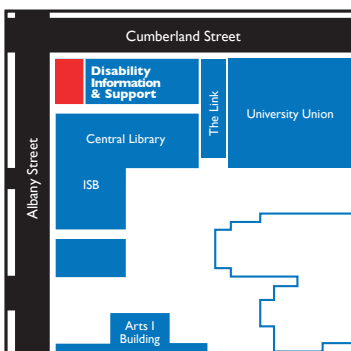


Imagine

Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei.
Aim for the highest cloud so that if you miss it, you will hit a lofty mountain.
Māori Proverb
Disability Information & Support Newsletter: Issue 1 2018



Our physical address is:
Disability Information & Support
West Lane
Information Services Building
Cnr Cumberland and Albany Streets
Dunedin

Welcome to the 2018 edition of 'Imagine', Disability Information and Support's newsletter, which we hope you will find informative. The team at Disability Information and Support would like to extend a warm welcome to both new and returning students. As we prepare this newsletter, we can see that the campus is well and truly coming alive with the energy and enthusiasm the students bring. This is always a highlight for us, as we greatly enjoy working with students to ensure they have their academic learning support in place prior to the academic year commencing.

As we go forward into 2018, we also reflect on the previous year and it is worth mentioning that 1161 students

contacted our office for advice or support during 2017. Our Student Satisfaction Survey indicated that 92% of respondents found the support they received to be extremely satisfactory or satisfactory, which is a result that we are delighted with. That said, we are always looking at ways to improve our service, so please feel free to provide us with feedback via our website.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the very best with your studies this year and encourage you to visit when you are passing our service.

Melissa Lethaby
Manager



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Disability Matters

Making the Convention Real

The University of Otago hosted a major international disability conference in Dunedin from 26 – 29 November 2017. *Disability Matters: Making the Convention Real* focused on seven articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It offered an opportunity for presenters and participants to share their experiences, knowledge and research regarding the implementation of this important convention.

The UNCRPD has yet to be widely recognised within Aotearoa New Zealand resulting in a significant gap between its words and its enactment in daily life. The aim of this conference was to help close that gap. Unlike many academic conferences this conference welcomed people from all walks of life, including disabled people, families/whānau, self/advocates, educators, service providers, practitioners, policy makers, students and researchers.

We were fortunate to speak to a number of the presenters during the three day conference and have included two interesting articles in this edition of our newsletter for your enjoyment. More articles will be available to read in the second addition of our newsletter due out in semester two.

Inside schools: Making the Convention Real

He might be quietly spoken but Professor Roger Slee has a strong message: "Inclusive education is a prerequisite for democracy".

Founding editor of the *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Roger says inclusive education raises fundamental questions about the kind of world we want to live in.

"Other questions follow – who's in and who's out? And who decides?"

"So it's really about understanding exclusion and how that happens to vulnerable groups of people. Then as you come to understand the culture and structure of exclusion you are able to develop schools that are better placed to dismantle the barriers to inclusion."

A former Chair of the Board of Directors of Children and Young People with Disabilities Australia and former Deputy Director General of Education in Queensland, Roger says something as visionary as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is very challenging to education jurisdictions because it speaks a very different language than education has been speaking.

"Schools are very old inventions and they were never meant for everybody. In my own country Aboriginal children didn't have a right to education. And neither did kids with disabilities – and so it went.

"Progressively there have been legislative attempts to provide access for different groups who are missing out. But in the area of disability and education it's still seen to be the business of special education to somehow provide an inclusive education. It's not just the language that is wrong, it's the assumptions behind it that are really troubling."

The notion that children with disabilities are the business of the special educators rather than everybody's business is one Roger finds particularly troubling.

"There have been a number of reports and enquiries into education for children with disabilities in Australia and each one of them has come out with a serious set of issues to be addressed and they show collectively that a significant group of the population are not getting a good deal from education the way it is."

Neighbourhood schools didn't take responsibility for the education of children with disabilities, Roger explains - that fell upon a developing system of special education. An assumption then developed which said that bit of the special education system should be moved in with the regular education system, with the belief that such a move would result in a more inclusive education system.

"I actually think that's misguided thinking in that you will simply create new forms of segregation within the regular school. It's really a larger agenda about reforming education per se, so that difference is seen to be the norm and difference is an asset of value for education, not simply a challenge."

