

Disability Support Program

Consultation following program evaluation

October 2016

Opportunity through learning

Contents

[Summary 3](#_Toc465412617)

[Introduction 5](#_Toc465412618)

[Findings 6](#_Toc465412619)

[Response to the Evaluation Findings 8](#_Toc465412620)

[Improving efficiency - Distribute all funding by formula 8](#_Toc465412621)

[Proposed formula 9](#_Toc465412622)

[Transition timing 9](#_Toc465412623)

[Payment timing 10](#_Toc465412624)

[Improving efficiency and effectiveness - Reporting requirements 10](#_Toc465412625)

[Improving appropriateness - Broaden the scope of eligible activities 10](#_Toc465412626)

[Improving effectiveness - Expanded role for ADCET 11](#_Toc465412627)

[Response to opportunities for improvement 12](#_Toc465412628)

[Feedback on Consultation Paper Issues 14](#_Toc465412629)

[Appendix A 15](#_Toc465412630)

[Proposed Parameters for the Disability Support Program 15](#_Toc465412631)

[Appendix B 19](#_Toc465412632)

[Evaluation Findings 19](#_Toc465412633)

[Appropriateness 19](#_Toc465412634)

[Effectiveness 19](#_Toc465412635)

[Administration and Operational Efficiency 20](#_Toc465412636)

[Appendix C 21](#_Toc465412637)

[DSP Funding Model Comparison 21](#_Toc465412638)

# Summary

Higher Education providers have obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Disability Standards for Education (2005) to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that all students with disability have the same or similar choices and opportunities regarding enrolment, participation, curriculum and support services as students without disability. The Australian Government provides supplementary funding to eligible higher education providers to help them meet some of these obligations through the Higher Education Disability Support Program (DSP).

In 2014 the DSP was evaluated by KPMG to verify the program was meeting its objectives and to identify options to improve the ongoing operation of the program within its current funding allocation. The evaluation put forward several options to improve the program’s design and the department invites stakeholders to consider those options in providing feedback. In developing this response to the evaluation, the guiding principles were to reduce as much as possible the administrative burden on providers of participating in the program, and ensure the program offers providers the flexibility to best address the needs of students with disability. If consultation shows justification for a different approach, alternatives will be considered that best achieve program objectives.

The evaluation found the DSP is successful in supporting providers to meet their obligations to students. The DSP assists in meeting student needs that are of particular concern to students: completing course assignments and exams, and fully participating in lectures and tutorials. The program contributes to facilitating access to support and equipment for students with disability, and minimising or removing barriers to participating in higher education. Through funding the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET), the DSP promotes inclusive teaching and learning practises, and increases awareness of contemporary research to support students with disability.

Regarding program improvements, the KPMG evaluation supported the findings of the 2013 Review of Reporting Requirements for Universities, which identified DSP claim procedures as being very time intensive for providers. The proposed response seeks to reduce the administrative burden for providers under the DSP by transitioning to a formula-based funding system. This formula would be based on the number of students with disability enrolled at each provider as a proportion of the total number of students with disability enrolled at all eligible providers. Reporting under the proposed program parameters would consist of providers submitting an annual report acquitting funds received against the eligible program activities.

The evaluation also considered the appropriateness of the support provided by the DSP. Since the program started there has been a shift in the disability profile of students to include a greater number of students with mental health issues and learning disorders. Lower levels of awareness from provider staff in supporting students with these types of disability was identified as an issue not addressed by the DSP’s current program design, which does not include training of provider staff. The proposed parameters therefore include staff training as an eligible activity that a provider may fund with its DSP allocation.

Another activity that would be eligible for support under the proposed parameters is modifications to course content, teaching materials and delivery methods to better meet the needs of students with disability. The evaluation found that changes in educational practise and advances in technology allow for mainstream curricula to be universalised to a much greater extent, reducing the need for individual adjustments for students with disability. The proposed parameters will support providers to make these changes while continuing support for individual adjustments. It is proposed to increase funding to ADCET to support providers in undertaking the new activities contained in the proposed parameters. Comments are welcome from providers as to what potential roles for ADCET would be most useful.

