

University for People with Intellectual Disability – A Position Paper (Easy English Version)

The Problem



Australians with intellectual disability do not have the same access to university as students without disability.



This is because policies and funding do not see someone with an intellectual disability as a possible university student.



Universities do not have the supports needed to make sure the communication and learning needs of people with intellectual disability are met.



Many students with intellectual disability never thought university was an option for them.

A lot of people do not understand intellectual disability and what someone with an intellectual disability can do.



Only two Australian universities have programs for people with intellectual disability.



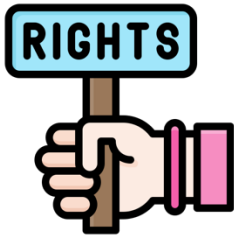
These are the Uni 2 Beyond Program run by the Centre for Disability Studies at the University of Sydney and the Up the Hill Project based at Flinders University in South Australia.



However participants of these programs do not get a formal university qualification like other students without intellectual disability.



Australian universities are not meeting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, because they do not give real and inclusive options for people with intellectual disability.



This convention tells us what countries must do to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights as everybody else.

How to fix the Problem

We recommend the Australian Government (Federal and State) do the following 5 things:



1. Make policy better and take a national approach:



We want to see other Australian universities start and run their own programs/ pathways for students with intellectual disabilities.



2. Work together and provide funding:



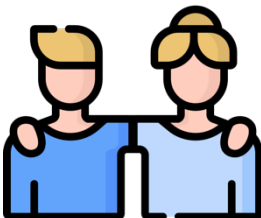
We want to make sure universities can run a fully inclusive campus.



There needs to be more awareness and involvement with NDIS service providers to support students at university.



People with intellectual disability should not be charged high fees.



This will help students get the support needed at university. Especially if funding does not exist within the university.



3. Create more university pathways and programs:



There needs to be more programs across Australia and within each State and Territory.



We want to make sure there is more access to university education that is in line with people's abilities and with what people want to do in their life.



We want to encourage other universities, schools, and communities to have pathways, programs and funds for students with intellectual disability.



4. Offer planning and supports for the start of going to university:



We want to make sure there is support with planning for and starting a university program.



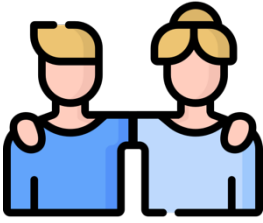
The planning should begin in high school and involve the person with intellectual disability, their family and other supporters.



For people with intellectual disability who left school a long time ago, other kinds of planning and funding should be available.



5. Develop partnerships with organisations and programs for people who graduate from university to improve pathways to employment:



We want to make sure there is continued support as students with intellectual disability move through their university program/ degree and onwards to employment.



We want to set students up after they graduate and support them to get good employment.

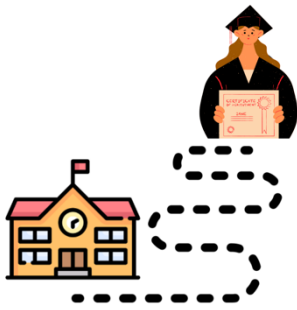
We recommend Australian Universities do the following 5 things:



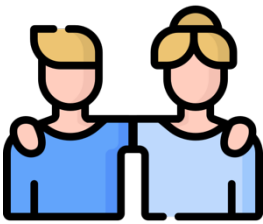
1. Help change the ideas and actions of the whole university institute:



We want universities to make the inclusion of students with intellectual disability part of what they do and how they work. Not just something they think of later, or something they think is someone else's responsibility.



We want to see specific programs and pathways that support students' education journey from high school to university education.



All students should be supported to achieve the education they want to. Everyone has ability.



2. Offer more choice, flexibility, and support within the programs:



We want universities to allow students with intellectual disability to get an actual qualification.



This may involve supporting 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure that students with intellectual disability can enjoy their experience, be successful and finish off their qualification.



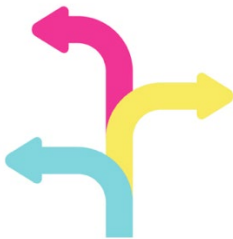
3. Increase awareness:



We want people in high schools and across the wider community to know about inclusive university programs/pathways. People with lived experience should be part of this.



This is especially important for the enrolment of older students who left school a long time ago and for people who never thought university was a possibility when they graduated from high school.



4. Create more education pathways:



We want to see more options for people with intellectual disability to move across different education providers.



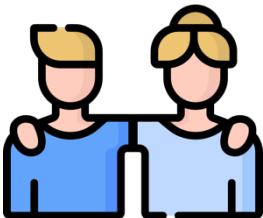
We want to better support students' learning needs without impacting on their finances.



5. Pay attention to staff training and changing ideas and actions so they are more inclusive:



We want to make sure there are fully inclusive practices across the university campus, not just in the lecture room.



We want university staff to be supported in teaching and working with people with diverse learning needs.



People with intellectual disabilities need to be a part of this and have their voices heard.

How we developed this paper

The recommendations in this paper are based on the following 4 things:



1. Reading and understanding written documents from all over the world.



2. Interviews with students and family members of the two inclusive programs in Australian universities.



3. Advice and guidance from our expert advisory committee of people with intellectual disability.



4. Two National Roundtable discussions.



A community of practice has been set up to share knowledge and resources across programs and universities.



This will be held online.



It will be led by Flinders University and Centre for Disability Studies, at the University of Sydney.



We would love to speak with you about our work.

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