"So, it's not just dropping special education into regular education and fusing the two - it's rethinking how we look at questions like what the kids need to know, think, and will be able to do in order to negotiate their way in the world, and then we arrange the pedagogy, curriculum and the organisation of the school to do it."

Roger points to outlying schools as an example of what can be done.

"They do a really decent job of embracing and educating all of the students who come in the door. It seems in Australia and other places, the further you move outside the cities the more inclusive schools generally become."

"If they've got nowhere to refer the kid to, they say, "gee this is going to be challenging." But this is our kid and the first principle is belonging and ownership, and then the technical questions of how to do it come after that."

Roger says teacher education is a key component. Teachers often think they need to know Braille, be able to sign or have special education training but Slee says it's more important they learn about the problem of ableism and how that works and operates.

"A lot of the assumptions about special education tend to lead to either overt or subtle forms of ableism and segregation of kids. When it [teacher education] should simply be about identifying the skill sets children require and then building a program behind that".



Making the Convention Real: Perspective of a person with long-term mental impairment and experience of disability

You will note that I am using the descriptor 'mental impairment'. Personally I prefer mental distress but mental impairment is the language of the Convention. Why not mental disability? Because the social and human rights models of disability, upon which the Convention is based, identifies the barriers created by the social and physical environment that inhibit the ability of persons with impairments to exercise their human rights as the disability, not us.

New Zealand's Mental Health Act is an example of how our society disables those who experience mental impairment and is one of the most problematic issues standing in the way of the country's efforts to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), according to researcher Dr Sarah Gordon, from the Department of Psychological Medicine at the University of Otago Wellington.

"I'm looking at what I see as the significant challenges and the areas where New Zealand is not complying with the convention, what we need to do in order to change that and some of the barriers that we are and will face in making those changes," says Sarah.

"I do a lot of work around stigma and discrimination associated with mental distress and I do quite a lot of work around the Mental Health Act.

"Our Mental Health Act is problematic in that it is the legislation that is probably the most non-compliant with the UNCRPD. I believe it will require a significant shift to become compliant".

Sarah says the story of Ashley Peacock is a striking example. He was in a forensic unit in Wellington for a number of years and at one stage he spent more than a year in seclusion. Even the Ombudsman spoke out and said that under the Crimes of Torture Act his treatment was cruel and inhumane.

"To be saying that the practices that are occurring in New Zealand are crimes of torture in this day and age is quite horrendous."

As part of her University of Otago role, Sarah teaches psychiatric registrars, and those who come from overseas are not only surprised to see seclusion still being used here, but also the extent to which it is used.

According to Sarah, another key concern is compulsory treatment, particularly through the use of community treatment orders where people are compulsorily treated with anti-psychotics or some other medications.

"You don't have to lack capacity to be subjected to this treatment which has significant side effects and no evidence base for maintenance use. Most of the rest of the world is using legislation which is capacity based which is a step in the right direction but ultimately, under the CRPD, everybody has the right to choose. If someone's decision making skills are affected for some reason then we need to put supports in place to support them to make a decision."

Sarah says educating health professionals is one of the keys to changing this approach.

"From my perspective, making the convention real involves a big shift in how we train our health professionals. "Moving from a charity model or a clinical model of disability to a social model or a human rights model means that the role of health professionals is not only to support me to self-manage my impairment but also to support me to exercise my human rights in response to a society that disables me.

Sarah's own experience of impairment and disability has shown how the right support can be empowering.

"I was first diagnosed with mental impairment at the age of 17. I was actually at University at that time. I use the term mental impairment in this context because it is the term that is used in the convention, although that's not my personal preference," she adds.

"I was committed to a hospital at that time for six months before I was discharged into the care of my family with the advice that a return to University would not be wise and that independent living would not be an option for me going forward."



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"Luckily for me my parents were not compliant with that advice. They facilitated and paid for wrap-around mental health support to enable me to return to University – at the beginning on a part-time basis. I did one paper per semester and had about 15 hours mental health support to enable me to do that. It included having someone accompany me to lectures and tutorials."

Sarah says it wasn't the most favourable cost/benefit investment at that time but it was key in terms of her outcomes.

"It ensured I had access to options and opportunities which I see a lot of my peers, who experience similar impairment, missing out on. I believe education is absolutely crucial for everyone; we don't do that well in New Zealand as we don't accommodate people with disabilities in education well – and that's a shame".

