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# Editorial

Welcome to the second and final edition of JANZSSA for 2013. Firstly, our apologies if this edition has arrived a little later than usual. The reason for this is that there was a late flurry of activity amongst contributors and we opted to delay the final production of this edition in order to have the opportunity of including some excellent and topical papers which otherwise would have been delayed until next year. As ANZSSA members will know, the 2013 bi-ennial ANZSSA conference is rapidly approaching - this year to be held in Wellington, New Zealand at the University of Victoria in the first week of December. We are anticipating being able to publish a number of papers from the conference in the April 2014 edition of JANZSSA; another reason for wanting to publish the papers being submitted to us this year, even it meant getting this edition out slightly late. So, thank you for your patience, and thank you to those authors contributing to this edition.

Readers will find that this edition has been certainly worth waiting for! We are particularly pleased to have three refereed papers included, along with five other contributions of non-refereed papers, best practice case examples and a book review, which takes the interesting format of an interview with the author.

Once again, the diversity of interests and experience amongst those working with students is apparent by a brief glance at the Contents Page. Topics covered in the academically robust peer-reviewed papers include international student safety, social inclusion and the complex issue of inherent requirements. The non-refereed paper and best practice case examples provide sound and practical descriptions of challenges faced and solutions implemented and evaluated, in the various fields of disability, peer mentoring and online counselling. Such case examples of projects and programs being implemented by our colleagues, in universities and other tertiary institutions all around Australia and New Zealand, are the life-blood of JANZSSA; such papers provide an important means of sharing innovations and encouraging the further development of programs to support students and enhance their engagement and success in education.

Last but by no means least, this edition offers a Conversation Piece by the outgoing President of ANZSSA, Dr Jim Elliott, who offers a thoughtful insight to the development of and changes within ANZSSA over the past years. As Jim tells us, he first joined ANZSSA in 1989 and has seen many changes over that time. One of the challenges that Jim discusses is the need for ANZSSA to clearly position itself as an inclusive professional organisation which embraces the needs and interests of a wide range of student services' professionals. The perception outside the membership that ANZSSA is primarily a group for Counsellors is one that appears to be remarkably persistent, despite the fact that a cursory glance at the Contents Pages of JANZSSA over the past few years, demonstrates that this is anything but the case. However, how we communicate our mission, our purpose and our goals is crucial to ANZSSA's ongoing growth and relevance.

As the close of 2013 rapidly approaches, we would like to thank all our readers and contributors for your continued support of JANZSSA and we look forward to bringing you some great papers from the 2013 ANZSSA conference within the pages of the first edition next year.

Cathy Stone
Annie Andrews
**Co-editors, JANZSSA**

# The Changing Nature of Student-ship:
# Social Inclusion and Paid Employment
# Practices in the Bradley Years.

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## Abstract

*The Bradley review suggests that students with low socio-economic status (SES) need greater financial support than that which is currently offered to them if they are to take up university places and remain at university throughout their courses (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent and Scales, 2008). This recommendation is, in part, based on research into the necessity for low SES students to maintain paid, term-time employment throughout their higher education to meet their basic needs. This study is a companion study to one recently undertaken into this issue at another Australian university site (Dearlove & Marland, 2012). Consequently, it seeks to explore the connection between SES status and paid term-time employment at this site: a suburban campus of a national Australian university. This research used a four page questionnaire to establish average hours of employment, types of employment, the necessity for employment, the expenditure of the money earned, and the potential for interference between study and paid employment for the full-time undergraduate students participating in this research. As with the previous research, there was a remarkable level of similarity between the responses of the two SES groups studied (low and mid/high). As term-time employment appears to be an almost universal phenomenon driven by necessity, it seems that it is time for universities and government to attempt to assist students to manage these dual roles.*

## Key words

Bradley Review; SES; term-time employment; social inclusion

## Introduction

The Bradley Review (2008) made various recommendations concerning strategies for the social inclusion of students, including those with a low socio-economic status (LSES). Although this Review was released five years ago, it has only recently (2012) come into official effect. To establish greater social equity, the Review identifies a number of possible economic and social strategies that government agencies and universities might implement as a way to draw individuals with LSES into university study (p. 40-42). One such strategy proposed by Bradley is to provide increased financial support to LSES students, arguing that it is "critically important to attract financially disadvantaged students into higher education" (p. 47). What adds potency to this recommendation is that it already seems to be the case that many students are financially challenged and must negotiate a balance between their student, work and social/personal lives in order to remain at university (McInnis & Hartley, 2002; James, Bexley, Devlin & Marginson, 2007). This issue is becoming of interest at the sector level and is now targeted in a single item in the national University Experience Survey (UES) (Radloff, Coates, Taylor, James & Krause, 2012). A recently completed qualitative research project (Dearlove & Marland, 2012) has investigated the issue of paid work for undergraduate students at an onshore suburban satellite site of a major regional university in NSW. The campus was located in an area described by Baum, O'Connor and Stimson (2005, p. 68) as comfortable and "advantaged" (p. 67). Despite this, just over a third (34.47%) of the respondents were categorised as LSES on the basis of their parents' levels of education, the same measure employed in this current study. The research reported here seeks to explore the relevance of such findings to a campus of a university that has proactively sought to attract students in response to the Bradley initiatives.

**Literature review**

*Socio-economic status (SES): Academic participation and social inclusion*

Simon Marginson (2011) has appositely demonstrated the complexity of developing policies around the promotion of equity, where there is tension between issues of fairness and social inclusion. While it is true that enrolled university students with a LSES are underrepresented, the factors associated with their limited numbers are complex. Current research on this topic (McMillan & Western, 2000; James, 2001; Bowden & Doughney, 2010; Smith, 2011; Brook, 2011) has identified a number of potentially limiting factors in relation to Australian universities' enrolments of students with LSES, and it appears that these factors are largely attitudinal. Some studies have unexpectedly demonstrated that students of a LSES share an equivalent level of aspiration to attend university as those students who have a mid/high socio-economic-status (M/HSES) (Smith, 2011; Bok, 2010). However, Zammit (2011) has suggested that students with M/HSES may be pedagogically privileged, in that they have a history of positive classroom engagement due to the type of knowledge that is valued. Such cultural capital is not as available to LSES students, which may ultimately impact on their participation in higher education. Further, students with a LSES may compound negative school experiences with scholastic self-doubt and, therefore, may lack confidence in their academic ability (Smith, 2011, p. 166). This factor may discourage them from entering university studies. Other research suggests that financial concerns and debt aversion, that is, attitudes to financial matters, may be a factor that results in students from a LSES taking up vocational training rather than a university qualification, although the research is inconsistent (Callender & Jackson, 2008; Forsyth & Furlong, 2003). In fact, James (2007) has argued that financial considerations for those of LSES are complex and that "the assumption that cost is the principal barrier to access" is a myth (p. 11). James (2007) posits that "[c]ost is a factor, but it is not the only factor. All the evidence points to lower levels of school achievement, lower aspirations, and lack of perceived personal relevance being far more potent factors" (p. 11).

*Paid work practices of students: The Australian context*

Research into Australian university students' paid work practices and its impact on their academic performances, has uncovered a number of trends and raised a number of issues requiring further investigation; these issues are summarised here and discussed below. While the actual percentage of students involved in paid work and the average hours worked varies by cohort, it is clear that it is now the norm for students to work rather than the exception. The average number of hours of term-time work is increasing in general and overwhelmingly students are working out of necessity. The hours worked appear to reach a certain point (although this point varies across different studies, see Section 2.4 below) before negatively impacting students' academic results. Further, the work can have both direct and indirect negative effects on class attendances. However, there appears to be little evidence to suggest that paid work impacts to a greater extent on LSES than on M/HSES in the Australian context.

Research into the paid work practices of Australian undergraduate university students has now spanned more than ten years, beginning in earnest with the report by McInnes and Hartley (2002), and following a relatively brief mention of this issue in the McInnes, James and Hartley (2000) First Year Experience Report. The latter report pointed to a "trend…[towards]…less attachment and commitment to a range of aspects of university life and academic work on the part of those who work longer hours in paid employment" (p. xii) . The subsequent McInnes and Hartley (2002) report provided a more detailed picture of the situation at that time. They reported that the average hours of paid work per week was 14.7 and that for 75% of students this was their main or only source of income. They also reported an inverse and close relationship between course contact hours and hours of paid work, although the majority of jobs were neither directly nor indirectly related to the students' courses of study. In this study, 68% of respondents indicated that they worked to pay for basic necessities such as rent, food and transport.

In 2007, the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee commissioned a report into student finances (James, Bexley, Devlin & Marginson, 2007), which painted a picture consistent with the findings of these earlier reports. James et al. (2007) found that 70.6% of full-time undergraduate students were working an average of 14.8 hours per week to afford basic necessities, transport, textbooks and related study materials. Almost 40% of full-time students felt work negatively affected their studies and 22.4% regularly missed classes to attend employment. A small case study into medical students at the University of Adelaide conducted at this time (Duggin & Keefe, 2007) claimed that missing morning classes was arguably the result of tiredness from the previous day's or evening's employment. They also suggested the possibility of a mismatch between the current students' needs for income and previous tertiary cohorts' financial situations. This circumstance could lead to a possible mismatch in mutual expectations between faculty and students.

As is often the case, some inconsistencies between research results exist, usually as a result of different methodologies. However, trends are still identifiable. The 2010 First Year Experience Report (James, Krause & Jennings, 2010) indicates that 61% of full-time students also worked part-time and comments that this is "[a] growing proportion…" (p. 1). The report notes that only five years earlier that 55% of full-time students were engaged in part-time work, although the average of nearly 13 hours of paid work per week remains constant over this reporting period. Nearly two-thirds of working students earned money for basic needs despite longer hours of work being related to poorer GPAs. There appeared to be a decrease in the number and percentage of students feeling work interfered with their studies. At this time, a study by Robbins (2010) focussed on both the "…need for students to work during semesters…now impacting negatively on the quality of the educative experience" (AVCC 2007, Robbins, 2006 & Marriott, 2007, as cited in Robbins, 2010, p. 104) and on the vulnerability of students as employees in an increasingly deregulated employment market. Hall (2010) provides longitudinally researched results on the experiences of University of New South Wales (UNSW) students, showing increasing numbers and percentages of students working primarily in order to cover living costs, with decreasing numbers and percentages of hours spent on study and recreational activities. Most work was unrelated to the students' courses of study and the work often caused tiredness and decreased motivation. Hall points out that there is a finite point to the sorts of trade-offs students are currently making. This is consistent with the research (see section 2.4 below) that indicates a tipping point in the number of hours students can work before it impacts negatively on their results. Munro (2011) has added to the above numerically-based research outcomes by qualitatively investigating how students experienced their work-study balance. Students articulated a positive view of term time employment, despite difficulties with managing their dual roles.

Recently a longitudinal and statistically rigorous study conducted by Salamonson, Everett, Koch, Andrew and Davidson (2012) into nursing students' paid work practices, showed that during their three-year enrolment, students: increased their hours of employment, shifted to course-related employment, and working 16 hours per week was the limit before this employment negatively impacted their GPA. They noted that the clinical experiences gained through this employment did not seem to positively impact students' academic results even though the employment was increasingly work-related.

Finally, in the Australian context as elsewhere, the relationship between paid work and students' SES is poorly researched. James, Krause, and Jennings (2010) comment that the reasons for term-time employment varied minimally by SES but were more evident when age was the discriminating factor. They also, reported that, in general, LSES students are far more likely to work to meet basic needs and support families (2010, p. 51). Otherwise, findings on this issue do not appear in the research literature.

*Paid work practices of students: The global context*

The tendency towards working in paid employment while studying full-time is a global trend. In the United States (US), the flexibility of university provision "allows and even encourages students to combine paid work with their studies" (Johnstone & Shroff-Mehta, 2011, as cited in Callender, 2008, p. 362). Studies in the United Kingdom (UK) show an upward trend in hours of employment per week over time. For example, Hunt, Lincoln and Walker (2004) show increases from 1999 to 2001 of 37.6% to 48.7% and Darmody and Smyth (2008) reported 6 out of 10 students in their study cohort were working.

The average hours worked by students vary by cohort and in the UK appears to be fewer than the average number of hours worked by Australian students. Metcalf (2003) reported that half her UK research cohort worked an average of 12 hours or less and three quarters worked 16 hours or less. Darmody and Smyth (2008) reported that most of their Irish research cohort worked only 6-10 hours per week.

The impact of students' employment on their studies is often the focus of concern and findings appear contradictory. Callendar (2008) links work to poorer marks. Hunt, Lincoln and Walker (2004) do likewise but only for second and subsequent years of study, while Wenz and Yu (2010) report a decrease of 0.007 GPA per hour worked. Pike, Kuh and Massa-McKinley (2008) provide a thorough analysis of the direct and indirect impact of paid work on academic achievement in the US context and show that there is a:

> *statistically significant negative relationship … between working more than 20 hours per week and grades, even after controlling for students' characteristics and levels of engagement. An examination of the indirect relationships between work and grades revealed that working 20 hours or less on campus was significantly and positively related to grades (p. 578)*

Thus, the actual hours of work can have a variable impact on student achievement, depending on the hours of employment undertaken.

In relation to the conditional impact of paid work on students of different SES in the US, Pike, Kuh and Massa-McKinley (2008) suggest that the impact relates to hours of work, not student characteristics. However, Metcalf (2003), Hunt, Lincoln and Walker (2004), Moreau and Leathwood (2006) and Cooke, Barkham, Audin, and Bradley (2004) all discuss the possible inequities in the UK that appear to result as the greater proportion of working students come from poorer circumstances. Thus, the relationships between paid work and SES remain unclear and are quite possibly influenced by the socio-political and socio-economic contexts in which the students are studying and working.

## Research study

This research replicates an investigation into the relationship between university students' work and study (Dearlove & Marland, 2012) conducted at an onshore suburban satellite site of a major regional university in NSW situated in an area described as comfortable and "advantaged" (Baum et al., 2005, p. 67). This previous research focused on 'pre-Bradley' students, that is, a pre-2012 enrolment, whereas this current study focuses on a 'Bradley cohort', that is a cohort admitted under the first year of operation of the Bradley recommendations (2012). This study is intended to provide some insights concerning social inclusion and the paid work practices of a group of Australian students enrolled under the Bradley Review's recommendations and to allow comparison of these results with the results from a cohort enrolled at another Australian university site prior to the implementation of Bradley.

*Research questions*

Drawing from the previous study (Dearlove & Marland, 2012), this paper addresses the following questions in relation to students in the Bradley era:

1. Are there any significant distinctions between LSES and M/HSES cohorts with respect to term-time employment in general, the number of hours worked, and the types of jobs worked?

2. What sorts of financial decisions or considerations are made by these students and are there any noticeable differences across SES cohorts?

3. Does work interfere with commitment to academic study for LSES and M/HSES cohorts?

*Research site*

The site of this study is a national university's suburban campus, located in a "middle-class advantaged" western Sydney suburb (Baum et al., 2005, p. 3.14). The suburb has "more high than low income households" (Baum et.al, 2005, p. 3.14) with "high proportions of educated professionals and new-economy workers" (Baum et.al, 2005, p. 3.15). Although the university is positioned in a "middle-class advantaged" suburb, much of the surrounding areas are deemed to be of LSES (see below for an operational definition of SES). This university has actively recruited students with marginal ATARS[1]and from LSES in response to the Bradley objective of a 40% proportion of university graduates in the 25-34 age group by 2025 and a widening of participation. As Massaro and Martin (2009) have pointed out, even if the 20% of total enrolments which is to comprise students of LSES complete their degrees, this would still not achieve the 40% target. To do this, students with lower ATARS than have previously been enrolled will need to be recruited. This group of students have not been explicitly discussed by Bradley nor in the Australian Government's policy paper *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (Australian Government, 2009).

