





# Disability and the HE 'Anxiety Machine': Fitting your own oxygen mask first.

Professor Sally Kift PFHEA
President, Australian Learning & Teaching Fellows
Visiting Professorial Fellow, NCSEHE





#### **Overview**

- What's with that title?
- Why does this matter?
- An apology...
- What are the stressors?
- Happy places & gratitude
- What to do/ Getting up in the morning
  - Good practice
  - Intrinsic motivation
  - Sharing the load/Whole-of-uni approaches
  - Building alliances
  - Silver linings
  - [Self-]Compassion



#### **DISCLAIMER...** and

"We must be careful not to pathologise normal responses to an abnormal situation" Gareth Hughes, 2020

https://bit.ly/32JILdp





#### Universities UK & Student Minds have defined

- "Mental health" as "a spectrum of experience, from good mental health to mental illness and distress" and
- "Wellbeing" to include the "wider physical, social and economic experience".

Universities UK. (2020a, May). *Stepchange: mentally healthy universities*. London: Universities UK <a href="https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange-mhu">https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange-mhu</a>



## The title...

# Disability and the HE 'Anxiety Machine'

HE described as an "Anxiety Machine" (Morrish, 2019)



Pressure Vessels:
The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff

By Liz Morrish
With a Foreword by Professor Mike Thomas





https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2019/05/23/new-report-shows-big-increase-in-demand-for-mental-health-support-among-higher-education-staff/

# FLORENCE + THE MACHINE



# The title...

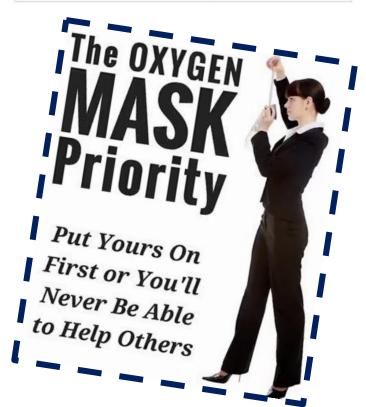
Fitting your own oxygen mask first

# Maintaining Our Well-Being and Fitting Our Own Oxygen Masks First

Professor Rachael Field

Now more than ever it's important that we maintain our own well-being. Much is being asked of us as legal educators. Our students are needing our support and we need to have capacity to be responsive to them — not only in terms of their learning as we move to online approaches, but also just generally. We are having to be adaptive and agile in adopting new ways of being legal academics.

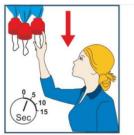






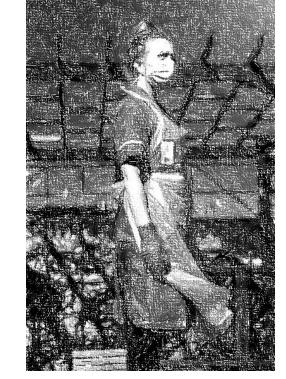
# Why does this matter? 1, 2, 3...











University-as-ecosystem: Wellbeing of staff & students inextricably interlinked



#### **COVID-19's Impact on Disability Practitioners in Tertiary Ed**

# Beyond COVID-19 THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR SURVEY REPORT Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training I WWW.ADCET.EDU.AU

#### It's been hard...

The results highlight the commitment and fortitude of staff in the sector. Despite the challenges... disability practitioners continued to provide students with essential advocacy, adjustments and supports. Often this meant supporting students to navigate around unforeseen obstacles and adapt to change at the same time as they may have been struggling to do the same themselves.

As one respondent commented there was an:

"overwhelming feeling of having to support everyone (staff, students and family) but you are operating in the same "never seen before" vacuum of experience as everyone else. Knowing you need to look after your own mental health but not actually having the time or space to do so because you can't let your team/students/family down in the middle of a global crisis..."

#### thebmjopinion



"The mental health impact of the pandemic is likely to last much longer than the physical health impact, and there will be no vaccine for these mental health impacts" @AKousoulis @mentalhealth

https://twitter.com/bmj latest/status/1261734430693109761



"The long term mental health impact of COVID-19 must not be ignored"

■ April ■ May ■ June

Usual Australian scores



# Why does this matter?



<u>Higher Education Standards Framework</u> (Threshold Standards) 2015



# "There is no health without mental health"

David Satcher, US Surgeon General, 1999



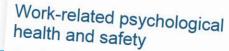
Nearly 1 in 6 Australian workers experience mental ill-health

UTS and the University of Sydney, 2017



Adults spend about 1/3 of their life at work and work can contribute to mental health or ill-health