This proposal anticipates amending the DSP guidelines, contained in the Other Grant Guidelines (Education) 2012, in early 2017. To allow providers sufficient time to plan for the transition to the new guidelines, it is proposed to commence any new funding arrangements in 2018.

# Introduction

The Disability Support Program (DSP) was announced in the 2002-03 Budget as part of a higher education reform package called “Backing Australia’s Future” and started in 2004. Its objectives are to assist eligible higher education providers to provide high cost educational support and/or equipment to domestic students with disability, encourage providers to attract and support students with disability, and provide information and resources on inclusive teaching and learning practices for students with disability. Funding for the program commenced in 2005. It is indexed and currently totals around $7 million each year.

The program has three components:

* **Additional Support for Students with Disabilities (ASSD)** provides funding to assist with the high costs incurred in providing educational support and equipment to students with disability ($6.2 million in 2016)
* **Performance-based Disability Support Funding** to encourage higher education providers to implement strategies to attract and support students with disability ($1 million in 2016)
* **The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)**, a website that provides information and other resources designed to promote inclusive teaching and learning practices for students with disability ($78,000 funding in 2016).

In 2014 the Government commissioned KPMG to undertake an evaluation of the DSP, which was completed in 2015 and is available at <https://www.education.gov.au/access-and-participation>. The evaluation considered operation of the DSP to date by examining its:

* **Administration and operational efficiency**, including how the program is operating, what it is providing, and the management and administration of the program
* **Appropriateness** - whether the program, given higher education providers’ legal obligations, is addressing the right needs of students with disability and is able to meet changing student requirements
* **Effectiveness**, including whether the program is meeting its stated objectives.

This paper outlines a proposed response to the evaluation findings. Proposed parameters for the post-evaluation DSP are at Appendix A to the paper.

Feedback is welcome on the proposed changes to the DSP presented in this paper and the proposed program parameters. All feedback will be considered before making any changes to the program.

Submissions are due by 5.00 pm (AEDT) on Friday 25 November 2016 and should be emailed to disability@education.gov.au.

# Findings

The evaluation found that the DSP is successful in supporting higher education providers to meet the needs of students with disability. It funds support to address difficulties in completing assignments and exams and participating in lectures and tutorials, which students with disability reported as most important to overcome. The DSP assists providers to meet their obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and Disability Standards for Education (2005), and complements activities funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). ADCET was rated as a valuable resource by provider staff, and the primary way in which the DSP contributes to increasing awareness of contemporary research and best practise regarding students with disability. Detailed findings from the report are listed at Appendix B.

The evaluation also identified a number of issues that could be addressed through improved program design.

**Administration and operational efficiency**

The evaluation identified that ASSD procedures, in which providers are partially reimbursed for individual support/equipment claims, are very time intensive for providers. A large number of claims are submitted for small amounts of money, with 57 per cent of claims accounting for only 6 per cent of the total amount of funds provided. Nearly one third of providers reported spending more than 20 days preparing their claim and 83 per cent of provider staff surveyed said it took two to five people to prepare the claim.

**Appropriateness**

The evaluation found the disability profile of university students is shifting. While providers are continuing to support students with physical and sensory disabilities, more students with mental health issues and learning disorders are accessing providers’ disability support services. The nature of support required by these students is different and often requires more frequent and intensive staff support. Students with mental health issues and learning disorders could be better supported through additional training for support staff and academic staff at higher education providers, but DSP funding cannot be used for this purpose under the current guidelines.

On the issues of curriculum development, accreditation and delivery, the evaluation noted that changes in educational practises and advances in technology have made it easier to make mainstream curricula available to all students. The current focus of the DSP is on providing adjustment support for individual students; it does not support the application of universal design for learning[[1]](#footnote-1) principles that would lessen the need for adjustments for students with disability. The evaluation suggested that the Government consider whether a change in the focus of the DSP is appropriate.

