SPEAKER:

Good morning everyone. If you would like to find a seat there is plenty up the front as well.

There is plenty up the front. So just wait until everyone has a seat. Let the anticipation build up.

OK. Brilliant. The doors are closing. Good morning everybody. Welcome to Pathways 14. It is an absolute honour and privilege to have you all here and to see you, and we are looking forward to a wonderful three days of conference. My name is Anthony Gartner, the Associate Director of Student Equity and Access Services in Swinburne Uni in Melbourne, and I'm also the president of ATEND. I would also like to introduce Rick Boffa who is the - I don't know what your new title is Rick. What is it today?

RICK BOFFA:

Thanks Anthony. My new job is Manager Equitable Link Services, RMIT Melbourne.

ANTHONY GARTNER:

So equitable learning services and accessibility services, both on the platform. We will keep it fairly brief and get into the day. But we have got a few things to do first. So the first one is, that what I would really like to do is to thank the people and the organisations who have been sponsors for this incredible conference. So in particular to Wise Employment who are gold sponsor. A generous donation from Wise, and we thank you incredibly for that. We have Macquarie University who has provided our interpreting services for the conference. I thank you Macquarie.

We have Northern Beaches Council who is a bronze partner and we will shortly welcome Mayor Michael Regan to the stage who will speak to us.

We have the name badge and lanyard partner which is Textel. I think you are familiar with Read and Write Gold. A lot of our students use it. We have a satchel partner, which is DataB Student Assist. We have the keynote session partners. UTS , Uni of Sydney and Uni of NSW. We have a captioning partner which is Ai Media and they will speak to us shortly too.

We have an NDCO partner which is the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, disability and carer support grant from the Australian Government Department of Social Services. Very generous people and organisations have put money into make this conference work today. We thank you all for that.

We will have a couple of special guests this morning. As I mentioned, we will have the mayor of Northern Beaches, Councillor Michael Regan. We will have Uncle Allen Madden who will do the Welcome to Country and we welcome Alastair McEwin, who will be speaking as well. Thank you, Alastair.

We will do something a little different this morning. What I reckon is to work in the disability sector - I have been in it for about 20 years now, as many of you have been in 20 years or a lot longer in many cases - I reckon it takes a little bit of superpower. Has anyone ever thought that?  Ever noticed the work we have to do and the effort that it takes and the compliments we get but also the feedback we get, the challenges we experience, the special students that make our lives extraordinary challenging and those other students that make our lives a sheer pleasure. I reckon it needs a little bit of superpower. So what I'm going to invite you to do is to think of a super name for yourself. So Rick and I have been thinking about this. And I'm going to be Ant Man. And Rick, you are going to be -

RICK BOFFA:

Speed Racer.

(Laughter)

ANTHONY GARTNER:

I would invite you now just to think, to take 30 seconds and think of your superpower name. And if you write it on your name tag then the invitation is at the next break to find out three other people's superpower names and why they chose that name. You have 30 seconds. Yes. To find a pen and write your super power name on your lanyard

(Group discussion)

ANTHONY GARTNER:

Okay.

Has everyone thought of your superhero superpower name and written it down on your badge?  Your challenge is to find out three other names at the next break. What I will do now is handing over to Rick Boffa. We will be co-MCing this conference over the next three days. Each session will also have a chair. So we have got a little strategy worked out to find out what is happening in each of the sessions because we won't be there of course. So I'm going to hand over to Rick now.

SPEAKER:

Thanks very much Ant Man. I'm really excited being asked to co-chair today's Pathways 14 Conference. Thank you, Anthony and committee. We have 258 delegates with us today from across the country, including New Zealand and Vietnam. Welcome everybody. Great diversity amongst us. From universities, TAFEs, DES provider, NDCOs, Department of Education state and Commonwealth. NGOs, disability service providers, and support organisations. Schools, technology experts and employment services.

So welcome everybody. I would like to talk a little bit about housekeeping. So the toilets are located outside and downstairs. If you hear an evacuation alarm, please make your way orderly downstairs and gather outside for further instructions. Novotel is a fully smoke free environment, so please if you would like to smoke please go outside.

We are going to - because we think you are a wonderful audience we think you deserve an extra 10 minutes rest break this afternoon, which is not on the program. Bonus. Absolutely. And social media, please follow us on #pathwaysforchange.

Now, I would like to take the opportunity to invite the full committee up on to the stage and acknowledge their wonderful achievement in getting Pathways 14  conference up and running. Please, a round of applause and if committee members can make their way up.

(Applause)

RICK BOFFA:

Can I just ask committee members if they could briefly introduce themselves.

KELLY PIPER:

Good morning. I'm Kelly Piper the disability liaison at Macquarie University.

TINA EDNEY:

I'm Tina Edney at the University of Wollongong and disability liaison officer there.

MICHELLE KERR:

Good morning, I am Michelle Kerr senior student equity officer at University of NSW.

Jessica:

Good morning. I am Jessica and I work in the NDCA program for the Sydney region.

ALICIA FORD:

Good morning, I am Alicia Ford the NDCO for Illawarra and south-east NSW.

PATRICK McGOLDRICK:

Patria McGoldrick disability liaison officer and team leader at the University of Wollongong.

STEPHANIE PALERMO:

I'm Stephanie Palermo, the senior disability services officer at the University of Sydney.

DAGMA KMINIAK:

Good morning everyone, I'm Dagma Kminiak the manager of disability services at the University of Sydney.

TRACEY HEATHERTON:

I'm Tracey Heatherton, NDCO for Riverina and ACT

LLOYD GRIS:

Good morning, my name is Lloyd Gris, and the NDCO for the New England and north-west of NSW.

RICK BOFFA:

Great. Thank you very much everyone. And a round of applause.

(Applause)

Now I would like to hand off to Dagmar and Petria.

DAGMAR KMINIAK:

Thank you. I speak into this microphone. Welcome everyone. We finally made it. We are so excited. So from the program you would have noticed that the conference is actually broken up into themes. Which are universal design for learning and inclusive design. Inclusivity and employment, and mental health and community links. So the committee decided to select themes based on what is currently primarily a key focus in the sector. And today we have a range of wonderful speakers who will be providing presentations directly related to each of the themes. So at the end of every day what we will do is we will also have the chairs provide a little bit of a summary with regards to each of the sessions, and the chairs will provide an overview of the important themes and the key insights.

I will hand over to Petria who will provide a little bit of an overview of the social aspects of the conference. The networking aspects, and the wellbeing and fund-raising aspects. Thanks Petria.

PETRIA:

Good morning everyone. I have to bring it down a bit shorter. Okay. So as I said, the other part of the conference certainly what's going to come out of the next three days is obviously lots of valuable information and a lot of learning. But also to that, learning also incorporates what's involved in our social networking and wellbeing activities. We really felt this time with the conference it was important to focus on wellbeing, as Anthony mentioned at the beginning we work very hard, we have a very challenging area of work to work in. So wellbeing is important. As you might have noticed in the program for example, we have organised a yoga on the beach, and also in selecting the venue it was actually an opportunity for us to enjoy outside beautiful nature we have, the beaches, and certainly this area is very good and very flat for walking in and enjoying the outdoors.

We are encouraging that.

The other two social and networking activities we have got is of course this afternoon, is the welcome reception which will follow the end of the conference and after the AGM for ATEND. And that networking reception will be out in the foyer just out here. Tomorrow night we have a gala dinner which will be held in this space as well. So it will be a three course sit down meal here and we have entertainment organised as well. We hope that those activities apart from anything else that happens at morning tea, afternoon tea, lunch etcetera, is an opportunity to meet up with old colleagues, meet up with new colleagues, learn and enjoy and share.

And finally, we have some fund-raising that is happening. First of all we have some silent auction items. Some of those will be displayed out here in the foyer over the next couple of days. There is beautiful artworks we had donated for the conference. And as well there will be some other items and memorabilia available at the conference dinner. As well as we are having a raffle with a whole range of items. So we do both welcome you to the conference and hope it all goes well and so very glad to see you all.

(Applause)

DAGMAR KMINIAK:

Just another quick note, if anyone has any questions please speak with either Petria or myself. CommSec, the conference organising committee, including Barry, Nicola and Abbey will also be here in the upper foyer for the full three days of the conference and they are here to answer any questions and also assist with any issues. We hope you have a wonderful three days. Thank you everyone.

(Applause)

RICK BOFFA:

Thanks Dagma and Petria. It is my pleasure to invite Uncle Allen Madden from the stage. He is from the Metro Land Council and will be doing or Welcome to Country this morning.

(Applause)

UNCLE ALLEN MADDEN:

Thank you. Bugger!

Thank you. Once again, my name is Allen Madden, Gadigal elder. Lord Mayor, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. For my first song -

(Laughter)

No, only kidding!  Makes me feel pretty good looking around here. I see a few of my mob here. The old grey-haired mob!

(Laughter)

Two apologies for the terrible weather we are having outside at the moment. Sorry.

(Laughter)

And not being able to welcome you to my country and my language as we were forbidden to talk our language a long time ago. As we all Welcome to Country first and foremost as always to acknowledge our Aboriginal elders, all elders past and present, and pay my respects. To all our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters, from whatever Aboriginal or island nation you may have come from, welcome to Gadigal. And to all our non-indigenous brothers and sisters here today, a very warm and sincere welcome to you. No matter where you have come from, whether it be across the seas, across the state or across town, once again a very warm and sincere welcome to you.

And as I mentioned many times before, was, is, and always will be Aboriginal land. Only three things surer than that, coming, taxation and going.

It's an honourable pleasure to be here today to welcome one and all to Gadigal. Gadigal is one of 29 clans of the Eora Nation. The Eora Nation is bounded by nature's own. The Hawkesbury River to the north. Mobs up that way call it the Darkinjung. Nepean to the west, the Derrebin and Georges river to the south, Kyemai. And in between those three mighty rivers, is the Eora nation. In that nation there are 29 clans. And the clans land we are on today is the Gadigal. On behalf of members of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, and of the Gadigal mob, once again a very warm and sincere welcome to you.

There is an old saying out there, I think it is very appropriate for you mob here today, you fellas have heard it a thousand times before. They say where there is a will there is relatives.

(Laughter)

So once again, on behalf of Land Council, and of the Gadigal mob, welcome, welcome, welcome.

Thank you.

(Applause)

RICK BOFFA:

Thank you and indeed it is our privilege to be on Gadigal land today and isn't it a beautiful place to be. Thank you.

It is now my great pleasure to introduce councillor Michael Regan who is going to speak to us. Michael Regan was the first popularly elected mayor of Warringah in 2008 and was re-elected by the community in 2012. Under his leadership numerous projects, such as the completion of the Narrabeen Lagoon Trail and creation of the all-ability precinct at Collaroy was implemented. He was awarded the AR Blewett Memorial Award which recognises the best performing council in NSW. Congratulations.

Prior to being elected, he worked in the local government sector for nearly two decades in a range of roles, includes customer service and town planning.

MICHAEL REGAN:

Thank you Ant Man. I will trying to work out what mine would be. I thought Tony Stark. That will be out there arrogant. Wonder Women, people might question my sexuality, but women should take over the world. If it can't be Wonder Woman, I think I'm left with the Tassie Devil. Does that count?  Crazy lunatic person I am.

Thank you for your welcome to country Uncle Allen. Can I too pay my respects to Aboriginal elders past and present and emerging leaders. It is part of the oldest continuing culture in the world and we are very privileged to be on Aboriginal land.

Can I also welcome and extend a special thanks to our Disability Discrimination Commissioner Alastair McEwin for being here today and about to give the keynote address this morning. I was going to stay for that, but I have just been summonsed to Parliament for some announcement. So it must be an election year. Goodness knows what they are up to today.

Can I say thank you to the Australian Territory Education Network on Disability in putting this conference together. I'm thrilled the northern beaches is being a host to this. It's a fantastic event and have you chosen the northern beaches, or what I call it the world's best kept secret, as the place to hold this event.

Sadly there is still an educational gap between people with and without a disability. Just 17% of people with disability currently hold a bachelor’s degree compared to 30% without a disability. The world "disability" got brought up the other day at a function I was at with Fighting Chance and talking about that they were in India and there was a sign with the wheelchair there and a person there with one of the signs. Instead of saying "disabled" or "disability", it said "differently abled". We thought, that is a catchphrase. That could catch on. Just differently abled. We started throwing that around with our office and around with the Fighting Chance partners and others, but it is interesting to see the different reactions we get. We get used to the word disability but is it disability or is it differently abled.