*Participant group*

This Bradley cohort comprises students who form the first intake under the Bradley recommendations (Bradley, 2008). In the second semester of 2012, first-year full-time undergraduate students enrolled in subjects associated with the disciplines of history and performance studies in Arts and Education degrees were surveyed over a period of one week. One hundred and seventy-three students were given a questionnaire and 169 were returned giving a response rate of 97.7%. Full-time students (n=159) comprise the participant group in this research. The participant group's responses represented a response rate of 91.9%. This participant group was comprised predominantly of females (60.38%, n=96); of traditional age (that is, 18-20 years, 74.21%, n=118); and of M/HSES (73.58%, n=117). The majority were enrolled in a degree that related to education (59.75%, n=95), about one third were enrolled in an Arts degree (33.33%, n=53), with the remainder (6.92%, n=11) enrolled in either a combined Arts degree (n=9) or they failed to specify the nature of their degree (n=2).

*Method*

This research project employed the same method as a companion project conducted with a different but predominantly middle class, pre-Bradley cohort (Dearlove & Marland, 2012). This was to facilitate comparisons across case studies. Participants in this research were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire concerning their current term-time employment practices, enrolment and demographics. Akin with the previous study, "[t]he questionnaire sought to establish average hours of employment, types of employment, the necessity for employment, the expenditure of the money earned, and the potential for interference between study and paid employment. The demographic information was used to determine the students' SES" (Dearlove & Marland, 2012, p. A-63).

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[1] ATAR: Australian Tertiary Admission Rank - The ATAR is a percentile ranking measure used in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, which ranks the academic abilities of university applicants. It is a score out of 100 to two decimal places (Universities Admissions Centre (NSW and ACT), 2012, p. 1)

The surveys were distributed during class time in the second semester of 2012 to students enrolled in history and performance studies subjects. The results were coded, entered into Excel, and counts and percentages were generated. Textual responses were categorised and counts and percentages were calculated.

*Operationalisation of the concept of socio-economic status*

This study measured SES based on each individual student's parents' levels of education in accordance with the recommendations by Bowden and Doughney (2010, p. 120) and James (2001, p. 464). The shortcomings of the postcode methodology are generally acknowledged (McMillan & Western, 2000; James, 2001; Bowden & Doughney, 2010; Bradley et al., 2008; James et al., 2008; and Western, 1998), and Bowden and Doughney argue that SES can be "measured by the level of parental education" (2010, p. 120). James (2001) defines LSES students as those whose "parents did not attend school, attended primary school, or attended some secondary school" (p. 464). On this basis, any post-secondary qualification by either parent was considered to indicate M/HSES in this study.

**Results and discussion**

The results of this study are summarised below under each of the research questions listed in the methodology. Comparisons will be made to the companion research project (Dearlove & Marland, 2012) as well as to national and international literature.

*Are there any noticeable distinctions between LSES and M/HSES cohorts with respect to term-time employment in general, the number of hours worked, and the types of jobs worked?*

On the basis of the results of this survey, there appears to be greater similarity than difference between the LSES and M/HSES groups in relation to their participation in term-time employment. The hours students spent in term-time employment appear to be relatively similar across the two SES groupings in this study (LSES and M/HSES) with two notable exceptions: non-participation and participation for 1-8 hours per week (see discussion below). Vocational orientations towards term-time employment appear to be similarly minimal between SES groupings. The influence of the location and rate of pay of the term-time employment may be different between the two SES groupings, although the poor response rates to these items render conclusions drawn on the basis of this information somewhat questionable.

Table 1 shows students' responses to questionnaire items related to general patterns of term-time employment, according to the students' SES.

*Table 1: Data on students' patterns of term-time employment*

| Question | Categories of responses | LSES Students' Responses | | M/HSES Students' Responses | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How many hours per week (on average) do you undertake paid employment, during the semester? (If not working during the semester, indicate '0' hours) | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | 0 hours | 29.27 | 12 | 19.66 | 23 |
| | 1 – 8.5 hours | 9.76 | 4 | 18.80 | 22 |
| | 9 – 16.5 hours | 26.83 | 11 | 29.06 | 34 |
| | 17 – 24 hours | 19.51 | 8 | 14.53 | 17 |
| | 25+ hours | 14.63 | 6 | 15.38 | 18 |
| | Unspecified | 0.00 | 0 | 2.56 | 3 |
| **Question** | **Categories of responses** | **LSES Students' Responses** | | **M/HSES Students' Responses** | |
| If you work, why do you undertake the particular type of paid employment that you do: Work is related to my field of study | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Strongly Agree | 7.32 | 3 | 5.98 | 7 |
| | Agree | 2.44 | 1 | 8.55 | 10 |
| | Neutral | 12.20 | 5 | 11.11 | 13 |
| | Disagree | 17.07 | 7 | 23.08 | 27 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 29.27 | 12 | 32.48 | 38 |
| | Unspecified | 31.71 | 13 | 18.80 | 22 |
| **Question** | **Categories of responses** | **LSES Students' Responses** | | **M/HSES Students' Responses** | |
| If you work, why do you undertake the particular type of paid employment that you do: Work is conveniently located | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Strongly Agree | 19.51 | 8 | 23.93 | 28 |
| | Agree | 36.59 | 15 | 35.04 | 41 |
| | Neutral | 12.20 | 5 | 11.11 | 13 |
| | Disagree | 0.00 | 0 | 9.40 | 11 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 0.00 | 0 | 2.56 | 3 |
| | Unspecified | 31.71 | 13 | 17.95 | 21 |
| **Question** | **Categories of responses** | **LSES Students' Responses** | | **M/HSES Students' Responses** | |
| If you work, why do you undertake the particular type of paid employment that you do: Work is well paid | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Strongly Agree | 17.07 | 7 | 11.11 | 13 |
| | Agree | 12.20 | 5 | 45.30 | 53 |
| | Neutral | 26.83 | 11 | 14.53 | 17 |
| | Disagree | 9.76 | 4 | 5.13 | 6 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.44 | 1 | 5.13 | 6 |
| | Unspecified | 31.71 | 13 | 18.80 | 22 |
| **Question** | **Categories of responses** | **LSES Students' Responses** | | **M/HSES Students' Response** | |
| If you work, why do you undertake the particular type of paid employment that you do: My work hours fit with my studies. | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Strongly Agree | 19.51 | 8 | 20.51 | 24 |
| | Agree | 17.07 | 7 | 42.74 | 50 |
| | Neutral | 24.39 | 10 | 9.40 | 11 |
| | Disagree | 4.88 | 2 | 7.69 | 9 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.44 | 1 | 1.71 | 2 |
| | Unspecified | 31.71 | 13 | 17.95 | 21 |

However, in comparison with data from the previous study (Dearlove & Marland, 2012), a greater number of students from both SES cohorts in this research were not participating in part-time employment than in the companion research (22.15%, n=35 in this study and 13.07%, n=23 of the cohort in the previous research). In direct contrast to common beliefs concerning LSES students and their greater need for employment in order to sustain their studies (Bradley, 2008), this research and the companion research both indicate minimal differences in employment patterns between SES cohorts at both research sites. These results also contradict the UK patterns of student part-time employment and consequent concerns over inequity (Metcalf, 2003; Hunt, Lincoln & Walker, 2004; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; and Cooke, Barkham, Audin & Bradley, 2004) as a result of LSES students working more than M/HSES students. In this research and the companion research, paid employment practices were remarkably similar across SES groups. However, what this research does not address is whether LSES students had already withdrawn from their studies in response to difficult financial circumstances.

The relatedness of students' work to their field of study is difficult to consider in this research cohort as the BA degree is not vocationally oriented and the combined degrees (for example, BA/BSW) require professional qualifications prior to related employment, so the researchers were reliant on students' self-reports of the relatedness. Based on these data, around half of each SES group (low=46.34%, n=19; M/HSES = 55.56%, n=65) felt their work did not relate to their studies, while only a few (LSES= 9.76%, n=4; M/HSES = 14.53%, n=17) felt it did. It should be noted that students did not identify or report on the general skills that are developed in the BA as being related to their employability or vocational placement. These data suggest that the motivation for students' participation in the type of employment they undertake lies outside future specific vocational pathways for these students. This is in contrast with the findings of Salamonson et al. (2012) when investigating the work patterns of students enrolled in nursing which is a highly vocationally oriented degree. Similarly, this case study's findings contrast markedly with the companion research findings, which are more consistent with the Salamonson et al. results.

The convenience of the location of the work and the level of pay were both influences in students' decisions to engage in part-time employment, although the high non-response rate to this item and the high frequency of neutral as a response, combine to make any conclusions based on these responses highly tentative. Both the LSES and the M/HSES groups (LSES= 56.1%, n=23 M/HSES = 58.97%, n=69) indicated that the convenience of the location was a factor in their engagement in term time paid work. For the M/HSES group, a nearly equally strong motivator was the level of pay, with 56.4% (n=66) indicating that this influenced their decision to engage in the type of term time employment they did. Interestingly, only 29.27% of the LSES group indicated this while over a quarter (26.83%, n=11) were neutral, that is either unsure whether or not the level of pay had an effect on their decisions to engage in work or indicating it was irrelevant to this decision. Moreover, a further 32% of LSES students did not respond to this question at all (19% in the cases of M/HSES students).

A notable difference between the two SES groups in this research cohort is that the M/HSES group undertook employment because the hours of work fitted with their studies whereas this reason was less prominent among the LSES group (LSES= 36.58% n=15; M/HSES = 63.25% n=74). Note however that 24% took a neutral position and 31% did not respond. These response patterns represent a weakness in the data and mean that only highly tentative conclusions that require further investigation can be drawn. Keeping these weaknesses in mind, it seems that the role of pay and the necessity for work hours that fit with study patterns are two areas which might be operating differently in the two SES groups in this study. This difference requires confirmation and investigation elsewhere, especially as it relates to a difference between the SES groups concerning their prioritising of their current activities (work and study) and their educational / career aspirations, that is, their short and long term planning goals. What this points toward is the need for a more refined and complex notion of SES that acknowledges some of the hard-to-define subtleties

in this concept as well as the need to more fully investigate attitudinal factors that are associated with students' enrolment in universities and participation in paid work, rather than focusing on financial factors (Marginson, 2011; McMillan & Western, 2000; James, 2001; Bowden & Doughney, 2010; Smith, 2011; Brook, 2011).

*4.2 What sort of financial decisions or considerations are made by these students and are there any noticeable differences across SES cohorts?*

There were remarkable levels of similarity between the two SES groups in this study in relation to the financial decisions they made concerning essential and non-essential expenditures and their definitions of essential and non-essential items.

*Table 2: Students' responses to questionnaire items related to expenditure patterns differentiated according to students' SES.\**

| Question | Categories of responses | LSES Students' Responses | | M/HSES Students' Responses | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Please circle the proportion of your income (from work and other sources eg AUSTUDY) that you estimate is spent on essential and non-essential items | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | 0% on essentials and 100% non-essentials | 2.44 | 1 | 4.27 | 5 |
| | Between 1 & 20% on essentials AND between 80 & 99% on non-essentials. | 19.51 | 8 | 12.82 | 15 |
| | Between 21 & 40% on essentials AND between 60 & 79% on non-essentials. | 21.95 | 9 | 26.50 | 31 |
| | Between 41 & 60% on essentials AND between 40 & 59% on non-essentials. | 17.07 | 7 | 18.80 | 22 |
| | Between 61 & 80% on essentials AND between 20 & 39% on non-essentials. | 24.39 | 10 | 16.24 | 19 |
| | Between 81 & 99% on essentials AND between 1 & 19% on non-essentials. | 2.44 | 1 | 12.82 | 15 |
| | BLANK | 12.20 | 5 | 8.55 | 10 |

\* No student indicated spending 100% on essentials and 0% on non-essentials

This research cohort appears to be less well off than the companion research cohort, with just less than a third of the M/HSES group (29.06% n=34) and just over a quarter of the LSES group (26.83%, n=11) spending 0-39% of their income on non-essentials. About three quarters of the previous research cohort was spending 0-40% on non-essentials. However, it is interesting that the expenditure patterns for both SES groups in both studies are similar, and it could be that something related to the locales is influencing expenditure patterns more than SES. Given that most participants are aged between 18 and 20 years (74%, n=169) it is possible that shared social activities situated around each locale and peer pressure to participate influences these expenditure patterns more than SES.

Students from both SES groups in this study ranked the top three essential items in the same way, indicating no difference with respect to the prioritising of necessities. In fact, both groups ranked

food first: M/HSES 25.29% n=87; LSES 24.56% n=28,

transport second: M/HSES 21.51% n=74; LSES17.54% n=20,

study costs third: M/HSES:16.28% n=56; LSES14.91% n=17.

This was also true of the companion research cohort (Dearlove & Marland, 2012), although the actual items that were listed deviated very slightly from this study. Despite the geographical differences, there is marked similarity between the cohorts at both sites. Due to the different

methods and reporting choices detailed in various studies, it is difficult to make detailed comparisons with published literature. However, the Australian research by James, Bexley, Devlin and Marginson (2007) and James, Krause and Jennings (2010) both indicate that the majority of students are working to meet basic needs or for necessities. This current research indicates food, transport, and study costs are key demands on students' earnings and these could be considered necessities for students. Similarly, Hall (2010) discovered that UNSW students were working primarily to meet living costs. These results consistently indicate that term time employment is not an optional activity undertaken by many students, but is in fact a necessity.

Non-essential items were also ranked similarly by both SES groups in this study. The first three items ranked by M/HSES and LSES students were the same and included entertainment, transport and clothing. A minor difference was that entertainment and transport were ranked in reverse positions by M/HSES and LSES respondents:

Entertainment: ranked first by M/HSES 32.57% n=71 and second by LSES23.68% n=18, leisure items: ranked second by M/HSES 20.18% n=44 and first by LSES27.63% n=21, clothes: ranked third by both groups M/HSES 18.35% n=40 and LSES22.37% n=17.

These results are further evidence of minimal differences between students of different SES backgrounds in relation to their involvement in term-time employment. In this case, their expenditure patterns are highly similar.

*Does work interfere with commitment to academic study for either cohort?*

Both SES groups similarly prioritised study over work by reducing their work hours to accommodate their study needs more often than the reverse. Both groups also reported similar levels of interference by term-time employment in their study.

