

Student Life – UNSW Sydney

Enhancing Self-Disclosure of Equity Group Membership



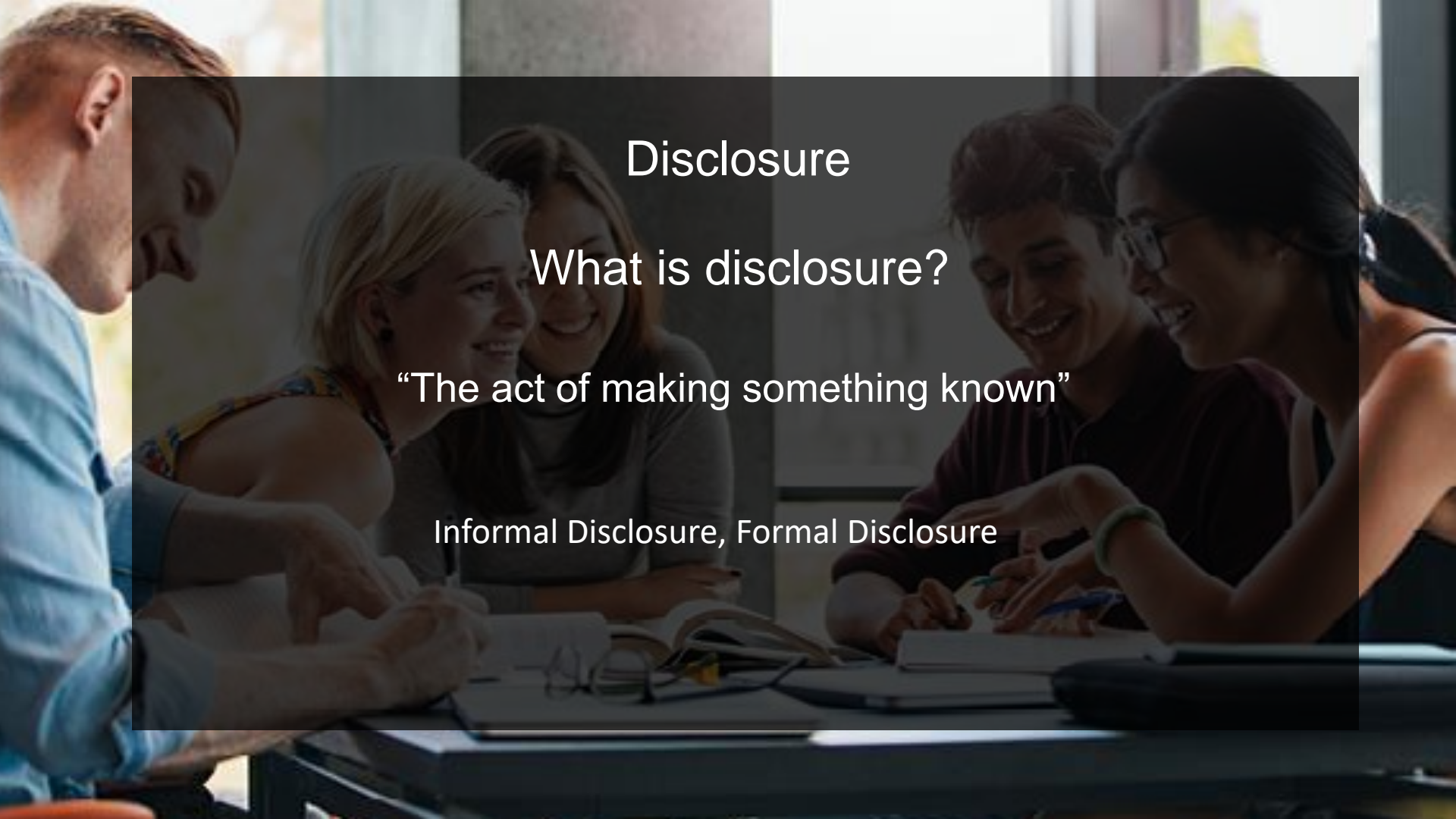
Ms Rita Kusevskis-Hayes (Manager), Dr Colin Clark, Mr Matthew Wilkinson

