PETER DE NATRIS:  
In life people have too many goals in one year and don't have enough 3- to 5-year goals.   
  
The Agency needs to think about that - what the Scheme may look like in 2021 for the participants. The other important thing to acknowledge – and as education professionals you would embrace this concept – they may have had experiences that means their life is not a good life and they need a longer term plan then a one-year plan.   
  
If you look at the PC Report, that is reflected in the Act. I commend the Act to you. I know you don't go home and read legislation but it is worth it, it is a well-constructed and well-written piece of contemporary legislation.   
  
There are many elements, but the main ones I want to point out are in this slide.   
  
It is about reasonable and necessary supports. I am the first to say to anyone, we have a lot to learn in this space. If you go back to the Productivity Commission Report, what works for people is a key challenge for the Agency.   
  
Everyone wants it to be perfect instantly. If we leave it up to the market to decide what is best for people, we will be in a world of pain in 10 or 20 years. We need to get busy and work with academics and practitioners to fill in those spaces, so we have good information for participants about the types of supports that work for them and information they can base judgements on.   
  
We're going from a welfare system that was underfunded to a contemporary piece of legislation that is centred on the participants – a big leap. We haven't spent a lot of time with those people preparing them for that.   
  
It is about achieving goals, and a lifetime approach. It is important to understand a lifetime approach. It is about information and referral.   
  
I came from the New South Wales state system and I worry, as I watch my colleagues scampering for the exit door in disability, and I will put up a slide in a minute that says you have to bring them back.   
  
People with disability are not living their lives in a parallel universe called the National Disability Insurance Scheme – they are first and foremost citizens of Australia and are entitled to what every citizen is entitled to.   
  
The NDIS is not just about reasonable and necessary supports, it is about inclusion, linkages and capacity building.   
  
The Act, and rightfully so, puts most of the resources of the $22 billion Scheme in the hands of participants.   
  
There are resources that need to be allocated to provide the infrastructure and impetus for that to happen in Australia. Particularly, where that is not a strength in many communities.   
  
In many instances, people with a disability cannot access basic services and are not welcomed into many community and social events.   
  
The information, community linkages and capacity building strategies break that down and tackle it. It is one thing to provide participants with reasonable and necessary funds to have an ordinary life, but if you don't have a welcoming Australian society, a community that is able to understand them and see them as people rather than being defined by their disability, it will fail.   
  
We must have a duality of those strategies. The reason I say that, if you look at this slide which I lifted from a report in Victoria earlier this year around students with disability in the education system, there was a wonderful pictorial of what the education system was trying to embrace in Victoria in transition to the NDIS.   
  
At the top you see 15 in every 100 students in Victoria that attend primary or secondary school require some form of reasonable adjustment – to the environment, classroom, curriculum, teaching strategies – for them to be able to access it.   
  
Only 4 of the 15 would be significantly enough impacted by their disability to be a participant of the NDIS. But 15 require a reasonable adjustment – this is a challenge for states and territories. Most of them have given every cent to the NDIS but they need to now go back and ensure they are not only maintaining their effort but it needs to be an accommodation appropriate to all students with additional needs, not just those in the NDIS.   
  
Don't forget those numbers. I will refer back to them shortly. Information, linkages and capacity building is about making sure people have the skills and capacity to be involved in the community.   
  
If we look at special needs in Australia, first of all it is the preschool years – we will give a tick to Victoria, a pass mark to New South Wales, harsh on me because I lead this in New South Wales.   
  
The rest of the states and territories would get a huge fail. Children with additional needs in Queensland, this will horrify some of you, cannot access mainstream early childhood settings like kindergartens and childminding centres – they are ushered off to the special one.   
  
Primary School, yes, we have made good progress. Do we have participation right? We have the legislation in place, they are all attending school, but by the time you get to secondary school, in every state and territory, the dropout rates of students with disabilities are horrendous.   
  
If they don't drop out they are usually home-schooled or have the highest levels of expulsion and absenteeism, in every state and territory in Australia.   
  
Vocational education and training has had its own challenges from the point of view of maintaining the effort and it is not overly accessible in most states and territories.   
  
The one I give a tick to is higher education, the university sector. They have been on a wonderful journey of what I would call localised and community-driven strategies, by the university education system, to include people with disability and additional learning needs.   
  
I felt I was coming to preach to the converted because for many of you this is something you have been embracing, leading in, and challenged by for the last 15 years.   
  
Building that capacity in mainstream services to include people with a disability is not just about their physical presence, it is about true inclusion. We have a long, long way to go.   
  
This is where I will be a bit controversial. Everyone will look to the NDIA for answers to this. I will tell you, as I stand in front of you, the NDIA is the administrator of the Scheme. I am probably one of the leading thought-makers in the NDIA, but this is about you people. The NDIS is owned by all Australians, not the administrators.   
  
Your challenge is to find the clever and innovative ways of including all people with a disability in the educational opportunities your universities offer. The NDIS is an enabler, a source of reasonable and necessary funds to allow that person, who wants to be a student on your campus, to access them.   
  
How you bring that to reality is the contract between you and your potential student. That is a huge challenge for everyone to embrace.   
  
Rather than thinking there is a magic manual that will come out of the NDIA to unlock this, the innovation lies with you and your potential students. People with a disability will tell you exactly what they need and figure it out with you – they are the most remarkable and resilient people in the world.   
  
Other activities include Local Area Coordination, market development… I will talk about some of that now but if I talk about all of them you will be here until lunchtime on Saturday.   
  
A little bit about the mainstream interface... First of all, the design of the Scheme is driven by the legislation. It is quite instructional to the NDIA as to how the design should look.   
  
It has insurance at its centre, but the market-based principles mean the Agency has to work with markets to ensure people with disability are not just defined by their reasonable and necessary supports.   
  
There are two policy documents that accompanied the Act. The first is the Mainstream Interface Principles and the second is Applied Principles and Tables of Support.   
  
It is available on the DSS website, how the NDIS interacts with 11 different systems. I could put up a lot of slides, that would be boring, high-level and does not give a lot of answers.   
  
You are all lifetime learners, you can download them and have a look at them. Familiarise yourself with them. I always like to remind people when they ask me questions of technical relevance, as far as legislation goes, there is only two things you cannot do – anything illegal and anything that will cause harm.   
  
Other than that, there is not much the Act says you cannot do.   
  
The Mainstream Interface development is important. If any of you have heard the previous Disability Discrimination Commissioner speak, he has been clear all along about the message of 'soft bigotry' of people in Australia with people with a disability.   
  
He does not mean it in an offensive way. It means we have problems adjusting whether that is sensory impairment, physical disability, or neuro-diversity. We tend not to interact, we tend to walk around it.   
  
That soft bigotry is what we need to focus on in mainstream development. We need markets to be strong advocates and influences on all Australian committees and environments – not just delivering supports for a dollar.   
  
I spoke about research and development. The Productivity Commission Report… I could write the exam for the NDIS, I reckon. If you go to the report, it spends five chapters talking about the need for research and development and what we call the evidence in so many parts of disability in Australia.   
  
It is important because there is a part that describes what should be funded under reasonable and necessary supports. It says, under Section 25, a person can be funded for reasonable and necessary supports if the CEO or the CEO's delegate is satisfied there is evidence or scientific basis that says the support will deliver good outcomes for the participant, and will positively affect the lifetime care and support needs.   
  
This is an insurance approach, whole of life, not five minutes. We have an actuarial department that works hard in giving us the whole of life calculations of the different types of evidence.   
  
This is the biggest gap in the NDIS, the need for research and development in a range of areas, not dissimilar to what Health puts into research.   
  
The research budget in the Australian health system is well in excess of $2 billion a year. In disability, last time I looked, collective investment of the states and territories was $5 million.   
  
We have a fair opportunity to get this right. And there is a challenge for everyone. It’s not just about education, the nuts and bolts, but I want to leave you with a message about the big picture.   
  
Research and development is a huge challenge in the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and we should ensure – that is all of you, not just me – as concerned Australian citizens, that the Agency is getting attention and focus to this and making sure that we are building that true, validated research and evidence base, so we are providing future Australians with great information about what works – what works, why, and what they can reasonably expect out of it.   
  