*Table 3. Table showing students' responses to questionnaire items pertaining to the relationship between paid work and study.*

| Question | Categories of responses | LSES Students' Responses | | M/HSES Students' Responses | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How often, if at all, does your work interfere with your ability to study or attend classes? | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Always | 4.88 | 2 | 3.42 | 4 |
| | Often | 21.95 | 9 | 22.22 | 26 |
| | Sometimes | 34.15 | 14 | 43.59 | 51 |
| | Never | 4.88 | 2 | 11.11 | 13 |
| | Blank | 34.15 | 14 | 19.66 | 23 |
| Question | Categories of responses | LSES Students' Responses | | M/HSES Students' Responses | |
| Please indicate which of the following statements best explains any interference your work creates with your ability to study or attend classes: Work conflicts with my scheduled classes. | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2.44 | 1 | 1.71 | 2 |
| | Agree | 7.32 | 3 | 11.97 | 14 |
| | Neutral | 19.51 | 8 | 20.51 | 24 |
| | Disagree | 21.95 | 9 | 25.64 | 30 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 14.63 | 6 | 18.80 | 22 |
| | Blanks | 34.15 | 14 | 21.37 | 25 |
| Question | Categories of responses | LSES Students' Responses | | M/HSES Students' Responses | |
| Please indicate which of the following statements best explains any interference your work creates with your ability to study or attend classes: Work takes up time that I would like to use for study. | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Strongly Agree | 17.07 | 7 | 17.09 | 20 |
| | Agree | 29.27 | 12 | 35.04 | 41 |
| | Neutral | 12.20 | 5 | 17.95 | 21 |
| | Disagree | 4.88 | 2 | 5.13 | 6 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.44 | 1 | 4.27 | 5 |
| | Blanks | 34.15 | 14 | 20.51 | 24 |
| Question | Categories of responses | LSES Students' Responses | | M/HSES Students' Responses | |
| Please indicate which of the following statements best indicates the way in which your work assists with your studies: Work enables me to afford study. | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Strongly Agree | 17.07 | 7 | 17.09 | 20 |
| | Agree | 31.71 | 13 | 36.75 | 43 |
| | Neutral | 4.88 | 2 | 13.68 | 16 |
| | Disagree | 7.32 | 3 | 9.40 | 11 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 7.32 | 3 | 4.27 | 5 |
| | Blanks | 31.71 | 13 | 18.80 | 22 |
| Question | Categories of responses | LSES Students' Responses | | M/HSES Students' Responses | |
| Have you had to decrease your work hours to accommodate your time needs while studying? | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Yes | 56.10 | 23 | 52.14 | 61 |
| | No | 17.07 | 7 | 27.35 | 32 |
| | Blanks | 26.83 | 11 | 20.51 | 24 |
| Question | Categories of responses | LSES Students' Responses | | M/HSES Students' Responses | |
| Have you had to reduce your study load (i.e. moved from full to part-time, or dropped a subject) to accommodate your time needs for working? | | % | n=41 | % | n=117 |
| | Yes | 21.95 | 9 | 17.09 | 20 |
| | No | 51.22 | 21 | 65.81 | 77 |
| | Blanks | 26.83 | 11 | 17.09 | 20 |

The two SES groups in this study were similar in their prioritising of study over work. Over half of both groups (LSES= 56.1% n=23; M/HSES = 52.14%, n=61) had reduced work hours for study and a similar percentage of each group (LSES= 21.95% n=9; M/HSES = 17.09%, n=20) had had to reduce their study load to allow them to work. This similarity was also evident in the companion research (Dearlove & Marland, 2012, p. A-68).

For both SES groups, work interferes with study and classes to some extent for the majority (LSES= 60.98%, n=25; M/HSES = 69.23% n=81). Only a few students from either SES group (LSES= 9.76% n=4; M/HSES = 13.68% n=16) found that work interfered with their scheduled classes. The companion research reported similar findings (Dearlove & Marland, 2012, p. A-68). These data are at odds with the findings of James et al. (2007) who found that 22.4% regularly missed classes for work. Duggin and Keefe (2007) argued that it was likely that students missed morning classes as a result of evening work, based on the students' reports that their employment caused fatigue and a hangover effect the next day. This interpretation was based on a high frequency of responses to a free response item in their survey. In contrast, large proportions from both SES groups in the study reported here (LSES=46.34% n=19; M/HSES = 52.13% n=61) found their part-time employment interfered with their study time, but not so much with their scheduled classes (LSES=9.76%, n=4; M/HSES=13.68% n=16), although again the poor response rate to this question necessitates caution with these findings. Hall's (2010) point concerning the finite trade-offs available to students who are juggling study, work and social/personal lives indicates the necessity for universities and government to acknowledge and share the responsibility for the management of these complex situations.

**Conclusion**

Overall, this study into term-time employment and SES indicates minimal differences between the behaviours of students from LSES and M/HSES. The hours students spent in term-time employment appear to be remarkably similar across the two SES groupings used in this study (LSES and M/HSES). Indications of vocational orientations towards term-time employment appear to be minimal amongst both SES groupings and both SES groups prioritised study over work. Also, both groups reported interference by term-time employment in their studies and there is remarkable similarity between both SES groups' patterns of expenditure and rankings of essential and non-essential items. Students defined essential items as food, transport and study costs and this confirms the results of other studies which indicate that the money earned from term-time employment is used for necessities. The general agreement amongst published research findings (James, Bexley, Devlin & Marginson, 2007; James, Krause & Jennings, 2010; and Hall, 2010), and confirmed in this research, is that necessity is a key motivation for students' term-time employment. This implies that, outside of significant changes to the higher education context such as scholarships and bursaries, this phenomenon is now a permanent feature of the higher education landscape. The options available to students to take responsibility for making this situation viable are finite, as Hall (2010) has indicated. Pedagogically, the less time spent involved in studies is not in the best interests of students or universities. Furthermore, this phenomenon appears to be widespread, that is, not attached to any one SES group in particular. Consequently, it can be argued that it is timely for universities and government (especially in relation to a review of various funding and financial student support mechanisms) to take a part in addressing this situation, rather than leaving it entirely to students to manage.

Management of this situation at a systemic level can be complicated and have impacts on staff workloads and working conditions as well as government-provided student support, all of which is designed around the current 'traditional' degree structure. This makes it a complex negotiation that will take time to design and implement. Some of the options that may be investigated include timetabling on a trimester basis in order to reduce the students' subject load at any one time and so allow more time for both term-time employment and study. Providing employment options on campus for students could be considered as could using technology strategically to reduce on-

campus time while not reducing students' opportunities to learn from each other. For example: all first year classes conducted on campus with small tutorial groups: in second year introducing some on-line lectures but retaining tutorials; in third year moving to all on-line lectures with tutorials on campus. Such restructuring would necessarily entail a proactive rethink of the provision of student services, including the hours of coverage, the nature of the services provided and the role of student services in the development of a 'student life'. The revision of student loans (amounts and eligibility), increased bursaries and scholarships are also options to be reconsidered.

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# The Safety of International Students in a Regional Area of Australia: Perceptions and Experiences

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## Abstract

*In Australia, international students have not only made an enormous economic contribution to the educational sector, but also enriched the cultural diversity of Australian institutions and societies. When international students become a part of the Australian community, issues related to their personal safety are significant, not only to relevant authorities but also to the broader community. This study aimed to investigate the safety of international students at a regional campus and surrounding environment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 international students aimed at exploring the current concerns and needs regarding their safety on and off campus. In addition, a focus group discussion was conducted with five stakeholders to investigate ways to improve the safety of international students in the current context. Four main themes emerged from the data, including safety concerns, safety risks, preventative safety strategies, and safety needs. One of the most frequent suggestions was to increase the reach of surveillance, greater support from the responsible authorities, particularly as related to environments beyond the confines of the university campus. The findings of this study have offered practical implications associated with the enhancement of the safety of international students in regional Australia.*

## Keywords

Higher education, international students, risk, student safety, vulnerability

## Introduction

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012a), there were 1.2 million students in the higher education system in 2010, among whom 28% (335,000) were international students. This latter group of students have added tremendous diversity to academic institutions and enriched the learning experience of domestic students. Economically, the international education sector has generated approximately $18.3 billion per year, constituting the third largest export industry in Australia (AEI, 2011). Politically, the sector is essential in fostering stronger international links (AIC, 2011a). Its multiple roles in education, economy, politics, as well as the wider social landscape has made the international education sector the focus of government, the media and the public.

According to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) (2010), the well-being and high-quality experience of international students is dependent upon many contributory factors, including personal safety. As revealed by an Australian Education International survey in 2006, personal safety was among the primary driving forces behind choosing to studying in Australia by international students from different countries such as Indonesia (94%); India (93%); Singapore/Malaysia (91%); China/Hong Kong (90%); and Thailand (91%) (AEI & Ipsos Australia Pty Ltd, 2007). Personal safety is also an important concern for international students in other developed countries, such as America (Bista & Foster, 2011) or New Zealand (Beard, 2011).

Personal safety includes issues such as home and fire safety, road and public transport safety, beach safety, and having an understanding of and ability to use emergency contact details (Nyland, Forbes-Mewett, & Marginson, 2010). Nevertheless, the focus of this paper is concerned with personal safety regarding assault, crime and racial abuse. Although this is complex it may be partially explained by the belief that international students are more vulnerable to safety hazards, living mostly on their own with limited support networks (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Rosenthal, Rossell, & Thomson, 2007), experiencing language barriers (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002), facing cultural differences in attitudes and social behaviours (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008), and encountering the many challenges associated with living in a new country.

**Background**

Since 2009, the safety of international students has emerged as a topic of much interest and debate, with the explosion of media coverage on several assaults that targeted Indian and Chinese students in Melbourne and Sydney (Gilmore, 2009; Hartcher, 2010; Healy, 2009; Ramachandran, 2009). Specifically, in May and June 2009, there were 14 assaults against Indian students, ranging from verbal abuse to physical attacks such as bashing, stabbing, or petrol bombing (Nyland, Forbes-Hewett, & Maginson, 2010). In the same year in Tasmania, a 26-year-old Chinese student was murdered in June, while in April and May 2010, three more assaults on international students were reported (Denholm, 2010). In a 2010 scoping study conducted in Melbourne, international students were reported to exhibit a higher likelihood of feeling unsafe and of having experienced more incidents of crime than domestic students (ICEPA, 2010). According to Levett (2008), the Chinese consulate in Sydney sought better protection for Chinese students from Australian authorities after one fourth of the 100 respondents in a 2008 survey reported being a victim of crime.

Serious efforts by the Australian government have since been made to address this issue. Many investigative bodies, such as the Victorian Task Force, (Nyland, Forbes-Hewett, et al., 2010) and the Tasmanian Police Taskforce (Price, 2010) were created to examine problems faced by international students. An increase in safety-related information has been made available to international students, for example, through the downloadable pre-arrival and orientation handbook entitled "Rainbow Guide", funded by the Commonwealth Government (NEAS/ISANA, 2008). The issuance of the "International Students Strategy for Australia 2010-2014" by COAG is regarded as another move to promote higher safety, in all aspects of daily living, for international students.

More recently, the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations funded a project, which led to the introduction of the "Universities Australia - Good Practice Guidelines for Enhancing Student Safety" in March 2011. On the part of higher education providers, universities across the nation are highlighting the seriousness of international students' safety and taking measures to tackle the problem. Various conferences have been held to pool collective resources in addressing the issue, including the Annual Campus and Students Security Conference at the University of Melbourne, and the 2011 Community-Campus Summit on International Students at Monash University.

Within the context of promoting improved safety for international students, the aim of this study was to investigate the safety of international students enrolled at a regional university, who are residing both on and off campus. It was particularly designed to better understand the current issues facing international students in regional areas, where perceived safety can be quite distinct from those in metropolitan locations, as well as examining their needs and expectations regarding safety on and off campus.

The university campus is located in an inner regional centre, with a population of approximately 65,000 people and in a state where the overall victim of assault rate is one of the lowest in Australia, with 700 victims per 100,000 head of population (ABS, 2011). In addition, the area where the university is located has a social and cultural environment that is vastly different to large Australian cities, as migrants, excluding those from UK and New Zealand, constitute only 5.72% of the population. As such, the area lacks the large, dense and dynamic cultural and linguistic diverse (CALD) communities which enrich larger Australian cities, such as Melbourne and Sydney (ABS, 2012b).

By actively bringing together international students and various stakeholders, the study sought to enhance community engagement and inform policies and initiatives on how to create safer communities for international students. Specifically, the study's objectives were to examine the views, experiences, needs and expectations of international students regarding their own personal safety; to examine the views of key stakeholders regarding the personal safety of international

students; and to inform policies and initiatives on how to create safe communities for international students.

## Methods

The research site of the study was a university in a regional area of Australia, where international students constituted 13% of the student population. Due to the distinct characteristics of regional areas in terms of the social, cultural and structural conditions, outlined previously, the study was anticipated to reveal interesting insights into the views and experiences of this under-researched group of international students.

The study employed a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with international students and focus group discussions with stakeholders and student representatives. A total of 25 international students (9 males, 16 females) participated in the interviews. The student participants aged between 20 to 38 years of age and were from various cultural background including China, India, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore and Saudi Arabia. The focus group discussion involved one student and four representatives from the International Student Services, Campus Security, and Accommodation Services and had an interest in ensuring the safety of international students. The interviews and focus group discussion were audio recorded with the participants' approval.

Data analysis was achieved by using NVivo 9 software to collate and code data. All the student participants were coded according to their gender (M for Male; F for Female) and cultural backgrounds, i.e., F1, Malaysia or M6, Vietnam. The stakeholder representatives (R) were also coded based on their gender, i.e. R1-F or R2-M. The data was then collated based on question headings. Grouped data was subject to double checking to ensure the integrity of the data. Additionally, thematic analysis of data was completed to identify key patterns and trends while comparing expressed views. Within the first stage, broad categories were identified within an overall schema, while in the second stage, a detailed series of hierarchical nodes and sub-nodes were developed. Data was coded and, where necessary, extra nodes were built into the schema. A number of quotations have been included in the paper to illustrate and support the accounts emerging from the textual responses.

## Results

The findings of the study highlighted four main themes in relation to the safety of international students at the researched university. This included safety issues, safety risks, preventative safety strategies, and safety needs.

### *Safety issues*

When discussing their feeling of safety on and off campus, the majority of the student participants expressed positive sentiments regarding their sense of safety. One participant commented: "I feel it's a very safe place and it's just more than what I expect" (M5, India). Others indicated a degree of positivity, with some hesitation, for example: "I feel safe in the day, but not at night" (F1, Malaysia) or "well, you are basically quite safe as long you don't go out during night time and weekend" (M6, Vietnam).

However, many student participants regarded the researched campus and its adjacent areas as unsafe for international students. Their negative feeling was in most cases associated with a single bad incident they experienced, which had created a fear about their safety.

> I [was] attacked by teenagers... now, I do not feel safe here especially when I pass [a group of] teenagers. If it is night time, it's worse. (F10, Japan)

Sometimes, the negative feelings about safety were brought about when 'reality' failed to match their expectations.

> *Safety [here] is worse than I expected because I thought it was a quiet and peaceful [place]. But there are kids or young adults running around at night that could hurt you. I personally think that it is quite unsafe to live in. (F2, Taiwan)*

Some student participants reported having experienced violence, crime or other threats. The reported incidents included offensive verbal abuse (M8, Vietnam; F3, Malaysia), food being thrown (M1, Malaysia), physical attacks (F10, Japan), and theft and house break-ins (M9, China; F16, Vietnam). It is worth noting that these incidents have affected the students in differing degrees. Some were "too deeply traumatised to go out for a while" and some merely saw it as a reminder to be mindful of possible dangers. However, an important finding was that only half of the victims had reported these incidents to the police or university security. Others chose to "just ignore them" rather than reporting them or seeking further support.

The interview data also indicated that almost all of the student participants had either witnessed or heard from friends about violence or crimes against international students on and off campus. Theft, verbal abuse and physical intimidation were the most frequently reported incidents.

