DARREN BRITTEN: Welcome, everybody, and thank you for joining us today. My name is Darren Britten and my pronouns are he/him, and I am the National Assistive Technology Officer with the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, that is ADCET for short. I'm a white man in my 50s with blonde/greying hair with a beard and glasses.

This webinar is being live captioned. To activate those captions, click on the CC button in the tool bar that's located either on the top or the bottom of your screen, and we also have captions available via a browser, which will be added to the chat box, so you can click that link. While Virtually connected today, we are geographically dispersed. And in the spirit of reconciliation, I acknowledge the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation in Victoria, where I am located, and my colleagues from Lutruwita, that is Tasmanian Aboriginal land, on which ADCET is hosted. ADCET respectfully acknowledges First Nations people and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and to the many Aboriginal people that did not make Elder status. I also acknowledge all other countries and lands from participants in this meeting and also acknowledge their Elders and ancestors and their legacy to us, and also to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are joining this webinar today.

Today's webinar, entitled Celebrating Student Success: Embedding Inclusive Practices into Graduation, presented by Kylie Austin and Jaymee Beveridge, which explores how the University of Wollongong reimagined their graduation ceremonies by connecting them to their rich Indigenous history to make them more inclusive. Unfortunately, Jaymee can't be here today, but Kylie will soldier on and present on behalf of both of them.

Before we begin, just a few more housekeeping details. This webinar is being live captioned by Sharon from Bradley Reporting thank you and is being recorded. The recording for this webinar will be available on ADCET in the coming days. If you have any technical difficulties, please email admin@adcet.edu.au. The presentation will run for about 45, 50 minutes, and there will time left at the end for your questions. Throughout the presentation, please feel free to use the chat box to have a chat with each other and with us, but please remember to choose all panellists and attendees so everybody can read what you have to say.

Kylie's happy to answer questions at the end. So if you have a question you would like asked, please use the Q&A box rather than the chat box and then we can keep a track of those. That's it from me. Interesting topic today. Looking forward to seeing it. Over to you, Kylie.

KYLIE AUSTIN: Thank you so much, Darren, and thank you, everyone, for having me today. Unfortunately, Jaymee had some personal business that she needed to attend to quite urgently, so I'm going to try and do our journey together justice, as it was quite a journey that we both went on together that we are going to be talking about today. And in addition to Darren's acknowledgment, I'd just like to add my acknowledgment of country as well. I'm joining you from the lands of the Five Islands people located at the bottom of Mount Geera and I'd like to acknowledge the devastating impact of colonisation on our campus's footprint and commit ourselves to truth telling, healing and education.

So today we're going to be talking about how UOW have been on a journey over the last three and a half years to embed Aboriginal knowledge into our graduation ceremonies. And in addition to that, how we've also taken a gender inclusive approach to our graduation ceremonies, a culturally inclusive approach, and how we have also ensured that our graduation ceremonies are inclusive for people with disability so that they can fully participate in graduation and celebrate their achievements of completing their degree.

So before we get started and we talk a little bit about the journey, this is a journey that Jaymee and I went on with a number of people. Those people included members of our local Aboriginal communities. It also included staff and students who worked at the University of Wollongong. And so I'm going to let them tell their story about how they've been engaged in graduation, first of all, and how it came to be, and then I'll share my perspective after that as well. So we'll start by watching this short video.

(Video played).

SPEAKER: My name a Layne Brown. I'm a local Aboriginal man in the Illawarra area and I'm a past student of the university, and now get to be a part of the university to share some cultural practices.

SPEAKER: I'm May Button and I live at Primbee. I am a Dharawal lady.

SPEAKER: My name is Vanessa Pagett. I am an Aboriginal woman and community member and also a professional services staff member at UOW.

SPEAKER: My name is Joshua Lobb and I am a teacher in the faculty of art, social sciences and humanities.

SPEAKER: My name is Beau Beveridge, and I'm a proud Bindal woman from Queensland with ties to Moa Island in the Torres Strait. This is my graduation hat. It was actually my mum's hat and it got painted just before my graduation, and it's something we can continue to pass down for generations, as well as my kangaroo skin, and it has a family story on it. It's really important and it's something super special we can also pass down to family.

SPEAKER: My name is Keith Brandy. I'm a proud Wiradjuri man from Central NSW.

SPEAKER: This came about from conversations at university around how we can involve Aboriginal culture into the ceremony. We already have a pretty rich curriculum that involves Aboriginal cultural elements, so we started looking and having conversations about, well, we've got a ceremony here with graduates from the university, how do we start to embed the Aboriginal culture into that ceremony. And we took it probably one step further in really grounding that university graduation in the Aboriginal cultural values.

SPEAKER: It's acknowledging everybody. Community is not just Indigenous. It's whoever lives in your area or lives nearby. And it's about coming together as one as one, a lot of people.

