Slide 1 (Speaker: Isabel Osuna-Gatty)

## Engaging people with disabilities from multicultural backgrounds

### Susan Beard – Region 23 – Adelaide Metro

### Gary Kerridge – Region 24 – South Eastern SA and Northern Adelaide

### Devan Nathan – Region 3 – Northern Sydney

### Isabel Osuna-Gatty – Region 25 – Central and Northern South Australia

#### Logo: NDCO National Disability Coordination Officer Program - An Australian Government Initiative

**Notes:**

Good afternoon. Before we begin, we would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture.

Today we are on the land of Kaurna (pronounced Ghana) and the Darug people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

As you are all joining today from various places across Australia, we acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the country on which you are on and pay respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

We also pay our respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present here today.

# Slide 2

## What we know so far

## Understanding multicultural communities

## Multicultural people who are Deaf – A case study

## Strategies to engage people with disability from multicultural backgrounds

#### Logo: International Day of People with Disability

**Notes:**

As you all know today is the International Day of people with disability and we would like to shine a light to those people from multicultural communities living and studying in Australia and the intersectionality of multiple challenges that worsen vulnerabilities and deepen the difficulties they face when they settle and adapt to living and participating in the Australian society.

Many multicultural communities face significant and complex challenges, hence requiring greater support in accessing services due to lack of local knowledge, low levels of English Language and Literacy skills, lack of confidence and poor self-esteem.

For many multicultural communities, disability carries a high level of stigma. If they are participating in tertiary education, whether they are from a migrant or humanitarian entrant background or an international student, disclosing disability or reaching out for support becomes a very high hurdle to jump.

The aim of this presentation is to share information, provide strategies and share innovative best practice methods and approaches which will strengthen engagement, organisational capacity and service delivery for tertiary education providers when working with students with a disability from multicultural communities.

To speak about what we know so far, here is Susan who will speak about finding data on people with a disability in multicultural communities.

Slide 3 (Speaker Susan Beard)

## What we know so far

### Definitions

### Problems with data collection and exclusion

#### Decorative Image: A group of people under different coloured and patterned umbrellas

**Notes:**

Statistics for multicultural people with disability nationally and for those attending tertiary study are difficult to source and underrepresent the population and these students’ needs.

To understand this challenge, we need to look at the definition of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people (CALD) for gathering statistics.

**Definitions**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recommends that a minimum core set of indicators is used in addition to their standard set of indicators to indicate CALD and a standard core set that includes.

The minimum variables include

• Country of birth- excluding the so-called Main English-Speaking Countries (MESCs) e.g. Canada USA, UK New Zealand, South Africa

• Main Language spoken at home other than English

• Proficiency in English

However, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) standard set of cultural and language indicators include other indicators such as Country of birth of parents, Language patterns e.g. First language spoken, all languages spoken at home, religious affiliation, year of arrival in Australia, Ancestry

**Problems with data collection and exclusion**

The Federal Institute of Health the Federation of Ethnic Alliance (FECCA) indicates one of the main problems in identifying statistics and indicated by is that government agencies and organisations tend to use minimal data indicators such as country of birth other than M E S C to define Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people and use indicators in isolation to identify people from CALD backgrounds.

There is support by the institute and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation, of People with Disability into much broader indicators, including interpreters, humanitarian status, dual heritage, migrant and a non-restricted length of residency in Australia.

The Institute also indicates there are concerns with collecting data when surveys are provided in English.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) also includes a language indicator and country of birth in non-M E S C.

FECCA further indicates that by identifying only people born in non-MESC countries, this excludes those born in Mainly English-Speaking Countries with parents from different cultural backgrounds.

Approximately 1.4 million Australian born people are also excluded from CALD statistics if they speak English proficiently but identify as another culture.

The emphasis in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse services is to focus on those born overseas at the exclusion of those born in Australia or have a language other than English.

Hence, a person born in Australia with disability with high proficiency in English but with parents born overseas and from different cultures, is not included in Multicultural Statistics.

For this reason, we are using the term ‘multicultural’ to include all variables of and those who identify themselves as having a diverse cultural background.

# Slide 4

## Multicultural Tertiary students with disability

### National Data

### Rich Data- Multicultural Youth Australia Census

### Questions for Consideration

**Notes:**

Multicultural Tertiary students with disability – national data

We would like to give a big thanks to the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) for providing research documents and the following table that provides national data for students with disability and multicultural backgrounds gained from various queries on tables for ABS 2016 and 2018 data.

It is very difficult to source data and we are still exploring how to capture it.

The National Data Multicultural and Disability for people aged between 20 to 24 shows 105 as CALD Minimum Variables as studying in a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), 136 studying at TAFE, 41 studying at university or another Higher Education institution, making that a total of 282.