> *My friend who lived in the Mowbray area, people try to open her room window, lucky that the window was locked, but her bike was stolen. (F4, Korea)*

Discussing these criminal acts from their own experience in dealing with international students, one stakeholder admitted that they went "from one extreme to the other", with some physical violence resulting in injury or death. However, she emphasised that, in her view, "the experiences that international students have would fit in with the experiences that the general community has in terms of violence" (R1-F).

*Safety risks*

There was an agreement among student and stakeholder participants about the claim that international students were more vulnerable to violence or crime than their domestic counterparts. However, when explaining this greater tendency for being victimized, the participants came up with varying reasons. The student participants identified several challenges and difficulties experienced by international students, including loneliness, difficulty in getting help, lack of cross-cultural communication skills, lack of car ownership and limited knowledge of self-protection strategies. The following comments exemplified those perceived safety risks.

> *I think it's because of [the] language barrier for some and not understanding the culture of local people. (M3, Singapore).*

> *Probably, [be]cause they walked around even at night and [they are] unsure how to protect themselves. (M7, Malaysia)*

> *Yes, I think they are more vulnerable. They are lonely and have little support in a strange country. (M4, China)*

> *Most international students won't be able to afford cars … they rely on public transport very much and they walk a lot. (F15, China)*

On the other hand, the stakeholder participants tended to underscore international students' unfamiliarity or insensitivity to the new social-cultural environment. One of the stakeholder participants, for example, attributed international students' higher possibility to victimization to the "nature of being new to the environment, new to the society or lack of understanding about their surroundings" (R3-M). The deceptive feeling of safety generated by the neat and tidy appearance of the surroundings, in their view, might put international students at a higher risk. The things which were highlighted were their unfamiliarity with their surroundings, not being aware of the potential dangers; so some of them might walk alone in the streets.

> *It's quiet. The houses are all neat and tidy. It looks very safe. (R1-F)*

The irregular work schedules of many international students who need employment to support themselves were also highlighted by stakeholders as a threat to their safety.

> *They might take up any kind of job to settle down at first, so it means a late job, late shifts... I think that creates a natural risk of travelling late. (R3-M)*

In addition, the widespread perception among criminals that international students were "potential lucrative targets" was believed to partly contribute to their greater vulnerability to being victimised. This claim resonates with Li (2008), who indicated a public perception that Chinese students carried a lot of cash with them and thus they became easy targets of criminals and gangs.

It is important to note that while the susceptibility of international students to safety risks were considered multi-faceted, student participants were particularly concerned about racial discrimination as the cause for violence or crime against international students. The reported incidents were very often portrayed as being ethnically charged violence or ethno-violence as referred to by (Hoffman, Schuh, & Fenske, 1998).

> *I think most probably because of racism. They are not happy with our existence or they are curious why we are here. (M2, Saudi Arabia)*

> *They often misunderstand international students and think we are refugees etc. and perhaps think we have grabbed most of their work opportunities. (F3, Malaysia)*

> *We are smaller in size and minority. Discrimination is the main reason, I think. (M3, Singapore)*

> *I'm not sure why, perhaps they feel that Asian people are annoying. (M6, Vietnam)*

This view, however, was not shared by the stakeholder participants, who saw reported incidents against international students as opportunistic and situational in nature.

> *You may have students arriving here and in five years nothing happened... Somebody else may arrive the first day, and the second day they hear or experience something bad. Some people are more prone to being in that situation whether they are international or not. They just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. ...you know, we have an escalation of crime within our society, and unfortunately international students get caught up in it, because they are part of the community. (R1-F)*

> *They just target the soft targets. Aggressive people don't distinguish between whether the targets are international students or local people. I don't think there are any racism issues here. (R3-M)*

*Preventative safety strategies*

In the face of possible danger, all student participants indicated that they had taken certain precautions to ensure their own safety while studying and living on and off campus. The most frequently reported preventative strategies among the student participants were staying home at night, going out in groups and taking some safety measures.

> *I stay at home during night time because crimes always happen at night. I learn to protect myself as much as I can. (M1, Malaysia)*

Some students looked to social-cultural integration as an effective strategy in protecting their own personal safety.

> *I try to act more politely, and not lose control when people insult me. I also try to understand the culture here to truly open up, emotionally and mentally to the new place. (F7, China)*

Commenting on preventative safety strategies, one stakeholder participant highlighted an effective program, which was being implemented to support new students in socialising and getting to know their new community.

> *[We have] devised a program of mentoring ... where say, a Korean student will meet with a new Korean student and he will explain the area, where the shops are... they are paid to do that for about six weeks after the new students first arrive. It seems to work. (R2-M)*

Many stakeholder participants felt that international students could do more to reduce the chance of being soft targets, such as dispersing themselves throughout the community rather than living in the same area. One participant suggested that a student who was being targeted in the street should "jump on any bus" as all buses are equipped with cameras. Another suggested that students use the ambulance service for emergencies, as all international students are entitled to access ambulance services free of charge. Importantly, stakeholder participants emphasised the need to raise safety awareness among international students as well as other involved parties.

> *We have to reinforce throughout, which is really important. We have to educate [international students] about what constitutes normal behaviour and what is not... during orientation, we have the police that come out and talk to the students... but [the] reality is that many do not take that information on board until they get into a situation. It's the difficulty in trying to educate, and say "look, you need to be aware of..." without scaring them... to many it's still an abstract concept for a while until they or their friend get into trouble. (R1-F)*

The necessity to communicate and unite actions across different levels of government, institutions, organisations and communities was also stressed.

> *I think it should be a holistic approach. At the moment I think there's a big gap... There are security that are responsible for certain things at certain times, and we may not know about them... the local police may be responsible about certain things at certain times and we are not informed here about it... and all channels are interrelated. So [there needs to be a link between] community, police, the university, security, academic staff, and teaching staff. (R3-M)*

*Safety needs*

A majority of students interviewed wanted more visible support from the University International Services, the police and the government. Their suggestions included multi-cultural awareness activities for both international students and local people; more buses during night time; more lighting on the streets and around the campus; more night patrols, especially in high risks areas; and improved video surveillance around the campus. For example, one participant commented:

> *I would expect to see security patrol more frequently on and around campus and it is really good that the University provide a Uni bus from city to Uni without stopping in the middle, only allow students to hop on, especially at night. (F3, Malaysia)*

Better communication of information about safety was also called for, with news about criminal activities being clearly publicised and cautions against being attacked properly emphasised:

> *Although it may arouse some uncertainty about studying here, they could have a newsletter about safety or if an incident happens, they may have a report and send it out to all international students saying this has happened, you know, make it more specific, say, during orientation, there should be real examples saying what has happened. (F15, China)*

**Discussion and recommendations**

*Safety issues*

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the student participants felt safe on and off campus. While different in scope and approach, these findings are fairly consistent with those in a survey in Melbourne, which indicated that a large proportion (78%) of international students felt safe, and the remaining 22 % felt unsafe (ICEPA, 2010). Other studies by Australian Education International (AIC, 2011a) or by Marginson et al. (2010) established that a large majority of those surveyed indicated feeling safe while studying and living in Australia.

The negative feelings about safety among the minority were associated with their own bad experience or with stories that they heard about concerning crime on international students. A few student participants reported incidents of first-hand exposure to violence, crime or other threats, including offensive verbal abuse, food being thrown, physical attacks, theft, and house break-ins.

However, almost all student participants had either witnessed or heard from their friends about crime against international students, among which theft, verbal abuse and physical intimidation were most frequently reported.

These findings indicate that concerns about the safety of international students in the current context are legitimate and that safety issues should be taken seriously. These findings are similar to much of the literature. For example, in their survey among 200 international students from nine Australian universities, Marginson et al. (2010) found that a small number of international students reported being the victim of assault, robbery and burglary, but many knew someone who had experienced one of these crimes.

Another concerning finding was that only half of the student victims had reported the incidents to the police or university security and other half chose to "just ignore them". This revelation supports a phenomenon which is well-documented about victims of crime (Brown & Seller, 2007; Graycar, 2010). In the Victoria University survey (ICEPA, 2010), only 13.5% of those who had experience violence or crime reported to the police. In a recent qualitative study by Basu and Akbar (2012) among Indian students at Queensland University of Technology, Indian students were depicted as easier targets of mugging because they are perceived as being reluctant to report to the police.

*Safety risk*

The student and stakeholder participants had a propensity to believe that international students were more vulnerable to violence or crime than domestic students although they had different reasons to believe so. The student participants pointed to many factors that could contribute to the easier victimization of international students, such as loneliness, difficulty in getting help, lack of cross-cultural communication skills, absence of car ownership and lack of self-protection strategies.

The element of social exclusion is perceived to lie at the heart of these safety threatening factors. As such, COAG (2010) underlined isolation, lack of networks and/or citizen's rights as contributory to personal security issues. Similarly, in a qualitative study with PhD students in Australia, Cotterall (2011) revealed that international students were socially isolated, which worsened their difficulties especially in times of crisis.

Conversely, stakeholder participants highlighted international students' unfamiliarity or insensitivity to the new social-cultural environment; the irregular working schedules they may work in; and that they are perceived as being 'soft' or lucrative targets is reflected within the literature (Shekhar & Saxena, 2010; Spolc & Lee, 2009, p. 4)

It is worth noting that the student participants were particularly concerned about racial discrimination as the cause for violence or crime against international students. This belief is again in alignment with those expressed in the survey of international students in Melbourne, where 50% of international students believed the threats to their safety had a racial, religious or cultural dimension (ICEPA, 2010). However, this view was not shared by the stakeholder participants, who considered crime against international students as largely opportunistic and situational in nature.

One possible explanation for the difference in perspective regarding racism is that international students tend to base their judgement on a few specific cases while stakeholders often rely on the bigger systemic picture. The stakeholders' view was possibly based on the available statistical data, which indicates that the rate of assault among all groups of international students was significantly lower than the relevant weighted State average in 2009 (AIC, 2011b). The report by Australian Institute of Criminology reads, "Analysis of the Australian component of the 2004 International Crime Victims Survey produced no evidence of significantly increased reporting of personal victimisation by overseas-born students compared with Australian-born students" (AIC, 2011a, p. xiii). When the rate of crime and violence against international students in the community is not significantly disproportional to the domestic students, there is little evidence to substantiate the claim that the reported incidents were racially motivated.

However, it is worth pointing out that many victims choose not to report their experiences as evidenced by this study and the literature (Graycar, 2010). This results in an inadequacy of data to fully reflect all the complications of the issue. This phenomenon has been noted by The Senate (2009) in that the higher education sector may not completely understand the depth and breadth of this safety issue among international students, who are reluctant to report criminal activity for fear of an adverse impact on an existing visa or future visa application. According to Graycar (2010), it is also difficult to examine the racism factor behind criminal acts due to the difficulty in obtaining information about a student's ethnicity and ascertaining the intent of a perpetrator.

Given the disparity in perspectives between international students and stakeholders about the existence of racially motivated crime against international students in Australia, practical measures should be taken to cast light on this uncertainty. Specific efforts, for example, should be put into gathering information about crimes against international students, as opposed to domestic students or the general public. In addition, it is necessary to gather as much information as possible about students' ethnicity, income, expenditure, employment and accommodation, in order to gain a better understanding of the situation before any claims can be made about the primary motive of a crime. To encourage more students to report criminal activity, it is recommended that more channels be established, such as a website, where international students can register any concerns without unnecessary worries about visas or the like.

*Preventative safety strategies*

All student participants reported taking certain precautions to ensure their own safety on and off campus, which indicated a high level of personal safety awareness. Their most frequently reported preventative strategies were staying home at night, going out in groups and carrying pepper spray. These findings seem to reflect the common sense in safety practices, which are consistent within current literature. Brown and Seller (2007) found that international students in the United Kingdom actively took precautions against possible dangers, such as avoiding walking alone in risky areas at night. International respondents to a survey in Melbourne also indicated that they avoided going out late at night alone to enhance their personal safety (Marginson et al., 2010). These precautionary practices are expected to reduce the likelihood of crime as most robberies, both against international students and the larger public, occur in the late evenings and early mornings (AIC, 2011a).

From the stakeholder's perspective, it was important to emphasize the need to communicate and unite actions across different levels of government, institutions, organisations and communities. Proposing an initiative to promote preventative safety strategies, one stakeholder participant highlighted a program, implemented by his department. In this program, newly arrived students are supported by their senior counterparts, who usually come from the same home countries, in socialising and getting to know their new community. Awareness about safety and precautions against crime are also communicated effectively through this peer-to-peer channel.

*Safety needs*

The findings of the study indicated that international students wanted more visible support from the University International Services, the police and the government. Their suggested needs included multi-cultural awareness activities for both international students and local people; more direct bus routes during night time; more lighting on the streets and around the campus; more night patrols, especially in high risks areas; and improved video surveillance around the campus. These findings underscored the relationship between the safety of international students and the physical and structural factors of the wider social-economic environment such as lighting, public transport, and working conditions. Thus, a community-based safety strategy needs to be established to address the issue with clearly defined plans of action for each involved party. The level of monitoring, surveillance, and support also needs to be improved, especially when it relates to environments beyond the confines of the university campus.

# Conclusion

Overall, the combination of personal, environmental and social-economic factors have a propensity for international students to be perceived as soft targets. This potentially places them at a greater risk of experiencing assault, robbery and burglary than domestic students. Despite this, the findings of the study revealed that the majority of the student participants felt reasonably safe on and off campus. To augment these complex challenges encountered by international students, greater assistance and support as well as improved communication is required from the university, the government, and other organisations including the wider community, to guard against harassment and violence. The multiple vulnerabilities of international students as referred to by (Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, & Sawir, 2005) were clearly illustrated by the participants in this study, who experienced first-hand exposure to crime or witnessed or heard about crimes on international students. These safety-related challenges reflect the broader structural and socio-economic issues within the community which have an important role to play in the student experience (The Senate, 2009). It is imperative that community safety strategies are developed, which addresses the safety issues which involve not only international students but the community at large.

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# The Potential Impacts of 'Inherent Requirements' and 'Mandatory Professional Reporting' on Students, particularly those with Mental Health Concerns, registering with University Disability Support/Equity Services.

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## Abstract

*University-entrance in Australia has become increasingly inclusive of a broader cross-section of the community, and in a number cases, the participation of underrepresented groups ('equity groups') has been actively encouraged. Initiatives to encourage broader participation have often been highly effective, resulting in wider community benefits. Students with disabilities have formed a significant equity group, and students with a mental health issue are a subset of this group. Such students are frequently supported by disability support centres, or equity divisions, variously named across the sector, but now a standard feature of all Australian campuses. Disclosure of disability, particularly mental illness, is respected as an option for students, and non disclosure recognised as a common phenomenon. Non disclosing students have less access to services and mechanisms likely to support them; however, their right to privacy has been respected. A new focus on 'inherent requirements' and related 'mandatory professional reporting' within study courses has the potential to reduce disclosure further, to the disadvantage of students, staff and universities generally. Ironically, inherent requirement policies which require students to sign statements of capacity may well result in decreased disclosure. The intentions (to protect all concerned) underpinning inherent requirements are plausibly sound but necessitate that students are provided with clear information and the necessary reassurance to remain confident in disclosing their personal health information.*

## The changing university cohort and emergence of equity groups

In the 1960's in Australia, less than 5% of school leavers progressed to university education (McNaught & Beal, 2012), and mature age entry was a rare phenomenon. The sixties and seventies were periods of dramatic social, economic and political change within Australia (Weston, Soriano & Qu, 2001) not limited to: changing family structures, new understandings of gender, improved opportunities for women, the recognition of Indigenous people, and, changing attitudes towards people with disabilities. As an example of the changes occurring, by the mid 1980s in Australia, 'special education' schools were largely closed, and the majority of students were mainstreamed in to regular classrooms (Mazurek & Winzer, 1994).