Why do we need the NDIS?   
  
Those of you who forgot, there was a line in the Productivity Commission Report saying that the current disability systems in Australia are broken – broken and not working.   
  
I like to keep reminding people about that. So, why would you do it the same way? That’s the other challenge, and that is why the evidence base is so important.   
  
It respects individuality, the choice of individuals – that everyone is different. Therefore, we do not talk about equity in the NDIS, but about equality.   
  
Not everybody comes to the NDIS equal. They come with their own set of circumstances, their own life pathway, and to think that everybody should get the same amount or get the same sorts of considerations each time is a falsity.   
  
Because life pathways are also not always the same for every individual, therefore when people ask me about – "Well, why does one person get this, and another gets that?" – that is what was reasonable and necessary in the planning process.   
  
If we do not trust it and stick to it, then we go back to the old system of everybody getting five dollars each rather than what is reasonable and necessary and what makes a difference.   
  
It will be national – about lifetime care and support, certainty and consistency. That's a massive challenge for the NDIA. I challenge you to think about your own experiences for people who are going to be participants of the Scheme.

They have fought long and hard, tooth and nail, for every dollar, for every hand they can get. To say to them, "You probably don't need that now," they will be reluctant to take it out of their plan because they have fought so hard for it.   
  
So, giving them confidence that the NDIS will be there for them when they need it will be a huge change management process for the NDIS.   
  
For carers of those with disabilities, it is about peace of mind – about saying, "I know when I'm not around that my nephew, Daniel, who has significant intellectual disability and is on the spectrum, there will be something for him. He will not be left to the generosity and welfare and whims of the old system.”  
  
There is the access to the NDIS. The reason I put it up is because the first three are easy to understand but I want to refer to the fourth one – early intervention.   
  
The reason I like to point this out is that understanding this allows you to think more creatively with people who may come and want to be students and access a university course, access some form of education that will better their lives, and make you more creative about how you help them.   
  
The early intervention requirements of the Act under section 25 basically say early intervention is not just in the early childhood years, but across the whole of the lifespan.   
  
If a person has a goal in their plan that requires certain things that enable them to head towards that goal, you can actually construct that in a context of early intervention.   
  
You are actually early intervening in a school when you see someone dropping out of school and give them extra supports that deal with the issue as to why they are falling out of school.   
  
A person with disability – the classic here is young students in secondary school on the spectrum – they reach an age when their behaviour goes off the Richter scale.   
  
Everybody stands back and says, "We can't deal with that!" In the most horrible case scenarios, they get locked in a box or a cage in the corner of the room, whereas what we should be doing is saying, "What do we need to address these issues for this person, and what does the environment need to be able to allow this person to continue to be included?"   
  
Currently we have a focus on dealing with the symptoms, not dealing with what is going on for that young person. Early intervention frees up our ability to move resources through reasonable and necessary support planning.   
  
Remember, as long as the CEO or the CEO's delegate has confidence that there’s evidence that says what will be put in place will deliver the following types of outcomes, a promise that this will deliver that, you should invest in it.   
  
Because the ultimate outcome should be that not only are the behaviours off the Richter scale addressed, but the ultimate goal is that the person stays in school and can access the curriculum and learning outcomes that they are after.   
  
We should keep that clear in our minds because we tend to focus on the issue in front of us, rightfully so, but without long-term goals. Everyone plans for the next year, we should have three- to five- to ten-year goals in our lives as well.   
  
I touched on the community, and mainstream, and choice and control, and now on the insurance approach. Why is it an insurance scheme?   
  
You are all members of the Scheme. I don't know if you know that but you all pay your taxes and your Medicare levies, so you all put in premiums.   
  
A $22 billion-scheme so that an insurance approach could be taken. When the Productivity Commission wrote its report it was very clear that an insurance approach meant you could focus on three key aspects.   
  
One is a whole-of-life approach, one is an approach which invests in the research and development around practice and outcomes, and the last one – very important – the focus is shifted from a crisis-driven system to one that is focused on early intervention.   
  
Early intervention is about saying that there are some things in life that are predictable and why do we ignore them until it becomes a crisis?   
  
Why do we sit back and allow a crisis to happen? Why do we wait until mum and dad are at breaking point? The insurance approach is about investing early.   
  
In education, I like to think about that as saying that education is the enabler to a full and ordinary life. What does an ordinary life involve? In Australia, most of us are expected to have some form of economic participation – a job, work – education and skills unlock a lot of the barriers. The NDIA and Commonwealth Government has a lot of work to do with the demand side of things, demand being the jobs, where the labour is going to, but on the supply side the participants of the Scheme, we need to do early intervention under the insurance approach.   
  
Giving due regard and proper focus to ensuring that the participants of the Scheme who have goals of economic participation in their plans are given the reasonable and necessary supports to obtain that.   
  
And higher education, in particular university courses, are something that are very accessible for most of the participants of the Scheme.   
  
My challenge to all of you is that you should never, ever, get stuck with that sort of question – how do I make this work?   
  
The more compelling question is not how do I make this work, but how do I reach the outcomes for the person in their life?   
  
I will finish off. As I said, I could go till Saturday lunchtime if you wanted me to. I will finish with this – in talking to states and territories and, indeed, the education sector in the work I'm doing, my first hook-in is very simple.   
  
I tell them they are signatories to the Convention. You all have your National Disability Strategy implementation plans. Let's look at them and see where they link in with the NDIS and see where we can collaborate.   
  
This is a grab bag of when I was focusing on secondary education and employment and that's a collection of the statements in their public documents about their commitment to people with disabilities as residents of the states and territories. Most universities have the same. Barriers are many, solutions are many, and innovation should prevail. It is not about what I can't do, but how can I do this?   
  
I will use Early Childhood Early Intervention as the one I've been focused on to give you an example of interface. This will take two minutes.   
  
How many of you know Dr Tim Moore, the eminent practitioner and academic in early childhood intervention in Australia? I love his work, he is very practical man, down to earth, talking a lot about family and the parents' role.   
  
It is not about reasonable and necessary supports in the early childhood years but often about environments where children can access so they can live, grow, and play with other children.   
  
Without those opportunities, delays will be magnified. They do not learn in the therapist's room. Therapists do good work, but skills are developed with other children.   
  
We must build community connections and the capacity for the early childhood system, universally, to understand developmental delay, disability, and include all children in everything they do.   
  
I'm getting the wind-up. I will flick forward.   
  
The last thing I would like to draw your attention to about education, is about Scheme achievements to date.   
  
That is a current dashboard for the quarter 2015/16. What is it focused on? How many people are in the Scheme and how satisfied they are.   
  
I challenge you to look at those and begin to think about dashboards in higher education about Scheme participants. And how they are participating and the educational outcomes being achieved.   
  
The NDIA will not do it but the higher education and universities can do it – you have the knowledge, the technical skills, and the capacity to do it.   
  
It should not be about the NDIA reporting about the NDIS, but about all Australian communities and sectors reporting – the key challenge for you all going forward. Thank you for listening to my ramblings.   
  
(Applause)   
  
GENEVIEVE JACOBS:   
Thank you for a thought-provoking presentation about the NDIS and its relationship with education. We have time for some questions. We will go to you first. We will just get the microphone to you – just one second.   
  
QUESTION FROM FLOOR:   
Thank you, that was great, and wonderful to hear about the values that underpin your organisation and the philosophy of the NDIS. That's the first time I've actually heard that.   
  
I work with students with psychiatric disabilities, and your values and principles seem to be really clashing with what is happening with Centrelink at the moment for that population.   
  
I'm wondering if those two systems need to have the same values, supporting each other. Is there a role for you in advocating for people with disabilities with the Centrelink situation because sometimes I describe it as being 'tortured'.   
  
PETER DE NATRIS:   
Great question. The NDIA have other roles, they have a board and an independent advisory council that are there to provide, to government more broadly, a range of advice about the actualisation and reach of the disability strategy and the commitment through the Acts and relevant legislation.   
  