If you include people born in Australia and MESC, we have 2,441 studying at an RTO, 4,101 studying at TAFE and 4,475 studying at university another Higher Education institution, making this a total of 11,017 students.

But if we add all variables, we have 2,546 students studying at an RTO, 4,237 studying at TAFE and 4,516 studying at university another Higher Education institution, making a total of 11,299 people doing tertiary education at a national level.

If we use a CALD definition with minimal indicators the population for those with disability aged between 20 – 34 attending registered Training Organisations, TAFEs and Universities or Higher Education institutions was 282 compared to 11,299 nationally.

This is a drastic flattening of statistics and with implications for resourcing and how these students are assisted.

**Rich Data- Multicultural Youth Australia Census**

Further studies confirm the problems with lack of rich data, the Multicultural Youth Australia Census by University of Melbourne consulted and surveyed 1,920 multicultural youth.

One quarter were aged 18 to 20. Almost another third were aged 21 to 25.

17.2% of the youth respondents had disability including 7.3% unsure if they had disability.

A number of participants commented that the CALD category has a tendency to flatten out their identities that are multi-faceted and complex not reflected by minimum data collection and the terms ‘migrant, ‘refugee’, and to some extent, ‘multicultural’, were perceived as labels applied to young people by outsiders.

The survey found that 27% of one cohort of youth identified themselves with a specific religion and culture, while the ABS had 6% for the same cohort in the general youth population.

The report noted that this rich data is of course not captured by ABS indicators.

Rich data could be collected in a way that supports identity, so we can create programs and policies which better foster inclusion.

In order to achieve improved supports, national consistency in data collection is required including asking individuals the question what cultural background do you identify with?

Of course, as we know we must also be mindful of generalising group statistics to the individual with disability.

**Questions for Consideration**

I would like to leave you with some questions to think about.

Who is included who is excluded in your identification of multicultural students and or program participants?

How do you know you are gathering and using feedback appropriately, providing the best possible resources and services to multicultural students with disability?

Now, I will pass the baton to Devan who will tell you about understanding Multicultural communities.

Slide 5 (Speaker Devan Nathan)

## Understanding multicultural communities

### Barriers people with disability face when engaging with educational institutions

### Perceptions from parents and students

#### Image: A group of two men and two women from diverse backgrounds standing in an open park holding speaking bubble signs

**Notes:**

People with disabilities from multicultural communities face many barriers and among them are common language and cultural barriers. The thought process in the mother tongue is very common among students who speak English as a Second Language despite having spent some reasonable years studying locally.

This is more challenging for people with disabilities who need to adjust to not only the new environment but also to the academic requirements. Factors such as culture, gender, social life or even food may have an impact on education.

It is a common belief among many multicultural communities that by disclosing disability the chances of securing employment will be difficult particularly if it is a hidden form of disability. It is a common preconceived idea that the information of a student with a disability is passed down to others in the future.

The concept of supports to engage in employment is still very much new to multicultural communities and often is prejudiced against the recruitment system. Some community members’ experiences from their home country may have contributed to this. Older generations may not have the knowledge and understanding of current practices, quite often reflect on their own experiences, and try to relate those to their children.

# Slide 6

## Understanding multicultural communities

### Disclosing disability and stigma

### Perceptions from education providers

#### Image: 3 young women and 2 men from diverse backgrounds sitting in front of trees smiling at the camera.

**Notes:**

The experience of students and parents of children with a disability from multicultural communities prevents them to disclose their disabilities to any third party outside their circle of confidence. This is mainly because in some communities, disability is perceived as a bad omen, a curse on the family, or even shame. Most families repress disability especially if the disability is hidden.

Parents and close contacts at large will keep disability information concealed, as there are other underlying reasons that go beyond employment such as marriage, social status, and social image, and so on.

Parents from multicultural communities are very reluctant to talk about their children’s disability within their community, let alone to an educational institution. A disability is not only seen as a condition of a person but rather linked to family background, cultural beliefs, and in some instances, it affects the social life of other family members i.e. marriage of other siblings.

Many educational institutions in western societies lack understanding of the issues facing people with disabilities from multicultural communities.

Some people with disabilities from multicultural communities who may not have completed their early education in Australia, would need some time to adjust to schooling in Australia, not only because of the language, but also because their previous schooling experiences may be very different.

Due to this, students can often be misunderstood as not having the capacity to comprehend what they are being told. Educators need to allow them time to process extra information mentally, especially as most are learning and/or improving their English language skills in addition to understanding and cognitively processing the content of what is being presented in class.