Progress is being made, which is really important. We are moving in the right direction. Today more than 60% of 20 to 24-year-olds with a disability completed year 12. That's more than double the rate in older demographics. Pathways plays a crucial role in supporting the post-secondary education and training sector, it provides a space to listen encourage, empower and learn from one another as we continue to make progress in the vital area. The theme of Pathways 14 , inclusion innovative, ingenuity allows us to reflect the changes ahead and provide support in a post-secondary education sector. In the northern beaches we remain committed to the goal of universal inclusion and accessibility. We do a lot in this space, and we are trying to be a leader in this space, I guess, for the fourth biggest council in the state with the amalgamation and the 10th biggest in the country.

As I said, we live in the world's best kept secret here in the northern beaches. There is so much more we can do with a home to many different groups here, such as Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Fighting Chance, social inclusion, we have every single one known, we have the spinal injuries now coming on board which is extraordinary and a different space to be in. We created the audibilities precinct. We are doing about $5 million worth of investment in inclusive playgrounds. Not to build the multi-million-dollar playgrounds, but the little playground parks you see that in neighbourhoods, which are generally inclusive because you have kids who were isolated if you like, you would have one kid in a wheelchair by himself or herself, then you would have kids playing over here. So one of our people from Play for All came to us and said after a Facebook rant - God I love Facebook, not - you are building a playground, there is five playgrounds but not inclusive. My son won't be able to join in with other kids. And we said, okay what is inclusive?  Is it a wheelchair swing or - a red rag to a bull?  I'm a politician, I don't pretend to understand these things but I'm here to listen and learn. What is it we need to learn?  I challenged her. She said, "I want to meet with you ". Great. In she came, and this is our side: "Okay, how much money do you want". She said, "I don't know ". I said "Excellent. We have a budget of $30,000 per playground, make it happen". She said, "Can do". She employed all the local artists in the area, she employed some other innovative different groups such as engineers, builders, other creative type thinkers, and got them all in a sort of workshop space with the artists in Brookvale and they set about designing and created playgrounds to be inclusive - generally inclusive for kids of all abilities to mix and play together and created a theme around each one. We have five up in Belrose. It is a theme. A different theme where it is touch, taste, sound, the other ones are mobility, and it is fascinating. All the kids now of different abilities are guess what, playing together. No one is isolated.

We are trying to be leaders in that space and prove to other councils you can actually take a lead and take a chance. And, I guess, the other thing we did with Fighting Chance they approached us and said, Jordan and Laura O'Reilly are locals and their brother had a Cerebral Palsy and is very smart academically, but his body fails him. So he wasn't able to do jobs with a sheltered workshop, that type of stuff wasn't acceptable to him and wasn't challenging him. So what work did council have?  We said, actually we have got a whole bunch of archives and record paper records that go back to the 1900s, we are about to put that out, we need digital archives now, put it in the cloud, are you up for the challenge?  Yep. We put it out for competitive tender as councils have to do, and they got a $500,000 contract straight away. And to then feed into their business and grow it, and they have several other councils and other private businesses as a result.

We are trying to be leaders in that space and making sure we cover ourselves. The audibility precinct in Collaroy was a challenge that we set for the spinal injuries unit. They said this was an amazing facility we are building, which is different to the normal hospital type style care model, and it will also double as a hotel for people with in wheelchairs. Okay. So what do you need in council?  We need you to make it pedestrian friendly, and all accessible from Long Reef Golf Course to us at Collaroy down to the Collaroy Beach front where the pubs and restaurants etc are. Okay, can do. Challenge accepted. The best part was we got our bit done before they did. Their care facility is fantastic.

We are trying to be leaders in the space. For a big council we can do that we are challenging smaller councils to do the same. It is about being inclusive and innovative and using ingenuity. Today is about specific themes around education or the like. So it is doable and absolutely should be done and we shouldn't leave anyone behind.

So we are proud to be part of - it is fantastic you are doing it here, I heard you because it is flat and easy to walk, that's great. Why don't you walk up to North Head, go for a walk or something like that?  I challenge you for that. Speedy here will take you up there. Take the lead, I'm sure. But can I say, finally, enjoy the location here for three days. I think I heard you say. I don't want to see any of you at the Boatshed after midnight. Nothing good happens at the Boatshed after midnight, but it is open about 4 or 5 in the morning. I know that. I do trust you will get out to - Hugo’s is my favourite in Manly at the wharf. The angel hair pasta with yellowfin tuna is awesome. The pizzas are good too. Also Lucas. Fantastic places around here to enjoy yourself and relax and get out on the walkway out there and do the Shelly to Manly Walk or go from Queenscliff to Shelly Beach and back. It is an awesome walk. Extend it over the headland to Freshwater Beach.

We proudly call this the world's best kept secret, but you discovered it. Enjoy it and enjoy your three days. Thank you for your contribution. You guys really are amazing with what you do. So thank you for sharing it with us here in Manly.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

What wants to move to Manly?  It is nicer than Fairfield I can tell you. Fairfield in Melbourne, I just clarify that.

(Laughter)

SPEAKER:

It now gives me great pleasure to welcome to the stage Alastair McEwin who is going to speak to us, and the theme of his address will be a post school future where everyone is included, how do we make that happen. To Alastair.

(Applause)

ALASTAIR McEWIN:

Good morning everyone. I would like to pay my respects to Uncle Allen and to his elders past and present and to Aboriginal people who are present here today. So my respects to you all. And thank you very much for having me and thank you mayor for your words. And thank you. I know that this time of the year is an opportunity to, you know, wind down a bit, to reflect on the achievements that you have accomplished for this year, as well as think about the challenges that we still have and how we might rise to them next year in 2019.

I'm going to talk about a few of the challenges that we have today, as well as talk about when we talk about inclusive education, what do we really mean when we say the word "Inclusive"?  Superheroes. My superhero name, I haven't quite come up with one, but I will confess to as a young boy in the 1970s, growing up watching Superman and being very envious of Lois Lane. I so wanted to be Lois Lane that I could be carried away from Superman from a burning building. Many years later I realised I was a gay man and I always wondered why I was so envious of Lois Lane. I must say, she did a brilliant job, she was a fantastic investigative journalist, but, no, let me leave it there.

The other thing about growing up though, as a deaf person, in the 70s and 80s, we did not have captions. So for deaf people and hard of hearing people watching movies like Superman, Batman, and all those other superhero movies and TV series, a lot of us had to work out or try to guess what was going on. So when captions became more prevalent in the late 80s onwards - 'Neighbours' and 'Home and Away' were two of the first series to have captions - a lot of us, perhaps all of us as deaf people and hard of hearing people are still catching up on what we describe as a lost childhood through entertainment, through stories, through the things that so many people take for granted in everyday life.

For us the challenges that we have today are many. But there are many also achievements. I want to reflect in some of them. The National Disability Insurance Scheme, so let me see. It's been five minutes since I started talking, so that's a fairly good record for not bringing up the NDIS in the first five minutes. What is the particular challenge for you as in the education sector?

We are seeing many challenges in the assumption that the NDIS will fix all the issues, will address all the challenges. What I have observed across Australia is that many schools and educational settings still grapple with the concept of inclusive education. With the advent or the implementation of the NDIS we have now seen an assumption by government, by policy makers, by many in the community that the NDIS should pick up everything and fix those issues. And I want to be very clear, the NDIS is about creating independent personal care and support for a person with a disability to be able to go out into the community, to be able to access employment, access education, access anything that we take for granted. It is still the primary responsibility of education and these education services to provide support and reasonable adjustment, to make sure that people with disabilities can get an education like anyone else.

I'm very conscious of the opportunities that I have had from a young boy, when I was a young boy, to where I am today. And I know I would not be here today in my current role if it were not for those opportunities. And I want to make sure that I can support you and your many colleagues around Australia to be the best person you can to provide support to your clients and to your students with disabilities.

One of my first early learning lessons about communication was when I was in primary and secondary school, I went to the same school for my 12 years of schooling. It was the private school in Adelaide with a hearing unit where they had specialist teachers of the deaf who supported up to 12 students from year 1 to year 12. And it was very much focused on the old method of education. So learning to speak, learning speech pathologies and thousands of hours of speech pathologies. P, P, P and Oh. R, roll your tongue. Thousands of hours to make me become hearing. In year 8 we had a teacher of the deaf come from Canada and she was a great believer in communication that best fits the deaf child. She started signing to us. That was not well received by some of the other teachers in the school. But for the first time I was able to, with the other students in the middle school, year 7 to year 10, access the weekly school assembly.

And for the first time in my life I realised how important these kind of things were. The things that I had missed out, the things I was not aware of, and why I for example have done something that was contrary to what we were told in the assembly. That is, you can see the power of making sure that you adapt to the student needs and you provide them with the right communication support.

And I'm still good friends with that teacher. She's gone back to Canada, and we are Facebook friends and I saw her last year in Canada. And now I said to her, "Thank you so much. Thank you for being brave". Because she came into an environment where she was not well received at first. She challenged the status quo. And that is what we also need to do, we need to challenge the status quo. We need to call things out as we believe we should see change.

And that's when we come to inclusive education. And for me segregated schooling systems is not inclusion. This is an example of where we need to make sure we continually challenge what we are trying to achieve. For as long as we have kids without disability not interacting with kids with disabilities, we will never get a truly inclusive society. And it concerns me when I see complaints at the Human Rights Commission where I hear comments like parents say, "I don't want my child with that sort of child in the classroom". It saddens me. For me I just want - I think we let every child learn how to interact with each other. A friend of mine said to me not so long ago, her - I think 9-year-old daughter is playing netball. And in the team is a girl who is short statured. My friend said to her daughter, how are you going, do you need to do anything additional, do you need to do anything for the girl who is short statured?  The daughter's response was, "Mum, why are you even questioning?  She's just part of the team". So it was a good reminder that it is often us as adults to try to impose standards or requirements when children are just being - just children and naturally adapting to the environment.

The theme for your conference is progressive partnerships and let me outline the opportunities and challenges. So I talk about the NDIS earlier and the challenges that we have in where I'm seeing a growing number of what I will call battlegrounds. Battlegrounds in health. Who is responsible for what?  Is it NDIS, is it the hospital?  Is it the family doctor?  And so on. Allied health. Education. Which is very relevant to your conference. Community services. And I think one of the biggest challenges we have to acknowledge is before the NDIS we still had a lot of challenges in achieving an inclusive society because we never got to that point now we have the NDIS it is the assumption that the NDIS should pick up on everything and fix them. I'm with the NDIA, when they have to push back. They have to push back to government. We have to remind the government we have a National Disability Strategy, a 10-year strategy, it's coming to the end in 2020. And the government is currently looking at what the new framework might look like.

And it is fair to say people with disabilities have told me every day, every week, the National Disability Strategy whilst on paper it looks good, and I agree with that, the implementation has been fraught. We have seen Commonwealth, state and territories and local governments almost try to say, "It's not my responsibility, it is the other person's or other organisations responsibility". So we need to see stronger leadership on all three levels.

I am pleased to see a growing number of local councils who are embracing the NDIS and opportunities it creates for people with disability. For example, the playground and simple community assistance, access to festivals. We see music festivals and other community festivals with quite - for people who have autism or who may be anxious about being in the public space. And that's great to see. I'm with the local councils when they are innovative, and when they are progressive. State and territories. Well, for as long as we have a federated system, since 1901 I think we will be continuing to have so many argy-bargies about who is responsible for what. While we have the constitution the National Disability Strategy needs a coordinated response.

One of the biggest concerns I have about the implementation of the NDIS is where I have seen state and territories almost run as fast as they can away from their responsibilities for funding disability services, disability advocacy organisations and organisations like yours on again the assumption that the NDIS will fix it all.

So yes, I do have some concerns. It is not all doom and gloom. I'm seeing the NDIS create amazing opportunities for individuals, particularly around empowering them. The NDIS is just over five years old. So I liken it to a 5-year-old child who has gone through, you know, babyhood, the terrible 2s, the tantrums, the toddler years. Preschool. Kindy. And then getting more aware of the world around them and starting to - for those of you at the children - be at the back and be cheeky almost but almost be assertive. For me it is great to see people with disabilities becoming more assertive. You have to remember, up until the NDIS people with disabilities in Australia did not really know how they could enforce their rights.

