ELICIA: Dr Paul Harpur will be presenting a panel session, facilitating a panel session on how to drive change through Disability Action Plans. Dr Harpur is from the University of Queensland and is an Associate Professor with the law school, chair of their Disability Inclusion Group and is a former Fulbright scholar and former Paralympian. He is an academic Fellow with the Harvard Law School Project on Disability, an International distinguished Fellow with the Burton Black Institute, Syracuse University, a non-executive director with Help Enterprises Limited and guide dog user. Dr Harpur was recognised to receive a 2019 citation for outstanding contributions to student learning as part of the Australian Award for University Teaching Program. Dr Harpur's citation is for outstanding leadership in translating disability strategy into a vision of ability, equality and core university business. He believes in ability equality strongly and works for a world where we no longer talk about us and them and, instead, just talk about us. And Dr Harpur, that is absolutely close to my heart. So I am very much looking forward to your panel presentation.

JANE: Hi, it's Jane here. Paul, if you could try turning on your mic, I can't do it from this end. I have asked you to unmute and turn your video on.

PAUL: There we go. Am I muted now? Can you hear me?

JANE: You are unmuted. Yes, definitely you are unmuted.

PAUL: And you can see me?

JANE: I haven't got you in my screen yet. Elicia?

ELICIA: Not yet, no.

PAUL: Well - - -

JANE: I will just try once more. You might see something pop up. I am asking you to share your video. You might get a notice.

PAUL: There we go. Sorry about that.

JANE: There we go. Brilliant. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL: Sorry about that. We had them all muted and video off because we didn't want my face imposed upon everything else. So welcome, everyone. And this is indeed a topic I'm incredibly passionate about. I've been very privileged at the University of Queensland to be able to drive some change through our Disability Action Plan. Now, this is just one measure. And I don't want to say that it's the only measure because it's one aspect of many aspects across the university where people are doing many, many good things, and it's just an amazing experience to see things come together, and today I'm very honoured to be here and able to talk about this and bring - we're having such a great panel to hear from such a diverse group. So today we've got up on the screen - I'm totally blind that's why I've got headphones on, just to let you know, I'm not listening to the cricket or football. So this is being recorded. If you wanted to come back and listen to anything or if you're saying anything adverse against your employer. There's a chat box if you want to comment generally and there's a Q&A box. If you have a question for the panel at the end we're going to revert - we're going to have those asked to the panel. Please, if you could put the questions in the Q&A box, and if it's already put there but you really, really want it asked you could put it again. There is another way, apparently. Now, what I'm going to do is going to flip to the panelists and I'm going to ask them to briefly introduce themselves because hearing too much from me I find in the Zoom world pretty tedious. I might go first to Jodie. Jodie, could you introduce yourself?

JODIE: Thanks, Paul. My name is Jodie Hoger. I work for TAFE New South Wales. And I'm one of the teacher consultants here at TAFE New South Wales, and I am a vision specialist. Thanks, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. Thank you. Herman, could you introduce yourself, please.

HEMANT: Thank you, Paul. Hi everyone. Lovely to meet you. My name is Herman. I'm from Bendigo Kangan Institute and I’m the Manager of Student Success. I look after all of our support functions, our library functions and our volunteer program at Bendigo Kangan. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL: Over to you, Samantha.

SAMANTHA: Thanks, Paul. My name is Samantha Tiernan. I'm the Manager of Disability and Access at Charles Sturt University. I'm working in this space because I feel passionate about disability and equal access for all. Thanks, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. And Dagmar, would you please introduce yourself?

DAGMAR: Thanks, Paul. My name is Dagmar Kminiak, I'm the manager of disability services at the University of Sydney. And I am passionate about changing the culture at the university as well as ensuring that the focus remains to be the implementation of universal design for learning principles in all areas of university life and I believe the Disability Action Plan is critical to achieving this.

PAUL: So what I’m going to do now, I'm going to ask the panelists a series of questions and they're going to respond, each of them in turn, to those questions. So that will give us - we've designed the questions in a way that we hope is informative and interesting and will engage this topic. So I'm going to start by - where is it - I might ask Samantha, how does - so asking about how does consultation inform the development of your action plan?

SAMANTHA: Thanks, Paul. The most recent accessibility action plan for Charles Sturt has involved a range of consultation. Initially, we reviewed the previous plan and also had a look at all the plans that were in the sector and had a review of what other universities were doing. Some draft ideas were provided to the Vice Chancellor leadership team because it's important that those ideas are provided to them to think about whether they can be operationalised. There's no point having things in a plan that can't come into fruition. So each of the Vice Chancellor leadership team members took those draft ideas and consulted their senior leaders. A sample of students and staff were provided with a draft plan to have a look at. That involved the Student Experience Committee. And also draft plan - our draft plan was reviewed by our equity and diversity committee, which also has student representation. Right at the moment the plan has just been recently sent out for wider consultation with staff and students and following that feedback it's hoped that the final plan will be provided to the Vice Chancellor leadership team for sign-off in mid-December. Implementation, progress towards achieving the goals and objectives that are set out in our plans at Charles Sturt University, all of the progress is reported through the equity and diversity committee. So that meets every quarter. And each of those VCLT members have objectives that are allocated to their area and they're responsible for ensuring that those objectives are met, and then they report through to that committee to provide an update. Thanks, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. Well, that’s really important. It's good to see good wide consultations. And Dagmar will also be able to comment on how you guys have developed consult - sorry, consulted the development of your strategy.