Multicultural communities from western countries are different from the multicultural communities from other parts of the world. There are many similarities among education institutions from other western countries as how they operate in the context of people with disability. Therefore, there is no one size fits all solution when engaging people with disabilities from multicultural backgrounds. Even among western countries, cultural differences may affect people with disabilities when participating in education.

Education providers need to take into consideration the intersectionality of all these factors when engaging with people with a disability from multicultural communities.

Now, to provide you with some strategies and approaches and how to accomplish this, here is Isabel.

Slide 7 (Speaker Gary Kerridge)

## Multicultural people who are Deaf – A case study

### Major barriers

### Language and social development

### Trauma

### Access to support and technology

#### Image: Deaf Bhutanese students and teachers from TAFE standing in front of the town of Robertson's sign. Source: Northern Argus News

**Notes:**

There is a large Bhutanese community in Adelaide. Many came escaping political turmoil. They brought with them family. Some of these family members have disabilities. The Bhutanese community in Adelaide numbers over 3,000. Part of this community is a group of 30 Deaf and hard of hearing people. They have been supported by Adelaide TAFE for several years.

I have also become aware and met a lady from South East Asia who is deaf. She has not been successful in her efforts to study and faces many language and practical barriers, not just to study, but to access services and participate in the community. I will touch briefly on this at the end.

Many of the Deaf and hard of hearing students have language deprivation which impacts on their ability to develop age appropriate behaviours and the required knowledge to learn.

Some of them have never been in a formal learning environment and do not know how to behave or respond appropriately in such an environment. The lack of social behaviour development can lead to behaviours not generally associated with adults and even mistrust and conflict.

Language development is variable. Some know some Nepalese sign language, some only know a bit, some have no sign language and little spoken language. The level of their language is extremely variable. AUSLAN and spoken English for many is their third and fourth language, and for some proficiency in their own spoken or sign language is minimal. This causes many learning and communication issues.

Learning needs to be innovative. Utilising native AUSLAN signers to assist them to develop proficiency in AUSLAN, classes can be a combination of visual learning, spoken language and native AUSLAN signers all working together to achieve learning goals.

Progress can be slow. But there is one student who has become a spokesperson for the group. He supports them to participate in the community, interprets advocates and takes part in teaching.

To develop good language and social skills, they need access to appropriate technology and support such as hearing aids, audiologists, speech therapists, as sign language models often does not occur. Many have never been fitted with hearing aids and this impacts on speech and language development. Their communication can often be only rudimentary because they miss the critical language and speech development milestones as a young child which is very hard to overcome in adult hood.

Many of these students exhibit trauma from being refugees and having lived in a dangerous country, they have been often victims of human rights abuses and political upheaval. There were comments made that some of these students had been abused in educational settings in their country and this has caused further trauma and mistrust of people seen to be in authority.

While this group is unique, this case study highlights some of the complexities and adjustments that are sometimes required to support people with a disability from multicultural backgrounds to participate ion tertiary education and training.

As I was saying at the start of this talk, I have recently been supporting a deaf lady from South East Asia. I am unsure of the circumstances of her arrival in Australia. She has been here for 24 years.

She exhibits all the issues that I have already spoken about. But I was asked to assist her for issues around her NDIS plan. It is a difficult thing to do because she has limited English and AUSLAN.

She commented that she had tried to study but found it too hard. She could not communicate well with other students and found it hard to understand what was going on. She found it harder to seek help.

I found it interesting that even though she seems to have some proficiency in her own language and she is able to write in Thai, no one appears to have ever utilised this skill as part of her support. They focused on AUSLAN which was probably her fourth language of which she has limited knowledge of.

She also has a number of needs such as access to the NDIS, as well as legal and medical services. It is clear she has little understanding of what is required in either of these areas. She thinks the NDIS, as an example, will pay for everything. It is very hard to explain to her how various funding supports work.

We are now currently exploring the addition of using her first language interpreter as well, even if this is written for her. So in a meeting you possibly will see a spoken language interpreter in her language writing to her but speaking to others, there will be a proficient AUSLAN user in the meeting to try and break concepts down into AUSLAN where needed as well an AUSLAN interpreter because the AUSLAN user in the meeting is a Deaf person who is a native signer. I raise this case to show the various layers of complexity that exist. These obviously impact on learning at all levels, including tertiary education.

I will now hand you back to Isabel.

Slide 8 (Speaker: Isabel Osuna-Gatty)

## Approaches and Strategies

### Inclusive Engagement

### The power of the story

### Ask questions

## Trauma-informed

### Don’t judge the book by its cover

### Create a collective culture

**Notes:**

As we have heard so far, we do not have a complete picture of people with disability from multicultural communities mainly due to the different methods of collection and limited research available.