This year, it is coming to the end of it, is the 25th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act and in that Act,  it is unlawful to discrimination on the basis of your disability. And education is one of the areas. It is fair to say that the education standards, the Disability Discrimination Act standards we have had since 2005, when I look at that, those standards and compare them with access to transport and access to building, or premises, we have seen good wins in access to building and transport. That's because people can share. How often do we all hear councils and other organisations say, "Great, we built a ramp into the building”?  But what about the things we can't see?  What about the way teachers deliver their methods to their students?  The ones who can't read quickly. The ones who have learning disabilities?  The things that we can't see. We have a long way to go and improving our compliance with the education standard.

I would love to see states and territories embrace inclusive education in a truly meaningful way. And by inclusive, I mean if a school was offering education services anyone should be able to access it. So in 1993 we had the Disability Discrimination Act, in 2006 we had another massive milestone in the history of the rights of people with disabilities. And that was the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities  adopted by the United Nations in 2006. It was the first ever convention that - the person with a disability at the forefront of the issue. It didn't create - this is something we need to remember it did not create new human rights, but rather it took those human rights, existing human rights and developed them from the lens of disability.

And article 24 talked about the right to education for people with disability. It's a very comprehensive one. It's the one that talked about making sure that teachers and schools provide the right support. In 2008 the Australian Government ratified the convention which was their way of saying we promise that we will implement that convention into the domestic laws and policy. How far have we really come?  Well, the National Disability Strategy, which commenced in 2010 was the Australian Government stated commitment to saying we will implement this CRPD, Convention on the Rights of People with Disability. Since then we have of course seen a growing awareness - and I have seen many wonderful examples across Australia of where education for children and young people with disabilities, they are flourishing, they are thriving, they are embracing learning. But they are just pockets around Australia and for me the challenge is to say to go, you need to pick up and invest in these really goods practices.

When I travel around Australia often a lot of the solutions given is not about more money, it is about recreating or resetting the environment. And I think there is a misconception that government has, that will always be continually asking for more money, for more investment. It is not so much that when I look at the best practices and when I look at the ways that teachers are adapting.

In October I was in the Northern Territory for 10 days. I travelled from Alice Springs to Tennant Creek and visited some very remote communities. And, again, the theme that I got from them was, not necessarily more money but rather the opportunity to use existing resources in a way that meets their needs, in the way that meets the community’s needs. Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and across Australia have told me they welcome the principle of the NDIS. They recognise that it's about creating independence for their community members who have a disability. It is about creating opportunities for that person with a disability to be part of their own community. And I met some young Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory who are doing amazing things with their NDIS package, but I do think the NDIA and the government has to invest more in community engagement and educating the community about what the NDIS means for them.

Technology. Technology has in many ways been an enabler, but it has also been a hindrance. And when I look back as somebody who is almost 50, when I look back at the 1970s and the 80s and the 90s, and the 2000s, and now the 2010s, I look at the things that we have seen develop in technology, how that benefitted me, but how it has also been a hindrance for me and my friends and colleagues with disability. And a few examples.

On a positive note, I mentioned captioning. The advent and implementation of captions for movies and TV programs and the news and so forth opened up a completely new world to myself and my friends who are deaf and hard of hearing. I can't understate how much it means just to be able to do the simple things like understand popular culture, understand the water cooler conversations that hearing people have, or, "Did you see 'Masterchef' last night, wasn't that a great show"; that kind of thing. Those are the simple things that embrace or lead to simple inclusion.

And I remember, as around about an 8-year-old, 9-year-old, I remember thinking obviously if I want to make myself understood, I'm going to get better at how I speak. I set myself the challenge at the age of 9, or 10, who knows Mary Poppins?  I set myself the challenge of getting that long, long, long word absolutely perfect. I'm proud to say I'm very happy to demonstrate it to you later.

But that is an example of the world that I was able to match with the hearing or with the audio. The captions. And we see now companies providing captions for kids in the educational setting. Live captions. So that they can sit here, in the room for example, and access the captions. We have come a long way also in terms of the speed and the quality. I remember getting nervous last year when I received a letter from Telstra, my telecommunication provider, saying we are no longer going to offer a paging service so people wanted to contact me, and they couldn't text me, they could ring my number, they would get a pager or a person who would say, 'Alastair McEwin's number, what's your message'. They would type it and send it to me via text. An actual human being. Last year they advised me, and I'm sure everyone else, that they will change to the voice to text program. I remember getting nervous because I wasn't convinced the voice to text program will be sophisticated 100% for what I need.

I have to say though, when somebody leaves a voice message it is not 100%, but it is good enough for me to understand the content. But a caution, I still have to sometimes work out and be hesitant. One time I received a call from one of the ministers, federal ministers, and the voice - the text said, "Hello, it is blah, blah" but it wasn't quite spelt exactly the same as the minister's spelling. So I had to do a bit of guesswork and had to get one of my team to call the minister's office back and confirm that it was him who had called before I was - you know, did the formal response to what he wanted to talk to me. So you can still see the challenges that remain.

But there are many other challenges that remain for people with disabilities in education and the wider community. Universities are, as I'm sure you are all aware, progressing more and more to almost completely an online learning environment. I'm hearing now whole courses that are taught online with no interactions between students in person. I have heard stories of students who have done the same course meeting for the first time at their graduation ceremonies. So it's an interesting world we are operating in.

Vision Australia released a few months ago a report into the experiences of people who are blind or have low vision with accessing online courses for universities. And the findings of that report were depressing and alarming. So many students who are blind or have low vision are having a lot of trouble accessing online materials or courses. We have a significant issue. And a lot of the universities appear to use the same sort of platform. So we are obviously going to have continuing problems if the universities don't get the basic access right. Of course if students drop out, as the report from vision Australia said, then they are not going to have the benefits also of interacting with other students getting to know them, learning from each other, students without disability learning to support their peers with disability and of course by not accessing university or taking the opportunities, the greater risks of employment opportunities. We all know in this room a link between a good education that will lead to better employment opportunities.

And for me I went to university and my first year was a big shock. I will tell you why. As I explained earlier, I went to a private school in Adelaide with a hearing unit, with teachers of the deaf who provided me with one-on-one support, note taking support, counselling support. They also had teachers at the school right from grade 1 to grade 12 almost bend over backwards to make sure I had the right access. It wasn't perfect, but it was very good. And so I grew up thinking that was the norm. And that's common for a lot of people with disability in terms of growing up thinking they are the only one in that environment.

There were other deaf kids in that school, the policy was to have one, no more than two students per year and so it was about 12 to 14 students across the grades. But I grew up thinking, now looking back, "Oh, so when I go to university I will get the same". Now, I arrived at Adelaide University and I didn't have the sense of entitlement, I had this sense of "I know what I need to be able to do art". I was keen to do one year of art and then get into law school. At that time in the mid-80s in South Australia you had to do one year of a non-law degree to then be able to apply for law school. I was very conscious that my first year of university, the marks were critical.

I went to the disability liaison officer, who at the time when I look back was very, very old school. And he said to me, "Well, you need - what you can do is you can obviously speak". So he made the assumption my hearing was perfect. "What I will do is I will give you a tape recorder. You can tape all the lectures and then go home and just listen to them again and again until you understand what was said. Or perhaps your mother could take the notes". I think we have come a long way since then and I'm sure when I look across at all the wonderful colleagues we have come a long way since then. That was the attitude that I had.

You have to remember that I hadn't developed the advocacy skills that I have today because yes, I grew up in an environment where I was given lots of opportunities, and I was provided with things, but I didn't have to fight for them. I didn't have to argue incessantly. And of course the Disability Discrimination Act hadn't come into effect in 1988, my first year of university, it came into effect towards the end of my undergraduate time at Adelaide University.

So I finished in 1993, the very same year that the BBA came into effect. So, yes, we have come a long way. Importantly though, to note, I noticed a growing number of deaf and hard of hearing students in South Australia becoming more assertive. I also learnt from my friends who were at the University of South Australia who had note taking and interpreting support. So I asked the disability liaison officer from there to come with me and to meet with the Adelaide University disability support office and have a conversation. A very early lesson in building your allies, in building the case for change with an army, almost, of allies. And have a reasonable but firm conversation. For me, I think that sparked the beginning of my advocacy.

In particular, in my last year of law school there was a young woman from my old school who was about to commence law. And I looked at her and I thought, "I don't want her to have to go through five years of banging your head against a wall and getting nothing". So in my final year I did get note taking support and my marks improved rapidly. Although I did spend a lot of time in the university bars and at other things. So I think I have to balance. But also, I participated in university life. And I was at Adelaide University at an amazing time in student politics. I was surrounded by the most amazing female role models who are now making amazing contributions to Australian society. And a few of them are Annabel Crabb, Penny Wong, Natasha Stott Despoja, Liana Buchanan, the Commissioner for Children in Victoria. The list goes on. That also sparked in me an awareness you will not always agree all the time, and, trust me, we had a lot of different views at student politics in Adelaide University. So for me when I look back the combination of being a person with a disability, being given the opportunity of opportunities and then using them in a way that creates independence for me.

That brings me back to the NDIS, but it also brings me back to the education setting that you are within. So the NDIS, I keep saying every time I meet with an MP or council, remember the NDIS is about the personal support or care that a person with a disability needs to - what I describe it's just to get out of - get out of their house. If it is accessible and for sadly not for many, but to create that independence about what are the barriers that prevent them from then going into say a university. We need to remind our politicians - I do this, trust me, every day - the NDIS is about creating that opportunity to get to the university. One of the areas I'm looking at is the inherent requirement. And I know there are sessions on that for the conference. For me I'm passionate about that, because we need to challenge the assumptions that the medical profession makes, the health professions make. The economists, the accountants make about the ability of people with disabilities to be doctors, economists, accountants. So the challenge - and I'm with you on that - is to make sure that the professional body, the medical colleges are more open to understanding how their inherent requirements are actually prohibiting people with disabilities to develop careers in those profession.

We are seeing people with disabilities become doctors, lawyers, accountants, nurses, and the list goes on. I heard a fabulous story only recently of a young woman who is deaf, hard of hearing, and lives in Bendigo, and she's just qualified as a nurse. She was the top student, but she had a lot of battles. And this is 2018, she had a lot of battles getting the right access. She's now an employed nurse in one of the hospitals in country Victoria. It can be done. It's challenging, yes, but it can certainly be done.

Every day we get it cited, however, I hope that in 10 to 15 years’ time it won't be a new story that somebody with Cerebral Palsy is enrolling in university. I'm hoping that it will just be seen as the norm.

Coming back to technology, we also think about - I'm hearing so many stories now of technology that is becoming more and more prevalent. The smart devices, the point of sale EFTPOS machine. They are becoming so much part of our everyday interaction, that is great. But with people who are blind, have low vision, or people with an intellectual or cognitive disability, it is hard to use. We need to make sure we don't get too excited about the next iteration of the iPhone, etcetera.

I'm always intrigued by those who line up outside the Apple store for days on end for the newest version. I'm always thinking, "Will this version be at least minimal accessible with all the basic functions". So for me when I see the role that you play in how you can utilise technology, your role also is to remind the developers that it is critical, if we expect government or rather government expects us to all go online and register your details for particular things on with the government website, if it's inaccessible then it is not going to help.

I remember being rather upset when Australia adopted the standard into making sure that when we - when government buys IT, procures IT it is accessible. They have adopted the European standard more or less. Great. Yay. But when they commence the consultation for that, the website to register your details was, guess what, inaccessible. So one almost Yay, I'm putting in my toe in the water, no I'm taking my toe out of the water, I'm not getting it cited. So my role and for all of you is to constantly remind our designers, our policy makers and governments the true importance of inclusion and that means asking us, talk to us, and we want to be part of it.

Another note about technology where I'm seeing it fail is when organisations develop a new app or new form of technology, they get really excited and they will bring in a person say who is blind, they will test that with the person and the person who is blind will say, "Yes, yes, yes. You have done it, all good". They will go away. You have to remember, every person with a disability is different. I'm different from many of my friends who are deaf or hard of hearing. Many of my friends grew up in deaf households with deaf parents. They don't lip read like I can. I don't sign as well as they do. So the diversity within the disability community.

We need to remind our app developers and website developers there is diversity.

What does the Commission also do in addition to what I have just outlined in terms of the work I'm doing?  Meghan Mitchell is the National Children's Commissioner and she is also very passionate about education for children and she's very passionate, like I am, for making sure we provide accessible education, inclusive education. So earlier this year in February we hosted a roundtable with disability advocates, academic government, and school principal’s associations, and I think some of you might be here today and we were really pleased to hear from such a wide range of stakeholders. And it was clear that there has to be change and it has to be a cultural change.