DAGMAR: Yeah, thanks, Paul. So for the University of Sydney, consultation really has been a key step in the development process of our current and previous plan. And I personally strongly believe that consultation with all stakeholders, including people with disability, is actually critical to having a plan that is relevant to every institution. So in terms of, I guess, our institution plans, they form the development 2013... that was our previous plan. We actually commenced the consultation process in 2012 with a university-wide staff and student survey where we really wanted to understand the experience of students and staff with disability and to identify what the key issues were for the institution. So the information which we received was invaluable and it really directly shaped the plan. For that particular plan the key issues which we identified through the consultation were specifically around the culture of the university, the need for disability awareness training, as well as the need to improve the accessibility of the university physical environment. Before the current plan we actually utilised the 2012 staff and student survey as the basis for our 2018 survey where we actually retained many of the same questions because we really wanted to measure the impact of the previous plan. So that allowed us to do that. And students from disability services were sent email reminders by disability services encouraging participation in the survey. So I personally believe that during every consultation process that it's really important to provide stakeholders with different ways in which they can actually engage in the provision of feedback. And so we also held some focus groups to guide the development of the plan. And the consultation phase for the current plan really highlighted the importance of incorporating strategies, initiatives and training to address mental health issues in order to support students and staff. And the second part of the question in terms of implementation, I really believe that having a plan which is based on, you know, some strong consultation, I believe it will ultimately assist with stakeholders and the university management are much more likely to look at committee financial resources as well as providing top-down approach support when the directives are directly supported by stakeholder feedback. That's been my experience.

PAUL: Thank you. Well, on that, approaching higher management, Disability Action Plans when they're lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission are signed off by the VC, Vice Chancellor or the CEO. So I thinkI might turn now to look at how do you or - where is it - how have you approached them about the Disability Action Plan. So I might ask first Hemant, how have you guys done that?

HEMANT: Thanks, Paul. Just to give you a bit of context, so we've got one CEO for two brands. So we actually operate under the Bendigo TAFE brand and the Kangan Institute brand. The challenge we've had historically is our plans were quite disparate, so we had a plan for Bendigo TAFE and a plan for Kangan Institute. They were quite out of date and they also only covered an annual cycle. Coming up with our new plan the first thing we did was we actually assigned an executive sponsor to that. And during the development phase of the entire plan we as a working group validated with key executive in terms of the actions, the deliverables and how, most importantly, the lines to our strategy. Following that what we did was we had two rounds of consultation with the executive. The first one was framed more as a little bit of a draft. So here is a draft plan, we had significant discussion at the executive around actions that need to be updated, further consultation that needed to be undertaken, and then subsequently we went back to the executive the second time. For us now the executive has approved the plan and next steps for us would be the plan will be presented to the board subcommittees for endorsement and finally up to the board in 2021 for endorsement. The other thing we also did with our plan is, in terms of connecting senior people in our organisation, we actually track our plan through the project management office, so all of the key deliverables, and that ensures that we've got visibility at the highest governance level of the organisation. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. Now, I might ask Jodie that same question: how have you approached the VC or CEO of your organisation and included them in this process?

JODIE: So with TAFE New South Wales we have a managing director, and a newly formed focus group which comprises, basically, of what we call the chiefs of the various pillars within TAFE New South Wales. So from the beginning - with TAFE New South Wales still being new in relation to, you know, over the last three years or so, coming together from various institutes across the State into one TAFE, there has been a lot of changes and ongoing changes in relation to structure. So basically, we formed a coordination committee called the DIAC, Disability Inclusion Action Coordination Committee, and we established connections into the various arms of the organisation to have representation, so that that representation can then take information back to their areas, feed it up through their channels, and ultimately what will happen is that the focus group which is chaired by our managing director will then endorse our Disability Inclusion Action Plan. We're still in the processes of the development of our Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and so one of the other measures that we're about to launch into is real engagement. One of our committee members talks about heads and heart. And that we want to really, I suppose, engage the various levels of middle management to really have them understand what the spirit of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is about. And so people start thinking with their heads at that management level in how they can embrace the strategies that we will be looking at implementing, but also from their hearts that they actually believe in the spirit of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, so that ultimately whilst we are working at, I suppose, trying to create something that is really quite large - take New South Wales - is massive. So looking at how we then engage our leaders so that we've got true inclusion of people with disability throughout the organisation, and ultimately that that not only in spirit, as it is at the moment, is endorsed by our leader, our managing director, but that once we have finalised the implementation plan, that we've then got that endorsement from our leaders to really start to step out and create change through the implementation.