Sarah points to two things that were key to her progressing: "One was that my parents never saw my impairment as something which precluded anything. They saw it as something that just meant I required a bit more support in order to achieve my dreams and aspirations. The other thing I had was a Dean who was aware of my mental impairment and his approach to it was supportive in that if I ever needed anything I would just go to him," she says.

If you are embarking on study at Otago you might find the following information useful!

The Locals Programme

If you are in your first year of study at the University of Otago, the Locals Programme may interest you! The Locals programme is for any University of Otago student who is in their first year of study and living in Dunedin either at home, boarding, renting or flatting. It is designed to create an enjoyable and supportive first year experience for new students who are not living in Residential Colleges. Students are able to access academic, social, sporting and community-based opportunities through the programme. It is a great way to make new friends and find out more about the academic support available to students.

For more information, and to register for Locals 2018, please click on the following link otago.ac.nz/locals/index.html.

Student Learning Development (SLD)

The SLD provides academic support to all students studying at the University. This support is free and confidential and available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Comprehensive information is available on their website at slc.otago.ac.nz/ and includes details about their workshops, PASS programme (Peer Assisted Study Sessions), Peer Writing support groups and Conversational English groups. Students are also able to check out the SLD calendar to see which events and workshops are coming up.

Student Health and Counselling

Student Health and Counselling provides a comprehensive range of primary health care services to students, including medical, counselling, nursing, psychiatry, health education and specialty clinics, such as healthy lifestyle, travel, immigration and sexual health. For additional information about these services you can check out their website at otago.ac.nz/studenthealth. Student Health and Counselling can also be contacted on 0800 479 821 or 03 479 8212.

OUSA's Student Support Centre

The Student Support Centre at OUSA provides a free and confidential service designed to assist students who are experiencing issues that are impacting on their studies. You can find out more information about the support they provide by visiting their website at ousa.org.nz/main/support/ or contacting them at 479 5449.

Healthy Campus Recreation magazine

The Healthy Campus Recreation magazine is a fantastic resource produced by OUSA. It includes information on the 50 plus courses, competitions and activities available to students each semester. Do check out the following link to view a copy of the magazine.

indd.adobe.com/view/c7c1421a-290d-4197-95b6-1dc53e342754

Postgraduate students: Health and Well-being

Here are some tips for developing strategies to promote your health and well-being.

Peer groups. Take time to meet other postgraduate students, and discuss ways you can support each other; especially when times are stressful.

Exercise. You may be thinking that you have no time for exercise, but even a ten minute stroll around the block could help to clear your head

Eat well. Your body needs regular fuel to keep your brain working. Be prepared, if you know you are heading into a full on study week, head to the supermarket and pick up some healthy study snacks. Healthy snack ideas could include fruit, banana chips, pretzels, nuts, carrots, humus, salsa and muesli bars.

Healthy habits. Incorporate healthy habits into your schedule; for example with your peer group, organise a regular coffee date or plan a fun event once a fortnight.

Ask for help. Talk to your Supervisor or Departmental Disability Contact. They are available to assist you.

Plan for fun and have a laugh. Set aside time for fun, make a plan and stick to it. Sometimes a good laugh is the best way to unwind. Balance out all that serious studying with a comedy film or stream some comedy festival clips on YouTube.

Talk about it. If you are feeling stressed talk it through with a friend, a family member, or one of the counsellors at Student Health. They may have ideas or helpful strategies and sometimes just talking it out can help lighten the load.

Sleep. Good sleep is essential for physical and mental well-being. Set up a relaxing routine before bed; this will help switch your mind from study-mode to sleep-mode.

Have a change of scenery. Try taking your readings to a café. Dunedin also has beautiful botanical gardens which make a lovely spot to sit and read on a sunny day.

Note Taking at DI&S

Wish you had an incentive to take quality notes...want to improve your grades...contribute to the success of others... have more spending power?

Become a Note-Taker

We asked four of our note-takers, Brittany, Chrissy, Jared and Michael why they provide notes:

At exam time I value the effort and time I put into my notes during the year.



Being a note-taker keeps you focused on lectures, which pays dividends at the end of semester.



It is also a simple way to earn some pocket money i.e. you have to take notes anyway.



It is a rewarding way to make some pocket money that helps rather than hinders your studies.



I feel a strong sense of personal reward by providing my notes, as I feel I am contributing to a supportive sense of community within the University.

