

# Enhancing self-disclosure of equity group membership

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## Abstract

*This project investigates the reasons why students from three equity groups—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students, students with disabilities and those from non-English speaking backgrounds—decline to disclose membership of these equity groups. This tendency may prevent students from accessing targeted support to which they are entitled, or hamper effective intervention. The project will estimate the reasons for and prevalence of non-disclosure and propose good practice guidelines for universities.*

## Background and purpose

There is evidence that students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, students with disabilities and Indigenous students are reluctant to self-disclose. 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).

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.

## Methods

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 semistructured 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.