**Effectiveness**

Under the present DSP guidelines, performance-based funding for providers to attract and support students with disability is limited to $1 million of the $7 million annual funding total. Only 56 per cent of provider staff surveyed as part of the evaluation agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘as a result of the DSP the university is able to implement programs to attract and retain students with disability’. The evaluation suggested this may be partly due to there being no requirement for providers to report on their use of performance-based funds, making it difficult to link funding with activities. While some providers had strategies specifically to attract students with disability, other providers approached disability as part of their wider access and equity programs. Other providers had no specific programs at all. Overall, the evaluation found that DSP funding could be better used to improve providers’ capacity and resources to attract and retain students with disability.

In response to the issues identified, the evaluation suggested a number of potential options for improvement:

* change claim reporting and/or eligibility thresholds, and/or the allocation of funding between program components, within the current program design
* change the program design to:
	+ allocate all DSP funding by formula or
	+ allocate all DSP funding by formula and include the DSP as a ring-fenced component of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)
* change the reporting requirements for performance-based funding
* broaden the scope of activities that can be funded through the DSP to include training for administrative and academic staff in support of students with disability
* an expanded role for ADCET.

# Response to the Evaluation Findings

It is proposed to make the following changes to the DSP’s design to address issues raised by the program evaluation. These changes are to reduce the administrative burden on providers; broaden the scope of eligible activities under the DSP to include staff training and modifications to course content, teaching materials and delivery methods; streamline program reporting while improving accountability for funding; and provide further support to the sector through ADCET.

## Improving efficiency - Distribute all funding by formula

This proposal would merge the ASSD and Performance-based Disability Support components of the program and allocate funding by formula (see Appendix A for additional information). It would not abolish funding for activities currently conducted under the ASSD or Performance-based Disability Support components. Providers would still be able to fund educational support and equipment (as they do currently under ASSD) and activities to attract and support students with disability (as they do currently under the Performance-based Disability Support funding). All that would change is the means of allocating funding. Allocating funding by formula would remove the requirement for providers to submit claims for reimbursement of DSP expenses and significantly reduce their administrative burden. It would also give each provider greater certainty about its amount of annual funding.

The formula would be based on a provider’s number of students with disability as a proportion of the total number of students with disability enrolled across eligible providers. This formula is proposed due to its simplicity and predictability. It is also based on the apparent need of each provider as indicated by the number of students with disability they have enrolled.

The Government acknowledges that providers can face unpredictable high costs to support some students with disability, but expects that eligible providers will continue to meet the costs of complying with their legal obligations from their base funding, supplemented by the DSP. DSP resourcing currently meets around 50 - 60 per cent of the eligible costs incurred by providers.

The Government is also aware that not all students with disability who receive support from providers disclose their disability, and are therefore not included in the number of students with disability that would be used in the proposed formula. The Government is funding a project under the HEPPP National Priorities Pool to enhance the ways in which students with disability are identified, including how best to support and encourage their self-disclosure. The Government is also seeking to enhance how providers collect this information and to improve the accuracy of the data they collect. This project will consider what effective practices are currently being used by providers to encourage the self-disclosure of people with disability and canvass what changes would need to be made to providers’ enrolment procedures if those practices were to be implemented by all providers.

### Proposed formula

The proposed funding formula, as specified under ‘Allocation of Funds’ in the proposed program parameters, is:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Grant | = | (A/B) x C |
|  |  |  |
| Where: | A | is the number of domestic students with disability enrolled at the eligible higher education provider in the most recent year for which data is available |
|  | B | is the total number of domestic students with disability enrolled at all eligible higher education providers in the most recent year for which data is available |
|  | C | is the total annual funding pool for the Higher Education Disability Support Program minus the amount allocated to the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training component. |

In comparison to historical funding received under the DSP, distributing funding based on the proposed formula will increase the amount provided to some providers but decrease it to others. Had all provider funding been distributed by the proposed formula in 2015, two thirds of providers would have received more funding while one third would have received less (see Appendix C).