PWC and Medibank Health Solutions, 2010



A systematic approach to meeting your duties

National guidance material

JANUARY 2019

https://bit.ly/3pknpgD

@KiftSallv

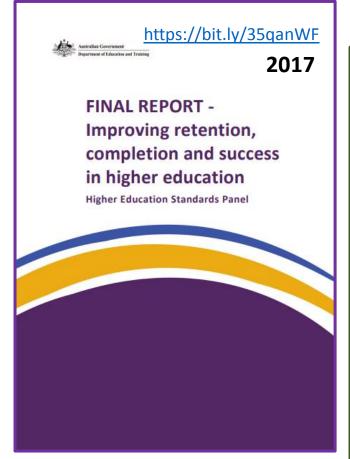


Developing a workplace mental health strategy





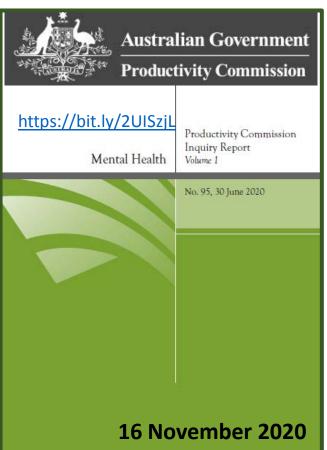
# Why does this matter?



#### **Recommendation 8:**

Every institution should have an institution-wide mental health strategy and implementation plan.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6 — SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF TERTIARY STUDENTS



**Strengthen provider accountability** & expand **MH support for students** (incl international students):

- Continue to expand online MH support & collect data for ongoing improvement (Action 6.1)
- Re **international students**, providers should:
  - → Make arrangements with insurers to ensure Overseas
    Student Health Cover is adequate
  - ★ Ensure counselling services can meet language & cultural diversity needs (Action 6.2)
- All tertiary ed providers to have student MH&W strategy, including staff training, as a registration requirement for TEQSA / ASQA (Action 6.3)
- Develop guidance for non-uni HE & VET providers re how best to meet students' MH needs (Action 6.4)
- TEQSA & ASQA to monitor, collect & disseminate evidence of interventions initiated "to improve mental wellbeing and mental health of students and staff" (Action 6.3)



#### Figure 2: Model for university mental health framework



#### COORDINATED ACTION

#### MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ELEMENTS



#### MENTAL HEALTH SECTOR FOCUS AREAS

- partnerships;
- planning;
- co-design services and supports;
- partner with universities to provide timely, accessible supports; and
- support educational pathways.

#### UNIVERSITY SECTOR FOCUS AREAS

- leadership;
- governance;
- community and environment;
- teaching and learning;
- workforce;
- student services; and
- research and translation.

"The framework views mental health and wellbeing **through** a **student lens**, acknowledging the interconnectedness of the university community." (at 14)

https://www.orygen.org.au/Policy/University-Mental-Health-Framework/Orygen-Uni-MH-framework-draft.aspx

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

## An apology...

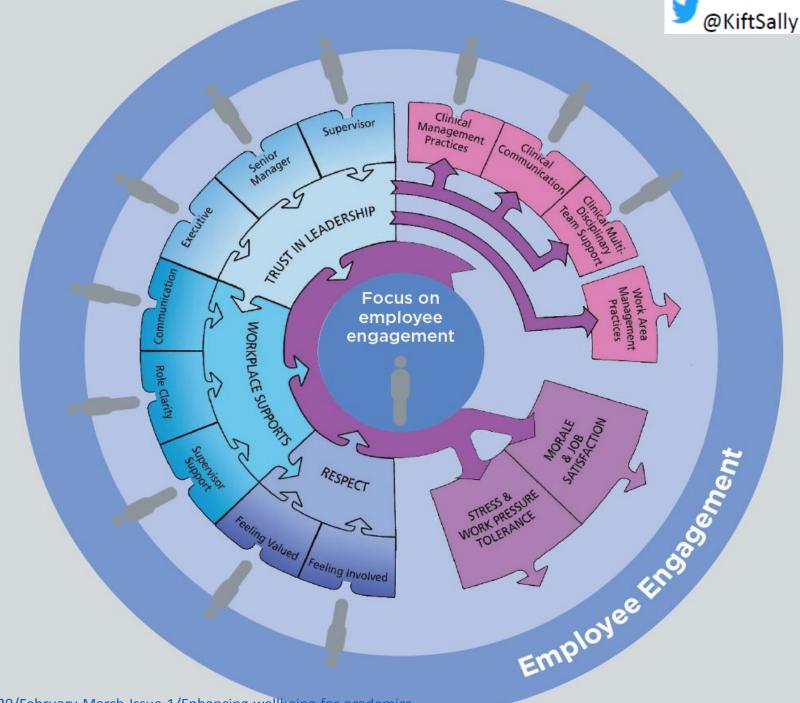
# It's all [mainly] academic[s]! Sorry...

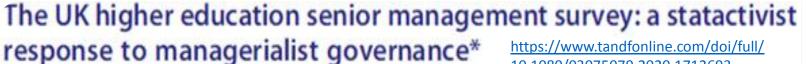
**Enhancing wellbeing for academics** 



..."a 'perfect storm' for academics...
In this volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment...

certain strategies that may enhance and maintain academics' wellbeing. These would complement the growing emphasis on student wellbeing. The two issues are closely linked..."





10.1080/03075079.2020.1712693

Mark Erickson <sup>©</sup><sup>a</sup>, Paul Hanna<sup>b</sup> and Carl Walker<sup>a</sup>

Jan 2020

It's [mainly] academic[s]...