PAUL: Well, thank you. I mean, briefly, our consultation at UQ is about to start again. We're not quite sure how we're going to go about it because we've been making a lot of good gains. A few years back the first one I was involved with, I was approached by the - essentially the Vice Chancellor would I be interested in helping. I gave a hand and I ended up chairing the committee and we made a lot of changes and in the iteration we've got now I wrote a report and I tried really hard sweeping changes and they were all pretty much adopted. Then the vision for UQ and ability and equality is a division I put out at the end of - a paper I wrote with Michael Stone from Harvard and we put out this university champions of change, the ideal place, and that's our vision here. I was a bit surprised how willing everyone has been to accept the plan and changes. And now with our new Vice Chancellor she's very committed to inclusion, I just got appointed to the Senate Committee for diversity inclusion. Now, she's joined that with the provost. So going forward, I think we're going to try and go - try some pretty transformational change. So we're in a very lucky place. I actually can't believe where we're at at the moment so that's really positive. One thing we don't have is - in the plan at the moment that a person with a disability has to be the person chairing the group that monitors it. I have been but obviously that's one thing I'm going to try and argue for. It's hard because there's not always a person with a disability at the university in a high rank position. We included disability in the staff survey of all people, so across the university disability is a factor. So that's provided some good feedback on where we've got issues but trying to identify someone championing this can be hard. So on that issue, how are people with disabilities involved with monitoring and implementing the Disability Action Plan, that's a really important question. I think I'm going to ask Hemant. How have you guys approached that, people with disabilities implementing and monitoring the plan?

HEMANT: Thank you, Paul. Our plan has been designed around four key outcome areas that have been identified in the Disability Discrimination Act. In addition to that we referenced the requirement under the Victorian standards of education. We focused on three key target groups in our plan, which is staff, students and volunteers. In terms of the actual development of the plan itself we formed a working group in November of 2019. And the working group included staff members and students self-identifying with a disability who were largely involved in the development, implementation and review of the plan. One of the core components that comes through in our plan is the student voice, and that's something that anchors us back to our actual strategic goal of putting the student at the centre of everything that we do. What we also then did is that once we had a draft plan in place and in terms of actually evaluating effectiveness of it, we also engaged with a number of external subject matter experts, so that includes people like the Bendigo City Council, we also approached Anthony from ATEND to review our plans and give us some feedback. In developing our plan and actually implementing it, we really tightened up the measures of success to ensure that it makes a positive difference on their experience, so whether it's staff, students or volunteers, and what we've done to measure that a little bit better is actually incorporate some accessibility and inclusion questions in all of our staff, student and volunteer surveys. One of the things that did come up for me, particularly engaging with people living with a disability to develop this plan is the revised terminology. So initially when we embarked on this journey it was going to be a Disability Action Plan. As an institute we realised this is much bigger than just disability, this is about accessibility and inclusion. So we've actually badged ours as accessibility and inclusion plan for the institute. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. And I think, if I could turn to Dagmar now to ask that same question. How are people with disabilities been included in implementing and monitoring your plan?

DAGMAR: Yeah. Thanks, Paul. So the implementation and monitoring of our plan was previously overseen by the Disability Action Plan consultant group. And it's currently overseen by the disability improvement action plan implementation group where the membership of the group actually consists of staff and students with disabilities, and it's what you mentioned before. One of the co-chairs of the current group actually identifies as having a disability. So that's really important. The purpose of the group is really to implement the objectives of the plan which specifically includes reviewing and reporting on the outcomes of the implementation of the plan, prioritising the strategies of the plan, so implementation, monitoring the development and implementation of the local faculty and procession or service unit plans, providing biennial reports to the university executive committee on, you know, the progress of the implementation of the plan, as well as communicating best practice to support the implementation of the plan. So with the previous plan, in terms of the implementation and monitoring, it was actually conducted through the development of localised faculty and procession or service unit plans where most faculties and professional services actually established their own internal working groups which were then responsible for implementing and monitoring their local plans, and we encourage where possible with membership of these groups actually include students and staff with a disability and for the most part they did.

PAUL: That’s good. So I think one of the issues with the whole convention of rights of persons with disabilities, this whole new normative shift,that was built on nothing about us without us, so that mantra, don't create something about us unless we're involved. We could take it further and say nothing about us unless it's led by us. The challenge of course is getting persons with disabilities involved in a sector where even though we might have around five per cent of students with a disability, are not always - well, that's only those that register. There's probably another - if you include other categories that don't need to register it's higher, but with staff you're nowhere near that high. Also people don't want to disclose their disabilities for obvious reasons. So I think it's interesting how challenges you guys have faced with getting people with disabilities involved with this process could ask that - I will ask that of Samantha. Samantha, how have you got persons with disabilities involved? What are some of the challenges?