By 1990, the Federal Government had identified five key equity groups (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990) encompassing people:

- from low socio-economic backgrounds;
- from rural or isolated areas;
- with a disability;
- from a non-English speaking background; and
- women, especially in non-traditional areas of study and higher degrees.

A sixth equity group, Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders, has been subsequently recognised. Various authors (e.g. Willems, 2010) have noted that many students from within the equity groups overlap (e.g. being Indigenous, from a remote community, having English as a Second Language, and coming from a community where otitis media results in hearing loss), which results in increased disadvantage in gaining qualifications and training.

Given the rise in reporting of the prevalence of mental health, many within the university sector would be likely to nominate this as a 'seventh' equity group. One in four young Australians suffers from a mental disorder in any year (Jureidini, 2012). Over recent years, much needed gains have

been made with increased awareness of mental health and subsequent improvements in treatment, albeit that much more needs to be achieved. Notably, stigma remains a major issue (Michaels, López, Rüsch, & Corrigan, 2012) with significant impacts. It is of relevance to concerns about openness to disclosure, and help-seeking behaviours, that rates of serious mental illness are significantly higher in university student cohorts than the general population (Stallman, 2010).

Registrations for university disability support services, linked to mental health, have increased dramatically (Storrie, Ahern & Tuckett, 2010) and, conversely, research indicates that the prevalence of mental health issues for university students has been significantly underestimated (Leahy, et al, 2010). In addition to those reluctant to disclose, some students will be unaware of their own mental illness. Signs may exist, or, may not yet be apparent, and develop during their university years; 75% of mental disorders start before the age of 25 (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Merikangas & Walters, 2005). Mental health and mental illness are prime considerations within the higher education sector.

In 1992, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was enacted as law, and simultaneously over the period from the 1990s to current times, Australia has become an increasingly litigious society, which indirectly served to ensure that Acts, like the DDA, and the Disability Standards for Education (DSE), enacted in 2005, were followed. In 2009, Australia adopted the Fair Work Act, administered by the Fair Work Ombudsman. The Fair Work Act redefined disability in broader terms and significantly increased opportunities for legal action in cases of non-compliance (Harpur, French & Bales, 2012). Employers, in particular, are aware of the damaging ramifications of potential legal proceedings related to disability and discrimination.

By 2008, the Bradley Review had led to national goals for specific targets related to equity groups, for example, by 2020, 20% of university entrants would be from low socio-economic backgrounds, and by 2025, 40% of people aged 25-34 years would have a Bachelor degree or above. Various government initiatives and funded projects have supported these plans, and publically available reporting mechanisms regularly provide updates on progress towards these goals. In some cases, lucrative funding has been connected to achieving progress towards the goals. The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), a federal government initiative targeting entrants from low socio-economic backgrounds, will supply over $185 million in funding in 2014 alone. This is motivation for embracing the national goals.

Students entering universities in Australia have become diversified. The elite academically-able students of the 1960s (and earlier) have been joined by a far broader cross-section of the community. Until relatively recent times, schooling systems which matriculated able students to university study, effectively denied people with disabilities the opportunity of university access (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler & Bereded-Samuel, 2010). Whilst still under-represented, people with disabilities are commonly entering university, and countless have demonstrated they are capable of not only course completion, but outstanding results (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh & Whitt, 2010). In many cases, their progress has been enabled by the use of modifications and adjustments, as set out in the various Acts. Disability support officers/divisions and equity officers/divisions (variously titled across the sector) provide accommodations and adjustments to enable participation (e.g. providing a note-taker to accompany a student unable to write). Students with disabilities must register with the appropriate university-based service, and services are explicit about the confidentiality afforded to registering students. Whilst the accommodation and adjustments are necessarily shared with staff on a need-to-know basis, the disability is not; however, by receiving an accommodation and/or adjustment, it is known the student has a disability.

**Registration and disclosure issues**

For a wide variety of reasons, students with disabilities are often reluctant to disclose their disability, and to register with services (Gerber & Price, 2012). Where the disability is visible (e.g. being in a wheelchair), or easily detected (e.g. wearing hearing aids and having impaired speech),

registration appears more likely to occur. That most disabilities are invisible or hidden (e.g. mental health, learning disabilities) presents a range of conundrums for both the individual and institution. If a student believes there may be long-term disadvantages in registration with a service, they will be reluctant to do so. If they do not register, this may place them at heightened risk as the pressures of university mount (e.g. a student with an anxiety disorder will be balancing work-life-study pressures; completing exams; presenting in front of peers and academic staff; all potentially anxiety inducing events) with resultant negative impacts (e.g. exacerbated ill health or attrition from study). Key reasons for reluctance to disclose include fear of discrimination, stigmatisation, and previously negative experiences from disclosure (Barney, Griffiths & Banfield, 2011) as well as the fear that disclosing will have a detrimental impact on future career options.

**The development of inherent requirement policies**

Most Australian universities have commenced the implementation of 'inherent requirement policies' (Bialocerkowski, Johnson, Allan & Phillips, 2013), which parallel the principles of inherent requirements within employment, which are exempt from being considered as discrimination within the DDA and other relevant legislations (e.g. the Equal Opportunity Acts in various states; WA in 1984; the Fair Work Act, 2009). Inherent requirements are logical in a range of settings and occupations (e.g. it would be impossible to be a fire-fighter in a wheelchair). Inherent requirements, in the context of study, are the essential elements of a course, or unit of study, that all students must meet. Whilst accommodations and adjustments can be made under the DDA, these cannot compromise the inherent requirements. Practical examples include: a pre-service teacher with a criminal record would need to ensure that their particular record would not preclude the necessary permissions, such as a 'Working with Children' clearance; a nursing student would need to ensure they had the necessary numeracy skills to perform accurate drug calculations for professional registration as a nurse.

Inherent requirements, made explicit, have the potential to ensure that a student does not unknowingly enter and complete a course of study where professional registration would be unlikely or impossible to obtain. However, completion of a particular course does not necessarily guarantee registration, and universities are not gate-keepers for the professions. Likewise, some students will complete a course and never opt for professional registration.

Many university qualifications are directly linked to professional registration bodies, and these bodies dictate inherent requirements for accreditation to work within the profession. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is the organisation responsible for the implementation of the 'National Registration and Accreditation Scheme' across Australia, and represents ten national boards. Likewise, the Medical Board of Australia has "Guidelines for mandatory notifications" which endeavour to ensure public safety by excluding from professional practice a practitioner who would be likely to place patients in danger. These Guidelines also cover students whilst undertaking training. Thus, higher education institutions are legally bound to report substantive concerns such as:

> "....if the provider reasonably believes: a). a student enrolled with the provider has an impairment that, in the course of the student undertaking clinical training, may place the public at substantial risk of harm if the provider reasonably believes: a). a student enrolled with the provider has an impairment that, in the course of the student undertaking clinical training, may place the public at substantial risk of harm" (Medical Board of Australia, 2011, p. 5).

It is unlikely that students who register with a mental health condition would be discriminated against with regard to professional registration or practicum placements; this would be illegal. The professional guidelines for medical professions and university inherent requirement policies, such as those of the University of Western Sydney, do not indicate that the presence of a mental illness is reportable or notifiable; only that behaviour which potentially endangers patients is reportable. However, unless this is carefully addressed with incoming students, the very nature of the descriptions and commentary could make students fearful. Given that fear of discrimination is often

a prime consideration in the reluctance to register, incoming students will require reassurance that inherent requirements and professional registration are not targeting mental illness per se. Students often fear stigma (Thornicroft, Rose & Mehta, 2010) and embarrassment in disclosing mental health issues (McAuliffe, Boddy, McLennan & Stewart, 2012), and their avoidance of support mechanisms can be counter-productive to their study success. Universities must engage with strategies which reduce stigmatisation as it is widely understood to be a key factor in creating a reluctance to register for support, and to access the benefits (Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein & Zivin, 2009) of engagement with institutional services. The development of university-wide mental health approaches, which include elements such as policy, procedures, plans, staff training, targeted campaigns and partnerships, may be a strategic way to progress this area.

The University of Western Sydney (UWS) has been recognised nationally for its leadership in the area of inherent requirements, which commenced in 2010, with Nursing Education, the Inherent Requirements of Nursing Education (IRONE) project, and has rapidly expanded to include all courses by 2013. Several institutions have used and refer to UWS policies as exemplars. Commonly, inherent requirement policies have categories such as: ethical behaviour, behavioural stability, legal, communication, cognition, sensory ability, and, sustainable performance. They are variously categorised in different universities with policies in place, but these factors are largely consistent. Inherent requirements and professional standards refer to behaviours and actions, not medical conditions. Behavioural stability is often the most nebulous of inherent requirement descriptors, which is problematic for students with a history of mental illness. Understandably, many will be reluctant to disclose; they may be managing very well, perhaps on a medication program which has controlled the condition in a highly effective manner or they may have experienced only a single episode of mental illness several years prior. They may also be apprehensive that an episodic period of illness, known to others, could mean that they are unable to meet the requirement of 'behavioural stability' at that time. Wright's (1975) seminal work around the concept of 'spread' challenges the common assumption that a student with a mental illness will never be able to meet the domain of behavioural stability. It is increasingly common for universities to make explicit the inherent requirements to students prior to entry, and in many cases, for students to sign disclosure statements and attest to the ability to meet inherent requirements. In doing so, institutions have an obligation to provide the necessary information to a student, so that a lack of information does not lead to either the provision of incorrect information, or unnecessary disclosure. Without other information being provided, a student with a mental illness who reads the 'behavioural stability' section of a university's inherent requirement policy might fairly assume that disclosure may lead to preclusion from all, or parts of, their intended study course.

### Challenges and implications of inherent requirement policies

Programs which increase access to support for students carry a range of potential benefits (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein & Hefner, 2007). Without treatment and support, the mental health issues experienced by university students are likely to escalate and carry significant negative impacts on individuals and the community (Stallman, 2010). There is an irony that the professions which have been the key drivers in the demand for inherent requirements - medicine, nursing, health care - may well be inadvertently discouraging treatment and support from the potentially vulnerable, who would benefit greatly from intervention. There is a particular challenge apparent for universities - to ensure that inherent requirements are used with particular care, noting their potential for harm or misuse. Venville (2012,p. 8) notes, in her detailed examination of TAFE students:

> *Students usually do not disclose their illness at the outset for the following reasons: they want to be self-reliant and to protect their sense of self as a coping person; they fear stigma, prejudice and rejection; and they don't consider an episode of psychosis or depression as a 'disability'. But the risk is then that the students are often too ill and too vulnerable to seek help when they need it the most.*

The privacy of personal health information is a significant issue for many, and can be particularly pronounced for a person whose privacy has been previously violated. The level of trust required for a student to provide private health information to a disability support/equity officer in a university setting cannot be underestimated; the officer is, after all, an employee of the organisation. Policies, protocols or legislation that override confidentiality and privacy may result in reduced disclosure. For university staff working in disability support and counselling services the dilemma of disclosure is an ever-present issue, when information shared may warrant disclosure for the good of the person, for the good of others, or to reduce reputational risk to the organisation. If inherent requirements impose a legal obligation to disclose known information, the capacity to provide assurances of confidentiality to students may become a contentious issue, with serious ramifications for both the student and university-employee. For example, there is no specific mention in the APRHA Act of who within an education provider has an obligation under mandatory reporting, however, it has the potential to impact on a range of individuals, not limited to disability support officers and counselling staff.

As an increasingly litigious society, it is only a matter of time until university policies on inherent requirements are tested in the courts. The fear of litigation is highly motivating for the university sector; there is an avoidance of having an issue escalate both for the time and cost involved, but more so, for the risk of negative publicity for the institution. Disability support/equity officers, admission offices, and faculties, will need to be alert to ensure that incoming students have clear guidance on their rights and responsibilities related to disclosure. There is necessarily an extra step in the enrolment process if students are to 'sign off' on inherent requirements, and the staff administering this step need to be fully trained and understand the ramifications and implications of both non-disclosure and disclosure.

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# On-line Counselling:
# A Reflection on Professional Practice

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## Abstract

*The University of Tasmania has multiple campuses and delivers courses on-line. In 2008 the counselling team began to investigate alternative methods of service delivery in counselling to off-campus students. This article is a reflection on the process of establishing and maintaining online counselling from a practitioner's viewpoint. The article focuses on Asynchronous Email Counselling (AEC), one type of online counselling, in the university context. From client feedback, AEC does not replace face-to-face counselling, but it is a valid alternative, enhancing the (distance) students' experience of university and increasing student retention.*

Recently I came across an old notebook. It was very small and well used. It was a record of measurements and 'counting' strokes and I realised it was my mother's knitting book that she kept with her wool and knitting needles. There were measurements and descriptions of jumpers she had knitted for our family in the 50s and 60s and later for her grandchildren. Spontaneous and unbidden memories of a time long passed sprang to mind while deciphering the cryptic notations for 'green jumper for Cheryl' and 'poncho crocheted shell pattern 1970'. In a series of counting strokes, abbreviations and comments ('knit extra rows for length!' and 'wool tangles easily - put in freezer before using!') the notebook became a time capsule unlocking sounds, thoughts and pictures.

Words have an emotive quality and an ability to transport us to other times and places, to challenge our thoughts and cause us to pause and reflect on who we are. Even in this century when we have access to a variety of media to communicate, words are still central to our communication, spoken or written. The same words can have the power to encourage or discourage, to hurt or to heal. Written words are confronting. Once written, the words can be passed on, repeated, used out of context, pop up unexpectedly, and transmitted in ways we had not thought possible. And with emails, words can become a permanent record to be retrieved at will.

As counsellors, words are our bread and butter – written and spoken. As counsellors we provide a space where words can, amongst other things, evoke, provoke, calm, encourage, guide and hopefully heal. Within the 'black box' where we practice, the hearers of the spoken word are limited to the participants – often face-to-face or within small groups. Sometimes to my amazement a client may say "When you said ….last time I was here….suddenly everything made sense"…. Meanwhile I may be thinking to myself – "did I actually say that?" Unless the session is recorded there is no way to actually go back and remind myself even if I wanted to!

Over recent decades the influence of the Internet on communication has changed the landscape of our practice. Ever increasingly, 'online counselling' has become a part of our professional counselling world. In my practice context, 'online counselling' is limited to Asynchronous Email Counselling (AEC), which is an email conversation not in real time but delayed, and shares similarities with a face-to-face appointment. I set aside a one hour time slot, during which time I read and respond to the client's email(s), asking questions for clarification and introducing psycho-education and strategies for the client to consider, as well as including empathic responses and building rapport. AEC gives the client and the counsellor time to review and reflect on what is being said. Additionally 'online counselling' is described on our website as being for students who are seeking counselling *via email*, for support in developing strategies for positively dealing with a range of personal issues and mental health issues.

A written record of a therapeutic interaction provides an in- depth resource for ongoing development and growth of both client and counsellor. It is a record that the counsellor has access to and that the client can return to again and again. We have no control over where this record of

written interaction may go or how it will be used or how the client may choose to share it. It is a counselling session exposed (do I sense a shudder?).

These aspects of AEC are very challenging. At first I felt almost professional fear! While it is possible to 'forget' parts of the verbal therapeutic conversation, the written interaction remains open to scrutiny. This aspect alone is enough to cause some counsellors to shy away from the experience of AEC. However, as I thought more about the process, and engaged with it, I realised that it is a process that holds me accountable. It is a written record of therapeutic engagement that does not rely on my memory or interpretation of the session. It provides a permanent scaffold to work with the client that is accepted by both parties. It can be returned to continually when clarification is needed or simply revisited to explore an experience or a strategy.

While I have no control how my client may use the emails, I have found them to be a valuable resource when reflecting on my practice and counselling skills. I have (with clients' permission) used some of the content for teaching purposes and supervision. Again because the emails are real rather than made up, there is an increase in vulnerability for me as a practitioner because my practice is open to discussion.

In the same way that a face-to-face session has structure, so does writing a AEC email. The structure includes an initial summary of the content of the client's email, with perhaps a few questions or thoughts of my own included; an empathic understanding of the deeper issues underlying the content and outlining strategies that may help the client, including the use of online self-help tools. Of course there is the temptation to inundate the client with a multiplicity of resources and options in the first email and this is part of the reflecting/balancing act in AEC. How many questions do I ask – without it becoming twenty questions? How many strategies/resources do I include in my response before the client feels overwhelmed? This reflective, questioning process continues to inform my professional practice. There are disadvantages to asynchronous email that are well documented in the literature – for example the time delay in receiving and responding to emails. "It takes too long!!" is a cry I hear from my colleagues and some clients alike.

To some extent I agree. At times it is frustrating waiting for an email response or writing a response that no longer seems applicable – maybe the client has moved on. Sometimes a client is unaware of the time taken to respond, of careful wording, editing and reflecting. AEC does allow for times of reflection for both the client and counsellor and it allows time for the client to explore strategies in their own way. And it creates space for the use of silence.

I enjoy using AEC within my counselling practice. If you have a love for words and for the use of written language then AEC provides a challenging medium to engage with clients. The rhythm and flow of responses between client and counsellor is an insightful process for me and I trust for the client. The time taken to work through a client's email, to build rapport and to be present, to reflect on what has been written and how is a process that re-informs my counselling skills.

It does require training to understand how to empathise, how to build an authentic relationship using written text and the skill of being present. Ethical issues, technological information and understanding, assessment, ways of responding and of being present, are some areas that are covered in AEC training. With the training comes an understanding of the process and the number of words that are written, shared, interpreted and clarified. A story of a personal struggle is written, responded to and shared. And as counsellors we have another legislated requirement – to securely store the information that is given.

Within verbal sessions, case notes can be summarised, the wording/phrasing and language may be crafted to suite a particular need or purpose, depending on the environment and institutional requirements where we work as counsellors. Case notes from verbal sessions are essentially interpretations/summaries of our interaction, which may differ from the client's recall. AEC produces a permanent record of the interaction and a document of authentic engagement. So when it comes to emails, how do we case note them? How do we store the emails?

Thinking of ways to record the case note from an AEC session became an opportunity to review and reflect on how I was responding to AEC clients – particularly in the light of my tendency to write long, flowing responses! A clear advantage of the email interaction is that the session is already written down. So it is easy enough to save the document to our electronic case note system with a very brief summary of the essential points. I realised however this raised another dilemma. Email strings are notoriously complicated to read. So to find information quickly (for example for me to go back and read the previous session or for another counsellor to read for a shared client) the initial summary became very important, providing a brief synopsis of the interaction. Sorting out the tangle of email strings began to happen slowly.

Following discussion with colleagues, it was decided to trial clearly identifying the session chronologically in the subject line of the case notes -for example 'e-counselling session 1 client contact'; 'e-counselling session 1 counsellor's response'; 'e-counselling session 2 client response'; 'e-counselling session 2 counsellor's response' etc. This chronological ordering of emails became particularly useful when some of my clients reached multiple sessions. It is a system that was developed through many discussions with my colleagues as we clarified how to store the information, while maintaining accessibility and the integrity of the client /counsellor interaction - as well as meeting the legal requirements for our counselling service. I have no doubt that the organisation of e-counselling information will be further refined over time.

With the logistics of managing a number of emails seemingly sorted, I was becoming more proficient at responding within the one-hour time slot that I had allocated. As my confidence increased, my verbose style became more selective, responding more to key issues (much like in the counselling face-to-face session) and thus less wordy! My responses became more structured rather than inundating the client with a variety of options or empathic responses. I began to slow the process of my response. This was a huge step forward –initially my flowing, detailed responses would take up to two hours to formulate and it became obvious that this level of interaction could not be sustained while managing a busy face-to-face case load.

I also became aware that performing a balancing act between managing face-to-face clients and AEC clients during peak times was becoming more complicated. Even though I indicated in my diary that I would be working online with a client, sometimes other face-to-face appointments would be entered into the same appointment space OR I would use the time for 'other pressing matters' and move the email client. It was easy enough to work through the scheduling of appointment times; my own response was more confronting. Why did I think it was OK to move an AEC session? If it was a face-to-face session I would not have intentionally moved it (except in urgent situations). So what was happening?

As I reflected, I discovered that with growing confidence in the busyness of increasing caseloads, I had begun to devalue the AEC experience. This was a profound and challenging insight for me. I worked with clients online, building rapport and legitimising the therapeutic experience through emails – and yet there appeared to be within me the lingering thought that because the client was not in the room, it was a less legitimate form of interaction – I had made an assumption that I could 'bump' the appointment relatively easily.

Once I realised what was happening and that I had almost fallen into a trap of thinking 'this is just an email', I began to read the email as if the client was with me telling their story and becoming vulnerable through the written text. By slowing my responses and reminding/questioning myself as to my role and purpose in this interaction, I was able to redevelop the sense of being present with the client.

This reflective process was a strong reminder that this interaction is not an administrative interaction via email. It is a therapeutic, person centred interaction, where the foundational elements of genuineness, authenticity, congruence and respect are threads that give the structure depth and

safety and form an integral and valid part of the AEC experience. Having worked through this I was finally able to write with genuineness and congruence,

*As I sit here alone in my office reflecting on your email and framing my responses, I imagine that you are sitting in the room with me. Just like a client who has come in to see me, my phone is diverted, and for the next hour you have my complete and undivided attention.*

From client feedback, AEC is not a substitute for face-to-face counselling nor does it suit everyone – clients or counsellors! On our website we are clear that we do not offer an online crisis service and if a client is seeking emergency assistance contacts are clearly given. There is in place, an online registration process and a clear description of how we define working within the online counselling context (i.e. AEC). Despite our best intent, some clients do slip through and when this happens the situation becomes a supported effort through discussions with colleagues identifying the avenues of care that may be available to the client. Not all encounters have been long term, successful AEC sessions. Some clients have responded for one session, others have not responded at all. The reasons are unclear – it is difficult to gain feedback from clients who do not wish to engage. On a professional level, some colleagues have more readily embraced AEC practice than others; interest, however, in the continued development and support for AEC remains high within the team.

There are legal issues to deal with, for example; when is it OK to work with a client enrolled in one of our courses but who is overseas on an exchange or returned to his/her own home country? How do professional associations advise ethical consideration in regard to email counselling? The complexity within AEC requires open discussion with legal teams, policy makers and colleagues in a similar way that establishing a face-to-face counselling service demands. Counselling 101 remember?

As a counselling team we began conversations about 'online counselling' in 2008, following up with a literature search and research into what was happening and available overseas. In 2011 we focussed on AEC as an area that we were able to professionally resource. A small pilot group ran in 2011and in 2012 we formally embraced the wider principle of 'online counselling', beginning with AEC as part of our service. The time taken to set up processes, training and information, including web based registration and access, has been long, including many wide ranging conversations and discussions with various departments and individuals within our university. AEC does not operate in isolation from the rest of the counselling service but is an integral part of service delivery.

As part of our investigative process into the potential student uptake of 'online counselling' at UTAS, three questions relating to accessing online counselling services including chat, email, Skype and phone were included in a 2011 Student Voice Survey (N =1600) exploring aspects of the student experience. Results indicated that 38% of respondents would be likely to use email counselling (when/if it became available), 58% indicated a preference for after hours and 75% indicated that the advantage of email counselling was the flexibility. Additionally 47.4% of respondents indicated a preference for face-face counselling when available. These results are supported by qualitative feedback summed up in two responses below:

*I really enjoyed the email correspondence because being someone who suffers high anxiety; it was a more low-focus, less confronting means to 'talk' about what was going on. Also, typing it out scaffolded my thinking and processing, made me think more purposefully rather than scratching for the first response that came into my head to fill the void of silence after a question is asked (It's the little things like that which cause stress when you're anxious). It was flexible time-wise which was really helpful when fitting things into a study/work/personal life schedule. However, I did feel it less efficient in comparison to face-to-face counselling sessions. It might be a few days between email responses or a week (not your fault, I imagine you have a very demanding job). I felt like what could be talked about/achieved in one email correspondence (my email and your response to it) was the equivalent of 5/10 mins in a face-to-face session. And also I believe that physical interaction is part of*

*the healing process in some instances. For example, just seeing the genuine concern on your face was an important part of the process for me. (Toni)\**

*Thank you for your support and reply, even though you are far away from me I found it very reassuring that there is someone out there who is willing to give me a helping hand. (Lee\* International student).*

To come to terms with AEC we need to be comfortable in our vulnerability, be willing to learn from our clients and to learn through the process, and to share our learning – both mistakes and successes collegially, enabling us to learn more about who we are as practitioners. We can be courageous and open to the opportunities that AEC offers and in doing so have access to a professional resource that has the capacity to deepen and broaden our professional practice. Being a written process, access to AEC scripts is not limited by advances in technology and the focus is solely on the written interaction between counsellor and client without embellishment or distraction. The therapeutic email is a time capsule unlocking the door to reflective practice – it has the ability to take us back to that particular moment of therapeutic engagement through the power of written language.

It would be wonderful to think that an AEC session email that is rediscovered sometime later will be as authentic and valid now as when first written, continuing to evoke thoughts and actions in the client and in the counsellor – just like finding a small, well used notebook from another time. Now we have the opportunity to open the door of our 'black box' and share with other professionals the paradoxical art of counselling. What a challenge!

*\*Pseudonyms used to maintain confidentiality.*

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*Best Practice Case Examples*

# SCU Connect Pilot Project:
# Adjusting to University

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## Background

SCU (Southern Cross University) Connect Project is a pilot transition program designed to improve connection to and retention in higher education for students from low socio-economic backgrounds by building their personal resilience. This was to address the high attrition rates in our first year student cohort (over 30%) and informed by research surrounding the negative impact of poor mental health in university students.

The challenges associated with university study can create a stressful environment, leading to or exacerbating poor mental health. Resilience skills help students cope with change, bounce back from setbacks, and maintain their wellbeing. These skills are not only valuable at the transition stage to university, but are important throughout life and are key graduate attributes.

Recent research tells us is that one in five Australians will experience anxiety or depression within a12 month period, but university students are more likely to experience mental health issues in that time. A recent study has shown that 83.9% university students were experiencing mental distress (compared with 29% in the general population). Importantly, 60-70% of final marks can be predicted by the student's level of distress and, despite high quality academic and wellbeing resources being available, relatively few students are aware of and access them (Stallman 2010). SCU's First Year Experience Survey 2011 found that one in five SCU students seriously consider dropping out in their first year and the primary reasons given were, time pressures on study, emotional health, and fear of failure.

## Desired outcomes

The project aimed to support first year students during their transition to university by 'normalising' this exciting and challenging time, and building their skills in resilience and wellbeing to keep them successfully on their educational journey. A further aim was to promote a culture of health and wellbeing within the university community by: facilitating positive connections between academic and professional staff and students; raising awareness of the importance of good mental health; and practicing authentically the values we were promoting. We believed that this holistic and systemic approach would help build SCU's capacity to engage, connect with and retain its first year students.

## Description of the pilot project

The project was initially funded with a $100k grant through the Higher Education Participation & Partnership Program (HEPPP) to run over a 10 month period (Oct 2012 – July 2013) with a successful funding extension through till December 2013.

Rachael Jones, a Registered Psychologist and an SCU Student Health Services Counsellor and Jo Mason, trained counsellor and teacher and SCU Equity & Diversity Officer were both seconded from their substantive positions to job share the full time project role.

The project started with comprehensive research and training into current work on resilience in education settings and included meeting with key researchers and educators in this area including Dr Helen Stallman (University of Queensland, co founder of The Desk: Health & Wellbeing site for

university students) and Dr Ian Shochet (Queensland University of Technology, developer of Promoting Adult Resilience 'PAR' Training).

The resilience skills training program was delivered in Session 1 2013 in tutorials in a first year unit in each of the following disciplines: Nursing, Psychology and Primary Education. These units were targeted as they were from the academic schools (Health & Human Sciences and Education) with the highest proportion of low socio-economic status students. The project coordinators had good working relationships with the academics involved in these units and could enlist their support and endorsement. It consisted of five 20 minute sessions interspersed from Week 3 until Week 13.

Another important aspect of the project was designing and implementing a creative outreach-based model of student engagement. This was a 'sticky' welcoming area, called 'Wellness HQ', set up in a common outdoor space over the first four weeks of the teaching session, to provide a less formal access and connection point for new students.

The final aspect of the project was facilitating, educating and promoting wellbeing for the wider university community. This was achieved through broad activities such as: the development of a 'Resilience' tips educational poster printed and distributed throughout the campus (on the back of toilet doors!); a welcome event for new staff on campus for the beginning of the teaching year; involvement in events on campus ('Get Connected' week); and emails to students promoting their specific support services on campus.

**Evaluation methods**

Students who undertook the resilience skills training (approximately 190) in Session 1 were given self-report surveys on their resilience and connectedness both before and after being delivered the training for research purposes. They were also asked to give general feedback about the usefulness of the training for first year students.

Anecdotal insights and feedback have also been collected from academics, students and staff involved in the implementation. The number of students/staff visiting the Wellness HQ was also recorded.

**Outcomes**

Initial findings from the surveys found a significant correlation between student's resilience at the beginning, to their connectedness and learning at the end of the session. This confirms the importance of student resilience and has implications for further work in this area.

The collated feedback indicated that 86% students enjoyed the sessions and thought that they were helpful for first year students while 71% reported they were using the resilience strategies taught.

Outcomes from this pilot project have meant it is now in the process of becoming a prototype program for wider implementation across the university.

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# Participation Assistants Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Asperger's Syndrome(AS)

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## Background

In the journal of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association (JANZSSA) Number 41, April 2013, Heather McLeod from the Australian National University (ANU) published an article advising on a pilot program Assisting Students with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) to transition more smoothly into Academic Life at University and into University Accommodation. This article is a follow up on how the Disability Services Centre (DSC) at the ANU developed the program further in 2013.

## Aim of the Program

The aim of the program is to attract and retain students with AS and ASDs at university. The ANU aims to achieve this by reducing stress and anxiety levels experienced by these students and assisting them in establishing and maintaining relationships and boundaries with academic, professional and accommodation staff. In addition our aim is to develop an awareness of ASD's in both professional and academic staff. The goal of the program being that students with AS and ASD are engaged and succeed at university.