Introduction

HEPPP-commissioned project 2016

Outcomes:

- To explore self-disclosure of equity groups
- To estimate rates of non-disclosure of three groups (Indigenous, students with disabilities and non-English-speaking backgrounds)
- To understand reasons for non-disclosure
- To propose guidelines for universities to encourage disclosure

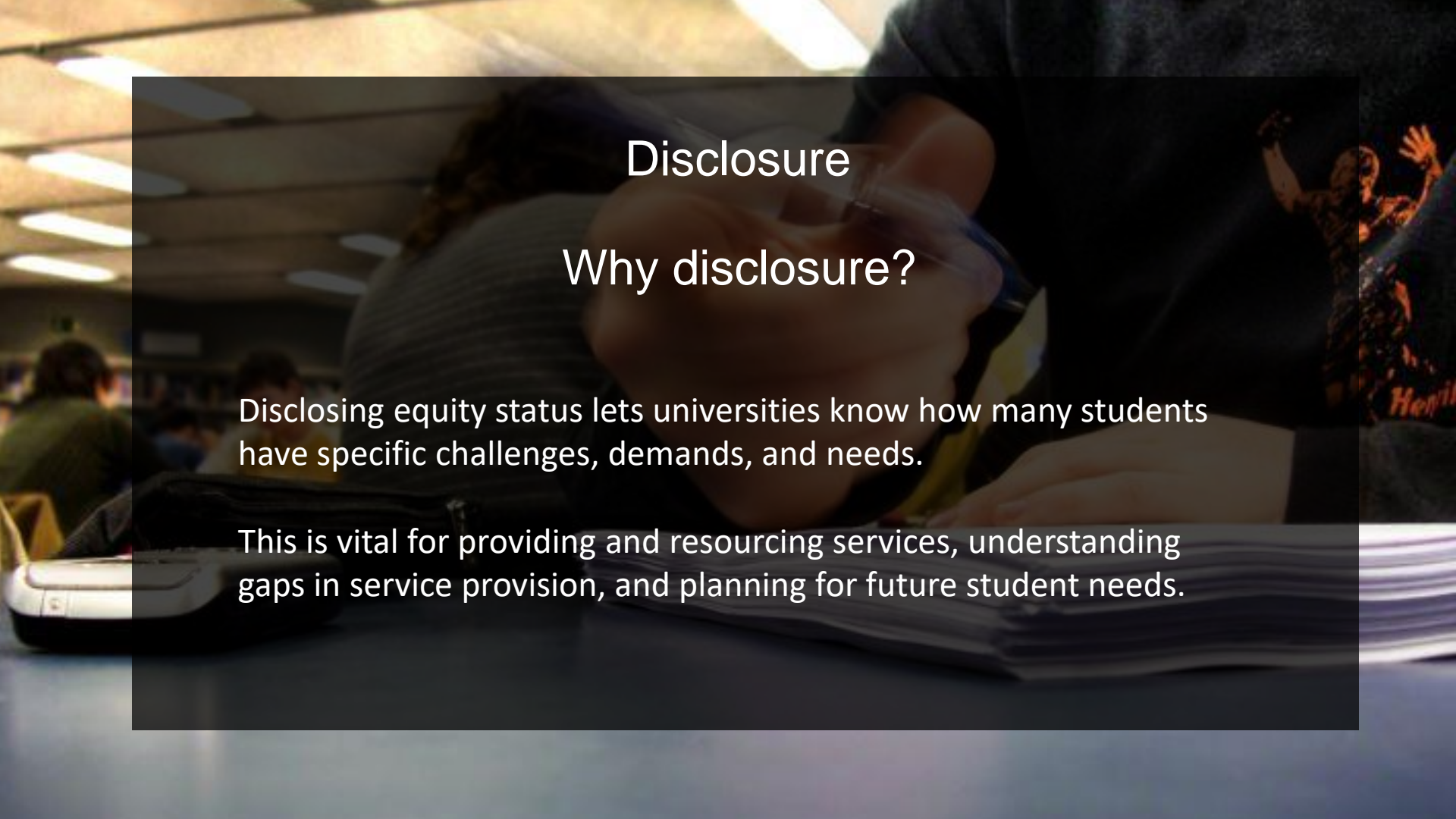


Disclosure

What is disclosure?

“The act of making something known”

Informal Disclosure, Formal Disclosure

A student is shown from the side, writing in a notebook. The background is a blurred classroom with other students and overhead lights. The text is overlaid on a dark semi-transparent rectangle.

Disclosure

Why disclosure?

Disclosing equity status lets universities know how many students have specific challenges, demands, and needs.

This is vital for providing and resourcing services, understanding gaps in service provision, and planning for future student needs.

Research Team

Ms. Rita Kusevskis-Hayes



Dr. Colin Clark



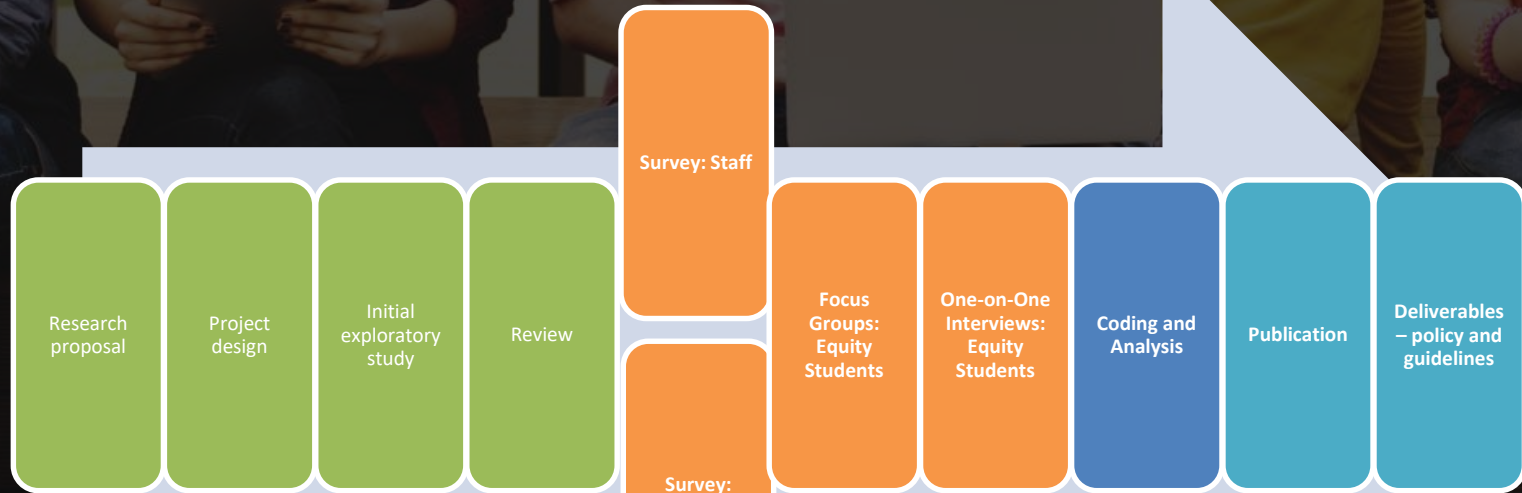
Mr. Matthew Wilkinson



Also Prudence Watt, Helen Meas, Julian Barber



Process



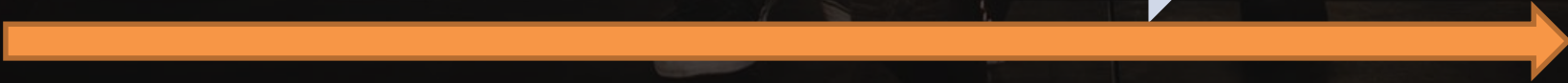
Dec 2016

May 2017

June/July 2017

December 2017

2018



Target Groups

1,035,474

University Students
(2015)

Data from Department of
Education and Training
(2015)

2008.0 - Census of
Population and Housing:
Nature and Content,
Australia, 2016

Indigenous Students



15,585 (1.6%)

3% of Pop.

Students w/ Disability



60,019 (5.8%)

18.5%

Non-English Speaking Background



40,281 (3.9%)

27%



ATS11
@ATSIONE

“...there are sooooo many special advantages for Indigenous people, that people that we must have not worked hard for our degrees, and that we are there for our skin colour- uni management tokens- instead of our brains”

#Notodisclose #ASTI #Student

Methods

Mixed method quantitative and qualitative study

1. Student and staff surveys
 - Australia-wide
 - Online
2. Interviews with equity students
 - In person and over the phone

Outcomes

The project has answered several questions that shed new light on this hidden population, including:

1. Why disclose?
2. How do students disclose?
3. What proportion of students in these cohorts do not disclose?
4. Why not disclose?
5. What policy recommendations can be derived?

Disclosure



Sw/Dis1

@studentwithdisability1

I feel like lots of the time when people are in situations like that and very often when people come to [disability unit] they're in strife so they're not really thinking about expectations and best case scenario. So, you know, people who are in really difficult situations are trying to get through from one day to the next, so I feel like I was trying to do that, and for that reason I wasn't kind of projecting expectations onto them.

#

Why Disclose?



Access support or enter targeted programs



Be part of a community



Meet peers



Recognise identity

Why do students disclose?

All groups report that disclosing equity information to the university benefits students.

Students also report a high degree of trust in the university with their equity information.



NonEngBack1

@studentNESB_1

“The university may categorize them or may consider them incompetent for their course even though they could've been born in Australia and speak fluent English”

#fluentenglish #prerequisites



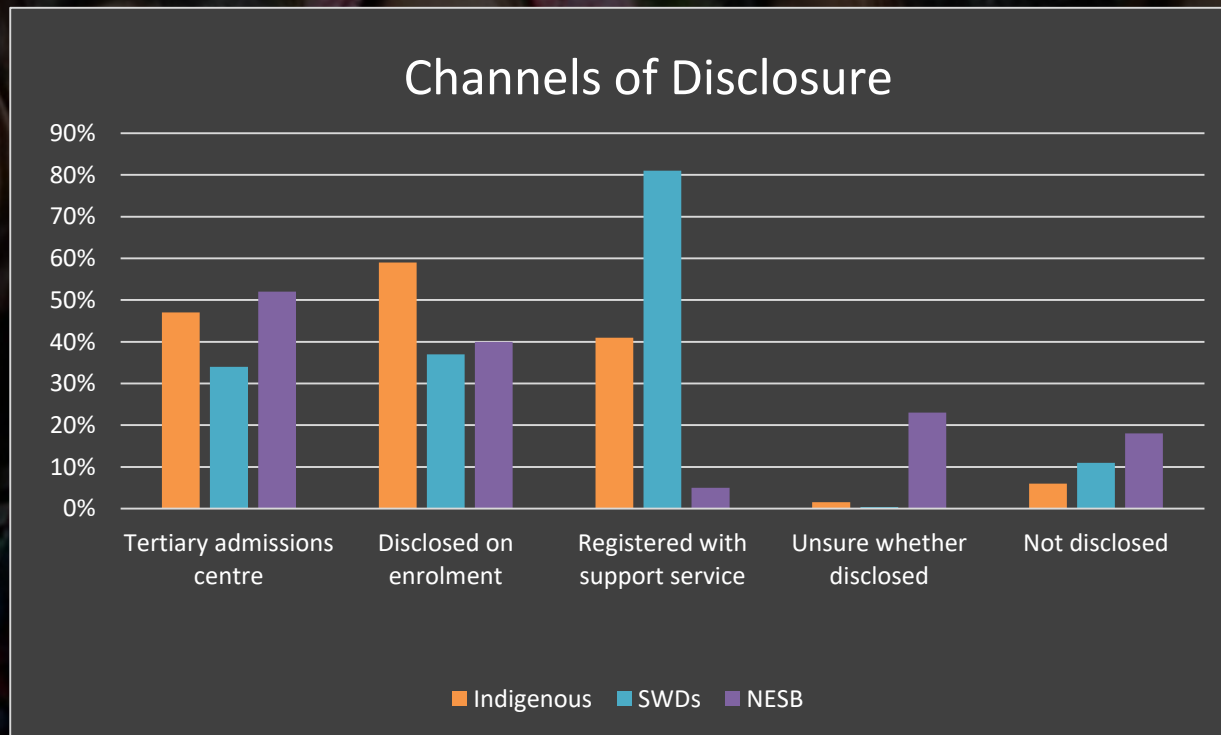
AusTSItwo2

@ATSIstudent_two

“Stop offering so many stupid 'indigenous pride' things. Make us normal - not 'special' “

#specials #whatisoffered


How do students disclose?



Non-disclosure at Australian universities

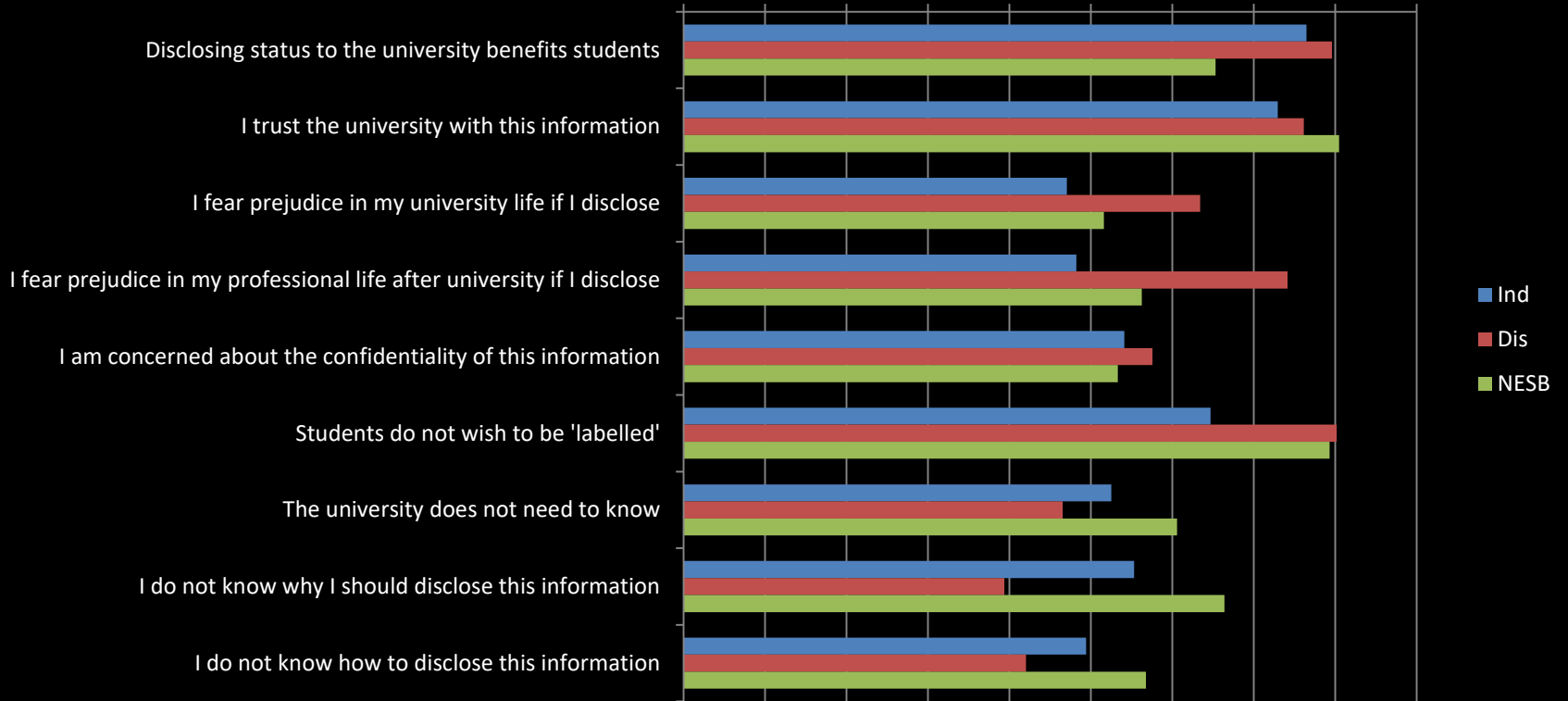
11% of students in the study did not disclose their equity status to the university. This includes:

- 11% of students living with a disability
- 6% of indigenous students
- 18% of students from non-English speaking backgrounds



Why do students not disclose?

Student Views of Disclosure



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

rejected special, different, and discriminatory treatment by their own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers, and non-Indigenous peers.



Participant 1

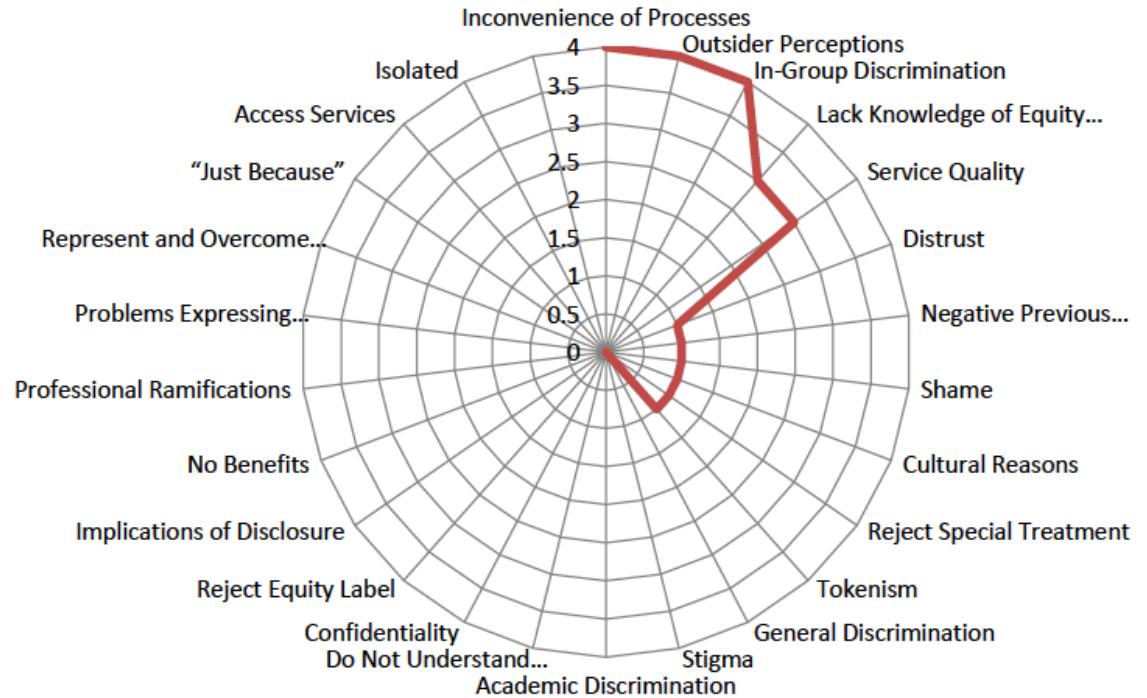
Indigenous

My brother so he's Aboriginal too, but he hates it. ... he's more inclined, along the lines of all the white people that he works with, who believe the only reason Aboriginal people get into university or get is because they tick the box.

If [people at university] find out through conversation, that you're Aboriginal – then there's a real change in the way that they articulate themselves, either they just ignore you completely or they... there's a level of ignorance or hostility in the language.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reported a high degree of trust with the university's use of their information, and saw benefits for other students in doing so.

Wished not to be 'labeled' or thought of as token Indigenous students.



Factors in (non)disclosure

Disclosure needed for financial assistance

May be needed for access to facilities

Reasons for nondisclosure

1. Inconvenience (of securing documentation)
2. Outsider (mis)perceptions
3. In-group discrimination
4. Lack knowledge of services
5. Reject special treatment



Participant 49

Indigenous

“It’s fairly progressive But I guess there are people who are not particularly culturally sensitive [to] stereotypes and what not.

Those could be one of the social factors, being singled out as being the token in the class. You can usually find a community to be a part of when you disclose that you’re indigenous”

Students with disabilities did not wish to be 'labeled', for wholly different reasons.

Rather than fearing tokenism, students with disabilities did not wish to be seen as getting special treatment.

Factors in (non)disclosure

Needed for most services/adjustments

1. Discrimination
2. Distrust of systems
3. Stigma
4. Inconvenience of processes
5. Lack knowledge of entitlements
6. Shame
7. Reject equity or disability labels



Participant

SWD

“My psychologist charges \$480 for a report about my autism”

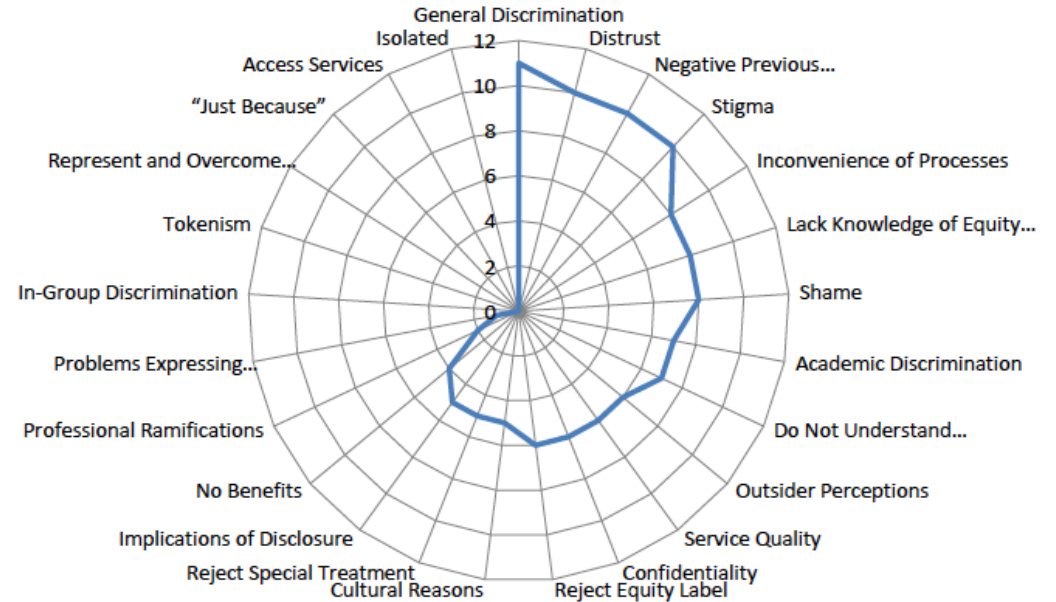


Participant 1

SWD

“Basically what I mean, I suppose more special treatment. I was aware that ... You do get more special circumstances within exams and that sort of thing.

I thought, one for all and all for one. Even though this might have gone wrong with me, I still should have the same pressure as the next person next to me”



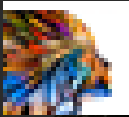
NESB students reported higher rates of ambivalence or lack of benefit associated with their equity status, and much lower rates of stigma, discrimination and fears of differential treatment.

Factors in (non)disclosure

Disclosure channels may not exist
Disclosure may be “just because” the student is asked

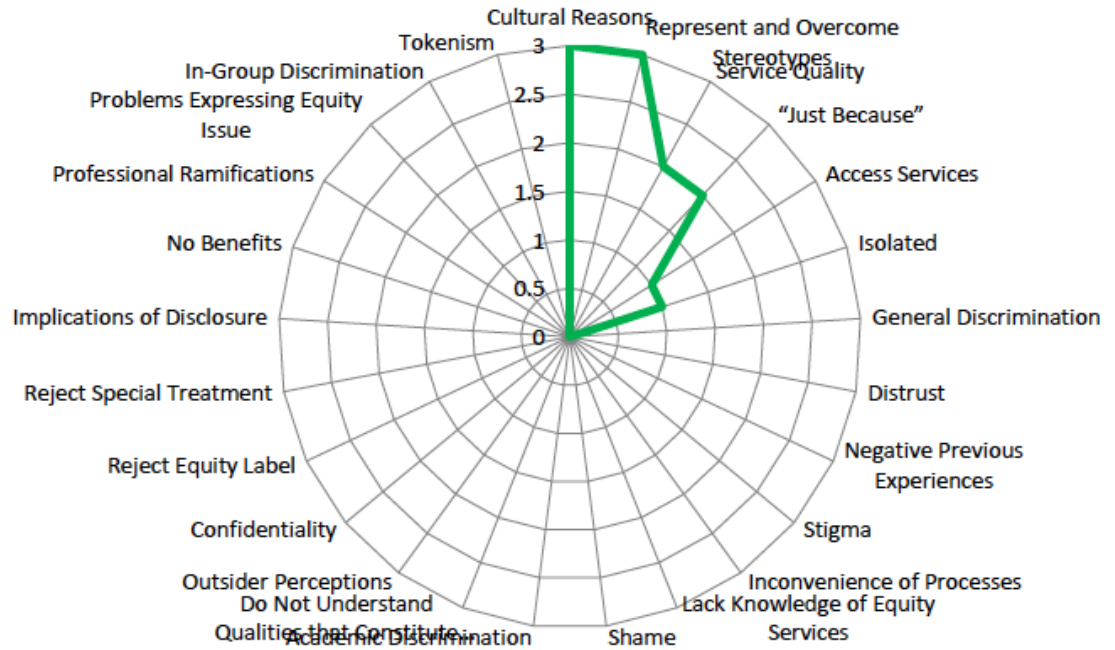
Reasons for non-disclosure

1. Cultural reasons: don't show weakness
2. “Represent and overcome”
3. Rejection of international student stereotypes
4. No particular reason to disclose when English is adequate



Participant 76
NESB


“I was brought up...very, very, old school. In other words, it’s always mind over matter, you should work as hard as the next person and you shouldn’t get any special treatment I didn’t want it to be like that and I know, that these are the certain things that come with disclosing that.”



Are there other options for disclosure?

Online tools have potential as gateways to support

	Previously undisclosed
Short-term issue	77%
Long-term issue	37.5%
Disability	90%
Total	70%

An aerial photograph of a modern university campus at dusk. The image shows several multi-story brick buildings with large windows, some of which are illuminated from within. In the center, there is a large, paved plaza with several rectangular green lawn areas. People can be seen walking on the plaza. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the primary light sources being the building windows and streetlights. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangle is overlaid on the left and center of the image, containing white text.

Policy recommendations

1. Offer staggered options for disclosure
2. Facilitate interactions between equity services and academic staff to encourage awareness.
3. Educate students on programs and services, with clear guidelines on accommodations and the disclosure process.
4. Encourage cross-university collaboration
5. Encourage a wider understanding of equity group membership.
6. Embrace inclusive practice to reduce reliance on disclosure

A nighttime photograph of a building entrance. A central walkway leads up a set of stairs to a building with large glass windows. The scene is illuminated by warm yellow lights from the building and red light pillars lining the walkway. A black horizontal bar is overlaid across the middle of the image.

Q&A