The current approach under the DSP of reimbursing expenses does not necessarily provide an incentive for providers to adopt practices that both provide appropriate services and minimise cost. For example, the need to provide note taking support may be met by paying a small honorarium to other students, by professional note takers or by external agencies – means that vary greatly in cost. It is possible that allocating funding according to the number of students with disability will encourage providers to adopt practices that provide appropriate support at the most efficient cost per student.

### Transition timing

Under the current guidelines, eligible providers will receive payment in the fourth quarter of 2016 for expenses incurred in 2015. They are currently meeting expenses in 2016 on the basis that they will be able to claim reimbursement of a proportion of those expenses from 2017 DSP funds in accordance with current DSP guidelines. The Government anticipates amending the DSP guidelines, contained in the Other Grant Guidelines (Education) 2012, in early 2017.

It is proposed to commence payment by formula in 2018 and pay DSP funds in 2017 under the current arrangements. This would mean ‘no surprises’ DSP payments in 2017, and allow providers to plan during 2017 for transition to payment by formula in 2018.

### Payment timing

Under the formula based approach DSP funding could be paid once yearly, as is currently the case, or on a quarterly basis depending on the preferences of providers.

If the payments by formula commence in 2018, allocations could be made as early as January 2018 using the latest available student data. Alternatively providers could be paid quarterly with the payments made in January, April, July and October 2018.

For simplicity it is proposed to pay DSP funding once yearly.

## Improving efficiency and effectiveness - Reporting requirements

The proposed program parameters at Appendix A outline a requirement for annual reporting under the DSP (see the ‘Reporting’ section). This would involve a streamlined report in which providers briefly outline the amount of funding and major initiatives conducted against the eligible types of activity under the program (detailed in the following section), with reference to outcomes, and acquit their annual expenditure.

## Improving appropriateness - Broaden the scope of eligible activities

The evaluation found that, with increasing numbers of students presenting with mental health and learning disorders there was an increased need to train staff in the support of these students, who currently perceive that students with visible disabilities receive better support. Disability liaison officers consulted as part of the evaluation also reported that academic staff were often less experienced in supporting students with mental health issues and could benefit from additional training.

Another area of opportunity identified by the evaluation was supporting providers to make mainstream services available to all students, through the application of principles such as universal design, rather than by relying on adjustments for individual students with disability. While providers could continue to provide individualised equipment and support to students with disability under the proposed program parameters, DSP funding could also support efforts to make courses accessible to all, particularly in cases where it will be more effective and efficient in the long term.

To introduce these changes it is proposed to add two activities that may be funded under the DSP (see ‘Eligible DSF activities’ in the proposed parameters appendix):

* training higher education provider staff to support students with disability; and
* modifications to course content, teaching materials and delivery methods to better meet the needs of students with disability.

These new activities would be in addition to the following existing activities:

* activities aimed at attracting and supporting students with disability; and
* educational support and equipment for students with disability.

Providers would have flexibility to apply DSP funding between the eligible activities in a way that best meets the needs of their student cohort and strategic direction. They would not be obliged to undertake all the eligible activities using DSP funding. For example, a provider could allocate all funding to educational support and equipment. This proposal provides flexibility for providers to use DSP funding as a supplement to assist with their legal obligations to students with disability.

## Improving effectiveness - Expanded role for ADCET

The evaluation found that ADCET contributes to improving awareness of contemporary research and practice materials relating to inclusive teaching and learning practices for students with disability. In particular it identified two main areas where ADCET aids higher education providers:

* **As a training tool**. New disability support practitioners at higher education providers are able to access the resources provided by ADCET in order to develop their understanding of contemporary disability support and keep them informed of the sector more broadly.
* **As a resource to guide decisions and promote knowledge**. A centralised source of information acts as a ‘one stop shop’ for disability practitioners to be able to access in order to make decisions when deciding what support provisions will be put in place for students. It also provides practitioners the opportunity to share information with teaching staff and others involved with a student with links that may be useful to further their understanding and encourage a shared understanding of the needs of the student.