And I acknowledge that there are challenges there. You have got 40-plus universities in Australia, you have got your TAFE, you have got your other VET providers and you have got good nicknames - how many schools, 40,000 perhaps schools around Australia. Some of the things we heard from colleagues that day in the roundtable were things like principals of schools being the gatekeepers. I mentioned earlier the stories I have heard such as parent groups might approach a principal and saying, "We don't want that child with a disability in our school. We don't want that kind". So we need to challenge but also support principals and teachers better to be more open, how they might include a child with a disability.

We also heard as, I mentioned earlier, the DDA standards on education have been lacklustre in their implementation. One of the criticisms I hear weekly is there is no enforcement or compliance regime that underpins the DDA standard. I would absolutely love power to be able to say to schools or to education settings, you need to be complying, here is my magic wand. Wait a minute, here is my superhero power, I will obliterate you off the face of the earth if you don't comply with the DDA. Or me and Superman can do it together.

We also heard that teachers, they should - they want to do the right thing. They really - they want the best for their students. And they said to me, if we knew what were all the range of tools that I could use to support the disability, I will do it. So we heard that. They need more support in understanding the disability rights and also a human rights approach. And it was really gratifying. I was pleased to hear that. I knew it, but it was good to have it confirmed. Teachers do want the best for their child. Of course I understand when you have a classroom of 30 young children running around or just being children we need to understand also that those - the naughtiness and there is also disability. And often teachers conflate the two. We need to make sure that it is not about the disability but it they are just being a child; how can we provide them with the right support knowing they have a disability.

We also talked about the use of restrictive practices in that forum. And Meghan and I have also had many conversations since then with our colleagues from the Principals association from the AUU and the government. And we know, we have a zero tolerance to restrictive practices. So going forward Meghan and I next year will be looking closely and working with teachers and their association, how can we best support teachers when it comes to restrictive practices?  Making sure that we don't use them. And teachers just told us that if they had an opportunity to reflect where they had a situation that was challenging, how could they have done better. I look forward to working with the teachers and their associations on that.

In bringing this to a close, I just want to say, as I was coming over on the ferry, so I live on the south side, so it's sometimes rare for me to come to the north shore, Manly is so beautiful and it's that lovely - you have the lovely spot where you have the harbour and you have got the open sea, so a five minute walk from the ferry walk. I was reflecting on how fortunate I have been and how easy it is to derail things. I remember comments at school where the teachers were doing the right thing, but the student would sometimes say things like - I remember in year 10 getting the top mark for German. I just seemed to have a natural ability for languages, foreign languages. I just took to German and Latin like a duck does to water. I loved it. I got the top mark in year 10 German. I remember the comments from the other students were, "You shouldn't be doing this, you can't be getting the top mark. You are deaf". And that was often a common theme. I don't think I was ever bullied mercilessly, although I have to say if they were making nasty comments behind my back, I never knew.

So as I was coming over here I wanted to leave you with a final thought. How can we best support kids to be kids, and one of the things we need to be very conscious of, if we are segregating kids with disabilities, we will never - as I said earlier - never get to that truly inclusive society. I learnt from that. And I have to say, the friends I made at school, we still see each other. I missed my 30-year reunion last year, and I was devastated. I will tell you why. I was given an opportunity by the Australian Government to go to South America to do some work. The Australian Government was bidding to be on the Human Rights Council  and so they sent a lot of people around the world to do work with other countries, as a way of promoting Australia's bid for the Human Rights Council. They sent me to Peru and Paraguay. I do remember saying "Please, don't send me on the weekend when I want to go to my school reunion in Adelaide", because it was important for me to go back to the reunion and just be speaking as an equal, but also to remind my friends at the school how great they were, most of the time, but also people who now have children of their own, some of them have kids with disabilities. So it's important for me to keep that conversation going.

Anyway, when I was asked to go they told me the time, I remember saying to one of my friends, Natasha Stott Despoja, a former ambassador for women and girls, what would you do, school reunion or the government?  Natasha said, the government work, off you go. Because there will always be opportunities for reunions.

The role you play in allowing children and young people to be people, knowing you get that support for people with children with disabilities, they will do whatever they want. I would never have imagined to be in this role. I would never have imagined to be speaking to all you wonderful people. If as a 17-year-old you had said - somebody had said to me, you will be the disability discrimination commissioner - I am blessed. But my role is to make sure I create those opportunities for everyone else out there with a disability. Thank you so much.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

Thank you very much for your thought provoking keynote address. Certainly inclusive education is a priority. We need to continue to challenge the culture and work towards this goal. So we have some time for a couple of questions for Alastair. We are trying to locate the microphones. I can see a roving microphone there and another one there. Please put your hand up if you have a question.

No questions?

QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR:

Thank you very much for the thought provoking presentation. I come from Murdoch University, I work there as a disability advisor. I'm interested in your comment on inherent requirements. And also if I understood you correctly that the DDA doesn't have much power. Currently we are in some tough negotiations with academics, especially from the medical professions about an overlap of inherent requirements and students support. And registration with APRA. So I'm interested in your comments on DDA not having much power because APRA is always referring to their law of patient interest. Thank you.

ALASTAIR McEWIN:

Thank you. Excellent question. Yes, the DDA says once the ground for defence - if somebody is defending an allegation of discrimination against a person with a disability, one of the defences is to say they can't comply with the inherent requirements of a particular role. So that's black and white. It looks black and white. So the DDA says if they can't perform the inherent requirements of a particular role then that is a defence. And many people use that successfully. My point is, I think we need to take that a step back and think hang on, is that - are those particular requirements in that role, are they absolutely essential?  Can they be done differently?  Can they be done by somebody else?  And that's where a lot of the conversation needs to be happening. For me, when I look at nearly any role - we now have people who are deaf or have a physical disability who are flying planes, who are performing surgery and the list goes on around the world. So certainly the potential is there. For as long as we have the DDA we will still have many challenges in changing that culture.

A common complaint we get at the Australian Human Rights Commission is around when people who are - for example become ill or receive a disability through an accident and they come back to the workplace. We see a lot of complaints around the organisations saying, "We can't have you back to that role because you can't do X, Y and Z". Where we see a lot of success is where organisations have recognised that that person is a great employee, they don't just have to do X, Y and Z. So to come back to your original question, yes, the defence is still there, but I absolutely think we need to be creative and innovative, in line with your conversation, but also challenging. And one last comment, one of the biggest challenges is in the medical community. The doctors are trained to fix people. There is a very minimal teaching of human rights and for disability rights in medical schools. Doctors are trained to see a problem and then fix it as opposed to recognising that people with disability don't need fixing, they just need the right support.

(Applause)

QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR:

Hi. Rhonda Ebling from TAFE NSW. I just wanted to say how wonderful I thought your presentation was. But also one of your comments about challenging the status quo. And I'm pretty sure that everyone in this room has at some point in their career challenged the status quo on behalf of students with a disability in order to try and improve their access.

My concern is how do you challenge the status quo without it being a career limiting opportunity?  Because that's pretty much what happens when you challenge the status quo, especially in the area that I currently work.

(Applause)

ALASTAIR McEWIN:

Look, it's a really great question. And you know, I have often reflected - when I look back at where people have been - with you and your colleagues, where you come up against a system that universities - and I know how universities operate. In fact, I think universities and government are often very similar in terms of their bureaucratic approaches. You know, you need 10 forms just to get a pen or something. I don't know. So I know how hard it is. I do appreciate, particularly when you have got an academic year, you have got a finite time. Sometimes negotiating things in a semester is gone before you know that. So where I have seen it work well is where that example I gave earlier, of when I was at Adelaide University and the University of South Australia had an amazing disability liaison officer who gave me information, who gave me the tools. So I built my allies. But I also still had to come up against my own bureaucratic systems.

So a very recent example of where I see somebody who just put herself out there is Kerryn Phelps, now the independent member for Wentworth. Wow. I mean, she really put herself out there. She described it as it will be a miracle if she won, and she did say it was a miracle. But when I look at that example, that is the kind of thing we need to see. She has her detractors, she has her many negative comments, but she is always focused. For me I have learnt when it comes to students with disability, what is the focus?  What is the outcome that we are trying to achieve?  And I have also learnt sometimes if I know somebody within the university system I will use them. It is often people I have known from other areas. And I remember when I went to enrol in the MBA at UNSW, I don't know if there is anyone from UNSW here, I said I would like to go to the information night and can you please organise an interpreter. They said no. So one of my friends was working in the deputy vice chancellor's office, so just a quick email and, you know what, there was nothing wrong with that. You are not asking for favours, you are merely outlining the issue, and can you help in any way or can you pass me on to the right person.

So I think it is a bit cheeky in some ways, but you are never doing anything wrong simply by flagging the issue with somebody who might then be able to push it along.

SPEAKER:

Great. Thank you. Any other burning questions?  Okay. One more. Thank you.

QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR:

Hi my name is Marcia, I work for Laureate International Universities, a fairly young university and private university. So in the context of the registration that we went through just recently, I had a look into the Disability Inclusion Action Plan to see what the TACs plan had in how it was sort of supporting the GGA standards and all of those things. And to my surprise it was all about their internal disability inclusion action plan. So about their employment strategies and things like that. There is nothing to do with the standards. My question is, is there an opportunity to liaise with TACs to enforce through the re registration some of the standards particularly for private and education providers.

ALASTAIR McEWIN:

Thank you. It's a really important issue. And it is one I have seen emerging is where private providers are coming into the market, particularly driven partly by the NDIS in terms of creating new markets or rather creating a market within a market. And I have seen a concerning lack of awareness of the basics of - well, the DDA you noted and human rights framework and a person-centred approach and also the lack of understanding between educational opportunities then leading to employment opportunities.

So, yes, for me it is certainly on my radar. It is certainly one that I have started to have some conversations with a number of universities in the sense that this is what is happening here but also the opportunities for you to also be very aware of what is best practice. So I don't have all the answers, but what I also have seen is the way some of the private providers have treated people with disabilities who have been enrolling. And we have had a few complaints at the Commission about the lack of access, and the most common response or defence is, "It is too expensive. It's very expensive". So it is certainly on my radar. It is certainly something I will continue to think about, particularly when we look at the emerging growth around how different markets are responding to people with disabilities.

SPEAKER:

Thank you. Please join me in thanking Alastair.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

Is so just before we break for morning tea, we will have a brief Ai Media introduction from Sue Sanossian.

(Applause)

SUE SANOSSIAN:

Good morning and welcome. Thank you so much for the opportunity, we are delighted to be the captioning partner for this fabulous event. In the interests of time I am going to direct you to page 15 of your program, where there is a QR code for those wishing to access the captions. There is a different URL for every day of the conference, and the captions are accessible on any web enabled device.

I would also like to introduce my colleague John Peck. John, say hello. John will be available and on hand to speak with anyone regarding captioning in any range of circumstances from live captioning to live note taking, simple text which is live captioning for students with an ASD whereby the metaphor and figurative speech is removed, and the student is able to receive captioning in a very clear succinct format.

So thank you again for the opportunity. We are absolutely delighted to be here. And I should also point out that we are also located on the beautiful northern beaches, we have an office in Frenchs Forest which is our captioning hub for the 7 and 9 networks. And thank you again. Enjoy the conference and the dialogue.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

Thank you, Sue. So we are now breaking for morning tea and the exhibition. Morning tea will be served out in the foyer and after the morning tea we will be breaking for the concurrent sessions at 11 a.m. sharp. Thank you.

(Morning tea)

PETRIA McGOLDRICK:

Welcome back, everyone.

Waiting, waiting. I can just turn your attention, thank you and we will start the next plenary address, thank you. I want to introduce myself, my name is Petria McGoldrick, I am team leader at University of Wollongong and am fortunate to be with a great bunch of people to get this conference up and running.

I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and to pay my respects to Elders past and present and to any Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people here today.

I am sure many of you know Trevor but I will give you his bio anyway.

OK, Trevor has been a leader in the disability inequities for over 20 years. His roles in higher education have included the Regional Disability Liaison Officer for the Hunter and North Coast regions, manager of disability services at ANU, Australian National University, head of student equity and welfare and disability services at UWS, University of Western Sydney, which is now Western Sydney University, until his retirement in 2013.