Oct 2020

School of Applied Social Science, University of Brighton, Brighton, UK; University of Surrey, Guildford, UK

Survey of 5888 academic staff across UK HE re the satisfaction with senior managers & uni governance [It was very low].

#### Themes:

- Dominance & brutality of metrics
- Excessive workload
- Governance & accountability
- Perpetual change
- Vanity projects
- The "silenced academic"
- Work and mental health.

The carelessness of entrepreneurial universities in a world risk society: a feminist reflection on the impact of Covid-19 in Australia

Jill Blackmore 💿

Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Burwood, Australia

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07294360.2020.1825348

#### ABSTRACT

In this reflective piece, I consider how the pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of Australian universities. I argue that government and university management have been careless of international students and academics and their health and wellbeing, with significant equity and long-term effects as to the role of the university in a democracy.

"Governments and university management have been careless about the role of the universities in democratic societies, about what knowledge is valued and the work, health and wellbeing of academic and professional **staff** (Lynch et al., <u>2012</u>). Strategies of managerialism and marketisation permeate every aspect of our work practice [globally]."

#### THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

#### @KiftSally

#### The Staff Are Not OK

It's time higher education started paying attention to the health and well-being of the staff members whose work has pulled campuses through the Covid-19 crisis.

# "Affective labour" Emotional labour

By Lee Skallerup Bessette | OCTOBER 30, 2020

"...while the struggles of [academics] and administrators have been well-documented, there hasn't been much attention paid to the <a href="health">health</a> and well-being of the big pool of campus employees who together make up "the staff."...You know, the people who were expected to carry out whatever plans were made... And the people who have had to deal with the aftermath when things abruptly changed.

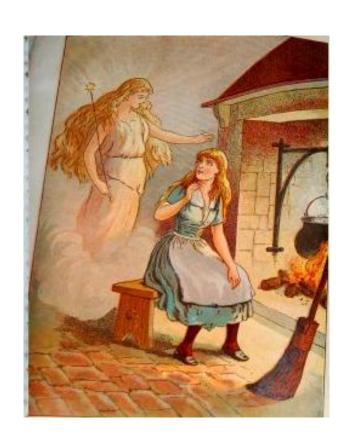


"...I was the host of <u>an Educause webinar</u>, aimed mainly at academic-technology staff and instructional designers, on all the "**affective labor**" they were suddenly having to do amid Covid-19 — that is, all of the **emotional support** that became part of their job, in addition to helping everyone with the technology of remote teaching...

This work is emotionally taxing under normal circumstances. But under Covid-19, it has been overwhelming."



# An apology... Disability & Equity Practitioners: The 'Cinderellas' of HE pandemic response

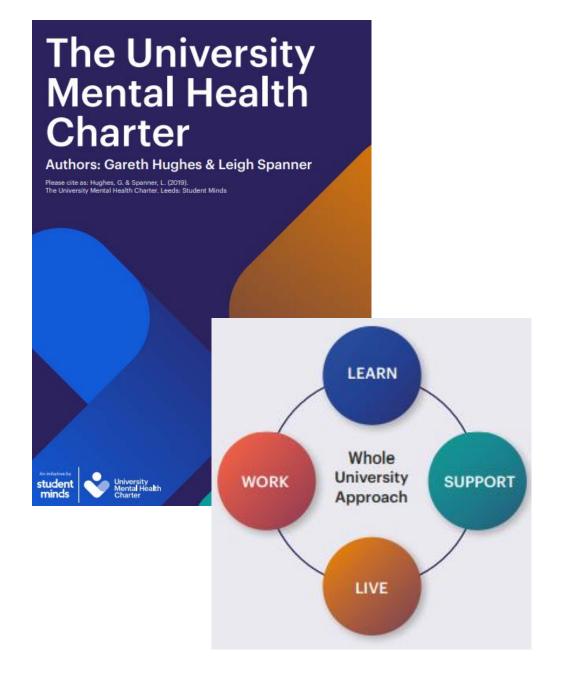


Hardworking, neglected, undervalued and not well understood.

Enabling and supporting those who may never even considered attending the Disability & Equity Ball pre-pandemic...







"...the mental health of university staff is a growing area of focus, with evidence indicating that there have been significant rises in the number of staff accessing counselling and occupational health services. Studies of academic staff have highlighted the potential negative impacts of supporting ill students, ongoing uncertainty about role and boundaries, workload and job insecurity. Some authors have claimed that academics are more likely to be experiencing anxiety than medical or police personnel. At present, little work has been undertaken to investigate the mental health of professional and support staff."

Hughes, G. & Spanner, L. (2019). The University Mental Health Charter. Leeds: Student Minds, at 6

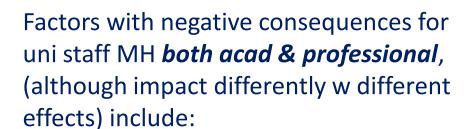
#### What are the stressors?