Page views of the ADCET website increased by 68 per cent between 2010 and 2015. The evaluation found that 76 per cent of provider staff surveyed who had visited the site thought it helped improve teaching or support practices for students with disability.

Survey participants broadly supported an expanded role for ADCET, funding for which currently comprises 1 per cent of the DSP allocation each year.

It is proposed to increase ADCET funding from around $80,000 per year to $150,000 per year, commencing in 2018 and to be sourced from existing DSP funds.

Potential additional roles for ADCET could include:

* consultative services to provide targeted advice on specific issues
* the creation of new content to support higher education providers, for example guidance on cost efficient best practice support
* provision of support to implement training programs
* curation of Listserv[[2]](#footnote-2) content to improve accessibility of material circulated
* undertaking research to improve outcomes for students with disability.

## Response to opportunities for improvement

The table below summarises the proposed response to opportunities for improvement identified by the evaluation on pages 44-47 of the evaluation report.

| **Opportunity for Improvement** | **Description** | **Response** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 5.2.1 Change reporting and/or eligibility threshold | Retain the current claims process and: increase the threshold amount at which claims are paid from $500 to $3,000; or set a threshold at which claims are reimbursed without acquittal; or cease funding for equipment and focus on educational support.  | Not proposed for adoption. Replacing the claims process with allocating funding via formula will both reduce administrative burden and enable universities to fund equipment and/or educational support to best support the needs of their students within the available funding, without regard to thresholds. |
| 5.2.2 Roll the DSP into the HEPPP and ‘ring fence’ funding for disability | DSP funding could be combined with the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program.  | Not proposed for adoption. A standalone program signals the importance of improving outcomes for students with disability. The evaluation also found discrete DSP funding improves the timeliness of support provided to students in some cases. |
| 5.2.3 Change reporting requirements for performance-based funding | No reporting is currently required by providers on the use of performance-based funding. | Adopted. This paper proposes reporting requirements that would apply to all activities under the program including those currently funded by performance based funding.  |
| 5.2.4 Distribute all funding based on formula | Funding via formula will reduce the administrative burden and shift the program focus from inputs to outcomes.  | Adopted. This paper proposes a formula based on the number of students with disability enrolled at each provider. |
| 5.2.5 Expanded role for ADCET | ADCET could act as a centre for excellence promoting best practice and undertaking research to improve outcomes for students.  | Increase ADCET funding from around $80,000 per year to $150,000 per year. The consultation paper seeks feedback from providers as to an expanded role for ADCET. |
| 5.2.6 Change ratio of funding split between ASSD and performance based funding | Providing more funding for the performance based component of the program could encourage providers to focus on broader efforts to attract and support students with disability. | The proposal combines both funding sources and allows providers the flexibility to allocate funds between them in accordance with their strategic approach and student cohort.  |
| **Opportunity for Improvement** | **Description** | **Response** |
| 5.2.7 Provide funding for staff training | Making funding available for staff training activities would improve the DSP’s ability to respond to changes in student needs. | Adopted. The proposal includes ‘training of higher education provider staff to support students with disability’ as an eligible DSP activity. |

# Feedback on Consultation Paper Issues

Feedback is welcome on the ideas presented in this paper and any other ideas to improve the DSP that stakeholders wish to raise.

It is not necessary to prepare a long, detailed submission or one that addresses all aspects of this consultation paper. You may prefer to address a few key issues that you believe to be important.

The questions below express the main issues presented in this paper, which you may find useful in framing your response.