He chaired the DEAN Steering Committee to establish DEAN and was the DEAN chair for the first three years. He has championed universal Access for people with disabilities and has written extensively, presented papers including keynote at many conferences, coordinated research projects and be a member of government advisory committees.

He was a key contributor to their UWS inherent requirement projects and contribute to projects such as the Digital Lecture Delivery Project and Assistive Technology Integration Project. Trevor was awarded the Vice Chancellor's Award for Career Achievement at the 2006 ANU staff excellence awards. The UWS outstanding contribution to teaching and learning award in 2012. He became the first life member of the Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability.

He has continued to be an active participant in the sector post-retirement as we can see and he readily contributes... Sorry, as well as undertaking consultancy work in the field. OK. That is yours, Trevor. I will not take your talk away.

Now, Trevor is speaking today and as I said he is recovering from an illness at the moment so he is apologising if his speech is not as it is supposed to be. If we get stuck and Trevor can't continue, we do have a copy of his talk so I can continue the rest of it. So, the presentation will last for 45 minutes in total, about 30 minutes for Trevor to speak and about 10 minutes for questions, there will be roving microphones around the room for questions later on.

I think it is now time to hand it over to Trevor.

(Applause)

TREVOR ALLAN:

Thank you, Petria. For those of you who don’t know me, My name is Trevor Allan, having difficulty speaking, it is a novel experience, and I am not as prepared as I would like to be having spent the last three weeks on the back with a fairly severe pneumonia. But I am here and I will do my best, I hope my voice holds out.

I would also like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land in which we meet and their Elders past and present. Excuse me, I will keep lubricating my throat.

The purpose of this paper is to outline some of the history behind inherent requirements to place the current activities in a context that helps us to understand recent developments as well as legal and educational frameworks in which they operate.

I won't be talking very much about the work we did at the University of Western Sydney. We have canvassed that a fair bit and there is lots and lots of resources around. What I would really like to do is put it in this concept.

They are not a new concept, they have been around since the start of the legislation. The introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1992 brought these requirements into the framework and many people have been dealing with inherent requirements over those intervening years.

Back in the '90s at ANU, as part of our staff handbook, there was a section on inherent requirements and a section on our staff webpage, included as part of our training, for the staff. In 2000, Cheryl Speckles and others in Western Australia developed guidelines and procedures to help universities develop their inherent requirements, and she also presented a paper on inherent requirements and professional bodies and pathways in 2002.

Mike Spur did some valuable work with the School of nursing in the University of Tasmania, so people have been talking about it a lot. Overseas as well. It is part of the disability legislation.

The fundamental basis of inherent requirements as promised disability practice and access issues is the legislation. The Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 as it has been amended and the disability standards for education in 2005 are the most relevant pieces of legislation.

They impose certain rights and obligations on universities, any educational institution, on students to prevent discrimination occurring. Perhaps it would be worthwhile for us to now think about just how legislation works.

And if I can give one piece of advice to any disability practitioner to enhance your capacity to operate effectively, it is know the legislation that you work under, know it and understand it, you can be your best friend or your worst enemy. It has made things easier for me over the years to understand the legislation.

The legislation works by being passed through both Houses of Parliament. It gets to the ascent from the Governor General and then becomes law. The law as it is applied gets interpreted through courts in what they call case law or precedents, so it may inform future behaviours.

You also need to know that the law is interpreted very literally by the courts. It is interpreted by what the law says, not what was intended or what you would like it to be, or what you think it should mean. It says what it actually says. A very good example of that is unjustifiable hardship and education.

Back when the original DDA was drafted, the only section of the education section where unjustifiable hardship was mentioned was the enrolment section. A case was brought before the courts where the university tried to claim unjustifiable hardship and the court said, it is not mentioned anywhere past enrolment.

So once the student is enrolled, there is no unjustifiable hardship. That is the way it stood until the introduction of the disability standards in 2005, where they actually inserted the standards that they unjustifiable hardship applies to every standard.

The reason for that is up until that, it didn't. So disability standards are subsidiary legislation, it means they comply with the standards, you comply with the DDA, if you don't comply with the standards, you don't comply with the DDA.

So one of the problems that we have a disability legislation is that very few of the complaints actually proceed to court, 85% are actually settled in the conciliation base and Human Rights Commission quite rightly aims to bring the parties together and encourage them to come to a settlement. And in most cases they do.

So there is very little case law, things need to be published on the Human Rights Commission website and in there standards were developed to assist us in interpreting the DDA. The subsidiary legislation only applies with the standard compliance.

So we'll concentrate on the standards because after they were introduced, they become the operational basis, so if you comply with the standards, you comply with the DDA. There are four exceptions of the standards, unjustifiable hardship we mentioned.

Next is under statutory authority, if the immigration act for example is discriminatory, that is excused under the legislation. The protection of public health and safety and a special mention is designed to benefit a student with disabilities such as specialist disability services, so positive discrimination is OK under the legislation.

The only real constraints on an obligation to provide adjustments is the process outlined in the section 3.4.3 which is the process for determining reasonable adjustments.

I'll just read it out to you, "in assessing whether the adjustment, unit or course or program in which the student is enrolled or proposes to be enrolled is reasonable, the provider is entitled to maintain the academic requirements of purpose or program and other requirements and components that are inherent or essential to its nature.

“Note - in providing students with disabilities, the provider will continue to ensure the integrity of its courses or programs and assessment requirements and processes so that those on who it confers an award will have an appropriate knowledge, experience and expertise in place for holding of that particular award".

So, we are obliged to make reasonable adjustments but we are also entitled to ensure that the inherent requirements are met and that we maintain the academic integrity of our teaching, learning, assessment and accreditation processes.

The only problem with this is that, more often than not, hopefully less so nowadays, most academics don't have a clue what the inherent requirements are. And what is compulsory, they know what they have traditionally had, what they would like students to be able to do but they don't know what is inherent because they actually haven't thought through that process.

They actually haven't sat down and thought through why is this essential, why do we require this? Why, if a student cannot meet this, they cannot pass the course. Or can we allow students to me that with adjustments?

I have always, over many years, found that inherent requirements basically pervade everything that we did. Back in the early days, when it was much harder to get adjustments and we had to argue for everything, you are dealing with inherent requirements every day.

You would say I want to change the situation with exams. No, you can't do that. Everyone has to sit the same exam, otherwise it is not fair. But this person goes through an inherently more time-consuming process. It is not fair to them.

No, we have to do the exam. You can't use that assistive technology because that will give advantage over other students. Time is sensitive, all those sorts of things, you had to argue it. To go through that process of seeing if the student connected to the task or knows how to do it, can advise someone and analyse results. In some instances that is all that is necessary.

In others, they may be required to physically perform a task or do things that have to be measured.

Are the tasks time sensitive? Is it a risk to public health and safety if they can't perform a task within a particular period of time? Resuscitation, for example. It might be critical for a patient being resuscitated that it is performed within a particular timeframe.

A good example of inherent requirements in practice, back when I was at ANU, we had a Canadian exchange student who was blind from birth, used a guide dog who she brought from Canada, interesting story about how to import guide dogs, but I won't go into that.

The second semester, she did a course that was 50% film study. Looking at film language, communication, techniques, strategies, and prepared an assignment based on that. My initial response was why do you do this to me? It's film. You can't see anything.

Then I stopped and thought actually, what are we teaching there? What is inherent and essential? Is it the capacity to physically sit down and view the film or is it the capacity to analyse the information contained in that film?

They talked about things like shot choice, angles, lighting, the film language. So I sat down with the Dean and asked what we were assessing here. What are we expecting the students to learn? Is it physically watching a film? No. It is the capacity to analyse the film and come up with an appropriate response.

So then the question was, a person blind from birth, can she deal with these abstract visual concepts? So we sat down and asked her a few questions and yes, she could.

We hired a student who had done the course before, knew the terminology laboriously, went through the course with her and she ended up topping the class.

The lecturer said she probably could have come first but he was pretty hard on her. It was not only achievable but she also provided the other students with a beautiful and powerful example of diversity in action and the lecturer said it was the best course he had ever taught because one of the hardest things is to get people to see films as a means of communication, as a constructed meaning of communication, rather than just entertainment.

He said they got that quicker and faster and more effectively than any course they had ever taught. He also said I needed to send more blind students over.

So inherent requirements are fundamental to determining whether an adjustment is reasonable. It is one of those critical factors that is outlined in the process, in the standards, in the legislation. It is an integral part of maintaining academic integrity.

If we lean to find providing access and provide adjustments that are unreasonable and inappropriate, that don't meet essential requirements, we are crediting a person as having the knowledge, skills, expertise, that are conferred by an award, when they don't have it. So we are undermining the integrity of the course.

We can also go the other way, people coming down hard in academic rigour and saying we won't make those adjustments because you think that will upset our standards when they haven't actually worked out what the standards and requirements are.

So you can unfairly exclude people or deny them adjustments that are perfectly reasonable. One of the things mentioned in the presentation this morning about full-time, part-time placements. There is nothing that requires, in most instances, placements to be full-time. If a person can work part-time in a field, why can't they study part-time? That has already been tested with the Human Rights Commission.

So it is a critical part. If you don't sit down with the academics and work those out, if they don't know what they are, then how can you arrive at what adjustments are reasonable, because you are missing a critical component, a critical piece of information in that whole process.

Outlining it up front also prevents indirect discrimination. If you don't tell students upfront what is going to be expected of them during a course, and they enrol and invest time and money, themselves, and find one or two or three years into the course that there are inherent requirements that they cannot meet, then you have discriminated against those students. And you have not allowed them to make an informed choice.

So, without rigorously determined and clearly articulated requirements for all courses, the risk for discriminatory practices or undermining academic integrity and the associated risk of limitation is very high.

If you know what course requirements are essential, we don't know whether adjustments proposed are reasonable. Many academics believe that if you make it compulsory, that makes it inherent. That doesn't. You can make anything you like compulsory. You can make people wear red underpants on their head during lectures if you want to but that doesn't make it inherent.

In many previous occasions, what they believed was inherent was found not to be. In fact, quite reasonable. I remember about three months before we finally introduced inherent requirements in the School of Nursing, that the head of the school said we will have part-time clinical placements over my dead body.

Three months later, we had our first student doing a part-time clinical placement and I ran into Rhonda at the cafe and said she looked really good. And she said "why?" And I said, "for a dead woman." And she said, "don't be cheeky."

(Laughter)

Inherent requirements are just compulsory but those requirements are fundamental, essential, basic to the award of the degree or the task, it is not enough to just say that they are inherent but you have to be able to justify that inherency.

You have to know why that is inherent because potentially you could be defending it in court. It is not enough to look at individual outcomes for students, people can study for all different reasons.

If the course is accredited by an extra body and that external body has certain requirements as a condition of that accreditation, then it may impose an inherent requirement on the course. Because otherwise they might say we are removing accreditation for the course.

That makes it an essential inherent requirement. In 2009, there were some amendments to the DDA and two of them that are critical was that they shifted the burden of proof of discrimination from the person making the complaint to the respondent.

Instead of the person making the complaint having to prove discrimination, the respondent has to prove that it didn't occur. That is a much higher burden of proof and much more important that you have a decision trial and justification to defend a complaint or discrimination.

The other was imposing a positive obligation to prevent discrimination occurring. As I mentioned earlier, there is potential for indirect discrimination and direct discrimination if you don't know that key component of your course requirements.

Students may be able to meet the course requirements but individual registration or employment are a separate issue. Students may be actually able to complete the course, but not get registration or employment. Or it may be conditional registration or conditional employment. So all of those possibilities are there.

Very quickly, delegates on the project developed a structure and process for developing and articulating the inherent requirements for courses. It became a very valuable tool for developing reasonable adjustments and we really improved that balance between providing disability access and academic integrity.

One of the academics said to me "I just feel so much more confident now in the reasonable adjustments that we have in place because I know the whys, wheres and hows of how we came to the decision in not undermining integrity.”

We came up with a definition, I won't go through that at the moment. They had a framework of five components. I think there are three essential components.

One is to say what the inherent requirement is. The second is to say that inherent requirements need a justification. There is a dual purpose in that. Not only being able to explain it to people’s suggestions and academics but it also allows the academics to come to an understanding of what is inherent and why.

And that process of actually thinking through inherency develops a much better understanding of the whole concept of inherent requirements. And the other third is the characteristics and adjustments that will allow you to meet the requirements. It is something that is part of the process of establishing reasonable adjustments. It is not something that students are expected to meet without reasonable adjustments.

So keeping the reasonable adjustments process and determination that as part of inherent requirements, keeping it at the forefront of people's minds I think is very important.

The reason why we included those components is that previous attempts to describe the inherent requirements often came down to a list of competencies, a list of attributes.

And without explanation or justification and reasonable adjustments, it is very easy for the competencies and the adjustments to get bracket creep, and more are more things to get included but are not inherent. Being able to justify every requirement as being inherent and why, and what sort of adjustments allow you to meet those requirements is vitally important.

I need to address the difference between compulsory and inherent requirements, which I mentioned before. A lack of clarity can lead to either discrimination or undermining academic integrity and getting the balance right is very important.

OK, just a couple of principles and then I will open it up to questions. If you don't teach it and assess it, and apply it to every single student in the course, it is not an inherent requirement. That is fundamental. It has to be taught, it has to be assessed, it has to apply to every single student in the course. Personal attributes are not inherent requirements. Students must demonstrate knowledge, skills and abilities.

As we have pointed out this morning, it is task-orientated, it has to be something people do. For a requirement to be inherent you need to be able to articulate why it is inherent, and be prepared to defend it. Just making something compulsory does not make it inherent.

One of the things we need to do is make sure we are articulating the inherent requirements of the course, not employment or registration, separate issues entirely. The accreditation requirements of the bodies of the course may impact on some courses, things like the student registration for nursing or medicine, the Law Society has some requirements around theirs. That may make something inherent but less than people think.

Students may be able to meet the course requirements but not raise or practice the profession, they may have qualified registration. It is a significant risk management issue for universities, particularly after the 2009 amendments, and the process of developing inherent requirements is important.

I was always worried that a lot of people just simply take the University of Western Sydney inherent requirements, changed the name and say now I have inherent requirements. The great risk in that is that the mind-set and the attitudes and the gatekeeper approach that academic areas have adopted stay in place, they say it is a term we have put in place to deal with the copycat students we don't want to deal with.

So that process is important, if people go through the process and get to understand it, it becomes a very powerful tool for inclusion. Rather than exclusion and the gatekeeper role. Be careful that you don't include mechanisms for teaching and assessing with the inherent requirements, for example an exam is for assessing knowledge and expertise, not the inherent requirement itself, it is about assessing the knowledge and expertise.

I had an argument where they argued that the exam was inherent and I said no, it is a mechanism. A couple of minutes, giving students and universities rights and obligations, no, all it does is clarify existing rights and obligations so that a critical factor in determining critical adjustments is understood.

And inherent requirements are designed to exclude students with disabilities from pursuing the courses, no. As I said, they are rights and obligations that already exist and in my experience it has been the opposite. They tended to be inclusive rather than exclusive, it has opened up adjustments for students with disabilities that were previously denied. Like with a part-time clinical placements.

When students are generally unable to meet inherent requirements, it is possible for them to be excluded or put in a different course, but there is clear and validated rationale behind those decisions, you can explain it. Those basing it on the UWS model, I don't think we got everything right at the time, I think inherent requirements should be something that is dynamic, it is not something you do once, polish off and leave it.

The incorporation of regulatory bodies and course accreditation, things like APRA again is a bit of a mixed bag, as Mr McEwin was saying this morning. There are risks there in imposing the inherent requirements that are discriminatory and prevent people from getting opportunities.

But if we get it right, if we get that balance right, you have a clearer, less contested process for developing reasonable adjustments and everybody has a greater level of confidence that the reasonable adjustments that you put in place are appropriate, and that the person is meeting the requirements of the course.

And students have a much clearer understanding of what course requirements will be. It is greater inclusion and better accreditation. And the requirements aren't a panacea, they won't solve all your problems I'm sorry to say. And they won't give you every answer.

But when they are properly developed, when they articulate it properly and apply it appropriately, they will provide the missing ingredient and so many of the courses and so many of the processes that we have had in the past of determining reasonable adjustments.

You take away the uncertainty and confusion and the disputes between students and disability practitioners. And it gives us much more confidence in balancing the access rights of students with the academic rigour and professional integrity.

I have some wonderful answers, hope you have some interesting questions.

PETRIA McGOLDRICK:

We probably have about 5 minutes for question time. Thanks, Trevor. And at the end we will have a huge clap. Does anybody have any questions? Can we have some microphones?

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

Just interested in your comments, if a lecturer went to advise a disability adviser, a student having to sit an exam is part of an integrated method of their assessment, combined with assignments and presentations and so on, in some instances we have recommended that a particular student not be subjected to sit an exam. And be given alternate assignments or presentations and so on.

But some lecturers argue back saying that that is not the right way of assessing the students, and it is part of their methodology. What would be your advice?

TREVOR ALLAN:

I would say, yes, definitely, it is only a mechanism and it is not the only mechanism that can be effective. Because inherent is saying what does the students know, is that the student’s own knowledge?

We need to establish that, the day of the internet and Google and people being able to find assignments on the web, it is important that you know that the work is the student’s own. But there are known other strategies.

Maybe it is an oral exam or something where a student has a mix of different assessment strategies to come up with evidence that they know what they are talking about and that they have mastered the necessary skills to be able to complete it.

But at the end of the day, there is nothing inherent about an exam that requires it to be used. It is up to the student and the disability practitioner to come up with methods and say this will achieve the outcome. You need to say, with this particular student, the written exam won't work for these reasons.

But that student may be able to do an oral presentation, maybe with the academic or a mixture of some assignment and applying that in a practical sense, it depends on the student and the course and what you are trying to assess.

But there is nothing legally which requires the student to sit the exam. Any other questions? Yes? I was wondering when you were going to get me.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

Hi, Trevor. I like your point about the documents being done presumably over time, and you have been associated long enough to have experienced that longer than anybody else, I would suspect. Do you have any comments about how that review process can be a selective review of the document?

TREVOR ALLAN:

Part of my problem is my ears, can we slow it down?

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

It was about the documents being dynamic and needing a review, could you comment on how to make the review process an active one so that it is being considered.

TREVOR ALLAN:

I think I mentioned this morning, that fundamentally academic and professional decisions and it should be all part of the review of the curriculum, of the syllabus, what they are teaching and how they’re teaching it. It should be built into their whole process. And every time you review anything to do with it, you should do a review of the inherent requirements.

They should be doing it, I would say, at least every two years anyway just to see what is working and what is not working and what can we learn about it? How can we change this and make sure it is required? And it is just fundamentally good teaching practice to know what it is you are teaching and you are expecting people to learn and expecting people to demonstrate the mastery of.

If you don't know that, it is pretty poor teaching practice, I would say. So yes, I think it is the academic's responsibility to build that into the process. Because again, part of the process is for them to preserve the academic integrity of their course so they can ensure that when they give an award, that the award has been earned and is appropriate, so yes, it has got to be.

PETRIA McGOLDRICK:

We have run out of time. Certainly, you can find Trevor around because he is here for the duration of the conference. Can I ask you to join in thanking Trevor for his presentation.

(Applause)

TREVOR ALLAN:

I might not be around for the next hour or two, I might have a lie down.

PETRIA McGOLDRICK:

This is just a small donation and thank you for Trevor's contribution today. It is important to go to the history and look at the history of inherent requirements. It is good to sit and listen and go back to what it all means, go back to the fundamentals and it just reinforces us, each time we do those battles with the institutions, what are the real key features.

I very much appreciate the first thing that Trevor said about the advice to disability legislators, know the standards. It is the document I keep opening up and reading all the time. I thank Trevor for his advice and giving the context and history which now places it in the policy of the future.

(Applause)

I am just going to make a housekeeping announcement. Then I will leave it to Elicia to follow through for the next session. We have one phone that is missing and we have one phone that has been found. They are not the same phones. The phone handed into this area has been handed into Consec, the front desk upstairs. And we are still looking for another phone.

Please keep your eye out for an abandoned phone. Thank you.

ELICIA FORD:

I would like to introduce Doctor Louisa Smith and Jax Jacki Brown to talk to us about codesign, universal design for learning, thinking about inclusion in higher education.

Louisa is a research fellow at the University of Wollongong focussing on the intersection between disability live course and complex support needs but I first met Louisa in Wollongong a couple of years back when she was working on a project called Lost in Transition which is looking at complex support needs and the transition to adulthood for young people.

We got chatting about that and some of her other work and it came to light in the conversation that Louisa is also the lead educator on an open online course called Disability and Support Life.

I had seen it promoted, I had thought it seemed interesting. I don't know about the rest of you, I am hopeless with engaging with moocs. I am not good at completing them. I get busy, they are not very interesting, not well-designed, that is not a blanket statement, just my experience.

So it goes by the wayside and I don't get them finished and it is water under the bridge. I met with Louisa, we connected. What happens when we connect with people is you feel a bit obligated to maybe follow through and do what you said you would do so I enrolled in this mooc, disability and the good life. I didn't know what to expect but I am really pleased that I enrolled and I'm proud to say I completed it.

Yay!

Which Louisa will talk more about. My first engagement with Jax was through the mooc. She was a peer educator. She was very important in my engagement. We had many robust discussions in the online discussion boards. I will let these two talk more about it and how it led to thinking through inclusion in higher education, through codesign and universal design for learning.

For me, it is around a scaffolding journey, many and blended ways in engaging with the content, multimedia, and those discussion threads were incredibly vital to my engagement because it allowed an opportunity for learners to really unpack and critically analyse and process the information and content of the course.

So without further ado I would like to ask Louisa and Jax to speak with us on the topic this afternoon.

(Applause)

JAX JACKI BROWN:

Thank you, it is a pleasure to be here this afternoon and also to find ourselves on a very large stage. We weren't expecting to be in this big room when we saw the program but we are excited to have so many of you listening to us.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered here today. And pay my respects to the Elders, past, present and emerging and extend my respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

I want to recognise the strength, resilience and pride of the first peoples of this land. This photo behind me is a photo of a group of people, some sitting in wheelchairs, some standing, some sitting on the ground.

It is of the First Peoples with Disability Network of Australia which is a great organisation which works at the intersection of race and disability by Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders people, for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people and their families.

So it is great if you can look at this and the grassroots work they are doing in this country.

DR LOUISA SMITH:

Thank you for the fantastic introduction. I am a critical disability scholar. Today I am going to be talking about, more broadly than the moocs. We designed two massive open online courses and I converted those into an undergraduate course. I can imagine it is more in line with what most of you will be doing in your day-to-day work and education.

I'll be talking about both of those but really to showcase a framework I developed with my colleagues around what we call codesign, universal design for learning. Even though design appears twice in that title which is really inconvenient, the acronym is C-UDL which is just too convenient to ignore.

I will break down what about this framework makes this a C-UDL and how we go about universal and inclusive design to make an inclusive learning environment.

JAX JACKI BROWN:

I am Jax, I'm a wheelchair user and disability rights and LGBT educator. I am also hiding behind here, not deliberately, just because I am currently in a battle with the NDIS, as I am sure a number of people are in this country, to justify why it is reasonable and necessary for me to get a power wheelchair and indeed, one that will allow me to reach the lectern and be able to be viewed by you all.

There is some disagreement about the reasonableness and necessariness of that.

DR LOUISA SMITH:

Someone could take a photo of that and we could put that in her plan.

JAX JACKI BROWN:

That is all for me today on that. But in regards to this, I looked first at this as a learner so I am connected with the disability community in Australia and internationally, and a number of us who are disability scholars and activists looked at this course I was going to be offered. To be completely honest with you, a lot of us thought "no, not another course with nondisabled people talking about people with disability."

Let's go in and critique it as a group, we think politically and critically about the stuff and actually engage, and call it out if it sucks and be interested in it if it has a few good things to offer.

I have to declare that I went in there to give them a bit of a hard time but honestly, and I don't say this lightly, I don't give out praise easily when it comes to disability space and nondisabled people working in it but I found it to be really good.

I found it to be engaging in a disability rights discourse, to be engaging with the social model of disability and the disability rights movement. But more than that, I found at its core to be centring the voices and lived experience of people with disabilities.

And about using that experience to transform the ways in which the learners have undertaken the course were encouraged to think about disability.

So I was pleasantly surprised. Over the six weeks of the course that I enrolled in as a learner, I expressed my lived experience, my disability politics. I had a lot of bold, strong opinions as I am known to do. And Louisa must have noticed because she approached me and said "look, you seem to know what you're talking about, you have a lot to say. Would you like a job moderating the next three of these courses?"

That was the first time I had ever been offered work as a result of my bold, strong, disability activist opinions. Normally I am pushed off to the side. That was nice. I proceeded to then be a moderator in the next three courses which was fabulous and also difficult and tiring work at times which I will discuss more.

DR LOUISA SMITH:

Thank you. Just a bit of background, I work at UoW, the reason this is branded as UNSW was that these courses came out of there. They took a long time to germinate. Largely because of the C-UDL approach we use.

The UNSW, like universities often do, decided they would take on this new thing and they said you can flagship this. You have got this interesting group of disability academics, you can work this out.

We got together. As disability academics we could see the democratic potential for online learning. I know there is a lot of critique around that but we can see how this actually could increase access.

As you all know, universities are places of exclusivity and a lot of my research, as Elicia has introduced, is with young people who have disabilities and other kinds of complex factors in their lives and as a result of that research, I have done a lot of that with young people on campuses.

Just even moving around campuses and experiencing campuses with young people with impairments is incredible insight into the inaccessibility of university spaces. Not just physically but cognitively, and in terms of anxiety and mental health. You will know that much better than me.

For that reason, we really embraced the idea of being able to use a national online platform to both raise awareness and to increase inclusion and access.

Over a period of two years, we developed and ran these two moocs and then I transferred them into a 12 week undergraduate education course. These courses were underpinned by an academic discipline which is called critical disability studies. It is a strange little discipline.

It is in association with the disability rights movement and for that reason it is interdisciplinary, you won't find it at one school or group of critical disability scholars in any of the places you may work.

We work in a lot of different fields. So recognised disability as a form of human diversity and it also helps to critique the social, cultural and political understandings of disability so that we can understand diversity of human minds and bodies.

I think, at its heart, what critical disability studies is really doing is asking us to question normativity, asking us to question what it means to be normal and talking about assumptions that we are making.

JAX JACKI BROWN:

And it also asks us to question the way in which the physical build structures of society have been built for the normative body and mind to have access. And how people who have disabilities or impairments cannot access that space. But it asks us to think about the attitudes we might hold as a society and shaping the way that we think about people with disabilities as well.

So often we see stereotypes in the media about disabilities, as inspiring as doing it all or disability as tragic, or needing help or pity. So these stereotypes shape the ideas people might hold and might not even be aware of until they run into me in the street and want to ask me what is wrong with me or have very, very stereotypical ideas about what my life must look like as a person with a physical disability.

So I think critical disability studies, the social model of disability which is part of that allows us to start to think about the big ideas that society might perpetuate, both in terms of its structures and also in terms of its attitudes around disability.

So as said before, I joined the first mooc to take it and have some fun doing so but I found across the six weeks, even as a learner, but also as a mentor, that I saw a number of participants who undertook the course undergo a transformation in their approach and understanding, and ideas about disability.

To shift from some of these stereotypes to understanding it as a human rights issue, as an issue of access, as an issue of identity of people with disabilities.

So not as a medicalised issue, but as a social issue. Not everyone, however, underwent this amazing shift which I was hoping everyone underwent but not everyone did. I think that was due to a number of issues, it was due to the fact that people drop-off in moocs, things come up in their lives and they get busy and don't continue with their study.

But I also think some learners, it was due to the content of the moocs being quite different to perhaps what they were expecting. Maybe they were expecting something that was no less challenging, not as challenging to their ideas about what disability might mean, maybe they weren't thinking it would challenge them in terms of their framing of human rights.

So this critical approach to disability that the course demanded of learners meant that some people drifted away because of that. But the people who underwent that sort of disability as a social political issue of rights and access and identity. So this shift was just in six weeks and it was wonderful to see.

Codesign for me, I was thinking a lot about it when I was to speak, it was also about centralising expressions of disabled people and embedding different types of access with the process along the way.

And learning from peoples lived experience as a means of doing this. So engaging in an ongoing conversation with people with disabilities and we were invited to give our feedback and told that feedback get taken on board.

Codesign is also about valuing the knowledge and work of disabled people, we know that 46% of people with disability in Australia live on or below the poverty line. One of the most disadvantaged minorities in this country. Remediating us of our time and expertise is a really key way we need to address some of that inequality.

DR LOUISA SMITH:

To summarise the slide, the idea of nothing for us without us, it was how we consider design in the course, within the framework that we developed, the kind of framework we developed.

That meant including people with disabilities from the outset. May I say right at the beginning, while we were doing a course in disability where it was central to the subject, this could be applied in developing any course about any subject, codesign for people with disabilities or other marginalised groups is important. You can do it in any study or any field of research.

One of the ways we got started with codesign was getting an advisory group together. It was a group of eight people with different diverse disabilities from diverse social, cultural background, sexualities, genders, and with a range of experiences.

And we asked them what do you want this course to include? It was so interesting and the people we employ were so interested that we realise quite quickly that we need resources, these discussions would become great educational resources.

We decided to film some of these edited discussions and make them into resources themselves. You can see a screenshot on the slide, which is an example of one of the discussions that is on the advisory group talking. And what that allowed also was a kind of modelling of collaborative practice, where there are people with diverse support needs all engaging in these discussions.

And yes, as we progressed, I also started to use different people as consultants in particular areas where they have shown interest. Codesign also means in our model, embracing a really diverse and complex team. It means you are really using every resource that we had.

There were five academics, there were three educational developers, 20 expert interviewees, most of whom were people who were academics and activists who have disabilities themselves. Six people on the advisory group, five guest presenters, there were a lot of people involved. And a lot of organisation was required, a lot of time and lead up.

So I think that embracing codesign actually means embracing a really complex process, not a tokenistic process of asking for advice.

Another aspect of our codesign was that we were really concerned that one of the things about online learning is how dislocating it is, how disconnected. For people who had not been engaged in learning very much, so a lot of people who have been excluded from conventional high educational pathways, having that really alienating environment we have to sell direct the whole time and you don't have a sense necessarily of companionship, would have been really hard.

So we developed the role of learner guide, there is a screenshot of it on the slide at the moment, it is a woman with a disability herself who is a learner who has been through the course before. So she engages with the learner as if they are next to her. And with me in a conversation about the topic that the person has just learnt.

And she has very different opinions to me and what I wanted her to have (Laughs). We often get into a lot of arguments. I think it is one of the things that facilitated the types of discussion that Elicia was talking about, that robust discussion.

A lot of people, particularly in the undergraduate course, said that one of the greatest learning resources was Mel, in the course, because she became a companion but she was also a voice of dissent. It allowed them to realise that they too could be a voice of dissent.

And that too come back to inherent, sorry, inherent requirements, was the inherent requirement of this course, that you are able to critique disability in a public forum. And that was what we really, that was my main thing that I wanted them to be able to do.

So implementing...

JAX JACKI BROWN:

There is a picture behind you of my profile when I was part of the course, it says I am a disability LGBTIQ rights activists, a public speaker, disability sexuality educator and dyslexic.

So I chose to reveal that in practice things very deliberately because I thought it was really important to clearly and deliberately and consciously position myself to the students as disabled. And to also disclose that I had dyslexia and I had dyslexia in a role that was requiring me to do a lot of reading and writing and moderating.

So I have software to do that, I feel very confident in doing that, but it can take me a longer time than it takes people who are not dyslexic. But disclosing that allowed me to bring that forward, I will try to do it as best I can, but at times it does not come across the way I intended, and that is OK because I’m modelling the fact I can still do my job well, while having these impairments that make me be able to see things differently to other people.

So, as I said before, it was a really great experience but it was also really difficult in that some learners still hold really stereotyped outdated views of disability. While it was my job to challenge these views, it was also my job to listen to them and to moderate some of the content and that was really hard to be able to be professional in this space and behave professionally but also to feel the personal impact of some of this stuff.

While I'm really grateful for this opportunity and I'm really grateful to get to work in the disability rights space more broadly with my other work, I don't think we can say that, we have this neat delineation between my professional life and my personal life. Those things very much inform the work that I do and why the work is important to me.

So I think that is really interesting when we start to think about codesign with people with disabilities and inviting us into spaces to take the lead. How do we manage that? What does that look like? How do we be supported in those roles, particularly when we deal with content or comments that may be quite difficult?

So me and others always would have weekly chats to talk about any issues or content that might have come up that I was finding difficult to manage, and she would step in if we both felt there was a need for her to do so as well.

DR LOUISA SMITH:

I just skipped forward...

JAX JACKI BROWN:

One of the things I think is interesting is the quote behind me, when you do have a lecturer or teacher who discloses they have a disability or a visual disability, it can be a great space for the disabled body as a site of education and challenge. It is definitely something I saw when I do sessional teaching at the university. A lot of my students were not expecting someone teaching about disability to have a disability.

They can often be quite reserved initially in expressing their ideas and opinions but I guess when I teaching in an online space, even when drawing that out and making that apparent in my discussions with students and in my profile, I think of course it isn't as present in their minds or isn't as visible so what does that do when you're working through some of these ideas of feeling challenged in this way? And maybe they are not always aware they are expressing them to someone who lives with a disability.

DR LOUISA SMITH:

Just skipping forward quickly to the universal design for learning section. Just a quick recap, universal design for learning, it comes from Universal Design, environments meet everyone's needs, no need for retrofitting, three key concepts, multiple means of representation, expression and engagement.

Has anyone not heard of this? Great. Is that just good pedagogy? I would say yes.

Anyone who has done anything to do with education knows that if you want people to engage, you have to not do what you are doing now, really, you have to get them doing different things. We have the 2pm slot.

Fast working in this course, Universal Design meant marrying this tension between clarity and flexibility. We need to be really clear so we can be flexible. Future line which is the mooc platform we use does manage to do that quite well.

You don't have to use it in a step motion but you can move around. You can be self-paced, self-directed, you can be personalised and for me, you can also differentiate the course yourself. In other words, I included extra steps in the course that were clearly marked and labelled. One is called extending your thinking and one was called expanding your learning.

Those two steps allow people who had a real interest, while it is two early steps and allow people who had an interest in those earlier steps to push those through into practical examples or into theoretical examples.

Some people could just go through those two steps and some people never did them.

And the metrics actually show that most moocs, despite having the structure we can move around willy-nilly, learners just do it straight. They go straight through, tick the box. Our metric showed that 40% of learners skipped. So they were learning because they were given options and directions they could go through. We emphasise the choose your own adventure narrative.

Most university courses are not comfortable with allowing students too much flexibility. In order for universities to be accessible, they need to be doing that a lot more.

What I decided was I released the whole course content online in the first week and set up they could do it as fast or slow as they wanted. We didn't have any set content they had to do. And so they had to be able to answer core questions for each week.

What that meant was when one of my students got scheduled and had to be in a psych ward for four weeks in a semester, they could continue to do their work. I didn't even get contacted by disability services. It was the only course that they completed that semester.

I think that degree, and that wasn't just because it was online. They explained why, it was because the content that was available that they could self-pace, they didn't feel like they had to complete anything in particular but they had to show something at the end and they knew they would be able to do that. They had confidence they could do that and they did.

Multimodal resources, you guys all know about this stuff.

Practice-based learning, probably the last thing I do but I will say the biggest impact this course made was not the academics talking in the many videos we did about disability theory and disability resources and things. It was people with disabilities, we made a series of documentaries, 14 documentaries, and it was those documentaries that made a difference. I am being pushed off the stage.

I know a lot of you work in universities, just like we really clearly labelled the pathways that students could have, we also enabled the academic resources. Obviously all the academic readings were accessible in accessible formats but they were all available through the course so didn't have to go anywhere else. So through the Moodle portal.

They were also labelled simple, intermediate and advanced and that was all about lexical density. So trying to work out their access. I have other things to say but hopefully people ask some good questions.

(Applause)

ELICIA FORD:

Thank you so much, Louisa and Jax, that was an interesting presentation and I am hoping there are some wonderful questions. We are running into afternoon tea time.

I am reassured that none of you are bolting out the door and I will remind you that not during afternoon tea but the next break we have has been extended in the program so you do have bonus time if you would now like to ask some questions of Louisa and Jax.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

So I had never heard of a mooc before but can we invite academics to do these?

DR LOUISA SMITH:

I realise, we have the paper where we wrote up the C-UDL framework so if you want that, I can give you that. Not anymore. The reason I made that slightly snide remark about something that universities do is that they did them once and so despite having spent $300,000 doing them, they are not running down anymore so moocs are massive open online courses.

They are a free online platform. We had 17,000 learners do these internationally and there were a lot of academics who did them and academics were the least likely to change their opinions.