Mental health can be adversely affected by exposure to "hazards" in the workplace, eg:

- High/Low job demands
- Low job control
- Poor support
- Poor workplace relationships
- Low role clarity
- Poor organisational change management
- Low recognition & reward
- Poor organisational justice
- Poor environmental conditions
- Remote or isolated work
- Violent or traumatic events



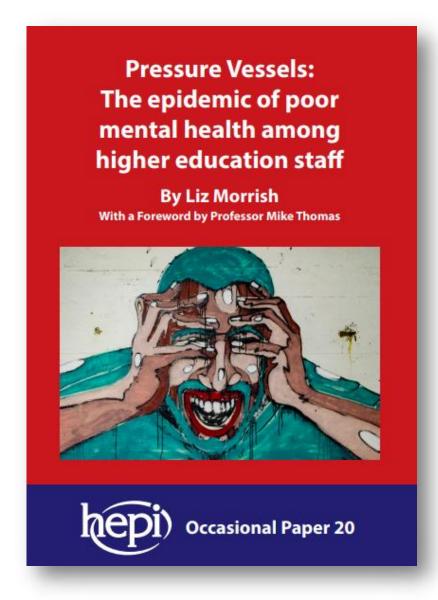


- Workload demands
- Administrative burdens
- Low levels of autonomy over work
- Lack of resources
- Job insecurity
- Poor management
- Extrinsic pressures (eg external audits & performance metrics, outside individual or group control)
- Neo-liberalism: consequences of consumerism & metrics
- Supporting students experiencing poor MH if staff not adequately prepared and supported.



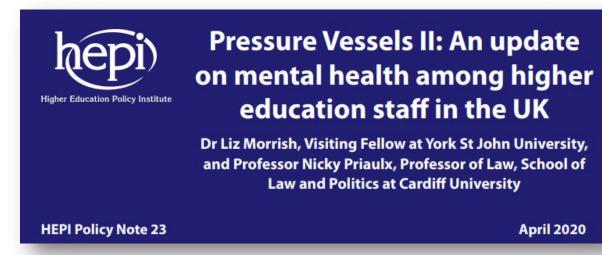
#### **Staff Mental Health in HE: What's the evidence?**





- **Escalation of poor mental health for uni staff over 2009-2016.**
- Fol requests & data from 59 institutions for period 2009/10 2015/16
- Rises in **counselling referrals**: 50% commonly, some unis up to 316%.
- Rises in occupational health referrals: 424% at Uni X; 344% Y Uni
- ♠ Professional staff = 65% of occupational health referrals on avg.

HE has been described as an "anxiety machine"



Update 2019 Fol requests to 17unis for 2016/17 & 2017/18 academic yrs

Across new sample from 2009/10-2017/18, where comparable data:

- Avg rise in staff accessing counselling is 172% (5 unis)
- Avg rise in staff accessing occupational health of 173% (10 unis)

#Jealous of UK whole-of-sector & whole-of-institution approaches #stepchange

**Pressure Vessels:** The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff

By Liz Morrish With a Foreword by Professor Mike Thomas



**Occasional Paper 20** 

Digital wellbeing

Digital wellbeing for you, your

colleagues and

students

Briefing paper for

https://bit.ly/3c7Tm41

"The importance of mental health and wellbeing is in focus now more than ever as people adapt to new ways of living, working and studying. For universities, this means enhancing support for students and staff alike."

> **ASSESSMENT** TOOL

STEPCHANGE: MENTALLY **HEALTHY UNIVERSITIES** 

18 May 2020



An online resource for postgraduate research students to support your wellbeing, learning and research.



Good practice principles to support the digital wellbeing of your students and staff

Iniversities UK

Briefing paper for senior leaders

Digital wellbeing - the impact of technologies and digital services on people's mental, physical and emotional health

What is digital wellbeing?



MENTAL HEALTH IN

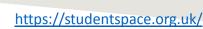
HIGHER EDUCATION

The University

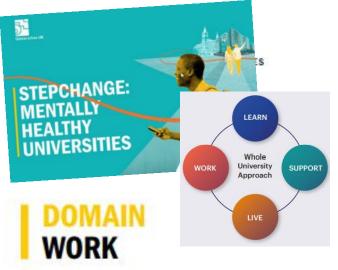
Mental Health

Authors: Gareth Hughes & Leigh Spanner

Charter



https://thewellbeingthesis.org.uk/



Good mental health is central to staff engagement, productivity and creativity. The whole university approach brings together staff and student mental health and wellbeing.



#### STAFF MENTAL HEALTH

- Develop and implement a strategy that aligns staff and student mental health.
- Promote mentally healthy workplaces.
- Build mental health into performance regimes.
- Champion open conversations.
- Deploy effective wellbeing interventions.
- Train line managers and research supervisors to promote mental health.
- Ensure that support is easy to access.

#### STAFF SUPPORTING STUDENTS

- Training for staff to be aware of mental health difficulties and to respond appropriately must be set in a wider framework that sets out roles, boundaries and support available.
- Training should support the development of aware and compassionate communities that enhance mental health as well as responding to crises.