1. Is distributing DSP funding via formula the best method of simplifying the administration arrangements for providers under the current ASSD?
2. If so, is the proposed formula the most appropriate to use?
3. Are there particular issues that should be considered further in developing the new DSP reporting requirements? Is there easily reportable and standardised data collected by providers that would be useful in conveying the benefits and outcomes obtained through DSP funding?
4. Do the combined old and new activities listed in the proposed program parameters correspond to the main challenges faced by providers in supporting students with disability?
5. Do providers support an increase in funding for ADCET to $150,000 per year? This represents around two per cent of DSP funds and an increase of around one per cent.
6. What additional services or information could ADCET provide that would be most useful to the sector’s ongoing work?
7. Should other or different changes be made to the DSP?

# Appendix A

#  Proposed Parameters for the Disability Support Program

**Program objective and description**

The objective of the Higher Education Disability Support Program is to help increase the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students with disability that access, participate in and succeed in higher education.

Note 1: This objective is consistent with Australia’s obligations in relation to higher education under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Higher Education Disability Support Program consists of two components:

1. Disability Support Fund (DSF); and
2. Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET).

**Total program funds and indexation**

The total grants amount available for the Higher Education Disability Support Program in 2017 will be $7,389,480 (the “**2017 DSP Grants Total**”). The total amount available under the Higher Education Disability Support Program in any subsequent year will be calculated by indexing the 2017 DSP Grants Total in accordance with Part 5-6 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

To avoid doubt, grants made under the Higher Education Disability Support Program are grants in respect of a year for the purposes of section 41-40 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

**Disability Support Fund**

**Objectives**

The objectives of the DSF are to attract and provide appropriate support to domestic undergraduate and postgraduate students with disability to participate and succeed in higher education.

**Allocation of funds**

Each higher education provider’s yearly allocation of funding will be calculated based on the below formula:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Grant | = | (A/B) x C |
|  |  |  |
| Where: | A | is the number of domestic students with disability enrolled at the higher education provider in the most recent year for which data is available. |
|  | B |  is the total number of domestic students with disability enrolled at all eligible higher education providers in the most recent year for which data is available. |
|  | C | is the total annual funding pool for the Higher Education Disability Support Program minus the amount allocated to the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training component. |

**DSF Payments**

Providers will receive their allocation of funds for each calendar year prior to the end of that calendar year.

**Interest**

Where a higher education provider earns interest on DSF funds, the provider must spend that interest on eligible DSF activities.

**Eligible DSF activities**

A higher education provider must only spend DSF funds for the purposes of students with disability on:

1. activities aimed at attracting and supporting students with disability;
2. educational support and equipment for students with disability;
3. modifications to course content, teaching materials and delivery methods to better meet the needs of students with disability; or
4. training of higher education provider staff to support students with disability.

**Ineligible DSF activities**

A higher education provider must not spend DSF funds on:

1. infrastructure - including but not limited to buildings, fixtures, roads, pathways and modifications thereof;
2. the provision of personal care for students with disability, including but not limited to, assistance provided by a paid or unpaid carer to ensure that basic activities of daily living and self-care (such as eating, dressing, grooming and commuting) are accomplished, as well as providing assistance with medications and medical treatments; or
3. any support covered by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).
4. any activity not listed under ‘Eligible DSF Activities’ above.

**Expenditure of DSF grant funds**

The grant must only be used on eligible DSF activities for the purposes of students with disability.

**Repayment of DSF grant funds**

Where a provider fails to spend any part of the DSF funds at the end of the grant period, the provider must return the unspent amount to the Commonwealth in accordance with instructions received from the department.

**Educational support services and equipment**

Before providing an educational support service or equipment item to a student, higher education providers must:

1. obtain evidence of the student’s disability and support needs;
2. undertake a needs assessment of that student’s needs in accordance with the higher education provider’s published procedure; and
3. ensure any educational support service or equipment item to be provided is required to meet that student’s needs.

Higher education providers must maintain records of the evidence and assessment process, including details of the medical, specialist or other advice obtained in verifying disability and support needs.

Higher education providers must publish their needs assessment procedure in a format that is readily available and accessible to the public, including people with disability.