The process has helped me understand how I learn and how others learn.



I have seen my grades dramatically improve since becoming a note-taker.



It improves the quality of your notes and provides incentives to attend class.



For more information, and to register your availability for 2018, simply send Disability Information and Support an email advising of your enrolled papers for 2018.

Email: disabilities.notetaker@otago.ac.nz

Appreciation Awards

Appreciation Awards

In October 2017, DI&S presented our Appreciation Awards at a ceremony held at the Staff Club. These awards acknowledge and thank individuals who have worked towards our vision of working in partnership to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes comprehensive academic support, and empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential. We were delighted that Professor Vernon Squire, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), was able to attend and present these awards. Congratulations to all award recipients!

The following Appreciation Awards were presented.

Lynnette Barker – For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Maria Barsema – For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff and students | Web Services

Janet Bryant – For being an outstanding Departmental Contact | Department of Economics

Cathie Child – For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff and students | Department of Marketing

Jacob Edmond – For providing exemplary support for students | Department of English and Linguistics

Kay Ellis – For being an outstanding Departmental Contact University of Otago Language Centre and Foundation Year

Janine Hayward – For providing exemplary support for students | Department of Politics

Eleanor Hinds – For providing first-class tutoring support for students

Anna Hoek-Sims – For sustained involvement in staff training programmes

Anu Kaw – For providing first-class tutoring support for students

Philip Kelly – For providing exemplary support for students | Department of Physiology

Josje Lelijveld – For providing outstanding teaching and raising the profile of NZSL

Iden Mahmood – For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Jake Mills – For providing exceptional guidance and relevant employment opportunities to students

Claire Muskett – For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff and students

Maria Pozza – For being an outstanding distance tutor

Finn Robinson – For being an outstanding note-taker

Lachie Scarsbrook – For being an outstanding note-taker

Sonya Stewart – For providing exceptional support and guidance to staff and students | Student Administration

Stephen Willis – For providing outstanding leadership and progress towards a more inclusive campus | Chief Operating Officer



Back row from left: Lynnette Barker, Maria Barsema, Stephen Willis, Anna Hoek-Sims, Cathie Child and Professor Vernon Squire (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic). Second row from left: Eleanor Hinds, Janet Bryant, Kay Ellis, Anu Kaw, Melissa Lethaby (The Manager of Disability Information and Support), Philip Kelly and Jake Mills. Front row from left: Lachie Scarsbrook, Finn Robinson, Maria Pozza, Janine Hayward, Jacob Edmond, and Sonya Stewart. Absent: Claire Muskett, Iden Mahmood and Josje Lelijveld. Photo: McRobie Studios.

OUSA Inclusive Teaching Award

Important dates

- Alternative Examination Arrangements – deadline for applications **7 May**
- UMAT Special testing conditions – deadline for applications **15 June**
- Semester One Exams – **6 to 20 June**

Check out DI&S's website

If you are interested in reading more about the experiences of other students at Otago have a look at the profiles on our website.

otago.ac.nz/disabilities/index.html

DI&S provides learning support, advice, advocacy and information to students who have a disability, impairment, injury or medical condition that affects their study for a period of four weeks or more. Please look at our website for information about the services we provide.

otago.ac.nz/disabilities/services/index.html

If you would like to provide confidential feedback on our service, please click on the following link.

otago.ac.nz/disabilities/questions/feedback/index.html

In September 2017, Dr Gill Rutherford (College of Education) and Dr Gareth Treharne (Department of Psychology) were presented with the OUSA Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award. It is evident from the student nominations that both were worthy recipients and are held in high regard by the students they work with. Gill was described as being “adaptable and flexible in her teaching” and she “makes sure her workshops are inclusive”. Other students stated that Gareth “is always approachable when it comes to discussing disability” and that he “is very helpful and knowledgeable about the supports available to disabled students”.

Congratulations Gill and Gareth for a job well done!



Dr Gill Rutherford, Dr Gareth Treharne and Melissa Lethaby,
Manager of Disability Information and Support.

Photo: Sharron Bennett.

Contact Details

Please contact us directly if you have any enquiries.

Disability Information and Support
University of Otago
PO Box 56
Dunedin 9054
New Zealand

Tel: 03 479 8235
or 0800 80 80 98
Fax: 03 479 5873
Email: disabilities@otago.ac.nz
Web: otago.ac.nz/disabilities
Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm