive Neutral Negative



Positive Neutral Negative



Leads to the Question???

Should the Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability, remove reference to disability, replacing this term with a yet to be determined variant such as accessibility, social inclusion or universal design?

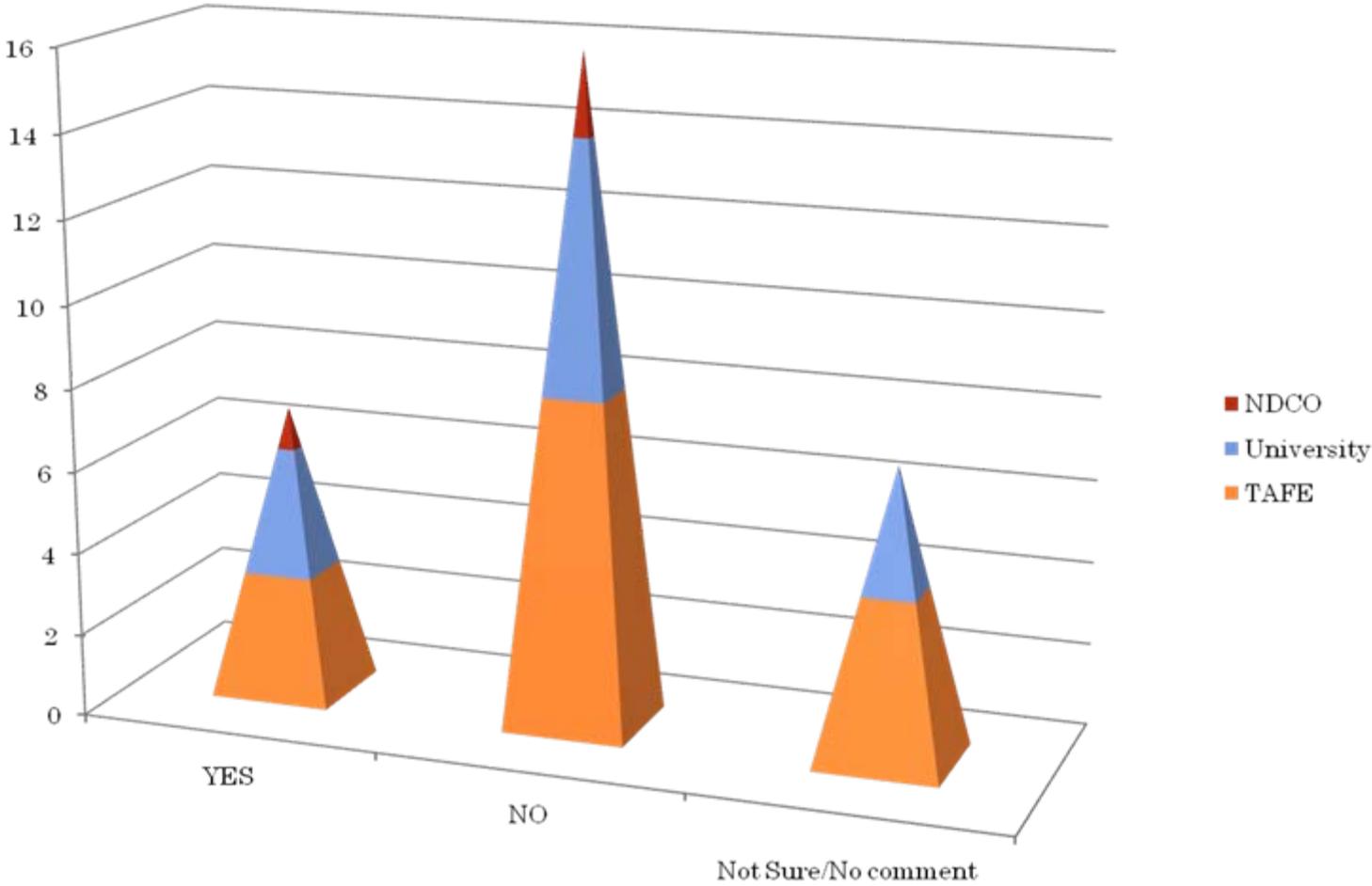
Agree

Undecided

Disagree



Respondents were reticent to drop the “D”?



Do words discriminate... Small steps towards inclusion?



Samantha Bergin & Joanna Bell
AccessAbility Support Advisers, James Cook University

The need for action

‘Disability Resources Centre’

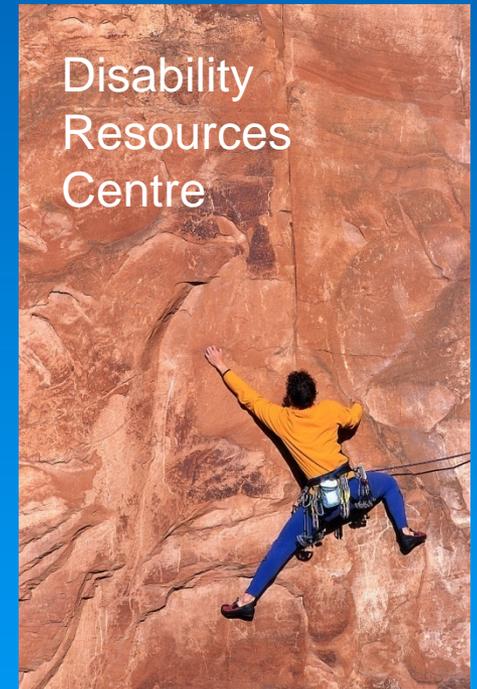
- Why wasn’t the service being used?
- What was the perception of DRC?

‘Not just for wheelchair users’

- Language
- Social inclusion

‘Moving with the times’

- New research
- Bradley Review



The need for action

“...I do have a disease in both of my hands...I do not believe it is a disability and I was taken back when my lecturer suggested Disability Resources Centre. Fancy suggesting that I am disabled!”

JCU Student

“...I always thought that the Disability Resources Centre was for students in wheelchairs. I’ve never thought of depression or dyslexia as a disability...”

JCU Lecturer

The time for change

Changing the name to *AccessAbility* Services

- Which name?
- Branding the service
- The process
- Financial implications
- Australia first



Not just a change in name....

- Inclusive Practice Acknowledgement Awards
- Toolkit for Staff
- Occupational Therapy Student Placements
- Model behaviour / language
- Marketing / Profile
- Partnerships
- Empowerment model



The Response

“...I am sure that if the name was *AccessAbility* Services, which it is now, I would not have required the more than gentle push in their direction.”

JCU Student

“I can understand why the change – the perception of disability as being deficit model. ...while ‘*AccessAbility*’ is a clever play on words there is a problem that it is not obvious what the service is about.”

JCU Learning Adviser

JCU Student video

The Response

“...the change from DRC to *AccessAbility* Services has been significant in how the service is perceived and utilised.....language is important and the name change has made me think more about 'being able to do something' rather than my 'lack of my ability to do something'...

... I have found myself making more student referrals... [previously] students were less receptive to seeking help as the label of 'disability' or 'disabled' had negative connotations...”

JCU Senior Lecturer

Discussion Prompt Questions

1. Does a move towards language such as reasonable adjustment/universal design serve as a proxy for disability?
2. What steps is your organisation taking to address social inclusion?
3. Does the practice of the disability officer need to evolve to accommodate those with learning needs that are not disability related?
4. Is the logic for moving away from disability terminology appropriate at various levels (policy, service, institutional, peak body)?
5. If ATEND were hypothetically to drop the D word, what might the consequences be?



The Language of Social Inclusion: Is Disability Weakened?