**Reporting**

A higher education provider must report to the department annually on the progress and outcomes of any DSP activities in the format specified by the department.

**Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training**

**Objective**

The objective of the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) component is to provide information, advice, and resources through a website to disability practitioners, teachers and students to promote inclusive teaching and learning practices for students with disability.

The ADCET will be hosted by a higher education provider appointed by the Minister for Education and Training.

Funds will be provided to the higher education provider hosting the ADCET as determined by the Minister under paragraph 41-30(b) of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

The Minister will determine the conditions of grant to the higher education provider hosting the ADCET under paragraph 41-25(b) of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

# Appendix B

# Evaluation Findings

The evaluation report is available at <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/evaluation-disability-support-programme-final-report>. The key findings are quoted below:

## Appropriateness

* Under the Disability Standards for Education, higher education providers must make adjustments to ensure that students with disability have the same or similar choices and opportunities as students without disability, particularly in regard to enrolment, participation, curriculum, harassment and support services.
* The objectives of the DSP align most strongly with higher education providers’ legal obligations in relation to promoting participation and the provision of support services.
* Eighty-five percent of DSP funding is provided to higher education providers via the ASSD component of the program. The majority of these funds are for the provision of educational support services, such as note taking services, invigilation, participation assistants, Auslan services, accessible formatting and transcription services.
* The ASSD generally meets about 50-60 percent of the costs claimed by higher education providers in any given year.
* Sixty-seven percent of all educational support claims in 2013 were classified as ‘high cost’ (over $6,000 in value). These supports were often provided to a small proportion of students with significant disability, such as visual or hearing impairment and other physical disabilities.
* University staff generally perceived the DSP was supporting higher education providers to meet their obligations to students.
* The disability profile of students is changing but funding is focused on physical and sensory disabilities. The evaluation found that, while more students with mental health issues and learning disorders are accessing university disability services, the bulk of funding under the program is still supporting students with hearing and visual impairments, and other physical disabilities.
* Changes in educational practices and improvements in technology have meant that universal design principles are incorporated to a greater extent in contemporary higher education settings. Universal design refers to ‘design of products and environments to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or of specialised design’.
* The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) further reinforces the focus of the DSP on direct higher education costs, such as equipment and education support. The NDIS will support students to physically access and attend higher education providers.

## Effectiveness

* The DSP is supporting higher education providers to meet student needs in areas that are of particular concern to students - completing course assignments and exams and fully participating in lectures and tutorials.
* The DSP contributes to facilitating access to supports and equipment for students with a disability.
* Higher education providers are using ASSD funding to provide a range of equipment and educational supports to remove barriers and facilitate access and participation.
* The DSP contributes to minimising or removing barriers for students with a disability to participate in higher education and has contributed to students with a disability being effectively supported in higher education throughout their studies. While students do not have a high level of awareness of the DSP, they are generally positive about their experience at university and the support they receive.
* DSP funding could be better utilised to improve higher education providers’ capacity and resources to attract and retain students with a disability.
* The DSP contributes to building higher education providers’ awareness of and access to contemporary research and practice materials relating to inclusive teaching and learning practices and support for students with a disability. This has primarily occurred via funding for ADCET.

## Administration and Operational Efficiency

* The DSP’s objectives and guidelines are well understood by university staff that are involved in administering the program. Staff generally considered the program objectives and guidelines were clear, with 60 percent of staff responding to the online survey either ‘agreeing’ or ‘strongly agreeing’ with the statement ‘the DSP program guidelines are accessible and easy to understand’, while 93 percent felt they understood the program’s objectives.
* The evaluation found there are a range of opportunities to streamline the program and reduce the administrative burden on higher education providers.
* Thirty-one percent of respondents reported that it took their university more than 20 days to prepare the claim.
* Eighty-three percent of respondents reported that it took two to five people to prepare the claim.
* Higher education providers are completing a large number of claims for small amounts of money. A review of 2013 claims for educational support carried out by KPMG found that 57 percent of claims accounts for only 6 percent of the total amount of funds provided.
* The majority of claims by value are for a limited number of ‘high cost’ students. A review of 2012 and 2013 claims carried out by KPMG found that the bulk of claims for educational support was for services provided to ‘high cost’ students – those whose costs were $6,000 or more for the period 1 January to 31 December.