SPEAKER: I didn't even know that the Indigenous perspectives were going to be embedded into graduation, and definitely not in the way that it was. Since that has happened, I have actively made sure that I'm available to actually watch the procession happen every graduation.

SPEAKER: The ones that we used to do in the past were very, very formal, and felt like it was a kind of endurance that people needed to go through. And I didn't think that it connected with students and students' experience as much as they do now.

SPEAKER: My graduation experience was amazing. When I walked in there was a yidaki playing and there was a smoking ceremony, and it was really great to be included and have such a positive experience.

SPEAKER: This is really important from a community perspective on multiple layers. There's been a history, especially on the east coast here where Aboriginal people haven't been able to openly and proudly practise their culture, and this is a really good step in making sure that we can show everybody Aboriginal culture and show them, I guess, an insight into our ceremony.

SPEAKER: You know, I'm an Elder now, and if I want to see change and want to encourage the next generation, and want to make a difference, and if I'm not seeing that being achieved much, then I have to step up and do something about it.

SPEAKER: For me, what I see when I watch what UOW graduation is now, it is a very rare space where I get to actually witness my two worlds actually coming together in the right way.

SPEAKER: I think what's really interesting about what we're doing with graduation now is that there's a very strong sense of inclusion. There's a very strong sense of belonging. It's a wonderful experience walking down to go down on stage and be part of the smoking ceremony, to sit there with a genuine Welcome to Country and to have the ceremony played around us is a great experience for us to understand and celebrate where we are.

SPEAKER: We walk a really fine line between sacred and secret, and we kind of bring to the table a lot of Aboriginal values that showcase a lot of the depth of our culture.

SPEAKER: I ran into a few students after that and they broke down and started crying because they were at that welcome. And when they shared with me their own experience on what they heard, that just blew me away.

SPEAKER: It's important to include culture into the graduation ceremony because it allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to feel respected and connected during the graduation ceremony and it also motivates them to come to university.

SPEAKER: I think it's a great thing. We hear about so many negative things about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but academically I think we're striving, and the opportunity to embed the cultural aspect of that into the graduation ceremony, I think is a wonderful thing. And, yes, I think for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their pride and gratitude to be able to do that as part of that cultural capacity of embedding Indigenous culture into academia is fantastic.

SPEAKER: The university can be on the front foot in showcasing they support Aboriginal culture and they have a role in helping rejuvenate and bring that culture back and they might come from families who haven't been able to practise their culture, or they might find a deeper sense of pride by seeing Aboriginal people front and centre at the beginning of every ceremony that makes them proud that their culture is valued and respected and is seen as the first culture of this land.

SPEAKER: I think it's really important that we understand where we are. We're underneath a beautiful mountain which has a long history, and I think it's really important that we share the knowledge of our Indigenous colleagues and the Indigenous community of this place with the community of the university. Those two things working together are really important for the way in which we exist as a university and the importance that we can share in the community.

SPEAKER: My first experience was getting me out of my comfort zone and, I guess, making my dreams, personally for myself, come true and that's encouraging the next generation to step up to follow their dream.

KYLIE: So thank you, everyone, for taking the time to listen to those stories, because this experience of transforming graduation has not just been a journey that I've been on and I will share my journey in a moment but has been a journey for our whole university community.

Before I share that journey, I just want to provide you with some descriptions around what's on the screen, to give everyone a bit of a sense of some of the Indigenous practices that we embedded into graduation. So the first image is a picture of our Aboriginal community with their ochre and their Indigenous dress walking down in front of our academic procession, conducting a smoking ceremony. And that's a really, really important aspect that our community was leading our academic staff and the rest of the university, and it was a really important part of the ceremony.

The next image shows the smoking ceremony. And so the smoking ceremony occurs as the procession enters into our sports hub venue, where we hold our graduations, and our Indigenous community members they smoke they walk around all of the graduates and smoke all of the graduates, and they then as each of our academic staff are processing up on to stage and taking their seats, each of those academic members of staff are smoked as well. While other members of the Aboriginal community then subsequently undertake a smoking ceremony with the rest of the guests and the audience.

During this time, it goes for probably about five minutes but it's completely silent and, you know, that space is held while the ceremony takes place. And so often we do have a yidaki playing and the clap sticks as well.

The third picture shows Aunty May, who was in the video, but we've been fortunate enough to have a number of Indigenous Elders work alongside us. Aunty May has been one of those, as well as Aunty Joyce and Aunty Shaz. Each of those Elders usually take turns to do the Welcome to Country, and those Welcome to Countries have been so powerful for our students because our Elders have really taken the time to understand our graduation practices and also us taking the time to understand the importance of the Welcome to Country as well and so they really tie their teachings through that welcome to the students' experiences as well.