SAMANTHA: Well, there is a range of challenges. I think you've sort of named many of those, Paul. From my point of view it's that, you know, people who are studying who have a disability are often maybe studying - reduced study load and have a lot on their plate just to be able to manage their study. So to commit to doing additional - you know, being involved in something so large over a period of time can be quite a challenge. I think the challenges that we faced - I think we can all do more to have more people with a disability involved in the plans. I think if many of the disability services - we're only part of the puzzle, it's a whole university plan as you can imagine. So I feel like there work that Charles Sturt needs to do. We have got some involvement. I think that we certainly have room for improvement there but I think some of the key challenges we face with the plan overall, it's a resource constrained environment. You're competing - this plan is competing for resources with many other things in the university. I think COVID has made it a particularly tough economic climate for us all. So, you know, getting resources, some of those big ticket items you might have loved to have seen a in a plan possibly are a bit more challenging based on the economics of where the university sector is at. Another key challenge we face with our plan is the casualisation of our academic workforce. There's many of our academics who would benefit from training, maybe their knowledge is not where it needs to be in terms of being able to support students, but if you're casual, you get paid for the job, the hours that you work. So you turn up and teach and to get casual staff to do extra, which is often what paid employees do, they get engaged, they do lots of extra things as part of being connected to an organisation, and when staff are casual we get not as much buy in from staff attending training, for disability awareness, in trying to improve their skills as something they would invest in. I would be interested to hear whether casualisation of the academic workforce is implementing at all on any of the Disability Action Plans elsewhere. Over to you, Paul.

PAUL: Certainly. If anyone has any comments - there is a lot of people I see listening - so anyone can add into that chat function, type in, yes, it's impacting and if you have any comments that would be great, because we can review them at the end. I might flip to ask Jodie. Jodie, what challenges have you guys had - challenges you face with getting persons with disabilities involved with the action plans.

JODIE: I think that one of the biggest hurdles that we have across TAFE New South Wales is that we cover the whole of New South Wales. So it's really difficult to work out an engagement strategy that, I suppose, where we can have local engagement that feeds back into a coordination committee. So we tried to link in sending information out through our internal networks to reach out to students. We didn't have a big uptake by students with disability to participate or provide feedback through our consultation processes. And I think that that is something that we need to take on board and do differently next time. COVID absolutely impacted on our abilities to have more engagement, particularly face-to-face. So we were very reliant on Microsoft Teams and that sort of online environment, and many of our students with disability had just been thrown into that online learning environment as well. And just didn't have the resources or the knowledge to actually engage through that modality. We've tried really hard with the set-up of the coordination committee that there was - there was representation by staff with disability on that coordination committee. And also through the consultation working groups that we established that we had staff with disability also engaging in those consultation groups as well. So we have the same issues. There are no staff that are in leadership roles with identified disability. So it's - you know, a lot of our staff sit at my level that have identified disabilities, mainly with the teacher consultants. So myself being blind on the consultative committee, it means that I'm very noisy, as a staff member and as someone that provides service to students, but, you know, I do think that it is difficult simply because until we are able to have more staff with disability join the workforce in general, and particularly into our tertiary education sector, we're going to constantly battle with having true representation of that nothing about us, without us. And I'm glad that I'm on the committee because you really do need to have people with disability involved with the entire process so that what may look good in theory may not actually be what people with disability need or want, and I think that that voice of reason from that disability perspective is absolutely critical when we're looking at these inclusion action plans and for them to be successful. Thanks, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. Very passionate. That was very well spoken. Now, Hemant, over - if I could ask you the same question about what are some of the key challenges you've confronted with getting persons with disabilities involved?

HEMANT: Thanks, Paul. Very, very similar to what you, Samantha and Jodie, shared earlier as well in relation to getting students and staff with a disability involved in the plan. So I won't repeat what was just covered earlier but some of the more broad challenges that we actually had in terms of actually the overall plan itself, we took a very much working group approach and the first challenge that we had, obviously, with any working group is how do you identify the right stakeholders across the whole institute, who needs to be involved, who needs to provide input. We picked out a number of key areas throughout the institute, we reached out to them and then they connected in with us. Once we formed the working group the next challenge we had was the expectation of the working group. People were happy to come together for a meeting and contribute at the meeting but then after that when other work needed to be done outside of the meeting it was a little bit of a challenge. How we overcame that was we focused the meetings a little more to have short, sharp deliverables. So we kind of felt like we were just building the plan one step at a time as we went along. The other broad thing we also faced, one of the challenges was consolidating the actions. Our first version of our plan had something like 250 actions. As a working group we kind of took a step back and went, "How are we going to track this? How will we measure it?" A lot of work has gone into consolidating those actions. Another challenge is consultation. I think Paul touched on about this earlier about UQ but often we take a step back and we all know we need to consult but how much is too much. So what we actually did, in terms of consultation, is we ensured that we consulted broadly across the institute but we also specifically engaged directly with every person that had a responsibility for an action to be delivered against the plan. Made sure that they were okay with it financially, that they had the relevant human resources to deliver on those actions, and tightened up the success measures with them. What we also did to anchor all of this back is we constantly pulled back all of our actions in our plan back to each strategic goal of the organisation, so we could show that it is achieving benefit. Finally, the biggest challenge that we're tackling at the moment now is really moving from action to implementation. So our plan is a five-year plan from 2020 all the way out to 2025. So the challenge that we're grappling with at the moment we're slowly working with is facing those actions. So as everyone mentioned earlier, 2021 is probably going to be a really tight financial constraints for all of us. So some of the bigger ticket items we may move to later years and try and get quick wins next year. So we're facing that at the moment. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. Before we leave the issue of having people with disability included I would just like you to reflect imagine if - there's a number of people here who are women. Could you imagine if we had a group talking about, say, women's issues, pregnancy or mat leave or something like that. And you saw who was on the committee and it was all white men. All old guys. You're feeling, you know, you would - it wouldn't really feel like perhaps they don't understand the issue. Or if it was, say, for example, one talking about indigenous reconciliation, and it had, you know, six people, six women from private schools, all white, and, you know, again, maybe all white guys. It's just those groups whilst they're important to engage in that discussion, it really needs to have the subject matter experts involved. And I think not just in the consultation but on the committee. And find ways, even if it costs money, to get casuals if they have disability, you need to have people with disabilities on those groups. And also in the leadership positions because they need that experience so they can then put that in their CVs to get permanent positions. So that's something I feel quite strongly about. And - yeah, whether you can get that into the actual plan itself can be an issue but as an implementation of the plan where they're not committed to it, I think that's a - something that's really important. Okay. Now, strategies, how has it actually achieved anything? Today at the moment we've talked about some pretty important things. But let’s turn to has it actually done something on the ground? Has it made - now, I'm going to ask people - Samantha - no, sorry, Jodie. Sorry, Samantha has had a heart attack there. Jodie I'm going to ask, in fact. Jodie, can you actually point to an example where your plan has made an actual change on the ground? Something it's achieved?