# Appendix C

# DSP Funding Model Comparison

The table and chart below compare the 2015 DSP allocations received by higher education providers with the amount of money they would have received had all provider funding been distributed by the formula proposed in this consultation paper.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Institution** | **Students with disability** | **Existing Model** | **Proposed Model**  |
| Australian Catholic University | 1426 | $72,658.61 | $195,846.06 |
| Australian National University | 1129 | $67,240.87 | $155,056.24 |
| Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education | 2 | $720.45 | $274.68 |
| Central Queensland University | 774 | $49,557.40 | $106,300.74 |
| Charles Darwin University | 507 | $11,145.41 | $69,631.10 |
| Charles Sturt University | 1288 | $117,219.50 | $176,893.22 |
| Curtin University of Technology | 1040 | $111,532.30 | $142,833.03 |
| Deakin University | 2503 | $397,735.99 | $343,760.65 |
| Edith Cowan University | 1175 | $102,411.33 | $161,373.86 |
| Federation University Australia | 433 | $128,344.48 | $59,467.98 |
| Flinders University of South Australia | 1305 | $249,510.57 | $179,227.99 |
| Griffith University | 1704 | $223,047.00 | $234,026.43 |
| James Cook University | 851 | $29,817.46 | $116,875.88 |
| La Trobe University | 1822 | $404,194.85 | $250,232.49 |
| Macquarie University | 1678 | $850,889.27 | $230,455.60 |
| Monash University | 2001 | $177,657.33 | $274,816.25 |
| Murdoch University | 1165 | $76,056.87 | $160,000.46 |
| Queensland University of Technology | 1517 | $309,745.85 | $208,343.95 |
| Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology | 1476 | $241,695.34 | $202,713.04 |
| Southern Cross University | 982 | $110,573.99 | $134,867.34 |
| Swinburne University of Technology | 1030 | $188,973.86 | $141,459.64 |
| University of Adelaide | 1545 | $36,539.47 | $212,189.46 |
| University of Canberra | 740 | $67,033.00 | $101,631.20 |
| University of Melbourne | 2018 | $278,581.53 | $277,151.02 |
| University of New England | 1657 | $256,501.14 | $227,571.48 |
| University of New South Wales | 1592 | $188,913.60 | $218,644.41 |
| University of Newcastle | 1863 | $113,366.10 | $255,863.40 |
| University of Queensland | 1187 | $125,251.88 | $163,021.93 |
| University of South Australia | 2031 | $106,770.88 | $278,936.43 |
| University of Southern Queensland | 1462 | $113,092.33 | $200,790.28 |
| University of Sydney | 1701 | $71,230.35 | $233,614.41 |
| University of Tasmania | 2112 | $101,642.51 | $290,060.93 |
| University of Technology, Sydney | 1226 | $408,082.88 | $168,378.17 |
| University of the Sunshine Coast | 659 | $57,130.68 | $90,506.70 |
| University of Western Australia | 1712 | $120,384.64 | $235,125.15 |
| University of Wollongong | 2041 | $222,956.20 | $280,309.83 |
| Victoria University | 788 | $70,931.51 | $108,223.49 |
| Western Sydney University | 1426 | $823,183.54 | $195,846.06 |
| **Total** | **51568** | **$7,082,321.00** | **$7,082,321.00** |

1. Universal design refers to the ‘design of products and environments to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or of specialised design’. More information is available from ADCET at <http://www.adcet.edu.au/disability-practitioner/course-design-and-implementation/universal-design/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Listserv is a closed email group with a subscription base of over 500 tertiary disability practitioners. It is a means by which disability practitioners can share best practice ideas and knowledge, and discuss relevant issues. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)