## Description

ANU students registered with the DSC, who identify with ASD or AS have the opportunity to join the Participation Assistant (PA) Program. Participation Assistants are selected from a pool of ANU senior psychology or medical students however also include students from other areas who have a background or experience of AS either in their own families or have worked in the area of disability. PAs provide individualized, creative and flexible support to students in the program. As the needs of the students are broad, the DSC individualizes the service for each student.

PA's are briefed by the Disability Advisor on the support needs of the student on a one-on-one basis and the limits of the PA's role are made clear to both the student and PA. Each PA is provided with supporting information including: role statement; guide to supporting students with ASD's and general information pack.

Generally PA's are employed between 2-5 hours per week and are paid a casual hourly rate. They are required to meet with the student on campus at a time agreed to by both parties. Their role is to assist the student with transition to university life including: orientation to campus and university systems (including IT/on-line systems); organization and planning (time tabling, keeping track of assessments, when to start revising for exams etc.); liaising with professional and academic staff. The PA does not provide academic assistance or counselling.

PAs are required to complete an electronic journal each fortnight and submit timesheets for approval. The journals are reviewed by the student's Disability Advisor to determine whether any modification or further support is required. The Project Officer provides administrative support for the program, sourcing and maintaining a register of suitable PAs, ensuring regular follow up and providing support to the PA and Disability Advisor as needed.

Funding for the Project Officer is provided by the University. Funding for PAs is provided by the University and a percentage is later claimed under the Additional Support for Students with Disabilities (ASSD).

**Evaluation**

Students and their PAs meet periodically with the Disability Advisor providing an opportunity for feedback and review. Satisfaction surveys are completed by participants at the end of each semester and reviewed by the DSC Manager. Student course results and retention rates at university are monitored at the end of each semester.

**Outcomes**

During the 2012 pilot, 12 students with ASD benefitted from the program. By the end of 2012, six of these students were able to advance from the program and continue independently in their studies. In 2013 the remaining six students continued in the program, most at reduced hours. During 2013 six new students joined the program with two only requiring a PA in Semester One before advising they felt confident enough to continue autonomously. The successful pilot in 2012 resulted in the ANU supporting this program by providing a part-time Projects Officer in 2013 to improve service delivery and ensure its ongoing success.

In August 2013 the DSC funded Prof Tony Attwood, world renown expert in AS and ASD, to facilitate two workshops on campus. Approximately 160 professional staff and 100 academic staff participated in the workshops providing disability awareness training across the ANU in ASD and AS. Prof Attwood advised that the ANU is currently leading Australia in best practice and supports for students with AS and ASD.

**The authors can be contacted at:**
**Julie.Harrison@anu.edu.au**

*Book Review*

# The Creative Seed

## By Lilian Wissink, published 2013 by Exisle Publishing, New Zealand.

## Interview with the Author

*By Rhonda Leece*
*Associate Director (Services)*
*University of New England.*

## Abstract

*Creativity is about expressing our individuality. It's our ability to use our imagination, to experiment and problem solve and ultimately to come up with valuable, innovative ideas in any area of life. The Creative Seed focuses on creativity within the realms of the arts, such as writing, painting, sculpting, crafts and performance. Research has shown a multitude of benefits for people who enjoy creative expression, such as increased emotional health, mental flexibility and social inclusion. Creativity in any domain, from the arts to science, is crucial in making valuable and wide-ranging contributions to our society.*

*Lilian Wissink, former Counsellor at UNE has just published a book, The Creative Seed: How to enrich your life through creativity.*

*This interview with the author examines how Lilian made the transition from a university counsellor to a published author and looks at the product of this transition, The Creative Seed.*

Lilian Wissink, former Counsellor at UNE has just published a book, The Creative Seed: How to enrich your life through creativity. The following interview with Lilian explores how self awareness and a desire to recognise and embrace individual creativity took Lilian from university counsellor to author published author. In her own words, Lilian takes us on her creative journey.

### Can you give a brief summary of what brought you to the place of being an author?

Just over a decade ago I became fascinated by the creative process. I was intrigued about how we can go from knowing very little about a particular creative area, such as painting, writing or performing and develop skills that we had not thought possible. This is what happened to me. I had always believed I wasn't the 'creative type'. Although I now realise that I was using my creativity in all sorts of ways, such as in my counselling, devising and running programs for students and staff at UNE, and also at home and in the garden. But I wanted to see if I could develop my creativity in unchartered areas, such as singing, drawing and painting. I started off tentatively, had lessons and was delighted to find with time, patience and a willingness to 'play' in these creative domains that I could accomplish creative goals that included singing in front of others and exhibiting and selling my art. I began to reflect on the creative journey and felt drawn to write with the hope of introducing others to this remarkable life experience.

### What prompted you to write The Creative Seed?

I wanted to demystify the creative process. Many people believe that they are not creative or that it's too late for them to develop skills in a particular creative area. I wrote the book because I believe that creativity is open to everyone, and not just to a select few. We can all discover and stimulate a new exciting dimension in our lives, maybe one we haven't seriously thought about before. And I was keen to use my professional experience as a psychologist and link my knowledge to my relatively new love of creative expression.

**What is the power of creativity?**

Creativity is about expressing our individuality. It's our ability to use our imagination, to experiment and problem solve and ultimately to come up with valuable, innovative ideas in any area of life. *The Creative Seed* focuses on creativity within the realms of the arts, such as writing, painting, sculpting, crafts and performance. Research has shown a multitude of benefits for people who enjoy creative expression, such as increased emotional health, mental flexibility and social inclusion. Creativity in any domain, from the arts to science, is crucial in making valuable and wide-ranging contributions to our society.

**Why/how do you think that nurturing the power of creativity is relevant to students in higher education?**

Sometimes we can get bogged down in teaching students facts and imparting knowledge. Of course, this is an important aspect of tertiary education, but I believe we also need to teach students the nuts and bolts of the creative process. For example, how to think broadly and problem solve by looking at an issue from different angles and how to come up with innovative solutions. As time goes on I think more universities are providing courses in creative thinking and I recently read that one American university requires all new students to take a course in creative expression. The upshot is that students directly experience the nature of the creative process and thus learn skills that are transferrable to other subjects and life in general. This can range from finding the delight in experimentation and seeing mistakes as an opportunity to learn, or developing personal qualities such as perseverance and flexibility. These learnt skills and personal qualities equip our students to be well-rounded and highly effective within their professional and personal communities. And of course there are many other benefits of creative expression such as emotional, social and spiritual.

Many of our tertiary students already study in a specific creative area, such as art, music, theatre studies, design and architecture. Just like students in others disciplines, they struggle with common obstacles like frustration, procrastination and perfectionism. Unfortunately, sometimes students start to believe that because they are struggling with these challenges that they are not able or capable, but with insight into the creative process they can find strategies which will empower them to move forward.

A series of 'creative touchstones' summarises each chapter. These provide questions to guide the reader in self reflection- 'I wonder what you discovered in this chapter', did the exercises help you to recognise how life events and historical influences have impacted on how you experience your own creativity'; and tips on avoiding or addressing common hurdles such as procrastination and perfectionism as well as advice related to developing self care and mindfulness skills.

**Tips for using The Creative Seed as a resource for practitioners?**

On the website – www.thecreativeseed.com.au, there is a section especially written for teachers, mentors and counsellors that provides suggestions on how to use *The Creative Seed* with students. There is also a list of common questions from practitioners which I answer by connecting to the book as a resource.

The questions on the website will resonate with counsellors in higher education:

> *Can you recommend ways to boost self-esteem; I have a very bright student who has excelled over the past two years, but I'm worried about him. He seems to be driving himself very hard and has some unrealistic expectations of what he feels he should achieve; My students are great. I like them, but they are young and seem to be caught up with being at university for the first time. They seem quite distracted; So many people seem stressed these days, especially my students who are juggling families or work, alongside their studies.*

Within the book there are numerous strategies that are well researched and validated and can be used individually or in a group setting. Topics include challenging the common myths of creativity,

acknowledging creative qualities and strengths, dealing with self-talk and stress, setting goals and learning how to navigate the *seed* process of acquiring **S**kills, **E**xperimenting, **E**valuating and **D**iscovering our unique gift of creativity. Each chapter has easy to follow exercises that can be used to assist the reader in gaining self-awareness and practical tools to help with the common challenges all creative people experience.

The website also has a light-hearted and insightful review by Annette Stevenson, Senior Counsellor at UNE that provides a practitioner's view to using *The Creative Seed* as a resource.

Annette's review highlights both the personal and professional uses of this book. She states,

> *As a psychologist/counsellor who has worked in the tertiary sector for many years, I was pleased to discover that the book has drawn on all of the therapeutic strategies that I introduce my student clients to – journaling, recognition of self-talk, development of insight and self-awareness, values clarification, creative problem solving, relaxation techniques, visualisations, goal-setting, and more. I can see myself directing many students towards this book – particularly post-graduate students embarking on large projects such as a research Masters or PhD – especially to address maladies such as the dreaded "writer's block". Then there are the students who procrastinate, have perfectionistic tendencies, or who have "imposter syndrome" and sabotage their studies. So many past clients' journeys have no doubt contributed to the veracity of the examples in this book (http://thecreativeseed.com.au/teachers-mentors-counsellors/review-by-annette-stevenson/ )*

**Where can readers get a copy of your book?**

The Creative Seed is available in all good bookshops and directly through the publisher – www.exislepublishing.com.au and www.exislepublishing.co.nz.

**Lilian Wissink can be contacted via email: wissinklilian@yahoo.com.au.**
*Thank you Lilian for sharing your journey with me.*

*Conversation Piece*

# Some Reflections on ANZSSA:
# What the Dickens Shall We Do?

Jim Elliott
ANZSSA President 2009-2013

As I come to the end of my term as President of ANZSSA, and indeed rattle towards retiring entirely from full-time work at a university, it is a good time to pause and reflect (like Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens' famous tale) on ANZSSA Past, ANZSSA Present and ANZSSA Future. Having joined ANZSSA in 1989, and been actively involved in some way or other since 1991, I feel like something of a fixture. Indeed, in the back of my filing cupboard, I recently found the 1993 ANZSSA Directory of Student Services Personnel – a listing of everyone working in support services in Australia and New Zealand at the time. As I flick through the staff listings in that publication, I see mostly names of those retired, moved along or (in some cases) no longer alive. About half a dozen old lags remain in service – and I will not shame and name right here. They know who they are….

### The ghost of ANZSSA past

To state the bleeding obvious, the higher education context in which ANZSSA existed when I joined in 1989 was significantly different from that of today. We had only begun to contemplate the concept of mass higher education. Numbers of students were, in absolute terms, a lot smaller. The proportion of international students likewise was much smaller. The technology from today's perspective was positively steam driven – although I presume today's technology will also look quaint in due course. I joined the Counselling Service at Curtin University at a time when almost no-one had a computer on their desk. To paraphrase the famous Monty Python sketch, we used to work in a paper bag at the bottom of a lake.

My understanding of the role of ANZSSA at the time was that the association met an important need to enable comparatively isolated support service staff to network. Given the relatively wide geographical separation of members, I have gained the impression that ANZSSA functioned mostly at state or regional level. In the 1970s and 1980s, it appears that the core office bearers – president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer – would be located in a single capital city for the duration of their term. Typically, the major goal of the executive would be to plan and deliver the subsequent biennial conference, which in turn was the only major opportunity for support service professionals to meet and network.

My first exposure to a biennial conference was in Sydney in 1991. At that conference, the president Brian Burke presented a number of constitutional changes which essentially created the regional and professional interest group structure that we have in place today (although there has been some tweaking since). As a young and naïve person, I was very much unaware of some of the under-currents of discontent at that time. But chief amongst those discontents was a sense of alienation amongst ISANA members.

Until the mid-1990s, ISANA was an interest group within ANZSSA. The acronym stood for International Student Advisors Network of Australia, and the group had been growing along with the increase in international student enrolments. There had been some concerns expressed from ISANA members that ANZSSA was a counsellor-based association, and that the timing of biennial conferences was not conducive to their participation. ANZSSA conferences had, it seems, traditionally been held in late January – which is typically a very busy time for anyone dealing with incoming international students. So, whilst ANZSSA was in the midst of creating an interest group structure to accommodate the needs of members who were not counsellors, the largest of those interest groups reached a decision that they would be best served by leaving ANZSSA. And indeed,

that is exactly what happened by 1995. (ISANA subsequently revised their name as ISANA International Education Association to reflect a wider vision than simply advising – but that is another story entirely).

An ironical result was that this move left ANZSSA more counsellor-dominated than ever as the remaining non-counsellor membership was rather limited in numbers. It resulted in the majority of members of the executive having a counsellor background. The perception that ANZSSA is counsellor-dominated has remained with us; and there clearly has been some truth in that perception if only in terms of the proportion of members with a counsellor background. Despite that, for as long as I can recall the National Executive has been anxious to reach out to other support service professional groups, and to find a place for those groups within ANZSSA.

ANZSSA is only one of a number of professional associations in this arena – although other professional associations tend to have a more focused brief than ANZSSA. The National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS) naturally focuses on career issues. The Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL), formed in 2005, addresses the needs of a range of professional staff working in various language and learning support roles. Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) focus on equity matters. The Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) has a focus on administrative and management issues, many of which impact on the students experience. The Tertiary Campus Ministry Association (TCMA) supports the professional goals of staff working in chaplaincy and ministry on Australian campuses. There are no doubt other professional associations. The market, to say the least, is someone fragmented.

We have also seen a growth in interest in student-experience related issues such as the First Year in Higher Education Centre which has hosted a series of annual conferences and acted as a focal point for effective practice in higher education – without actually becoming a professional association as such. In more recent days, we have seen professional conference organisers such as Criterion and Informa enter the student experience arena.

All of the above associations and other professional forums are no doubt meeting particular needs. But I do have a concern that there may be a danger of too much fragmentation and too much focus on single professional issues. It is rare that there is much dialogue between the various associations. And no doubt I am biased, but I do think ANZSSA appears to have the broadest and most inclusive notion of the student experience and a very broad view of support services, despite the counsellor tag.

ANZSSA developed the current Journal of the Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association (JANZSSA) into its current format in 1995. Prior to that, there had been an occasional newsletter labelled ANZSSA News, carrying a mixture of articles and news items. In the early 1990s, the publication was re-titled as JANZSSA but retained the same mix of news and some articles. The decision of the ANZSSA Executive in 1995 was to upgrade the professional standard by making the journal a more formal publication. It has been one of very few platforms for publication of articles related to student support and the student experience. As the inaugural editor (of the current format) in 1995, I am rather proud of what JANZSSA has developed into over the subsequent years.

On a very personal level, ANZSSA has been a very important part of my professional life in higher education. I have had the benefit of an outstanding network of colleagues in Australia and New Zealand – and in the wider international area. The national and regional conferences that I have attended have been immense fun, and I have inevitably returned back to my workplace with ideas to try out. I have developed some longstanding friendships. I suspect that I would not have lasted nearly so long in my profession without ANZSSA.

But times change….

## The ghost of ANZSSA present

ANZSSA today faces some challenges. In the association's early years, networking was harder; and finding and sharing information was harder. As a result, perhaps membership and affiliation with a professional association was of more value to individuals. In 2013, finding information is almost distressingly easy (although finding *wisdom* is just as tough as it ever was). Finding a network is also simple. Networking and brokering information have been key functions of associations like ANZSSA, and perhaps those functions no longer have the same value that they used to have.