#### DOMAIN SUPPORT

The demand for mental health support among students and staff has increased significantly. Universities currently resource a wide range of services to support those experiencing mental illness.

the wider sector.

#### DOMAIN LIVE

#### MAKING UNIVERSITIES HEALTHY SETTINGS

- Health promotion: promote ways to improve staff and student wellbeing to encourage healthy behaviours (physical activity, healthy eating and sleeping) and to discourage unhealthy behaviours such as abuse of alcohol and drugs.
- Healthy culture: create safe and open cultures that encourage inclusion and diversity and actively oppose bullying, harassment and marginalisation.
- Healthy environment: design work, learning and living spaces that promote good mental health, encourage access to nature and reduce physical risks.

#### WHOLE UNIVERSITY APPROACH: ENABLERS

@KiftSallv

Five cross-cutting themes to embed a whole university approach.

Leadership

ties.

Co-production

Information

Inclusivity

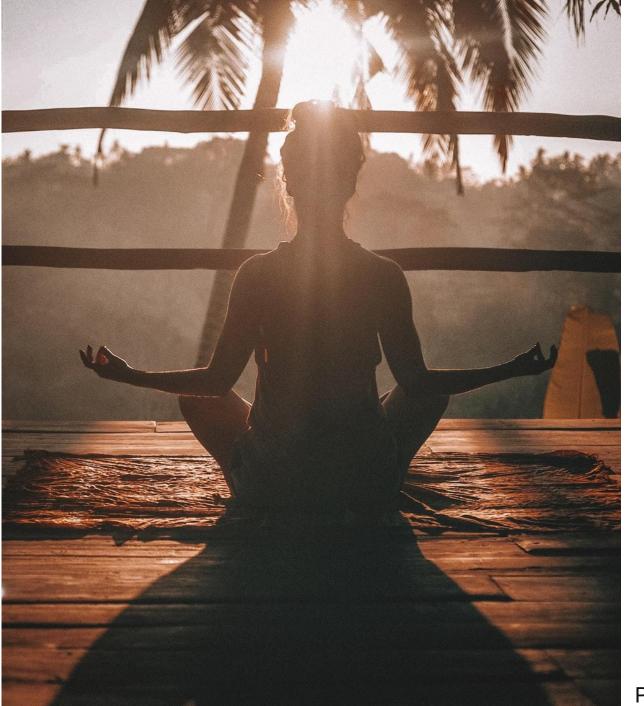
Research and innovation

Healthy community: work in partnership with students' unions and guilds to actively support the social integration of students, support academic achievement and retention, and reduce loneliness and improve wellbeing.

Visible leadership: senior leaders promoting open and supportive conversations is essential to bring about and sustain change.







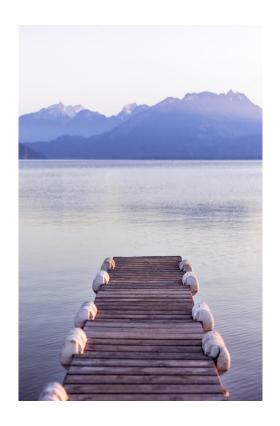


Photo by <u>Aurélien -</u> <u>Wild Spot</u> on <u>Unsplash</u>

Photo by <u>Jared Rice</u> on <u>Unsplash</u>

MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS

by

I just wrote this quote down as soon as he said it. I

of Delaware in parti

Education with a ma

"Jill (Biden) is an educator. It's not just what she does it's who she is. This is a great day for education. You're going to have one of your own in the Whitehouse" Joe Biden Victory speech 2020.





#### ABSTRACT

This Executive Position Paper (EPP) studies student retention in the community college and Delaware Technical & Community College in particular. The paper focuses on four areas of students' needs: academic, psychological, social, and physical. An overview of the paper is given, and an introduction to Delaware Technical & Community College is presented. First, the nature of the pre-tech (developmental) population is discussed. Then, a literature review offers current research by experts in the field. In addition, the results from pre-tech students, faculty, and advisor surveys and interviews are analyzed. Statistical information underscores the problem of retaining students, and personal accounts from students provide insight as to why students drop out. Overall, problem areas are identified, and recommendations and solutions are offered and encouraged.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dBjQwSbsQ16sGX4u8-ktEpkQGImdKueW/view

University



"Nothing inevitable about exclusion": careers support for students with disability



Curtin University



Outreach strategies for indigenous students: increasing impact & university participation



Disability support in higher education: what our students are telling us



On footprints, the university experience & why we need to listen to regional students Regional Students



Pathways to allied health: insights from indigenous health professionals



@KiftSally



Supporting students' mental wellbeing: teaching & learning makes such a difference!







New research: Re-imagining exams: How do assessment adjustments impact on inclusion?









A/Prof. Rola Ajjawi Prof. Margaret Bearman









Lois Harris



Dr Mary Dracup



High-stakes, timed assessments can be problematic for students with disabilities.... Though assessment adjustments are enshrined in legislation, equitable outcomes are not assured, and evidence for their efficacy is unclear... This project shifts the focus to **understanding the** broader context of, and barriers and enablers to, inclusive assessment design. It will use student voice data and workshops with staff and students

to research inclusive assessment development.