JODIE: I tell you, the thing that has really stood out to me more than anything else - and this has been still where, you know, we haven't even had our action plan endorsed yet. We're still working on it. But I want to use our marketing creative team as an example. And we've got one of the executives with marketing and the creative team is on our committee. And already we are seeing remarkable change in their approach to the inclusive design of flyers that are coming out, the appropriate selection of images that are strong and empowering for students and staff. And the enthusiasm and the ideas that are coming out of the marketing and creative team for how to better engage students with disability and how do we better promote inclusion for staff with disability and attract staff with disability into the organisation. So for me, at this moment in time, that has been a standout achievement before we've even started implementing our inclusion action plan. And that, I think, is one of the absolute benefits of having so many varied people engaged in the process because already they're taking that back into their space and starting to talk about it, and look at how they can do inclusion better in that particular space within the organisation. Thanks, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. Dagmar, would you like to comment on that as well and if you could point to a specific example in your organisation, how that action plan has made a difference?

DAGMAR: Yeah, absolutely. With regards to our previous plan, you know, there are a number of initiatives we're really proud of which resulted directly from the plan. And I think that was - you know, the first plan that the university can really be proud of it's where we really did the consultation phase right. We really put aside the appropriate resources required for implementation. So there was a lot of commitment and dedication. And there's actually a list of things which I'm very proud to read. Specifically what we did was we developed the university physical and digital accessibility audits and remediation was also implemented. We updated the online campus maps to really show the location of accessible parking, entering lifts and toilets. We developed some extensive disability awareness training, specifically on disability confidence, supporting students with disability, digital accessibility, inclusive teaching practices as well as universal design for learning. We also developed some disability awareness resources including an online module and a training manual for staff. We established the disability outwork network the DOR network, and the aim is provide support services for staff with disability. The Disability Inclusion Week was established as an annual event at the university. So every single year we allocate a week which is dedicated to the Disability Inclusion Week and we run a host of events for both staff and students to promote disability awareness inclusion and the theme of everyone is different. We also have - disability services support was also extended and implemented at satellite campus locations and all new and revised policies of the university we probably kind of implemented a policy whereby they are now reviewed by the Disability Action Plan Implementation Group prior to being published. So the last plan is definitely something to aim for.

PAUL: Cool. Thank you. I just want to - we've had a number of wins. Okay, the most ironic one was I noticed when you travel with a disability it can be more expensive. So I championed through - I got some funding for some internal research on staff with disabilities that travelled for work. So we ran the study, got the disability Commissioner to come up, our provost Vice Chancellor spoke, wrote up academic papers, also a policy document internally. We got a disability charitable fund up, approved by the provost, $50,000 assigned all ready to rumble and then COVID came along. So it still exists and it still got funding but it only - we did have one staff member use it and – yeah, it started operation in January. A bit unfortunate but that's ironic. You can't have everything. But, you know, I mean, why that was significant was new money was designated to disability and 50,000 was a lot. We've had other wins funding - well, that was just new funding. It is always hard to get. So we will come back to some other - I will come back to some of that other stuff later. So I guess one of the issues is how to keep it up to date because we have talked about - I did my own research on what other people are doing in the GOA, I limited to the GOA not because I'm an eliteist but simply because I was doing it off my own research time and they are so big and complicated. How do you keep it up to date? What drives your organisation to be continually looking ahead and I might ask Hemant that first. So what drives your organisation to keep it up to date? Your plan up to date.

HEMANT: Thanks, Paul. For us our working group now is evolving more into an implementation team. So tracking the actions and implementation of that. As I mentioned earlier one of the things we did do is in looking at every single action we mapped in our plan we aligned them back against the institute strategy. What this actually does is it ensures that they progress and attract hand in hand. We're also marking on an annual planner so we know our five-year plan what it looks like phasing of the actions accordingly. Every single key deliverable of our plan is actually tracked through the project management office and then the PMO then reports these deliverables to the executive, the relevant subcommittees and all the way up to the board. I guess in a way it keeps us accountable for what we said we're going to deliver and make sure we do deliver on that. We also in terms of keeping the plan itself up to date and the actions, we are going to be doing quarterly reports to the executive champion that actually has got carriage of this plan and we've committed in the plan itself to do a six-monthly review and update of the plan across the board. So there is significant change, then we will go back to the executive and the board for final endorsement. However, we have committed that in the plan for a regular review, again broadening the stakeholders for the review and updating of the plan. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you. I might ask Dagmar that same question. What motivates your organisation to keep their plan up to date?

DAGMAR: Thanks, Paul. So Sydney Uni has determined that each Disability Action Plan will be a five-year plan in order to ensure that the plan is relevant to all stakeholders as well as the institution. And we do review the success of each plan and conduct consultations to guide the development of new plans. So the process - I acknowledge the process absolutely requires a level of commitment and resourcing in order to achieve successful outcomes. So with the previous plan where we managed to, you know, achieve quite a lot, we were very lucky to have, you know, that top-down support in most instances from higher management. And we were also lucky to have resources allocated which allowed us to actually employ a full-time Disability Action Plan officer. And that role was really instrumental in keeping the whole process going. So that person was really responsible for coordinating all aspects of the implementation, development and monitoring of the plan, and, you know, just really ensuring that things weren't kind of falling through the cracks. Obviously during COVID we haven't been lucky enough to retain that position, so we need to, you know, review how we can continue with this type of engagement without that critical role.

PAUL: Thank you. I might actually drill down on that COVID issue. Now, COVID-19 if you've been under a rock since February, no, seriously it's the pandemic. It has impacted on our sector hugely. Job losses and cuts. Lots of jobs have been lost. So I guess what impact has it had on the Disability Action Plan. If I could ask Samantha. Samantha, how has COVID-19 pandemic, how has it impacted upon your action plan?

SAMANTHA: Thanks, Paul. I think it's impacted on engagement because when we've asked for feedback from staff in particular, if they've got job insecurity or they're concerned about their jobs and the cuts that are happening in the sector, they've kind of got to really drill down on what the key things are for them. I feel like there's been not as much feedback and engagement from staff as a result of the situation. I think COVID and resourcing - I mean, Dagmar just mentioned the position that she had managing the plan as being looked at under COVID, and I think that we're all - everything is being rationalised across the sector. So it's like, you know, keeping this plan who drives it, who is responsible, making sure that accountability exists, because, you know, when we're all asked to do more and spread ourselves more thinly across the board, and that's everybody who is involved in the plan, when it's included and is business as usual and it's not resource, that's a real challenge. I think COVID is going to have an ongoing effect to all of our plans over time because that resourcing issue is not going to be something that goes away as soon as COVID is sorted. It's going to be a problem that the universities are going to face for a period of time. I think there's a positive in COVID for the disability action plan or accessibility action plan and that is, you know, there has been so much more stuff online. Charles Sturt University has always been a leader in online learning but I think there's an increased awareness across the board about what you do in terms of content and online delivery for students has a value to all. Whereas, previously maybe some people had a view that it was just for the few. So I feel like this has been a bit of an opportunity with so many people using Zoom and this whole sort of changing dynamic of the way that teaching is happening, that I feel like there's a real opportunity and a positive. That's my positive from COVID. Over to you, Paul.

PAUL: Well, thank you. Hemant, how has COVID impacted upon you - I mean your action plan?

HEMANT: So like most of all of us in the room today, most of our workforce is working remotely at the moment. For us, we've actually - COVID has been a bit of a catalyst in terms of our plan because it's actually made it a lot easier for us to get together virtually, to catch up, to work through these working group meetings, to get those deliverables in place. I think previously, if you look at our organisation we've got quite a large geographical footprint and trying to coordinate people is always tricky but I’ve found personally that COVID has been a catalyst in actually getting us together, virtual meetings, people have really embraced the technology. The other positive out of COVID for all of us is if I look back at our historical plans that we had across Bendigo TAFE and Kangan Institute it was very much focused on face-to-face delivery of education. I think what COVID has done is actually taught us that our plans need to be adapted, need to be future focused for virtual delivery as well. What does the normal COVID look like and how do our plans address that? What that has basically meant for our plans is that we have put a larger focus on digital and assistive technology embedded throughout the plan with a view to working to virtual delivery as well. As everyone mentioned earlier with COVID I think for us it was about considering how do we deliver impact within the current economic climate. So this is about aligning the budgets against all of the initiatives. However, the way we've sort of approached this is when you look at the actions in our plan we've said there's actually two types of actions. There's hygiene, just basic stuff that we have to do, non negotiable and they have been addressed in the operational budgets and then we've looked at quantum improvements. What are the things we really want to do to lead the way in this space and what we will do through that is seek strategic funding to deliver on that. Thanks, Paul.

ELICIA: 15 minutes to go, Paul.

PAUL: Yep. That's all right. I was just thinking, Hemant - well, Dagmar, you sort of commented on COVID. If I might just skip to the last question so we can get some time for some others from the audience. Hemant, when you were drafting your plan what would you do differently next time?

HEMANT: That’s a really interesting question. Hindsight is a beautiful thing, isn't it, Paul? I think the first thing I would do differently next time is actually involve external stakeholders in the working group to develop the plan. We certainly engaged external stakeholders to review the plan. We had student, staff, volunteers involved in developing it but personally I feel that by having external stakeholders involved is you look broader than just your organisation and the education sector. As everyone mentioned earlier I would love to see a larger representation of students and volunteers involved in actually creating the plan. The other thing I would probably do differently is an institute-wide engagement prior to commencing the new plan. So even before embarking on the journey and developing the new plan I would probably like to see a lot more engagement across the institute. I think Dagmar mentioned this earlier, how they did a comprehensive review of external plans. We sort of did it the other way around. We kind of reviewed our internal plans, started building our brand new five-year plan and halfway through sort of took a step back and went, we actually should do an extensive review of everything that's out there, broader than just education. So we probably should have done that at the start of the process. The other thing I would consider is closure of the old plan. So, you know, what is the process for retiring a plan, closing out the plan, identifying what has been delivered, what hasn't, carrying over some of the stuff into the new plan. I think we're all pretty clear that, you know, internal communication during the development of a plan is critical. So we did keep the key stakeholders involved but I think a little bit of a progress tracker raising the awareness that this is happening across the institute, particularly for staff what this actually means for them, would have been useful. And I'm going to touch on Dagmar's point earlier about a dedicated resource. We didn't actually have a dedicated resource to manage the consultation and creation of the plan. So what we had to do was pull one of our staff members off what they were doing and get them focused to actually lead the working group and sort of deliver on the plan. So a dedicated resource would have been great but understandably in this financial climate it's not always possible. Thanks, Paul.

PAUL: Thank you for that. Now we're going to go to the - it's really good we've kept basically to time which is always nice. Now if we could go through some of the questions that have come from the audience.

ELICIA: Elicia here, thanks, Paul.

PAUL: Hi Elicia.

ELICIA: I've got four questions, I think, from the audience. So I will start with the one that has had the most up-votes and that's a question from Selina who asks: what are some of the concrete big wins you've had because of the action plans at your various institutions, and what are some of the big losses that have happened in spite of the plans?

PAUL: Well, some of us - has anyone got anything they would like to say about wins that they could point to that they haven't already been pointed to?

DAGMAR: I do.

PAUL: You go.

DAGMAR: I think what was notably significant, in terms of a win, from our previous plan was the consultation phase that we conducted in order to develop the plan really shed light on the situation of the culture at the university and how we really needed to, you know, instill some initiatives to improve the culture. So that was really instrumental in driving the development of disability awareness training, and then enforcing that disability awareness training to then take place and to be allocated as a priority in the local Disability Action Plans. That was quite instrumental for us.

PAUL: One of the things we've been doing at the moment is not just asking what have you done with the plan but how - because we get reports from every stakeholder, the key stakeholders are designated and when we ask them, "What have you done historically" but also we ask, "What are you doing next?" So then that's what we're doing this time. And so the next time we go back to them we will say, "Well, this is what you said you were going to do, how did you go?" So trying to make them think proactively, which I suppose that's a future win. But we also got some money to run a digital audit and got some changes around how procurement is occurring, hard to say whether - well, it's helped me, because we're more inclusive, but also when a major university goes to a supplier and says, "Look, this isn't accessible, can you do anything about it because we're trying to make it accessible. If you don't make it accessible, we notice there's another platform over here that is", it tends to encourage them to see the 30, $40,000 a year they might lose. That's had a few impacts. Anybody else got anything?

HEMANT: Paul, I will just jump in then.

PAUL: Yes.

HEMANT: Very similar comments to Dagmar, I think. For us what it has done is it's really across the institute raised the awareness of the importance of accessibility and inclusion. So we're at the point now where we want to - my ideal goal is that in three to five years I want every single person at the institute take a step back and question, what am I doing right now? Is it accessible to students? Is it accessible to staff? Does it align to the principles of inclusion? So we have seen a heightened awareness across the board and people are starting to think about, "All right, how does this impact my students and staff?" The other great thing we've also seen throughout developing the plan is the great ideas that have come up. So often people have got great ideas and they try and do it but also best practice. So some teaching areas are doing very innovative practices and getting that lifted so we can translate that across the institute has been a positive.

ELICIA: Elicia here.

PAUL: Yes.

ELICIA: That's a really nice segue into our next question which is from Andrew. Andrew asks: does anyone have any specific success stories of the action plan getting teachers or departments to change the way that classes are delivered, how class resources are presented, or how students are assessed to make courses more accessible?