JAX JACKI BROWN:

I also forgot to add in my notes but one of the other things about the C-UDL framework, because it was international, we had a lot of learners who had English as a second language and so a lot of people who were engaging with the content and writing comments who are using this as a second language so it made it accessible for that cohort of learners where it might not have been otherwise.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

Hello, Kathryn from Western Sydney University. Firstly I would like to say well done. I really enjoyed this presentation and particularly to Jax, how you got involved in the project, I think that is worthwhile to hear that history.

My question relates to the codesign aspect rather than the course itself. I am really interested in codesign and involving students, patients, whatever sphere we are from, in research and participation.

One of the barriers I often face or think about is that we often require people to have a voluntary contribution and don't value their contribution and I think it is really valid and worthwhile how you mentioned that finances aren't on the agenda. It is normally a voluntary contribution and to me that sometimes makes it more tokenistic and less valued.

Were there any bureaucratic processes or ways you are able to get those resources and make it happen?

DR LOUISA SMITH:

Yes, we paid everyone quite a lot. That was part of my political commitment to the project. And other people on the team. It was a huge bureaucratic task and we had to get three separate funds, three separate grant funds to do that.

So the commitment to that, we were laughing that if we had have used the funds that we spent on our own wages in terms of the amount of time it took us was the same amount we needed to pay people.

So it would have just been better if the university had just given us that money in the first place but we did get it. From three sources within the university. So we had to keep drawing from different pockets of money.

JAX JACKI BROWN:

And think, as I said, 47% of people live on or below the poverty line so being paid for our time is an important issue. So often I get emails asking if I will come and speak at this thing or write this thing for us, but of course it is volunteer work.

I am really committed to disability rights and putting forward some of these ideas but I think that assumption that people with disabilities should just volunteer, that we're not actually working, that we don't have important perspectives and expertise to share. It comes back to a lot of these stereotypes are people with disabilities just sit at home all day doing nothing with their lives.

We need to push back against that and say no, we're working and this work should be valued and we should be compensated for that. So it was fabulous to be compensated.

(Applause)

ELICIA FORD:

Thank you Louisa and Jax. We have to leave it there but I think authentic value and acknowledgement of the lived experience with disabilities is a really good place to leave it.

Will you two be hanging around for afternoon tea? Yes, if any of you have more questions, please feel free to approach them. After afternoon tea we will be going straight back into our concurrent sessions which will be the same configuration as this morning but I would like to first, on behalf of Pathways14 Conference, offer a small token of appreciation to you both.

(Applause)

(Afternoon tea)

ANTHONY GATNER:

OK... How's everybody doing? Exhausted, is everybody exhausted? It is a thumbs up day. Conferences, you do nothing but they are exhausting, aren't they? Because you are doing nothing but concentrating really hard. I think everybody's getting dressed up for cocktails, we have lost a few people.

We have a few things to do, one of them is the final wrap-up for the day and then the ATEND AGM in the meeting room behind here. And then we have a cocktail party. So it is nearly there. I have lost my sheet with all of my details on it.

That's the skill of admin. Did everybody get a superhero name? You got it down to three? OK, did anybody not find a superhero name? Still (Laughs). You have the night to think about it. Maybe some people will give you one, you might be christened with a superhero name.

So, what we have got to do now is invite up to the stage Tina, Elicia and Stephanie to do the wrap-up for the sessions.

STEPHANIE PALERMO:

Good afternoon, everybody, we have come to the end of day one of Pathways14, I hope you have enjoyed the wonderful array of speakers we had today. We want to do a nice wrap-up of all the presentations that came across so everybody can get a summary of the presentations that you have not been able to attend.

This morning when the conference opened, we had the opportunity to hear from Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner Alastair McEwin as our first keynote. And Alastair discussed a great deal of interesting points which strongly related to the theme of today which was inclusivity, universal design for learning and inclusive design.

Some of the points Alastair raised include the changing landscape of education, the NDIS, the development of technologies and inherent requirements. Alastair had highlighted that the NDIS, while not perfect, has created opportunities for many individuals with disability over the last five years and that this has resulted in empowering people, developing their independence and increasing accessibility.

A key theme throughout today has been inherent requirements and Alastair touched on the importance of educational institutions changing inherent requirements, and the use of professional bodies, which may be using inherent requirements to stop people with disability entering areas such as medicine.

It is challenging the status quo and challenging these starting at an education level. So inclusion is key and in our position, we can help academics to support their students by providing resources that have been provided to us. Taking this inclusive teaching approach will in turn break down stigma and create cultural change.

So after we had the keynote, we had three concurrent sessions. The first of which was delivered by Sharon Kerr, thank you, Jess, for the summary of Sharon's presentation. This session explores barriers and implications on the inclusion of Aboriginal people with disability in education such as areas of unemployment and incarceration. Sharon is currently undertaking a Ph.D. and her research has identified that the information on support services for business students on websites for universities is very bad with some not offering any information for Indigenous students.

She is finding ways to communicate supports better to Indigenous students, and considering things such as medical consultation, why do we need this before supports can commence? Sharon also reminded us that everybody is different and it is important to listen to the individual person’s story to understand the impact of the unique barriers. And if your process creates barriers, you should look at changing it.

Concurrent session 2 was delivered by Irene Victor, she discussed equitable learning services liaison in inclusive practice. She discussed issues around stigma, disability is seen as a curse/karma in Vietnam and she broke these down. She looked at development for staff including disability awareness, case management and psychological first aid.

Irene discussed how this needs to be a consultancy process between teachers and the disability services to achieve the best outcomes for students. And the third concurrent session was presented by Brian Conway and Sonali Marathe, they shared information about the Roundtable, information and access for people with disabilities with the aim being for accessible material to be made available at the same time and at the same cost of other material. They had guidelines and standards to assist organisations in making things accessible, such as making things accessible for educators and producing accessible print and e-texts, that information is available on their website.

They also talked about the Marrakesh Treaty to talk about this nationally and make it accessible and to end the book famine. So, I will leave it to...

TINA EDNEY:

Sorry, I'm not anywhere near as organised as Stephanie, so concurrent session four, Marion focused on NER guides to simplify what are inherent requirements and what the core tasks are. It was a useful tool for inclusion and could be embedded into course design, so it is a positive tool.

The guide itself, the kit included tasks in detail and a task clarification table which can be used in enhancing inherent requirements and (inaudible). Next was a talk by Sara Caplan and Sharni Burstin. Inclusion of disability in VET, it was a project over 12 months across sectors to identify barriers to inclusion for people with disability in VET. Some of the main barriers identified were understanding of disability and awareness, being against disability and inclusion and a lack of ability and adjustments and not communicating well with students with disabilities.

Training projects were developed looking at teachers, particularly for smaller training organisations and that is currently awaiting approval. And then we have session 6, translating models of practice into service delivery to maximise student growth and outcomes by Geetha Krishnakumar.

She talked about changes, some of the changes included online registration and empowering students to be actively engaged in input into their actual plan, in disseminating the information. Thank you.

ELICIA FORD:

Thanks, Tina. I will summarise the remaining sessions for today, we have had some really interesting presentations. Following lunch today we had a presentation from Trevor Allan on inherent requirements in context. Key takeaways from Trevor’s presentation, just really to know the legislation. But the history of inherent requirements is important for the future and he provided a great slide on principles which I highly recommend.

We then heard from Dr Louisa Smith and Jax Jacki Brown on universal design for learning, or as they put it, C-UDL. A key takeaway from the presentation is acknowledgement of the lived experience of people with disability and we are thinking through universal design and inclusive learning.

Other concurrent sessions this afternoon were promoting learner agency for all learners using digital tools as essential for change in education. Incorporating UDL principles within assessment, and academic learning plans for best practice analysis.

The key takeaway from all of these sessions is it came through quite strongly, being around student engagement, student agency and student empowerment, also some really practical strategies were shared. I strongly encourage you to follow up on those presenters throughout the day if you have any questions. I'd like to finish on a key message that Jack Crane shared with me, I think it is a great way to sum up the day, it is about the importance of knowledge exchange and transfer amongst people in our sector. I want to leave you with that parting thought, thank you.

(Applause)

ANTHONY GATNER:

Fantastic, thank you for the summaries, it is great because we can't be in every session. I want to invite you to think about, what is the one thing that has really struck you today? What is the one thing you have heard today that actually you would tell somebody about, that has really resonated with you? Have a moment to think about what that might be because we have all heard a lot of information today, what is going to make a difference to you as a practitioner?

For me it was about the importance of our website having information that is appropriate for Indigenous students, and making that very apparent. Yes?

COMMENT FROM FLOOR:

Just trying to do the right thing. For me, at the end of Trevor's presentation on inherent requirements, he made a comment about exams were mechanisms, I was going to say strategies, they are mechanisms and not an inherent requirement in themselves. As I was listening to him, I was thinking about a student who has severe exam anxiety and cannot function, we put in applications for adjustments in terms of another way of assessment and they were knocked back.

It is just the old school way of doing exams and needing to be closed book, when I have a doctor looking at things on Google or whatever medical thing they used to diagnose my shingles. Is memory really essential? So that was reminding me of all the work we need to do with faculties with students.

ANTHONY GATNER:

We do it and we do it and we do it. And every year we do it again.

COMMENT FROM FLOOR:

Thank you for today, my comment is very basic, it is the first Pathways14 conference I have been to and the first disability conference I have been to in a few years, but it is very comforting, I suppose, or just really helpful to hear that everybody has the same issues.

That I am not stuck on the Gold Coast with academics who will refuse to do anything else but exams. I don't know any doctor, lawyer, or other profession that doesn't look up the textbook. Isn't the important thing that we know where to look? But it was nice to know that we all have these issues.

ANTHONY GATNER:

It is nice to know that we experience all these issues together and the challenges we face. Just as a side note, I was in Singapore doing an audit and I noticed that when we moved from a country that has a whole lot of legislation in place, like a thing like a discrimination act, like Workplace Health and Safety, workplace adjustments. Those sort of things that we take for granted, because the legislation exists. When you move to a country where that legislation does not exist, those things don't exist either. They don't happen. We struggle with these issues but we are in fact so far ahead of so many other countries in the world that don't have the legislation we take for granted.

Our DDA is 25 years old. Some countries don't even have a Disability Discrimination Act. What I said to this organisation was, if you want to bring people with disability in, you need to start with the basics. You need to start with the bullying and harassment policy because it needs to be a safe workplace.

Start with a recruitment policy and a reasonable Workplace Adjustment policy so when they come, they actually have a way of being here. You need to start with accessible facilities, so a bathroom where a handrail is not halfway up the wall. Some really simple things we take for granted, they are not taken for granted things in many countries.

It was a really good reminder for me a couple of weeks ago when I was there, that there is some amazing work and practice that happens in Australia and we need to keep remembering that, as frustrated as we often are, and the nature of having the same conversations year in, year out, we actually are a long way ahead of many countries.

It is good to know we have made incredible progress over the years.

I need to now introduce Speed Racer who is going to do some housekeeping for us.

SPEAKER:

We purposefully illustrated an example of what Anthony was just talking about in regards to access. For those people on the left-hand side of the room to me, Anthony is going to mime as I talk.

Those people going to the AGM, I will let you know you are now five minutes late. Don't panic. Networking and drinks are in the grand ballroom area from 5:30. I look forward to seeing each of you there and I will be following up with you there with regards to your superhero aspirations.

If you haven't thought about one just yet, you have just a little under an hour to think of one.

A reminder to those who have preregistered for yoga on Thursday morning, you need to meet in the hotel foyer at 6 AM and then you will head off together to South Stine which is next to the Manly Ferry Club. Please bring your towel and if you haven't signed up and you would like to, you can do that at the Consec desk.

I also want to remind people we have some fabulous exhibitors out there so check them out, grab some brochures and check out their wares.

We also have the Novatel conference Wi-Fi that is available to us all, the password for that is Pathways14. Abstracts of the concurrent sessions will be online on the Pathways website and the address is on the front of your programs, and you will also find on the website all of the PowerPoints from the concurrent sessions which hopefully will be up by sometime next week, if not before.

I think that is pretty much all the housekeeping. Thank you, have a great day. Thank you for being with us today, everyone. Go and have fun.

(Applause)

ANTHONY GATNER:

Thanks, everyone. The other thing I heard today which I really enjoyed was when Alastair said he always wanted to be Lois Lane. I thought, so did I. There is one scene where she gets caught by Superman and she says "you've got me but who has got you?" Have a good night.

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