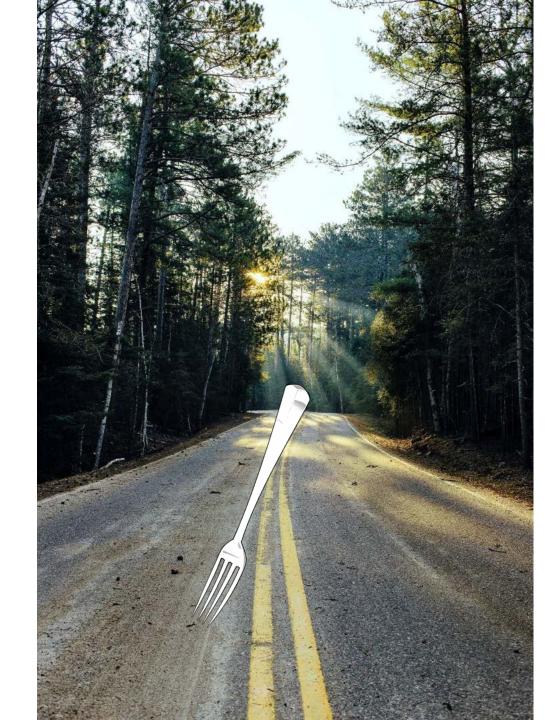


Overwhelming student interest in participating

https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/research-assessment-adjustments-inclusion/ https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/cradle/2020/11/24/an-update-on-re-imaginingexams-our-ncsehe-funded-project/



# What's to be done?\*



\*T&C apply



# What's to be done...? [With a huge disclaimer]











- Stay connected
- Recognise signs of stress
- Identify causes of stress
- Keep things in perspective
- Change the way you talk to yourself
- Gratitude
- Practise relaxation (eg, mindfulness, meditation, music, yoga)
- Fun



- Self-regulationSelf-awareness
- Good boundaries
- Good help-seeking skills
- Good work/life balance
- Resilience (the ability to keep going and bounce back)

#### **Practise CARE-**

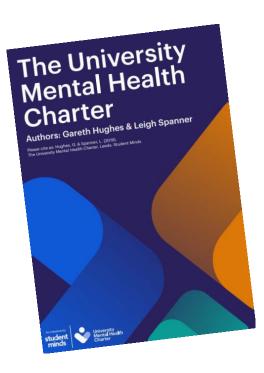
- Connectedness (networks & relationships)
- Awareness (understand your stressors & energisers)
- Resources (using your energy on productive work)
- Effectiveness (maintaining your prof development)

Dr Jenny English, academic work coach.









## **Principles of good practice:**

# Domain 3: Work

In this section

- Staff wellbeing
- Staff development

Staff development



#### **Staff Wellbeing**

- Workplace culture
- Interventions to support good staff wellbeing
- Support for staff who are experiencing problems with their MH

#### **Staff Development**



- Staff training & development on MH
- Role specific training on responding to student mental ill-health & clarifying boundaries
- Ongoing development of staff in MH roles
- Training managers to support staff to support students
- Training managers to support good wellbeing, within their teams & respond appropriately to staff experiencing poor MH





#### **COVID-19 Challenges faced by Disability Practitioners**

- Working from home (27)
- Wellbeing (28)
- Additional workloads(19)
- Communication (12)
- Student Interactions (12)
- Budget Constraints (6)
- Positive or Neutral (10)

# Beyond COVID-19 THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DISABILITY PRACTITIONERS IN THE TERTILARY EDUCATION SECTOR SURVEY REPORT ASSTRALIAN LIABRE 10551 THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN AUSTRALIAN AUGUST 2020

#### Overcoming the Challenges

Other

Processes and/or\_\_\_\_\_ resources - 13

For better proactive support of students (eg re IT support, internet & comms flow).

- Advocacy and/or training for academics
  - 15

- 18

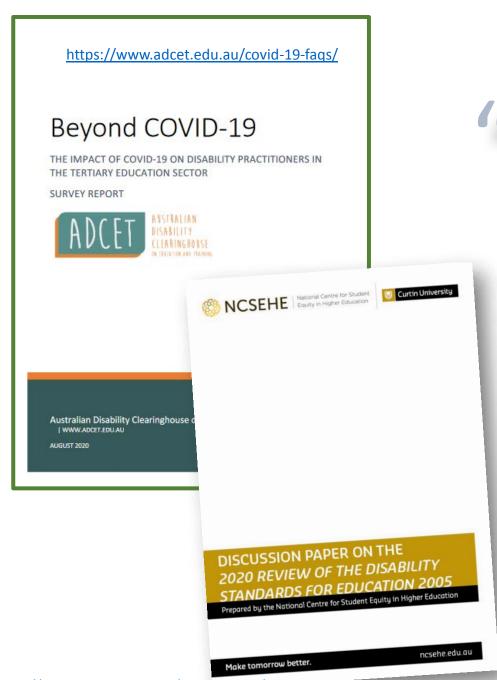
- For awareness re student challenges
- To consider diversity of learners in rapid responses/ UDL
- Policies and/or \_\_\_\_\_\_strategies Elevibility re assess
  - Flexibility re assessment
  - Inclusive pedagogy/ UDL.

