



Australian Association of Special Education Response to Consultation on **Improving the transparency of higher education admissions.**

Background

The Australian Association of Special Education Inc. (AASE) is committed to advocating for the provision of quality education for children and young people with special education needs across all settings.

The Australian Association of Special Education Inc. is the national peak body of professionals, other paraprofessionals and community members with expertise and/or interest in the education of children and young people with special education needs.

The key aims of AASE are to:

- a) Provide educational leadership to the professional and wider community
- b) Advocate for quality education for all
- c) Commission, participate in and disseminate quality research to inform educational practice
- d) Arrange, promote and facilitate high quality professional learning events and conferences
- e) Coach, mentor and model best practice in teaching and leadership
- f) Build partnerships with universities, service providers and the community
- g) Actively influence policy and decision making

RESPONSE

Our response will focus on the needs of students with disability. As increasing numbers of students with disability are identified in regular schools, so increasing numbers of students with disability will seek a post-secondary education. Universities are bound, as are other education institutions, by the Disability Standards for Education (available at <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>) which require them to provide access to university education to people with disability on the same basis as students without disability. Thus, universities, and university staff, are required to provide appropriate adjustments and supports to curriculum, course delivery, study materials, teaching, assessment and certification requirements. They must also provide necessary supports and develop and implement strategies to prevent harassment or victimisation of students with disability by other students or by staff.

As part of these obligations, universities must enable prospective students with disability to seek admission and enroll without undue difficulty, and provide relevant prospective students with disability with accessible information in a range of formats. They must also consult with the student to provide any necessary adjustments, supports or support staff. In order for a student to choose a university, information about how necessary supports and adjustments will be provided should be part of the information provided. Useful information about post-secondary education and students with disability is provided at <http://www.adcet.edu.au/students-with-disability/planning-for-post-secondary-education/>

We are concerned that there appear to be only two mentions of students with disability within this draft document. The possibility for universities to offer a specific disability admission scheme mentioned in Appendix D. AASE believes that all universities should offer a specific process to provide support and any required adjustments to the admissions process for students with disability. Such support would need to be individualised and flexible, given the diverse needs of students with disability.

We note in Appendix C that information about student and campus services that includes services for students with disability is optional. AASE strongly believes that information specific to supports for students with disability should be part of the required information made available regarding admissions. Students with disability may need to know about supports available both on and off-campus (for those studying by distance or on-line), and the processes used by the university to plan supports and adjustments on an individual basis.

We also think that university websites providing information about admissions should meet standards for accessibility (see <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>), which is the standard required for Australian Government websites to meet obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992.