Whether the student is from a migrant/refugee background or an international student. The student usually arrives with limited financial resources, most take the advantage of being able to work to up to 20 hours per week. When they arrive, they have to get used to a different way of life, culture and communication. Depending on the country of birth and the course they are undertaken, they would have English as a Second Language. They could also have been surviving experiences of trauma and social isolation.

As educational providers, we need to be mindful of the intersectionality of factors impacting people with a disability from multicultural backgrounds, this information will allow us to understand this cohort better and it prepares us to design strategies for service and engagement.

**Inclusive engagement:**

Multicultural people come from collective societies, where resources and information are shared for the survival and the betterment of the community. When settling in Australia, whether they are humanitarian entrants, migrants or international students, they need to learn the idiosyncrasies of life in an individualistic society.

If you have a student who made an appointment to see you, it is quite possible that they are looking to connect with someone who could possibly give them the answers and the guidance they are looking for, as they may not know many people in the course. It is not just about the course or the educational provider, it is a bit deeper, they need to find someone they can trust and build a relationship with.

We connect by our stories, try to find a commonality, tell them a bit about you. If you know something about their country, culture, music, art, tell them what you know and ask questions. (Do not talk about conflict, politics, or religion).

This process will make them at ease and the barriers between you will start to get smaller. They might start asking for assistance with an assignment, but they are sending around to check if you would be the one, they can share more about their situation. Usually they do not know the type of assistance they will need, so offer this information once they have spoken to you about their situation.

**Trauma-informed:**

Once, I had a student who was picked up on a bus to be taken to his campus which was located in a rural area. His classmates encouraged him to take a taxi to the main street to do his shopping. He said that he walked everywhere during his first weeks of arrival because taxis looked like police cars, until he took a ride with a friend and learned the difference. He said his heart jumped a beat every time he saw a taxi.

It is important to ask your student where you would like to meet. It is possible that an open space or a very close space could trigger memories. If you are an educator, do not use the student or the student’s culture or country of birth to illustrate examples.

We like people and we like sticking together. Work with your student council to create an opportunity for students to meet and share. Some other students might be interested in learning about other cultures or just simply meeting new friends. This will create a culture of inclusion, and provide that collective culture, students feel comfortable with.

# Slide 9

## Strengths-based

### Your students are the experts

### Promote resilience

### Build trust

## Culturally-appropriate

### Be open and flexible

### Adapt to the circumstances

**Notes:**

**Strengths-based:**

Start your conversation from a glass half full perspective, what do they know? What are the skills they bring? How would like to work together?

Their strengths will inform the design of your strategy, this will promote resilience and you will be able to pick up different cultural ecologies.

This approach will also allow you to obtain more valid information as you will be actively engaging with the student building trust and rapport. Then, it will be easier to talk about supports and services.

**Culturally-appropriate:**

Being culturally appropriate means to respectful and aware of other people’s cultures and beliefs.

Be mindful of the different English language skills and abilities, remember Gary’s case studies, AUSLAN is another language. Give them time to tell you their story.

If they have disclosed their disability, ask them if it is okay for them to talk about it. Do not correct them, remember they are telling what they know.

Ask them how you can assist them? If they do not know, give examples of how you have been able to help others.

Once you have built rapport and trust, you can provide them with other information about their circumstances if this is important to clarify.

Remember, you will not solve all the problems during your first consultation. It might take several appointments to assist the student.

Connect with your local Migrant Resource Centre, they usually have a list of multicultural services available. They will also have the list of the multicultural groups available in your local area. Centrelink also have Multicultural Services Officers who could have a list of available services in your region. Each state and territory has dedicated multicultural health, women’s and mental health services, check you’re your state and territory Department of Health website for more information.

As the Portuguese author of the Alchemist Paulo Coelho said: The world changes with your example and not with your opinion.

Thank you.

# Slide 10

## National Disability Coordination Officer Program – Multicultural Project

### Action-research activities

### Gaps and barriers

### Improve service delivery

#### Logo: NDCO National Disability Coordination Officer Program - An Australian Government Initiative

## Get in touch!

### If you would like to know more or would like to participate in our multicultural project, please contact Isabel Osuna-Gatty at [Isabel.osuna-gatty@sydney.edu.au](Isabel.osuna-gatty%40sydney.edu.au)

#### Poster: Let's celebrate - International People with disability 3 December - idpwd.com.au

**Notes:**

#### Currently, Susan, Devan, Gary and myself are involved in a multicultural project to look into gaps and barriers people with a disability from multicultural communities face when accessing and participating in tertiary education, with the purpose of developing innovative best practice approaches which will strengthen engagement and communication with people with a disability from multicultural communities, so we can improve service delivery and participation.

#### If you would like to know more or get involved, please do not hesitate to contact me.

#### We have a couple of minutes for any questions.

#### Thank you very much for your participation, have a great afternoon!