Training and/or shared practices
- 34

- **Sharing good WFH practices**
- Regular team check-ins
- Manage wellbeing
- PD for what tech works best
- Helpful training via ADCET,EPHEA & Aust-ed/ATEND

https://www.adcet.edu.au/covid-19-faqs/





#### Beyond COVID-19 – "Silver linings"

One of the **biggest silver lining** to emerge was the **notable shifting** of many practices, attitudes and mindsets towards more **inclusive teaching and universal design**. Necessity seems to have helped quickly **break down some long-standing barriers**.

#### For example:

- Openness to technological solutions
- · Inclusive teaching and learning
- Flexible work arrangements
- Connections, compassion, creativity and cohesion.

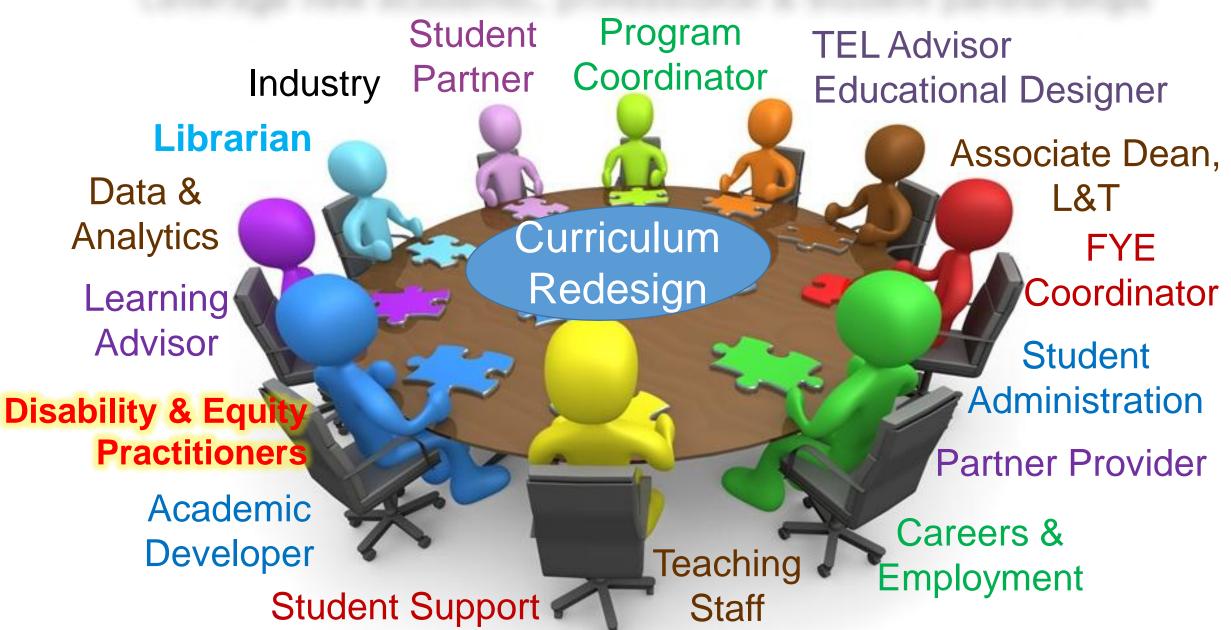
#### Recommendations

1. Host a participative forum to design ways of how to build upon and embed the silver linings that emerged during COVID-19 into ongoing practice and processes, including work practices, universal design, proactive supports and collaborations.

## Never let a crisis go to waste:



#### Leverage new academic, professional & student partnerships



# THE BEST CHANCE FOR ALL

Australia's future depends on all its people, whoever and wherever they are, being enabled to successfully engage in beneficial lifelong learning.

(BRADLEY)



# **Intrinsic Motivation:** The Best Chance for All



Australia's future depends on all its people, whoever and wherever they are, being enabled to successfully engage in beneficial lifelong learning.

#### MATTHEW BRETT March 2019

(AFEFA)

Curtin University

#### Contributing to:

A fair, democratic, prosperous, and enterprising nation; reconciliation with Indigenous Australia; cultural, civic and intellectual life.

#### Achieved by:

An inclusively designed system with multiple entry and exit points; proactive removal of barriers to participation; and tailored support where needed.

#### Accountable through:

An integrated approach to measuring success at institutional and national levels to align performance with policy objectives.

2018





ADCET webinar: COVID-19 & Beyond: Perspectives from TAFE Students



https://www.adcet.edu.au/adcet-podcasts/



Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) has ventured into the world of podcasting. Each month we will bring you stories that explore the landscape of disability within the tertiary education sector. And at times we will broaden the scope to the whole of the equity sector within tertiary education, this will be in partnership with the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) – we would like to acknowledge and thank them for their support. Get in touch if you are keen to be interviewed or can suggest future guests.