PAUL: Does anyone want to jump in? Any other panel - - -

DAGMAR: I can jump in.

PAUL: Yes.

DAGMAR: I mean, that to me sounds like really a focus on universal design for learning. You know, pushing your institution, as Hemant mentioned in his previous comment, to really take a step back and whenever you're designing anything from an accessiblity point of view the way you're going to be delivering, the way that students actually engage with the content of their unit, is it in line with principles of universal design for learning. We as part of our current plan have actually created a specific outcome and objective related to universal design for learning. So we are not at the stage of implementation or a success story yet but I have utilised the annual disability inclusion weeks to really kind of use universal design for learning as a theme, and we have held a number of workshops where we have actually had fellow economic colleagues present to other academic colleagues with regards to how they are actually utilising universal design for learning to really set up their units of study. And that was extremely successful. You know, other academic colleagues were very receptive of hearing other success stories by fellow academics rather than us presenting on the theory and what they should and shouldn't be doing, you know, using real life examples of where it's working well. But universal design for learning is something I'm passionate about and something I want to keep pushing. And this was touched on before. It is a challenge because it does require people to step back and look at how we're doing things and maybe look at something differently and, you know, we've been under a lot of pressure with COVID, people are feeling quite overwhelmed, but we can't kind of lose sight of our goal, regardless of what the workload is.

PAUL: One thing I've been trying to do here is work with our institute for teaching, learning - I will forget the correct wording - so an academic doesn't have to think about creating an inclusive work/teaching space. That is automatically largely inclusive. As far as possible we've got Blackboard it pops up and says, "Hey, there's a tape for that. Try and make it easy so you don’t have to think about it." Of course we're trying to train people and help - encourage them to think about it but I mean, I don't know your work hours but mine - last night I finished at 11 pm. To add more things into my day is pretty challenging. So I think that's - one thing I found very successful is to try universally - it's automated so you don't have to think about trying to create inclusive, it's inclusive from the outset.

SAMANTHA: It's Sam here.

PAUL: Yes.

SAMANTHA: I would just like to make a comment. I think from Charles Sturt's point of view, we all would know there are academics out there who are winners, who have got great skills, who really care and care passionately about accessibility and go above and beyond in the way they deliver their subject material. Then we know the academics that have the lack of skills, knowledge or understanding. So what we did as a team in the disability services as part of the action plan is created our top 10 tips for academics on accessibility. If you only had time to do 10 things, here are the 10 things that would make a difference to all students. And we pushed that out because it's like how do you get that information to academics who are really quite busy. And we worked with a division of learning and teaching and worked collaboratively to create that and they provide that resource to new academics who start at the university. And, I mean, we're all swimming against a current in a canoe when it comes to accessibility and we've got a lot of work to do as universities but certainly that's one of the real positives that come out of the collaboration as part of the plan for us.

PAUL: That's a good idea. Something which is very short, even if it's not comprehensive, it's - yeah, time poor. Do we have any more time?

ELICIA: Elicia here. I think we've got time for just one more question, Paul.

PAUL: Yes.

ELICIA: And I think, Sam, what you were just saying kind of harks back to what our keynote yesterday Tom Tobin was talking about, with the idea of plus one, so we are all time poor and if it's just one more thing you can do as a starting point to be more inclusive. The final question I'm going to ask to the panel today is from Debbie Hindle. And Deb asks: what thoughts do you have about alternative options for having a dedicated staff position responsible for the plan if it is distributed amongst staff where might it fit and who might drive it?

PAUL: Designated - someone getting paid? Unfortunately, that's - well, one of the wins we did have was we had someone in the library who was going to sit in the library helping staff and students with disabilities with all digital accessibility, but not just general but for teaching, for learning, for everything. Then COVID came along. Well, that's been held off a bit. Don't know. I mean, my personal view is anything central because if it's one university, you have issues with lifts, issues with parking, with IT, with the library, with teaching. So I would personally put it in central. But what do you guys think?

HEMANT: I'm happy to respond, Paul.

PAUL: Go for it.

HEMANT: So we had a very similar issue where we had - we started in November 2019. We needed to develop an Accessibility Inclusion Plan. We had no specific person to manage the project. The way I sort of took it is, again, you're robbing Peter to pay Paul. But for me one of our disability liaison officers actually led that. That way he was very well connected to our students, our staff, and across the network but, again, for me the plan was really built by the working group and like I mentioned earlier, when you have those working group meetings try and keep them short and sharp and focus on one key deliverable because as we all know when go away from these working groups we're all time poor, it's another email, another thing we have to do, we find having the short, sharp meetings - we used to meet once a fortnight and we just kept it very, very tight. Going right, this is the one thing we want to achieve for today, let's achieve it and move on. So it was sequentially built that way but we did have one of our DLOs leading it.

ELICIA: Elicia here. We are going to have to wrap up. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Dr Paul Harpur for facilitating the panel.

PAUL: Thank you.

ELICIA: And to our panelists, Dagmar, Sam, Jodie and Hemant.