The issue we have is any of those programs are driven by economic rather than social values – there is a clash there. We don't need to ignore that. We need to acknowledge and embrace it.   
  
When I talk about an interface and what it looks like, it is about the policy interface, and how different systems include and treat people who come to them with a range of disability they cannot understand.   
  
The Agency will never be bigger than what it is currently forming into. I think it is section 82, it says the Agency will never be more than 7% of the Scheme, not a lot of money when you pay for actuaries and IT people.   
  
It has a role it will need to grow into, they are focused on numbers at the moment (laughs).   
  
GENEVIEVE JACOBS:   
Another question at the back of the room. We will get a microphone to you.   
  
QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR:   
I am happy to support the (inaudible) of the NDIS. I have organised forums for the interface of Agency staff with the trial site in Western Australia.   
  
A couple of the unexpected outcomes have been, because it is owned by the individual, cross communication between agencies is a real issue.   
  
For example, a person is assigned a mentor or assistant for two hours on Wednesday. They roll up to the support centre and say they have come to work with so-and-so for two hours, they know nothing about it because of the structure of the NDIS, there is no Children's Check, the principal throws up his hands and says, "What do I do?"   
  
Another example, and this has to do with why Western Australia is holding out a bit, the huge haemorrhage of empathetic and relational staff from the system.   
  
Because of the pressure to achieve outcomes in terms of plan generation, there has mainly attraction of more bureaucratic type staff and Western Australia want to hang onto that, and get back to having empathetic and relational staff that can join with clients in an effective manner.   
  
They are practical illustrations of some of the challenges on the ground I have seen. This is more of a reflection, you may have a comment or two – but thanks.   
  
PETER DE NATRIS:   
I think the first one, the unintended consequences of taking an overly bureaucratic approach to something that should be more organic, is an interesting one.   
  
For those of you that followed the implementation of the NDIS… The Commonwealth doesn't do policy, it does design and implementation. We leave policy to our Commonwealth partner in the Department of Social Services.   
  
The one they haven't been able to land, because it is so hard, is quality and safeguards. That is the very essence of the issue as to how systems work collaboratively around the individual.   
  
This is an unintended consequence of something that is meant to be person-centred. They implemented silo-type communication systems. Communication systems should be about the individual.   
  
The second part is about the culture, I don't comment on this unless well-prompted, so, well done. My sense is you are right. The Agency started off employing eminently qualified practitioners as planners but quickly realised when the 7% clause became clear, it was never going to be sustainable or scalable.   
  
The challenge for the Agency is to rethink the whole planning process rather than trying to address it through thinking will we ever get the staff profile we need to have those values and focuses you talked about?   
  
The challenge is to rethink the design so that those values are the highest, they are important in getting it right.   
  
GENEVIEVE JACOBS:   
Let's thank Peter for his time.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Our next keynote speaker is a Canberra treasure. Sue Salthouse has worked in the area of justice and human rights since 1996. She is concerned about the intersecting areas of gender and disability and how it affects people. She is the convener of Women with Disabilities ACT, which bases its activities on principles delineated in human rights conventions ratified by Australia.   
  
She was the ACT representative on the COAG Advisory Panel on reducing violence against women and children. She was the ACT Senior Woman of the Year 2014, a finalist in Australian of the Year, 2015, and Citizen of the Year.   
  
I know her to be warm, strong and forthright. Welcome, Sue.   
  
SUE SALTHOUSE:   
This beautiful building is on ancient land. I would like to pay my respects to the Ngunnawal people, their Elders past and present, and acknowledge what we have to learn from them.   
  
I echo what Genevieve said. You have reinvigorated me, Peter. Sometimes we drop the ball or lose the big picture.   
  
I want to take it right back to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is a philosophical Article, it brings us back to what we are educating for – it’s so that a person's creative ability, mental and physical abilities, can be fully developed. That they know about their fundamental rights and freedoms. We are educating people to enable them to participate effectively in a free society. Now we have the NDIS to support them.   
  
The last clause in that is to say we need equitable access to tertiary education, including adult and vocational education.   
  
One of the most important things is lifelong learning. When we are talking about people with intellectual and cognitive impairment in the community, we forget we want them to be on a lifelong learning path – that is very important.   
  
They are high-level aspirations. In a way they disappear in a headlong rush to implement Article 27.   
  
What is Article 27? The right to work in employment. The right of a person with a disability to work on an equal basis on work they have chosen for themselves.   
  
We want an open and inclusive environment in the labour market. Peter has already outlined that that is what we are looking for. We want more people in jobs.   
  
The CRPD sets the scene for the (inaudible) in our institutions. They set the scene for how we implement them.   
  
I am only interested in three of the standards, from your context. I am interested in the reasonable adjustments. That is where your innovative thinking and accessible and transparent process has those review mechanisms.   
  
I know you have an incredible juggling act, getting the needs of the students met as well as maintaining the integrity of the unit of study.   
  
Part 7 is devoted to student support services, getting that equal participation.   
  
The third one that interests me is harassment and victimisation on campus. From a student point of view it has to affect how you work.   
  
In the last 10 years, participation in education has increased in all age groups. In the 16-54 age group, one in five, about 3 million people, are taking up education in Australia. I am pleased to see that women, young women up to 24, they have nearly doubled their participation.   
  
Mature women have gone through the roof in taking up education options.   
  
When I look at tertiary institutions that are universities, there have been increases, and it is great, we have about the same proportion of men and women undertaking Bachelor Degrees which puts us in the upper echelon of the OECD countries, with participation in university education.   
  
You don't need me to remind you that we have a pretty gendered society in Australia. Women outnumber men 2-to-1 in health disciplines and cultural studies. Overall, men are still 12 times more likely to study engineering than women.

The SDAC, my favourite piece of ABS work – the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers – it tells us that about 17% of all people with a disability in the 15-65 age group, have a Bachelor Degree or above in Australia.   
  
Wow, that is a good percentage, except 63% of the non-disabled population have a Bachelor Degree, or above. 17 to 63, we are not doing so well, and you don't get excited about that 17% because percentages are a tricky things.   
  
1,200 people a year, Australia-wide, 2% of people with a disability, in Australia, are getting their Bachelor Degree. You are working with students that are a rare breed. You are sending them out into the world, an incredible calling and responsibility you have.   
  
I want to look at their chances when they get out into the wide world. Already that 2% have a low participation ratio. Within universities, the share of placements, compared to the demographic, the structure in the population. There are only about half as many at university as what is in the wider population.   
  
I don't think that is your fault, somewhere along the line we have to get more students leaving secondary school already thinking about their employment.   
  
About 5% of all domestic undergraduates. Those numbers have gone up in the last five years, but still below what we want as a target.   
  
The success rate of getting them into university is OK, but could be better. When we get them out the other end, into employment, I had a look at the graduate destination surveys...   
  
These are 2014 figures, put out by Graduate Careers Australia. As an indicator, I only looked – probably because I was a bit lazy – I looked at full-time employment figures for graduates.   
  
The survey was done in October and April. April this year… Sorry, April last year, we see that 69% of all the Bachelor graduates were in full-time employment by April. 56% of graduates with disabilities were in full-time employment. I thought, "That's only a 13% difference, bloody good."   
  
29,000 people without disabilities got jobs and 652 graduates with disabilities got jobs.   
  
There are figures about who is in part-time and casual work, and still looking for full-time employment – it's about the same proportion.   
  
I thought, "That is pretty bloody good too!" Smaller numbers, but the same proportion – they have got their part-time jobs and are looking further.   
  
Then there is a group without a job. Guess what? There are twice as many graduates with disabilities as there are without disabilities who have not got a job at all. They have a Bachelor degree, but that is when the shutters came down.   
  
And that is one quarter of those 1,200 graduates, they didn't get a job. 11% of the nondisabled. Two and a half times the number.   
  
And then I looked back at those who had part-time/casual jobs and the penny dropped. The people with disability in the part-time/casual jobs are going to stay there.   
  
The undergraduates who do not have a disability, they will move out of that category. And they will get their full-time jobs.   
  