ADCET Webinar: COVID-19 & Beyond. Perspectives from TAFE Students



Tim Pitman, Debbie Hindle, Ashley Willcox, Fabian Jones, Damon Tyerman & Rachel Brooke





ADCET Webinar: Online learning for Deaf and hard of hearing students, learnings from COVID-19



Co-facilitated by Debbie Hindle & Brandon Taylor. With Maxine Warrell, Ryan Baker & Haydn Payne

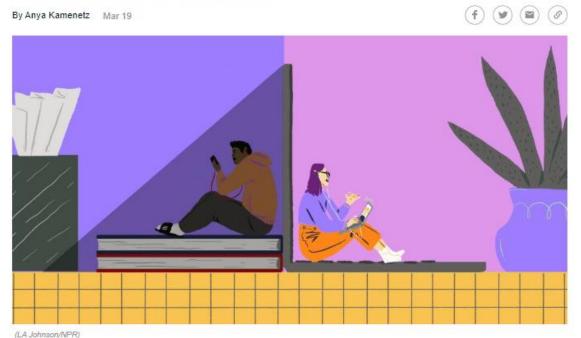
https://www.adcet.edu.au/covid-19-fags/webinars/



## Being [self] compassionate...

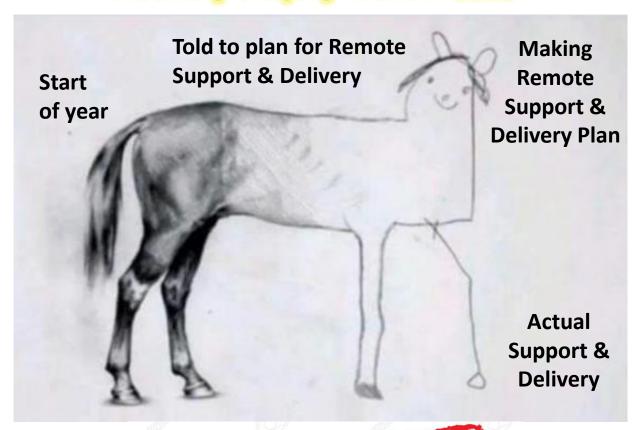
#### **PANIC-GOGY**

'Panic-gogy': Teaching Online Classes During The Coronavirus Pandemic



"The real skill that Panicgogy requires is sort of a critical compassion, if you will, the ability to look at the situation as it really is. Figure out what's going on, how you can operate within that, and how you can be compassionate in that as well."

#### Disability & Equity Work in 2020









Excessive Online Usage

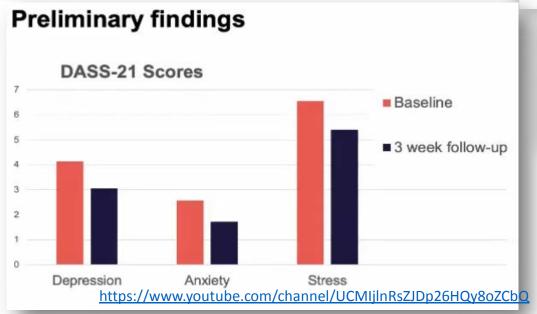






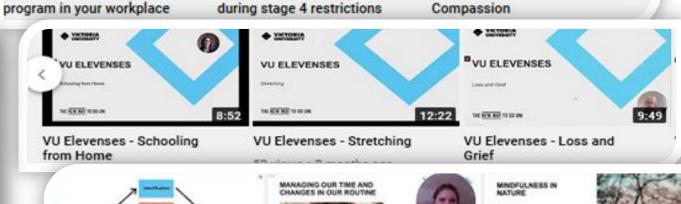


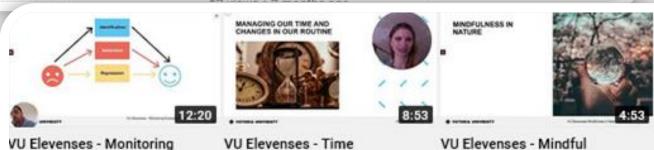
Supporting staff mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19: opinion











Management

Walking in Nature





















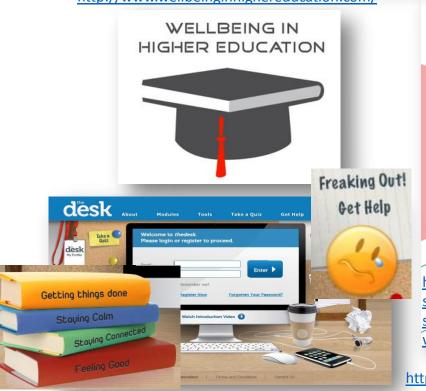














http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/blackdog-institute-mental-health-toolkit-2017.pdf

https://www.thedesk.org.au/login?login

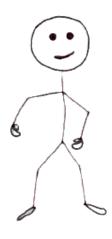


Thank-you!

### Disability 2020: Eternal Flame



This is my thank you dance!



@KiftSally

com/view/thank-you-thankyou-thanks-dance-gif-9394190

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BMp3hnE7Hk

http://www.bitternps.vic.edu.au/?page id=359