The fourth image that you can see on the slide is our Aboriginal community engaging in Indigenous song. And so the music that you heard that was the background music in the video, that was music that had been developed purposefully for graduation, and I'll talk a little bit about how all this came about in a moment, but it was developed by one of our alumni. He attended university here, engaged a lot with our Woolyungah Indigenous Centre during his time here. Has subsequently gone on to become a DJ and he created this beautiful music for us for graduation that incorporates sounds of the local area, as well as with Indigenous sounds of music as well.

In addition to that, the fifth photograph that you can see on the screen there is a picture of our Aunties at Coomdaditchie which is one of our local Aboriginal communities, and they undertake a lot of artwork for the community. So all of the artwork that we used for graduation, whether it's on the screens, on the graduation booklets, on the guests’ tickets, have all been designed by our Aunties and our local community at Coomdaditchie and those nods are undertaken the whole way through the ceremony.

So it was really important for us that this wasn't tokenistic, that this was a complete transformation of graduation, and really embedding graduation as part of an Indigenous ceremony or practice.

I'm going to share now whilst you take in those images, I'm going to share the journey that we went on at UOW to kind of come to this point, because I think that story is really important. And Jaymee and I normally have this conversation together and so, as I said, I will try and do that conversation justice. But Jaymee is our Vice President of Indigenous Strategy at the University of Wollongong and is also a former alumni of the University of Wollongong as well. And her and I had worked together on a number of projects previously. Our graduation ceremonies prior to 2022 were managed in our student services division. And like many universities over COVID, we didn't have a face-to-face graduation for a number of years due to COVID and the university subsequently ran online graduations in their place. And so when it came time to reinstate face to face graduations, we had the opportunity to graduation was sitting in my portfolio and there were three things, I guess, that occurred over that time in order to kind of transform graduation, and I'll talk through each of those.

The first one is leadership. So during the last few years we've had a Vice Chancellor, her name is Patricia Davidson. Her entire approach centred around equity, diversity and inclusion. And so from the commencement of these conversations we had really strong senior executive support and leadership around this journey. I remember Jaymee and I sitting down for the first time together and we had a discussion around what graduation used to be like. And we talked about the mace and we talked about the music that was held, and we talked about the gowns, and we talked about all of those traditional graduation practices that universities would typically run.

I remember she asked me a question and she shared a story with me. The first question she asked me was why do we do it like this? She followed up with a story which she shared with me about she had an experience where her and some students went and watched graduation and it was such a foreign European concept and a really uncomfortable setting as well.

So we started to go and look into the why. Why did we have this music? Why did we have these practices as part of graduation? When we started uncovering some of these things, one of the most obvious things that comes to mind is we looked at the Latin translation of the song that we were using that the procession walked into. And I'd have to get I can share the lyrics and the translation at some point with you all, but the song translated into it was something along the lines of, "come on all the boys, let's go have a beer together and let's all take a maid", was basically the crux of the song. And I'm very, very happy to share the translation with you.

So we were starting to question everything that was part of graduation. Why do we do it like this? And is this really something that, you know, represents the University of Wollongong? Represents the place and our students? And I think the more that we looked into each of these elements around graduation, the more it became clear to us that these weren't our traditions as a university. These were the traditions of other universities in other countries and did not reflect our practices here in our place in Australia as well.

So Jaymee and I went through a series of conversations. And to be honest with you, they weren't easy conversations because Jaymee had to put a lot of trust into me to make sure that we weren't going to do something that was tokenistic. But equally, I found it to be a really humbling experience because I had to constantly say to Jaymee, "I don't understand, I don't understand this aspect" or "I don't want to offend you but can I ask you this question?"

And so a lot of the conversations that occurred with Jaymee and I, we had to really build that trust between each other, and we also really had to have some pretty frank and candid conversations around why we did what we did, and that was not only between the both of us but it was also with the broader university community as well.

So we started having these conversations towards the back end of 2021. And by April consultation had been undertaken with community, with staff across UOW, and we'd gotten approval by the senior executive for our April graduation. So really over a five-month period to completely transform our graduations into what they are now. And over the last three years, those conversations, between community, between Jaymee and myself, those conversations haven't stopped because there absolutely has been challenges along the way. I'll share with you a couple of those challenges, because I do want to share with you some of the outcomes as well which we've been really pleased to see.

We have had, across the last three years of delivering graduation embedded in Indigenous ceremony, we have had about 14,000 people a year participate in these graduation ceremonies. And I can count probably on one hand, but we have experienced complaints from members of the broader community on why we're taking an approach to embed our graduations into an Indigenous ceremony. One of those complaints occurred in person during a ceremony, and we have received other complaints maybe occurred via email as well.