But the ones with disability will be languishing there indefinitely. And, at this point, you look at who goes on to further study, if they can afford it. And I don't know when you have students with disabilities, there will be a lot of them who are doing further study because the job barriers are there.   
  
So, the longitudinal information, actually across the board, shows that things are worsening for all graduates. 20 years ago when people came out of university, 83% would get full-time employment. Today, that has dropped by 10% of getting full-time employment.   
  
The part-time/casual positions are increasing. And you know that when we talk about the part-time workforce in Australia, in fact we have always had a fantastic part-time structure in that people had rights within that structure and that they would have permanent hours that they could call on, but we know casualisation means that those in the part-time workforce do not have secure hours, do not have contracts that they can call on.   
  
That's a whole other industrial relations picture about what is happening, and it is certainly hitting graduates with disabilities.   
  
So, I think, that you, as people working with the undergraduates, need to have some sort of understanding and focus on those employment outcomes.   
  
And I think that you need to really tune in to what are the workforce barriers and entry barriers, and I probably do not need to go through those for you. Students are telling you about them all the time.   
  
We know it is attitudes and behaviours during the recruitment phase that hits them in the face. There is actually a lack of jobs that graduates can do.   
  
There is difficulty getting flexible work arrangements. And we know that middle managers in Australia are pretty shithouse at getting flexible work arrangements.   
  
One of the big things we know is there is lack of accessible transport, and I think you need to be aware of this all the time when you are talking with students.   
  
And workplace design. I am never going to get to the photocopier but sometimes just the actual design of the workplace.   
  
I am not going to go into those further because time does not permit an analysis of the challenges, but I do direct you to a new study that was launched last week at the University of Canberra.   
  
It's called, 'Doing It Differently' and it looks at disclosure rates and reasons. And if you go to the Institute of Governance and Policy Analysis website and download the 'Doing It Differently' report, it outlines those disclosure barriers, and they are very useful for you to apply in your work, even though it was done in the workplace.   
  
So, I think that knowing all that, how does that help the work you do to help people with disability and students with disability get a job? It’s not entirely your responsibility, but you can do a lot. In question time, you can tell me what I don't already know about what you are doing.   
  
Now I want to return to section 3 of the Disability Standards for Education because harassment of students underlies the huge factor of the work that you do which you may not be taking into account.   
  
Levels across the board on campuses are pretty high and it has prompted Universities Australia to ask the Human Rights Commission to undertake an enquiry into campus harassment. About 72.5% reported that.   
  
My reason to focus on this is that the fear of violence is very, very real for students with disability. And that is particularly for women, and you need to be taking that into account – that we know…   
  
I'll just go through some statistics about women, but there are men. 40% of women with disabilities are likely to have been subject to violence where they live. Sexual victimisation is about four to ten times the experience of non-disabled women. For people with cognitive disability, it is 90%.   
  
More shockingly, the Centres Against Sexual Assault have shown that 25% of reported rape cases are women with disabilities. So, you know that these are traumatised people.   
  
So, when I first started working in advocacy I was invited, and I was really learning about disability because I had not thought about it before, as many of us don't until we are ‘it’, and I went to a network of students – Women Students of Australia – event.   
  
And they had funding for women students with disabilities to attend. I found that every one of the students with disability in that room had been sexually assaulted – at home by a relative, industry, at the bus stop, anywhere.  Particularly, those students with cognitive disabilities.   
  
So, if you think that somebody coming through your door has negative feelings about themselves or others or are a bit self-deprecating, or they have memory problems, and you put it down to their mental health, and they have difficulty establishing good working relationships, sometimes they have self-destructive behaviours, or they may have a chronic mental health condition. And you might put it down to their diagnosis. I would like you to think about the fact that these are traumatised people, and that you need to work with them – please work with them – in a trauma-informed way, because, I mean, we all mentally process behaviours in a certain way.   
  
But I think it is underlying, I know it is underlying for women in prisons, in their behaviours. I know it is underlying in the behaviours of many men, and I think that we need to really ask ourselves, "Is this behaviour their diagnosis or how is it impacted by their previous experiences?"   
  
I don't know if you know, today is day eight in 16 days of activism for eliminating violence against women.   
  
And I think, on a personal level, it is really hard to know what to do, but please go the 1800Respect website – a good place to refer people. Rosie Batty put out a video that says, one, when somebody discloses it, name it.

Sorry, she first says to ask someone, "Are you feeling safe?" Then name it. And then, to refer someone, give them the contact details of 1800Respect or 000 if danger is imminent. They have web chat, all councillors have had disability awareness training. And on a personal level you need to follow up if they are OK and feel safe now.   
  
Bringing it back to the professional level of the people who come through your door, please let women with disabilities know that there are schemes available in a number of states, of how they can have a pathway to safety.   
  
Find out what the situation is in your state, your location where your university is, where you can refer them to a domestic violence crisis service.   
  
Something like that, because one of the things we are emphasising is that whenever there is a disclosure – and you will be the first point of disclosure – do not let that go to waste.   
  
Know where to refer men and women who disclose the violence in their lives, where they can go. In the ACT we have a whole scheme – people in the ACT, if there is disclosure, tell them to ring the Domestic Violence Crisis Service because everybody there is trained to know what to do with women with disabilities, and we can get emergency equipment, accommodation, travel. We go to the NDIS and ask for more support hours. When the perpetrator walks out the door, support hours go.   
  
There will be something in your state so that you can say to people with disabilities, "This is where you go. Keep coming to our service, and we have counselling, but that is specialised counselling."   
  
We know you people are experts, and have expertise in this area, but I would love you to familiarise yourself on where to go.   
  
I was going to touch more on the NDIS but Peter outlined that. Will the NDIS help with your work? Yes, it will, it will give students the support they need and free them up to work in an academic space. And you can be familiar with how to get the best from their plan.   
  
Your workload could be lessened because they have an NDIS plan.   
  
What are the take-homes for the work you are doing? Number one, keep doing the work you are doing. All the indications I have are that you are producing fantastic work.   
  
Keep an eye on the workforce. Do you have liaison with them about specific ways we can exploit them to get jobs for people with a disability?   
  
Remember the likelihood that your student may have PTSD in their behaviour pattern, know how it manifests, and know what to do.   
  
Number seven is develop your action plan at the first point of disclosure. Number eight is keep doing what you are doing, which I said at the beginning.   
  
(Applause)   
  
GENEVIEVE JACOBS:   
Thank you, Sue. For years I talked to (inaudible) in the ACT and I have been stunned by those figures about disabled women and victims of violence and sexual violence. I thank you for opening our eyes to them.   
  
Do we have questions in the room? We will get a microphone to you.   
  
QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR:   
It is less of a question… I don't know what questions you could ask about that presentation. I want to thank you so much for voicing the terrible reality that those statistics outline.   
  
I have heard a common theme that we want to give people with a disability the ability to succeed. There is a follow-up – why don't they come to ask for help? This presentation outlines why that is.   
  
Everyone that goes to tertiary education is a smart cookie. If you have a disability, you know that you may come out of the bag and say, "I have a disability," and that will likely affect you in a bad way.   
  
The most important thing to take away from this is when initiating and saying, "Look, there are supports to protect people with a disability," as well as assist them – thank you.   
  
SUE SALTHOUSE:   
That is very true. That is why I recommend this 'Doing It Differently' report. We know the record for employment is abysmally low. The report looks at seven Australian Public Service departments and interviewed people, so they could safely say why they don't disclose.   
  
The reason is, in the workplace, would be very instructive to you as to why people don't disclose about their disability let alone the violence in their lives.   
  
It is very instructive to read in the report why employers set up barriers so that people cannot disclose. It is very important.   
  
One of the things I have tried to emphasise is, if you know the full, holistic picture of what has been happening in people's lives, you are better equipped to offer support.   
  
GENEVIEVE JACOBS:   
Being aware of possibilities is key – do we have other questions?   
  
Thank you, Sue. Wonderful, as always.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Our final keynote speaker is someone who was in my radio studio last Monday morning, deftly dealing with my questions about sports governance. Having lost the use of his legs at the age of four, Richard Nicholson has been involved since the age of 10 with archery and competing in mainstream gymnastics.   
  
His sport journey involves four Paralympic Games, many other Commonwealth Games, competitions and road races around the world, across powerlifting and athletics.   
  
In 2002 he began working at the Australian Sport Commission, and has presented at national and international conferences about the importance of including people with a disability in sport and recreation.   
  
Richard is now with the Australian Institute of Sport, managing a talent program. He will speak today about sport as a tool for social inclusion, 'My Journey From Athlete to Sports Administrator'. Welcome, Richard.   
  
(Applause)   
  
RICHARD NICHOLSON:   
Thank you for the terrific introduction. I could just say a few more words and exit.   
  
I am honoured to address this cohort of people but nervous about what I would say, is it engaging and relevant enough? Then the hard part, delivering it.   
  
I decided that ‘yes, I can, and I will open with this little…   
  
(Video plays)   
  
# Yes, I can, suddenly, yes I can.   
# Gee, "I'm afraid to go on"   
# Has turned into, "Yes, I can"   
# Take a look, what do you see?   
# 133 pounds of confidence, me   
# Got the feeling   
# I can do anything, yes I can   
# I was born today, I can go all the way   
# Yes… I… Can!   
# Yes… I… Can!   
# Yes… I… Can!   
# Yes… I… Can!   
# Yes… I… Can!   
# Yes… I… Can!   
# Yes… I… Can!   
  
No… You can't.   
  
Yes, I can.   
  
# I was just born today, I can go all the way.   
# Yes… I… Can!   
  
(Applause)   
  
RICHARD NICHOLSON:   
I wanted to include that because it is not just a good promo for the Rio Paralympics. This time around they managed to include a lot of other aspects of people who succeeded exceptionally well.   
  
I thought I would open with that. When I was preparing the speech I realised, as a person with a disability, and as an athlete, my whole life has been about challenges. I have not seen them as obstacles or barriers but have sought them out – that is why I believe 'I can'.   
  
As a chronic asthmatic from the age of six weeks, sometimes taking my next breath was my most immediate challenge. Later, I chose to challenge myself against the best athletes in the world.   
  
Some challenges are thrust upon us and some, like today, I chose to be here. It is how you deal with and overcome them where growing and learning takes place.   
  
I would like to share my journey about being an athlete, a person with a disability, a sports administrator, education educator and public speaker.   
  
It feels good when you overcome set goals. That feeling that you have worked hard, stayed committed to the hard period and reach the finish line.   
  
I would like to take a moment now, close your eyes and concentrate on a goal you have set yourself, something you have achieved.   
  
Maybe it was graduating from university, (inaudible), something you have worked hard and achieved. I want you to concentrate on the feeling, really savour it and, most importantly, try and remember it.   
  
You can open your eyes now.   
  
Far too many people forget the feeling of achievement and stop chasing it. I say never stop chasing it. Use today to keep challenging yourself and you will continue to learn and grow throughout your lifetime.   
  
Whether your goals are in academia, your chosen profession, health and fitness, stick to them, work hard, never stop chasing them.   
  
This is a photograph of me when I was much younger – I am the one in the beanie. I lost the use of my legs at the age of four so I cannot remember walking or running.   
  
They say you cannot miss what you never had, I was lucky because I never felt any resentment toward my able-bodied friends. I would feel frustrated but knew it was not my fault and I accepted that fact and got on with life.   
  
At an early age I learned two simple rules. One came from Malcolm Fraser, a prime minister from many moons ago – “Life is not always easy.” And, from the Rolling Stones, “You may not get what you want but you might just get what you need.”   
  
I threw that one in there. I don't have many photographs of myself in hospital from that period. Digital photography was not around then and that is about the only one I had.   
  
I was an active child growing up, always using crutches. I would give everything and anything a go.   
  
Often against the pleas and requests of my parents and teachers. I would sometimes fail – we all do. By simply having a go I'm sure I quickly earned the respect of my peers and have never been short on friends.   
  
Success will be different for everybody – how it is defined and measured. Success is ultimately determined by your own beliefs, values and principles, however, I believe that successful people share some common traits. Commitment to their goals, relentless enthusiasm, they give their time, and, more importantly, their ideas freely and they support others around them to do the same. They are innovative, never happy with the status quo, constantly looking to do things differently. They demonstrate a strong desire to make a difference, to be a change agent.   
  
I would like to share a story with you now that involves two people who, in their opinions, I'm sure, were simply doing their jobs, but who actually changed the course of my life and no doubt others as well.   
  
In my first year of high school, in 1982, aged 12, my PE teacher was tired of watching me sitting on the side of the gym and doing nothing. He threw me up onto the Roman rings. I had a well-developed upper body from eight years of crutches, and I was pretty good.   
  
He entered me in a high school gymnastics competition, and set me tasks of learning routines on the rings, high bars, pommel horse and parallel bars.   
  
In 1982, people with disability did not seem to participate in sports – at least not that I knew – and I was lucky to be attending a mainstream school then.   
  
A few weeks later, I competed at the competition. I was not very good. I had to dismount on my knees but I had fun.   
  
I was approached by one of the judges afterwards who asked me if I would like to come to his local gym after school. I went along, and within a couple of weeks, I was training three two-hour sessions per week and was training, competing and eventually coaching gymnastics for the next six years.   
  
During this period I developed a passion for sport and some physical and psychological attributes that would lay the foundations for an elite sporting career – including five Paralympic Games, six World Championships, three Commonwealth Games and countless other competitions, marathons and road races around the world. The point of the story is never underestimate your ability to influence somebody and have a positive impact on their life.   
  
The PE teacher had the idea of getting me moving. "I will put him on the Roman rings and see what happens."   
  
He then created an opportunity to me by entering me into competition, and then supported me by teaching me the routines are needed to know. At the competition, the judge offered me another opportunity which I enthusiastically grabbed and set me on my sporting journey.   
  
To me, these people were real change agents – they changed my life. They were quite forward-thinking in their attitudes towards disability and inclusion, particularly in 1982.   
  
I will tell you another story that, for me, is about recognising the need to change, which is also important.   
  
I graduated from Hawker College in 1987. And back in the day in Canberra I fell into a full-time job with the Australian Public Service about six weeks later, at the Australian Bureau of Statistics. I thought my sports days were behind me.   
  
In 1994, I went on my first overseas holiday. A couple of good friends went on a typical Contiki tour of the West Coast of the US. A pivotal moment in my life. I became aware of the world.   
  
After that tour we stopped in Hawaii on the way home for genuine R&R - essential after a Contiki tour.   
  
On the first day we had not walked 20 m from the hotel until we were solicited off the street to join the never-ending pub crawl. We were told that we get two free drinks at each bar and, when 60 or 80 people leave the bar, it's time to get out the front, get on the bus, and go to the next bar. Simple instructions.   
  
After the second pub I got on the bus, there was a big guy in the front seat, and he said, "Sit down here." He was pretty big so I thought I had better sit down.

Bruce turned out to be the owner of the never-ending pub crawl, and by 35 he had made enough money to work part-time in Waikiki and set up his business.   
  
He took one look at my physique, with my shoulders and matchstick legs, and said, "Hey, buddy, I can make you a champion." Needless to say, I spent the rest of the night drinking free drinks and learning how to arm wrestle.   
  
All I could think about was getting back to the US. It was May 1994 and I knew the Paralympics were going to be in Atlanta in 1996. I thought to myself, "All I have to do is make the team, and I will get a free ticket back."   
  
I contacted the ACT Disabled Sport and Recreation Association, which has not been in existence for many years now. And I asked them what sports would be on at the Games.   
  
They told me there was wheelchair racing, wheelchair tennis, wheelchair basketball… And I thought this was no good because I had never owned a wheelchair, or used one in my life.   
  
And then he said powerlifting, weightlifting in the Paralympics. I was a member of my local gym and I decided to become a power lifter then and there.   
  
I had a goal to get to Atlanta, and I had a means – I just needed the ranking in the top 12 athletes in the world and the Australian champion in my weight division. Easy!   
  
I made some phone calls that afternoon, and learnt the rules, and started training five to six days per week. And I figured in just over two years I spent well over $8,000 chasing competitions all over Australia, New Zealand, Noumea and all the way to the Netherlands in pursuit of my free ticket to Atlanta.   
  
(Laughter)   
  
I made that team, and my Paralympic debut was at Atlanta. In Sydney at the 2000 Paralympics, that was the highlight of my powerlifting career.   
  
Weighing in at 58.1 kg, I bench-pressed 175 – not a great photo but powerlifting shots don't lend themselves to that. This was a personal best, a new national record for the 60kg division. The first ever triple bodyweight bench-press for an Australian.   
  
And on the day...   
  
(Applause)   
  
Thank you.   
  
On the day, I was lucky enough to win the silver medal.   
  
Standing on the podium, I wasn't actually thinking, "I did it – I am number two in the world finally!" I realised it was only the culmination of many years of dedication, some compromise, and most of all hard work. It justified all the decisions I had to make to get there.   
  
Elite sport has provided many opportunities, challenges and many experiences that money simply cannot buy. Representing your country is an honour that never gets old, and to walk into the Sydney Olympic Stadium in front of 110,000 cheering Australians, with Midnight Oil blaring on the speakers, it is something I will never forget and gives me goosebumps.   
  
Another short story that made me realise the real power of sport came during the Sydney Paralympic Games. It was a special time in Australia to be an athlete, the privilege of a home game was something to be grateful for.   
  
One day I saw a small boy who was holding his mother's hand and pointing at me with the other hand. And he wondered what sport I played. This was one of the most memorable moments.   
  
Inquisitive minds will generally say, "What is wrong with that man, Mummy?" Or “Why does he have those? Pointing at my crutches. This young man changed my understanding of sport and my role in it. My sporting journey continued with a transition to athletics and wheelchair racing.   
  
There were a number of reasons for the change, including a significant drugs problem within powerlifting.   
  
There were plenty more opportunities in wheelchair racing to compete. I was being pressured by other athletes to switch. But in the end, after much contemplation, it was the lure of another challenge that convinced me to change direction.   
  
At the end of my career, I would not be left wondering, 'what if', I would know that as a wheelchair racer I made a bloody great powerlifter.   
  
Professionalism of athletes reached new levels in the years between Sydney and London. The most developed countries were now funding Paralympic programs at increasingly high levels. Many at comparative levels to able-bodied programs.   
  
The pursuit of winning World Championships and World Cup events became more significant across the Paralympic spectrum.   
  
‘Para’ events figured significantly on the Commonwealth Games program, and across the world prize money and support had increased to a level where it made it possible to compete in 8+ marathons per year. We knew we were building something bigger than a sporting festival that happened only once every four years.   
  
On the road to London, less than four weeks before the opening ceremony....

That was a good day in Athens. I won a silver medal there, losing to Thailand by 0.01, and Beijing was a great experience as well.   
  
Yes, but, leading into London, four weeks before the opening ceremony, I was training in Switzerland and was involved in a serious collision leaving me to be hospitalised, requiring surgery, and I was permanently scarred.   
  
I chose not to let the accident deny me my opportunity to race the best athletes in the world and I continued on my journey to London.   
  
The psychological scars were harder than the physical scars. At times, my preparation felt more like a daily test of my resilience than an elite athlete fine-tuning for a major event.   
  
My biggest problem was maintaining enthusiasm and motivation around my teammates. That's me on the warmup track. It was sunny in London, unbelievable. The locals couldn't believe it.   
  
The London Paralympics – my fifth games – provided me with numerous firsts and highlights.   
  
Before arriving, I took special note that any time Lord Sebastian Coe, chairman of the London Organising Committee, was speaking about the Olympic Games, he never once failed to mention the Paralympic Games in the same sentence. He promoted the Games as one sporting festival with two events.   
  
To me, this was a notable and positive change in the language used at previous games.   
  
On the bus from Heathrow to the Paralympic Village, for the first time I noticed Paralympic athletes, my competitors, adorning large billboards – the entire side of a building or the back of buses and taxis. A level of promotion that I had never seen.   
  
It was a near sell-out. Inside the 80,000-seat main stadium, fans were lapping up some of the most extraordinary athletic performances to date. Home-town hero, David Weir, would finish with four gold medals including the 800m, 1,500m and 5,000m, blue ribbon marathon event. It was sad, but you have to acknowledge it.   
  
However, there was one particular night. I was spectating in the stadium – it was the place to be. This particular night, something happened there that changed my perception of the Paralympics after five Games. I knew that the Paralympics had arrived in that moment.   
  
It was the final for the T44 100 metre race for amputees, below the knee. On the podium was Oliveira from Brazil and Oscar Pistorius, and Jonnie Peacock from Great Britain, plus the rest of the field.   
  
I was waiting for the race to begin and the 80,000-strong crowd started chanting, “Peacock, Peacock, Peacock…” This chant was akin to David Beckham taking a penalty for England during a World Cup match.   
  
I knew Jonnie Peacock had never run at this level before but 80,000 people knew who he was. Jonnie Peacock himself had to quiet the crowd before the race. The atmosphere in the stadium was tangible.   
  
The silence before the gun, the mad eruption of the crowd after the gun, the crowd was captivated by the competition. They forgot the disability and carbon prosthesis, this was elite level sport, country versus country and the bragging rights to go with it – it was awesome.   
  
My individual results in London were a bit disappointing and my confidence was low after the crash and it had an effect on my top-end speed.   
  
My London Games were salvaged when I won a bronze medal on the final night, in the 4 x 400m relay team, when we finished behind Thailand again by 0.14 of a second.   
  
I graduated from the University of Canberra in Sports Administration in 2002 as a mature aged student. My university placement was at the Australian Sports Commission, and I didn't leave until they gave me a job.   
  
I have been working in sport for nearly 17 years and it has been a privilege to work there in a variety of roles.   
  
To date this is the best job I have ever had. National sporting associations, state sporting associations, right into local clubs, educating them on how to be more inclusive in conducting their sport.   
  
We focused at a participation level and it was awesome to create opportunities for young people much like myself.   
  
I was also fortunate to work in a similar role in a sport development program, funded by AusAid, helping sport organisations in Fiji to be more inclusive.   
  
My current role is at the Australian Institute of Sport, working in high performance, managing a talent program, transferring athletes from non-Olympic to Olympic sports to help us win more gold medals.   
  
My current boss is keen on me finding the next Olympic medallist but I consider my role as a disability advocate and change agent for inclusion.   
  
In my experience, sport has the ability to change the perception of the community and change the way people with disability think and feel about themselves.   
  
Sport can build self-belief, confidence and a feeling of achievement, provide a sense of future and re-engage even the most isolated and disconnected.   
  
Sport can help reduce stigma and challenge community expectations of those with a disability. I have been lucky enough to be part of the Paralympic movement for more than 20 years and have seen the development of the size and prestige, and the attitude and acceptance of the athletes has evolved over that time.   
  
I obviously like sport a lot however I see it as a great tool for social inclusion. Sport can unite communities and even countries and break down barriers, with a unique ability to unite diverse groups across ages, abilities, races, religions, and genders.   
  
I take pride in playing a small part in building the reputation of the Games and professionalism of the athletes, and feel the legacy is in great hands with our current Australian team members.   
  
Finally, I should stress I owe everything to my parents, from the way they handled my initial illness, the love and support they gave me. Without them I would have achieved nothing.   
  
I would like to finish by reminding you to recognise your opportunities, seize them, continue to challenge yourself throughout your career.   
  
Embrace equity and diversity, invest in the communities where you work, play and live to create a positive change for all those around you.   
  
Thank you for your time and good luck.   
  
(Applause)   
  
GENEVIEVE JACOBS:   
Thank you, Richard. We have time for a question or two.   
  
Where does your resilience and determination come from?   
  
RICHARD NICHOLSON:   
I don't know, I go about my business. I was listening to Alan Tongue, Canberran of the Year, he talks about being an expert in everything you do and I think that is a good philosophy and approach.   
  
GENEVIEVE JACOBS:   
Let's thank Richard very much.   
  
(Applause)   
  
It is now my job to pull together some of the threads of the conference. We opened with Darlene who reflected on her own time, and how it changed the direction of her life. We were welcomed by Melanie and Julie.   
  
I want to note the small committee that brought this altogether. Hard work and challenges that solidified friendships – a great achievement. Let's thank them.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Our first speaker, Drisana Levitzke-Gray, described her childhood in a multigenerational deaf family, and talking about challenges in accessing further education and employment. She gave us a strong sense of what it was like to be racing to catch up and being removed from the business of learning, and the consequences that has for the deaf community.   
  
And her frustration that so many means of access are half-hearted. We had one outcome when a Tweet spoke about a lack of captions on airline movies, and it was picked up by Qantas on the same day.   
  
Jessica May talked about a lifelong struggle with anxiety, and the issues she had disclosing that as a successful public servant. Her answer was business that gave people jobs, not as a favour, but placed skilled disabled people in good jobs suited to their employer requirements, and determining what that person wanted and needed to work effectively.   
  
It's been a successful model whose recognition of (inaudible) has extended to working with veterans. Jessica said the assumption is sometimes the enemy of inclusion and to look at inclusive employment with common sense and she talked about the profit model replacing the dominant charity model of employment.   
  
David Fenton talked about getting funding models right, where the dissipation rates have risen only (inaudible) in six years. There is a problem with retention rates, career outcomes and salaries.   
  
We heard a lot about outcomes, data and funding in the conference, David said a (inaudible) would be better than the claims based system but the issue about data and lack of disclosure makes it hard to get a handle on how much funding will be needed.   
  
Jackie French took us on a passionate journey of her own experiences as a successful author who struggles with dyslexia. In a rapidly changing labour market there is less work available each year for underskilled or semiliterate adults who are overrepresented in the justice system and employment queues.   
  
We often fail to see individual complexities and she warned against one-size-fits-all solutions to things like reading problems. When they don't work, people can feel more excluded, with often fatal consequences.   
  
Leanne Cover talked us through how it is addressed at the Cancer Canberra Institute of technology, the start of lifelong learning and engagement. She has concerns over completion as the sole measure of success in funding terms, and the unwillingness to disclose when course teachers may be future employers.   
  
Institutions need to make early, possibility-focused contact with students.   
  
Another strong personal journey from ABC broadcaster, Craig Hamilton, talking about his 2000 breakdown and issues with bipolar disorder. After three years of feeling embarrassed, he took the decision to be open in the interest of reducing stigma, raising awareness and being part of an open discussion.   
  
His was about making good decisions about health, diet, exercise, and taking responsibility for your own mental health – quoting Martin Luther King, "Our lives begin to end the day we stay silent about things that matter."   
  
Sue Trinidad and Ian Cunningham from Curtin University, and their focus on closing the loop between equity policy and practice and their meta-analysis of six key studies of students with a disability – interesting findings including retention rates vary significantly between smaller universities, quite high, two major institutions.   
  
Data collection varies so widely, as does (inaudible) collection.   
  
Indigenous students, there was a tendency not to engage due to overriding concerns of being perceived as (inaudible) – again, data was patchy.   
  
They noted issues surrounding students with autism spectrum disorder who require transition (inaudible) and non-academic support. And things like the built environment, campus layout, teaching methods, which are so challenging for this group, but so rarely acknowledged.   
  
Sue and Ian talked about evidence-based guidelines and discussed resilience in the sector. Students that were doing well generally believed barriers were external and not individual. Staff could create problems with concerns that academic standards could be compromised.   
  
Online education was a preferred method of learning for many in disability. But constant disclosure (inaudible) many institutions and courses was sometimes discouraging, and a lack of universal design principles.   
  
Judy Hartley and Jenny Shaw were acclaimed for their foundational principle, ‘nothing about us without us’. And we reflected on the lessons of geese, to work with each other and allow (inaudible) and make sure when you honk, it is encouragement for those flying ahead.   
  
Matt Brett gave us an insight into (inaudible) people with a disability, 100,000 in Australia according to the ABS. And the university disclosure records of 60,000 people. Fully 40,000 people in there with a serious impact on funding.   
  
He talked about resistance to collecting data but a strong arc of progress within the sector over 25 years. He noted, this was disturbing, discrimination is more likely to be experienced from a lecturer, or on campus, than anywhere else in the life of a student.   
  
Modifications are sometimes still questioned and outcomes for education are still threatened.   
  
We heard about the willingness to tackle some ideas about access, Marnie Hughes-Warrington asked if education is enabling or disabling, and how (inaudible) is challenging the broken system of lectures, often not attended by many students, in underutilised lecture theatres.   
  
Understanding how and where students learn, it is possible to tailor their experience more effectively. They can make the tertiary experience more accessible for disability and they are knocking down a complex of lecture theatres.   
  
Michele Fleming discussed rates of disability and illness in Indigenous communities, at roughly three times the rate in the rest of the population.   
  
She said some universities did not correlate data about which students were Indigenous and disabled – often there was no connection between Indigenous education units and disability support staff, as well as (inaudible) will of Indigenous disability workers or even cultural training.   
  
Under-representation at all levels of tertiary education was (inaudible) in the Indigenous community, even more so amongst the disabled. But there is steady progress.   
  
Michele suggested there is an urgent need for a whole-of-university approach, universal cultural awareness, and better communication with Indigenous students themselves.   
  
David Miller talked about how equity is approached in the ACT vocational education and training system, mentioning the employment opportunities offered, and the issues surrounding a demand-driven system.   
  
It also offers the chance of unique tailoring to student needs through flexible approaches, acknowledging fewer choices for disabled students.   
  
We have heard this morning a really thorough and fascinating discussion from Peter De Natris about the NDIS and NDIA. The clarion call that it should be an enabler but is not the whole answer – the system is owned by all Australians and something we must get on board with ourselves.   
  
Again, from Peter, the evidence – why there is so often a lack of in-depth, useful data on disability, and therefore correlation to funding. There is a real urgency across the sector for that.   
  
Sue Salthouse raised awareness about participation rates in a gendered society, in general, but particularly with reference to disability.   
  
She made another of those observations that has permeated the conference about outcomes – that people go to university, they enter the tertiary sector, but what happens in the workplace where there is increasing casualisation, people with degrees ending up in part-time or casual work from which they do not progress.   
  
She drew our attention to the stark figures about violence against women with disability, and sexual violence in particular, which can have a major effect on completion rates and workplace placement.   
  
And Richard saying, “Yes, I can. I want to actively seek challenges and be a change agent.”  
  
It seems to me that speakers felt major progress had been made in the last 35 years, from the days when even collecting data about disability was seen as having little significance, and all sorts of nonsensical objections were raised to allowing disabled students to access education.   
  
The issue that came out of many presentations was a lack of sufficient data about the true size and nature of disability, the consequential problems of knowing the funding required to meet the needs and how best to address them.   
  
The sense that mental health has not always been as thoroughly addressed as physical disability, and that the complexity and constant requirements about disclosure in some sectors may stop students from doing so for a variety of reasons.   
  
It seems clear there are fairly urgent needs for a universal framework to give students and families a much clearer idea of what to expect of tertiary institutions – both universities and in the VET training sector.   
  
While excellent progress has been made in your particular, very engaged field, that awareness is not shared completely by the wider academic community where questions are continually raised about modifications, academic integrity, and what is reasonable and fair for students with a wide and complex range of disabilities.   
  
And there is an admission that while tertiary education can open a path to lifelong learning but too little attention is given to the participation outcomes.   
  
Sean Corcoran said, at the beginning of one of those concurrent sessions, that he salutes your strength, brilliance, trauma, stress and resilience. And so do I.   
  
It's been a pleasure to be a part of this event. Thank you for helping the conference to be a great success. I would like to thank the Auslan interpreters, they have worked tirelessly.   
  
Please complete the evaluation form, hand it in at the registration desk. And get your lunch in its takeaway package, particularly for delegates who need to leave immediately.   
  
I would like to hand over to some people who have been an important connecting thread over these last few days to close the conference. I would like to hand over to Julie Harrison and Mel Kovacks and then Darlene McLennan will close the conference. Thank you.   
  
(Applause)   
  
MEL KOVACKS:   
Julie and I will breathe a sigh of relief in a few minutes. So will the beautiful committee for all we have put together over the last two years.   
  
For a start, I will let you know that because of the frivolities last night, Julie has lost her voice. You are stuck with me. She said that was a miracle. Bear with us. Julie's voice is here in spirit. It just happens to be me the entire time but we are tag teaming.   
  
Two years ago, we were told it was our turn. It's been a great ride. I’m sure you will agree – it's been a wonderful conference. And we have had an absolute ball bringing it together.   
  
It has strengthened our network, and our friendship in our committee. We certainly know that this will continue for many years to come and that just in our sector as a whole, that our students in this State are well looked after and that we all came together and we will just continue to collaborate on things.   
  
Anybody coming next, the New South Wales colleagues, you might be interested in this bit of factual information.   
  
It has given us an amazing new lease on life about how we work together across the state in particular, and of course the way we can share with all of you. It has been great.   
  
As I said, it's been wonderful to see the vision come to life, and we do hope you all enjoyed it as much as we have.   
  
We did some things differently this time. And we did some things the same, as we all do when it is our chance to run the conference.   
  
And we just did all of this with the intention of bringing a rich, professional development experience for everybody here.   
  
Some key highlights – the pre-conference workshops. I believe there were 40 people who participated in that, and that was visiting our institutions, ANU, UC and CIT.   
  
The dinner. What do I say? It was fabulous and we had a wonderful time. We have all got sore heads today, but that is OK, it was worth it.   
  
Special mention to our new ATEND member number two. He has not turned up this morning, has he? He’s not decided to come and gatecrash?   
  
He will go down in the memory books as being part of the Canberra Conference. And lots of dance moves last night. Great food and wine. I hoped you all got a bit of the bacon that we raved about.   
  
A special shout out to ourselves, really, and committee members for our fabulous, of course, tour guide extraordinaire, for the bus yesterday. We take no responsibility for what we told you, but quite possibly we made some of it up.   
  
The silent auction was another highlight – something we thought we would give a go and see how it went. We thank so many people in the room who took out the call for donations of items. We thank you so much. Things came from all over the sector, and it made it a great success because everyone got behind it.   
  
You will be pleased to know, we raised for ATEND $2500 from the silent auction which is amazing.   
  
(Applause)   
  
And that goes into all of our PD.   
  
Genevieve summed this up beautifully. The keynote speakers, and all the plenary speakers. Thank you, what an amazing lot of experience!   
  
(Applause)   
  
We were just, when we got to the point that we had to look at everybody's abstracts, there is always the worry of, "How many people will do it? What will they talk about?"   
  
But we were blown away with the calibre of things going on in the sector, and we thank everybody for your contributions.   
  
And now, we get onto the thank yous, and we will leave you alone then, so you can get on with your day. Firstly, to Genevieve Jacobs.   
  
(Applause)   
  
We just cannot even begin to tell you how amazing an MC you have been. Genevieve is an icon in the ACT on the radio.   
  
I was telling her the other day that my husband was upset with me because he listens to 666 on the way to work. Genevieve was not on, and, “Why was she not on for three days?” And I said, "Sorry, but she is with me!" I'm sure you agree, she has done an amazing job. Thank you so much.   
  
(Applause)   
  
A big shout out to Consec, our conference providers. We started working on this journey just under two years ago – to Abbey, and Aaron, and Barry and Pam – and to Kellie Singer who is no longer with them, but was with the committee for a long time.   
  
You have been very professional and accommodating. You are a local family company. Consec are fabulous. We thank you so much. You will agree it's been a great organised event. Thank you.   
  
(Applause)   
  
A huge thank you to our trade exhibitors who came along and shared all of their wares with us. There has been a diverse range of trade exhibitions and I hope that you all got a lot out of it. We thank them.   
  
(Applause)   
  
A huge thank you to the interpreters. You are just amazing. And to Auslan Services who partnered with this.   
  
Many don't realise but in the ACT we actually only have two interpreters for the whole state at this level. We were in a bit of a panic as to how we would manage. Our poor interpreters! But they came on board. Thank you so much, and for your outstanding contributors to the sector.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Thank you to the venue, The Realm. The food has been fantastic. We were pleased to be able to use the space.   
  
A big thank you to the ACT staff and students for volunteering from our universities.   
  
You would have seen over the last three days a whole range of students and staff from our institutions coming along and volunteering time – most of them were wearing their blue or their black T-shirts – and Amerita… Where is she?   
  
Up the back. And Amerita at the back who organised all the volunteers. Thank you so much. A huge job to coordinate them, tell them what to do and teach them. We thank you so much for your support.   
  
And the Pathway 13 Committee. I would like to bring them on stage. They didn't know we would do this, but can we welcome Sue from ANU.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Haley from the University of Canberra. She is right at the back.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Belinda from CIT. Emma from ACU, and Tracy. Is she there? Has anybody seen her? She can't leave. She was with us. As co-chairs we could not have done it without the committee. We are great friends and we network all the time. And we worked tirelessly over the last few years to bring it together.   
  
This is an amazing bunch of people. We thank them so very much. And I would like to thank Julie for her amazing and outstanding support as co-chairs - a crazy journey for us and stressful times.   
  
And also, we do want to shout out to Sue and to Hayley because they were really our 2ICs, filling in for Julie and I while away. I recently left my role at UC and Hayley took up a lot of the reins in that time. And we want to make a special mention to those two for their work. They went above and beyond to help Julie and I out with extra things.   
  
I would like to call Darlene up to do some official business around the handover – thanks, everyone.   
  
(Applause)   
  
DARLENE McLENNAN:   
Thank you. I forgot to inform Genevieve there's been a change. I am pleased to inform you that, at the AGM, we got a new executive. I am pleased to announce we have a new Treasurer, Cynthia Fitzpatrick, NDCO at the University of Newcastle, a secretary, Dallas Dunn from the University of South Australia. As vice president, Merrin McCracken from Deakin University, and our new president is Anthony Gartner from Swinburne – I would like to thank all those people.   
  
(Applause)   
  
I would like to formally welcome Anthony to the stage and I will see you all later.   
  
ANTHONY GARTNER:   
We are delighted to thank the organising committee for the Pathways Conference and would like to present them with some flowers. So, for Melanie Kovacks.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Julie Harrison.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Susan Hancock.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Hayley Torabi.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Belinda Wallace.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Tracy Henderson.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Catherine (inaudible).   
  
Emma Grist.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Before we get to New South Wales we have to thank Darlene as the retiring president.   
  
(Applause)   
  
And the other members of the committee that retired. It is a great honour to be appointed president of ATEND. I am nervous and excited and look forward to working with everyone and seeing you all at the next conference.   
  
To do that we need to welcome our friends from New South Wales who are running the next conference – are there any people from New South Wales in the room?   
  
(Applause)   
  
SPEAKER:   
Come on, where are you all? There are more than three people from New South Wales.   
  
ANTHONY GARTNER:   
All of our friends from New South Wales, please come up and accept your mission.   
  
Would anyone from New South Wales like to say something?   
  
BERNARD:   
Good afternoon, the great modern day philosopher, Donald Trump, recently said, "You need to think anyway, so why not think big?"   
  
We will follow his advice and think big for Sydney. The possibilities are endless. Where will we go? The Northern Beaches, the Blue Mountains or the Shire? If that fails we have Rooty Hill RSL. We will need to move the conference to Tuesday nights because they have raffles and half price schnitzels.   
  
We are honoured to be hosting and welcoming you to Sydney!   
  
(Applause)   
  
ANTHONY GARTNER:   
We have a final tradition, the handover of the banner from the Canberra crew to the New South Wales crew – congratulations and good luck.   
  
(Applause)   
  
Thank you for attending Pathways in Canberra – an extraordinary conference. From the smiles on people's faces you have had a wonderful time. We will now call the conference closed and wish you safe travel to your various homes.   
  
See you in two years – thank you everyone.   
  
(Applause)

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