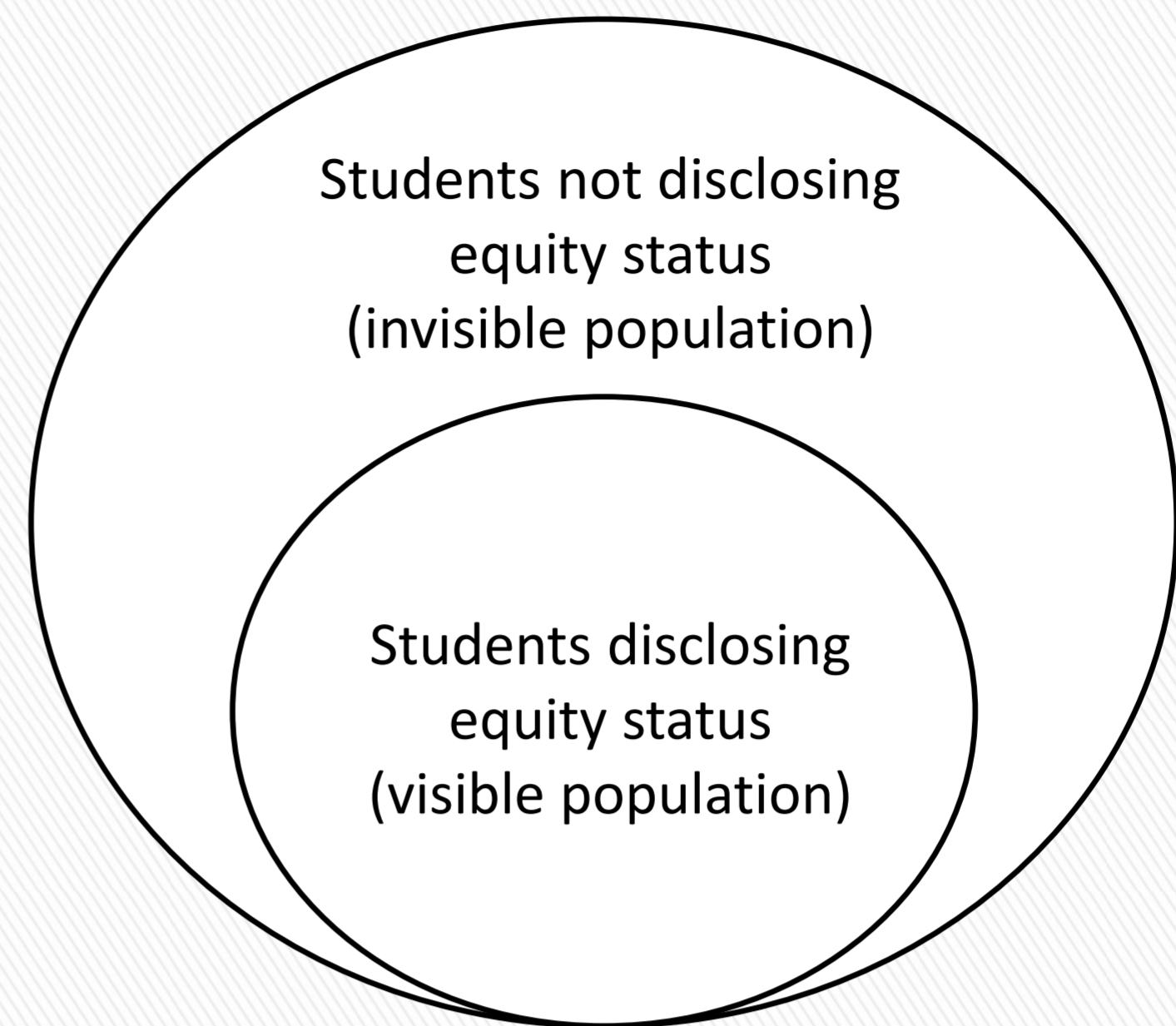


# Enhancing self-disclosure of equity group membership

## Background

There is evidence that students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, students with disabilities and Indigenous students are reluctant to self-disclose this information to tertiary education institutions. Indigenous students may find racial categories imprecise (Hickey, 2015) or fear discrimination at university. Those with disabilities may fear impacts on future employment (Morris & Turnbull, 2006), or stigma (Orona, Koenig, & Davis, 1994). Some may not consider their condition to be a disability and wish to manage perceptions by peers and staff (Olney & Brockelman, 2010).



## Purpose of this project

This project investigates the reasons why students from three equity groups—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disabilities and those from non-English speaking backgrounds—decline to disclose their equity status. This may prevent students from accessing targeted support to which they are entitled, or hamper effective intervention. This HEPPP commissioned project investigates self-disclosure of equity group members, and will propose guidelines for universities to promote self-disclosure of equity group membership by students.

## Methodology

Methods include a survey of university support services to determine current practices and considerations, and a survey of students at UNSW to investigate reasons for disclosure and nondisclosure. This will be supplemented with semi-structured interviews with students from each of the abovementioned equity groups.

## References

- Hickey, S. (2015). It all comes down to ticking a box: Collecting Aboriginal identification in a 30-year longitudinal health study. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2, 33–45.
- Olney, M. F., & Brockelman, K. F. (2010). Out of the disability closet: Strategic use of perception management by select university students with disabilities. *Disability & Society*, 18(1), 35–50.
- Orona, C. J., Koenig, B. A., & Davis, A. J. (1994). Cultural aspects of nondisclosure. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 3(3), 338–346.

Reasons for non-disclosure of indigenous status	% Service staff respondents
They do not trust the university with this information	0%
They see no benefit in disclosure	17%
They fear prejudice in their university life	83%
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	17%
They are concerned about confidentiality	67%
They do not wish to be "labelled"	83%
They do not believe the university needs to know	17%
They do not know how to disclose	33%
They do not have the necessary documentation	50%

Reasons for non-disclosure	% of staff respondents
They do not trust the university with this information	0.00%
They see no benefit in disclosure	50.00%
They fear prejudice in their university life	50.00%
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	12.50%
They are concerned about confidentiality	25.00%
They do not wish to be "labelled"	62.50%
They do not believe the university needs to know	37.50%
They do not know how to disclose	12.50%
No pathway exists for disclosure	25.00%

Reason for non-disclosure of a disability	Students with physical disabilities	Students with cognitive disabilities	Students with sensory disabilities	Students with social / emotional disabilities	Student carers for people with a disability
They do not trust the university with this information	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	100.00%	33.33%
They see no benefit in disclosure	40.00%	20.00%	20.00%	60.00%	80.00%
They fear prejudice in their university life	62.50%	75.00%	50.00%	100.00%	37.50%
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	50.00%	100.00%	75.00%	100.00%	50.00%
They are concerned about confidentiality	71.43%	85.71%	71.43%	100.00%	57.14%
They do not wish to be "labelled"	75.00%	100.00%	75.00%	87.50%	50.00%
They do not believe the university needs to know	42.86%	71.43%	57.14%	100.00%	71.43%
They do not know how to disclose	50.00%	100.00%	75.00%	87.50%	87.50%