In the late 1990s, there was a call from ANZSSA members to create an institutional membership option. Prior to the introduction of institutional membership, all membership was ANZSSA was as a result of an individual decision to join. Institutional membership allowed – in theory – for larger numbers of members from each institution on the basis of a single (but larger) subscription payment. The Executive of ANZSSA pondered this decision at some length before introducing the membership category. In essence, the reason to do so was the hope of expanding a membership base that had been plateauing along at much the same number for several years.

As it happened, institutional membership has not led to any increase in membership – or any major drop off either. We stubbornly plateau along with similar numbers from one year to the next. But one outcome of institutional membership is that it appears that many of our members are not really aware that they are members and do not seem to participate in any active way. So the current membership of ANZSSA is much the same as ever.

At the same time, we are aware (if only anecdotally) that the profile of staff involved in student support is changing. There appears to be a growth in the numbers of professional staff engaged in one form or another of "advisor" role, although that word may not necessarily be in their job title. My observations at Curtin and via my informal network at other institutions cannot be regarded as formal "data" in any way. And I am not aware of any disciplined investigation of this development – but I believe there are increasing numbers of professional staff in advisory support roles in a variety of settings and organisational structures. Some are attached to transition and retention support services such as the one I now manage. Others are in faculties, teaching departments, other central support services, equity areas, student unions/guilds and so on. These staff are not served directly by any of the other existing professional associations. Within ANZSSA, our interest group SFAN (Student Financial Advisors Network) is the most obvious body to provide some leadership in meeting the professional and networking needs of this growing group.

However, it is very easy to <u>say</u> that ANZSSA ought to be doing something, whether that applies to SFAN or any other group within ANZSSA. The most fundamental problem facing ANZSSA at present is that we exist as an *amateur* association of *professionals*. That is, virtually anything that ANZSSA does is achieved by the voluntary efforts of very busy people doing things on top of and in between the demands of their "real" jobs. A little money is spent on providing bookkeeper assistance to the treasurer; some funds are spent on our website; and a little is spent on the recently developed monthly e-newsletter. Pretty much everything else is done by members of the Executive and other members on various projects. This includes editing the journal, convening and managing our biennial conferences, conducting regional and interest group professional development events, liaising with international bodies such as NASPA and IASAS, carrying out standards-related projects, and a multitude of other bits and pieces. Active members of ANZSSA have limited time available to do these things, and the prospect of expanding into additional activities is often not possible. It only takes a (relatively) small crisis or new demand in the workplace to put ANZSSA on the backburner for a while. To be perfectly realistic, I believe that if each member of the Executive is able to facilitate one or two key things in a year, then we are doing well.

**The ghost of ANZSSA future**

As I near the end of more than two decades of involvement with ANZSSA, I ponder what the future might hold for the association. At one level, ANZSSA will continue to exist if the association meets the needs of members. While I am not at all sure that the Executive of ANZSSA knows what those needs are in any systematized way, I can make a few educated guesses of broad-scale issues that have the potential to benefit the support service community.

Possibly the most important is that people still highly value the opportunity to network in person. Warm bodies in the same room are better than anything on-line or mediated by any communications technology. Professional development events that get people together across disciplines and institutions are highly valued. I think it will remain a key function for ANZSSA to facilitate regional, national and international events.

Notwithstanding the previous paragraph, I believe there is also value in supplementing face-to-face networking with good communication channels. However, that remains a challenge. We have put some effort into setting up Linked In and Twitter as (allegedly) easy-to-use channels. But they are not used very much. Such communication I have with members of ANZSSA seems mostly to be email-based. I am not sure why that would be the case. Perhaps a larger proportion of ANZSSA members are of the age whereby email seemed like an amazing thing, and we have never gotten into the habit of using anything else. Or perhaps people meet their networking/communication needs outside any channels facilitated by ANZSSA. It is certainly an issue for consideration of the next Executive.

Given the fragmented nature of professional support services, we need to build better communications between ANZSSA and other key players in the field. Directors of support services usually have a wide portfolio including such services as counselling, learning support, health, careers, equity, child care, orientation, and many others. Some directors are active ANZSSA members; some are less active members; and many are not members at all. Regardless of that, there is benefit in ANZSSA having some sort of relationship with people in key management positions. We would also gain much in fostering closer relationships with some (if not all) of the other professional associations in the student support arena. We have already made some moves in this direction by reaching an agreement with ISANA to co-host a national conference in Adelaide in December 2014. That is an excellent beginning, and I am sure we could develop working relationships with other associations if we were able to allocate some time and resources to such relationships.

In reference to that latter point, ANZSSA attempted to create a kind of "peak council" of post-secondary support service associations around 2005. After meeting with representatives of five other associations, we sought to create an affiliated organisation to be known as the Post-Secondary Student Services Council of Australia. Sadly, nothing further ever came of this – largely because no resources in time or money were devoted to it. And – as we have noted earlier – ANZSSA like most of the other professional associations is reliant on volunteer time. Perhaps a council of that nature is not viable at this stage, and we are better off to initiate the occasional ad hoc meeting with other stakeholders from time to time on a needs basis.

As noted above, there has been growing interest in student transition, retention, first year experience and the like. In support of that, there has been an increase in staff involved in delivering these kinds of programs – often in student advisory roles of one sort or another. It is desirable for ANZSSA to do something in this space. I believe it would be desirable to build on the strengths within our Interest Group SFAN, and seek to develop a set of guidelines for good practice analogous to those developed for counsellors and for mentor programs.

A further gap in ANZSSA's repertoire has been our focus on universities, leading to not much attention to other post-secondary providers. There have been a small number of high profile individual members in VET sector and some smaller private providers, but I cannot help thinking that there are very likely some isolated support service professional out there who do not active an active professional network.

The most fundamental issue for ANZSSA's future is to consider the limits of what is actually possible with the resources we have. The key difficulty is our almost complete reliance on volunteer time. If we continue with this approach, then we must accept we are more or less doing all that can be done. However, I think we are reaching a point where the next Executive could consider using more paid resources. We do not need to become an employer with all the complexities that entails – but we could usefully contract out some activities without putting too much stress on ANZSSA funds. We hope to put forward some ideas around this to the Annual General Meeting to be held at the conference in Wellington in December.

## To conclude

When presidents step down from their role, they usually like to believe they have done at least a little bit of good. Most of the good has flowed the other way for me – I think I have gained a lot more from ANZSSA than I have been able to contribute. I have been stimulated to think, and gained many ideas that I have been able to implement in my work place. There have been some wonderful conferences, and I have made many excellent friendships. At the same time, I have some pride in what I have contributed to ANZZSA – especially the development of our journal, the existence of our annual Western Australian Duty of Care Conferences, and an active role in the planning and delivery of a succession of biennial conferences.

I believe ANZSSA is reasonably well-placed to reposition itself as a relevant association in the post-secondary education sector in our region, but that is not an assured future. Too many things have changed since ANZSSA was formed for us to toddle along as we always have. Our best resource is the many professional people who members and active participants in our regional groups, interest groups and part of the Executive. And our second best resource is a passably healthy bank account, which will allow the 2014-15 Executive to take some active steps to address some of the issues I have raised in this brief paper.

And finally, a quote from Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* that especially appeals to me…

"Bah," said Scrooge, "Humbug."

I shall put this in all my Christmas cards this year.

## Websites of Interest

ANZSSA - http://anzssa.squarespace.com/

NAGCAS - http://www.nagcas.org.au/

AALL - http://www.aall.org.au/home

EPHEA - http://www.adcet.edu.au/EdEquity/EPHEA.chpx

ATEM - http://www.atem.org.au/

FYHE - http://fyhe.com.au/

TCMA - http://www.tcma.org.au/

IASAS - http://www.iasasonline.org/

**The author may be contacted at:**
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# JANZSSA Submission Guidelines 2013

**Word Processing platform**

All articles should be submitted electronically using Microsoft Word or in another commonly used word processing format able to be converted to an MS Word document.

**Language and spelling**

JANZSSA uses Australian English so please adjust your spell check in word to ensure compliance.

**Journal format**

JANZSSA is published in an A4 format.

**Article Length:**

Articles would normally be less than 6,000 words to be accepted.

Articles longer than 6,000 words may be returned to authors to be shortened.

**Abstract is required:**

All articles submitted must include a brief (<250 words) abstract.

**Page layout required:**

Articles for inclusion in JANZSSA in either the referred or non-refereed suctions need to be submitted electronically using the following layout instructions.

The following is a normal page layout in MS Word:

Top: 5.5          Bottom: 5.5
Left: 2.54        Right: 2.54
Gutter = 0        Header = 1     Footer = 6

**Font type:**

Times New Roman

**Font pitch:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Article Title: | 14 point **BOLD** |
| Author/s Name, Role, Institution: | 12 point |
| Abstract header: | 12 point **BOLD** |
| Abstract body: | 10 point *italics* |
| Body text: | 12 point |
| Header within body of the text: | 12 point **BOLD** |
| Footnotes: | 9 point |

**Diagrams tables and drawings:**

Any diagrams and tables included in the text must be no larger than 21 cm in depth x 17 cms wide.

Any drawings included are inserted with **Paste Special** function so that the drawing is stable in the body of the text.

Text within a table is preferred as centred or left margin aligned.

**Use of colour:**

JANZSSA is published in black and white so use of colour in graphs, diagrams and drawings may mean that the nuanced meaning in the various components of the chart, graph etc lost. Please ensure that the differences in charts, diagrams and graphs etc are clearly defined using variations of colour within a grey scale.

**Use of References:**

Referencing protocol is the APA Referencing System. Examples of the APA Referencing system are easily found using an internet search. Below are two examples from Australian Universities.

> http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/ref_apa.html
> http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/tutorials/citing/apa.html

**Suitable content for articles submitted for publication in JANZSSA:**

Articles may include comment and debate on current issues, reports of student services in practice, policy matters, research projects, and reviews of relevant books. The guiding editorial policy is that articles are of interest to student service staff, and are of a high standard.

**JANZSSA publishes both refereed and non-referred articles:**

Authors who wish to submit an item to be published as a refereed article must include a written note to that effect at the time of submission. If an author does not specify for inclusion in the refereed section the editors will consider the article for publication in the non-refereed section.

**Refereed Articles:**

The Research Programmes and Policy Unit, Higher Education Group, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) advise that JANZSSA is recognized by DEEWR for publication of refereed articles. The register of such journals is to be found at

> http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/

**Non-Refereed Articles:**

Articles submitted for publication without being peer-refereed will be published at the discretion of the editors.

**Best Practice and Strategies to Show Case:**

JANZSSA includes in its non refereed section examples of best practice and innovation emerging in Student Services.

Contributions for this section are invited.

Contributions to this section would normally be descriptive and not evaluative.

Length of submissions can vary but the upper word limit will normally be 1500 words. Contributions of longer length may be returned to the author for editing.

A Showcase Best Practice Report Template is available from the Editors. See contact details below. Use of the template is not compulsory and is offered simply to assist if required.

**Reports and Reviews:**

Reports on aspects of policy and practice within Student Services and the Post-Secondary Education sector are invited. Short reviews of books, articles, journals, reports which would be of general interest to JANZSSA readers are also very welcome.

**Quality Submissions:**

All submissions for publication are required to comply with the layout requirements, and edited for grammar, punctuation and spelling accuracy prior to submission to the JANZSSA co-editors. Articles will be returned to authors for corrections, if required, prior to consideration for publication or distributed for peer review.

**Submission Deadlines:**

JANZSSA publishes issues: in April and October each year.

*Deadline for submission of non-refereed articles, reports or reviews, and contributions to the section, Best Practice and Strategies to Show Case:*

- February 14 for the April issue
- August 15 for the October issue.

*Deadline for submission of refereed articles:*

- October 30 for the April issue
- April 30 for the October issue.

**Referee Process:**

The editor of JANZSSA will consult with the Editorial Board to identify at least two expert referees (who may not necessarily be members of ANZSSA).

Each referee will be unaware of the identity of the other referee/s.

Each of the referees will be provided with an electronic copy of the article from which the author's name has been removed.

As author/s you should also remove other identifying information, and replace any such words or sentence with "words removed for purposes of author anonymity" so that you are not identifiable as the author/s once the author names have been removed.

Referees will submit a report back to the editor that contains one of four recommendations. These are:

1. That the article be published without amendment
2. That the article be published with minor amendment, to be approved by the Editor of JANZSSA
3. That the article be published with amendments to be approved by the referees
4. That the article <u>not</u> be published as a refereed article

Referees will also return the electronic copy of the article, which may contain annotations and suggested amendments to the paper. Referees will be asked to ensure that their identities are not revealed in the track changes or annotations made.

At least two referees must be in agreement for an article to be published as a refereed paper.

**Enquiries:**

Any queries regarding submission format should be directed to either of the co-editors. See contact details below.

**JANZSSA Co-editors (2012-2013)**

| | |
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Copy Editing by Ruth McHugh

**Before submitting your article:**

Please refer to the following check list and complete these actions prior to submission of the article.

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# ANZSSA Executive and Regional and Interest Group Convenors

This group also functions as the Editorial Board of JANZSSA

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## Convenors of Professional Interest Groups

| **Counsellors (Australia) and NASPA delegates**<br>Heather McLeod<br>Head, Counselling Service<br>ANU<br>Email: Heather.McLeod@anu.edu.au | **Counsellors (New Zealand)**<br>Gerard Hoffman<br>Head, Counselling Service<br>Victoria University of Wellington<br>PO Box 600<br>Wellington NZ<br>Ph: +64 4 463 5310<br>Email: gerard.hoffman@vuw.ac.nz | **Heads of Services**<br>Position Vacant |
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# Information about ANZSSA

The Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association provides development opportunities and sector representation for professional staff working in post secondary student engagement, student participation, student wellbeing and student development throughout Australia and New Zealand. Through meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences, experienced practitioners share information, ideas and research within their areas of expertise.

ANZSSA is focused on:

- The quality of the student experience

- Supporting and empowering students to achieve their educational and life goals

- Enhancing student wellbeing and development Improving student success and persistence

- Providing outreach to students at-risk

- Raising institutional student retention rates

## Membership

Whilst ANZSSA is based in Australia and New Zealand, anyone is welcome to join us, no matter where you may be located. Full details of current membership categories and registration costs are available via the ANZSSA website members' page at www.anzssa.org.

Belonging to ANZSSA will connect you to a community of professionals across many institutions and support areas – including:

International offices - Counselling - Health services - Housing services - Student guild advocates - Learning support - Grievance/Conflict Resolution officers - Chaplaincy and other faith officers - Careers - Academic advisors - Recreation services – First year experience and transition services - Mentor programs - Equity staff - Financial advisers - Student advisors - Disability support - Welfare advisors - Volunteer and leadership program coordinators - Directors and Heads of operational areas.

## Professional Development Activities

The *ANZSSA Biennial Conference* attracts international participants as well as delegates from across Australia and New Zealand.

*Regional and State meetings* range from informal workshops to visiting speakers and annual conferences.

*Members Discussion Board* located on the ANZSSA web site at *ww.anzssa.org* provides opportunities for members to share information and collaborate on programs and issues.

## Publications

*JANZSSA*, the Journal of ANZSSA, is published and distributed to members twice per year. Members are encouraged to contribute a variety of material: scholarly articles, information communications, comments, book reviews, and items of interest to the general membership can all be accommodated.

## Website

http://www.anzssa.org

The ANZZSA web site is a comprehensive resource offering a broad range of information to professionals working in student support and student services' roles.