In every single scenario, however, we have had the complete backing of our senior executive to say, UOW is committed to recognition and healing and graduation is one of the ways that we do that. And so one of the really important parts of this is that 14,000 people every year get to experience a culturally immersive experience and they may not have had that before. And so when we think about our roles as universities, yes, absolutely, we're providing teaching and learning and creating safe places for our students, but this has been really key in demonstrating to us, "actually, we also have a broader role in teaching and learning and creating safe places in our community as well".

A couple of things have occurred off the back of graduations as a result of this, and that has included, off the back of it we actually established our anti racism policy as a result. And that helped guide us in managing some of those complaints and things like that as well. And also, this was kind of the first you know, whilst we kind of book ended a student experience across their life cycle with embedding Indigenous ceremony into graduation, we've also subsequently started to think we've undertaken some work about how do we now embed that across the student lifecycle.

So we've worked with our wonderful colleagues in Woolyungah Indigenous Centre to engage students in a cultural ceremony at the point of orientation, and then we're working together to fill in the gaps, whether that be in teaching and learning or in student experience activities such as when we welcome our international students to Wollongong to ensure that we've got meaningful, transformative threads of educating our students about Indigenous culture the whole way through their university journey.

I'll share with you some outcomes in a moment, but in addition to embedding Aboriginal knowledges into graduation, we really looked at graduation as an opportunity to embed equity, diversity and inclusion principles across everything we did with the graduation. And so it's been probably one of the most, I would say, traditional, westernised, you know, activities that we would do as a university prior to 2022 was deliver graduation in a really traditional way. This process enabled us to really transform graduation and signal to our students and signal to our communities what UOW was really committed to.

So there's been a number of things that we've done. We've looked at the experience of students with disability in participating in graduation. One of the things that we have done is typically in the past we would have used our university hall for graduation. Our university hall has stairs going up to the stage and a lift for people who need to use a wheelchair or have other mobility needs. And one of the things that we did in the transformation of graduation is actually we now run graduation in our sports hub.

What that has enabled us to do is to completely redesign the stage. And so we now have a rep that goes across the stage and one of our amazing students, Jack, is going to tell you his story in a moment, but every student has the same journey across the stage, rather than having to navigate through upstairs, et cetera.

We've also put in place things like hearing loops, captioning, accessibility parking and priority seating for guests and ensuring that our graduation booklets and website are fully accessible. But really, one of the things, and we'll hear a little bit more at the moment, is that when every graduate signs up for graduation, we ask them what their accessibility needs are. And then a member of our team engages with our students in a one-on-one capacity to understand what their needs are, how we can support that student to fully participate in graduation, and then we undertake a range of steps to ensure that that student's needs are being met. And I'll share some stories with you in a moment around that.

Another thing that's something that's really important is our international students are a really important part of our university community. And in addition to that, our student population at UOW is extremely diverse. Our domestic students come from a range of cultural backgrounds as well. And so we encourage our students to wear their cultural dress alongside their graduation gowns and really to celebrate their culture. We provide messaging about graduation and what graduation is in different languages in our graduation booklet as well. And we do a whole range of accommodation and dining discounts for international students who are bringing their families to Wollongong to make that a bit more of a holistic experience as well.

In addition to that, we have worked really closely with our pride network, which was formerly our allied network to review all of our language that we use in graduation. So removing things like the use of pronouns, ladies and gentlemen, and things like that, so that all of our language is culturally inclusive. Access to all gender bathrooms as well. And we also run activities for children during graduation. So we have our Early Start Discovery Space come down, and kids make badges about how proud they are of their parents, and we have waiting areas for mums and pram parking for mums, and things like that as well.

So we've really looked at every component of graduation, and whilst we're still obviously picking up on things as we go, looking at how we can make every aspect of graduation an inclusive experience for all of our students.

Before I kind of talk any further, I'd like you to meet two of our students, Rhiannon and Jack. They recently graduated in 2024 at our graduation ceremonies. And in these videos, they're sharing their experience of how our team engaged with them to put in place adjustments to ensure they had a wonderful graduation experience. So, first of all, we'll hear from Rhiannon.

RHIANNON: I was fortunate enough to be allocated a sighted guide who helped me through the whole process by taking me around, describing what I was wearing, what the environment looked like, what was on the screen, how I was going to get my degree, who to shake hands with, where to stand. Yeah, just with everything. I thoroughly enjoyed that process because it's a little bit daunting not knowing what's around me, what to do, and the expectations of graduation.

KYLIE: So Rhiannon was also we actually had our first guide dog as well cross the stage in graduation as well and there was a lovely sighted guide, Robyn, worked with Rhiannon in terms of her arrival to the graduation ceremony, her time during the graduation ceremony and afterwards. And Robyn had organised to meet with Rhiannon beforehand and we did a walkthrough of graduation together so that she was really, really comfortable with how the graduation experience was going to go for her.

Next, I'd like you to meet Jack. So Jack is going to talk a little bit about his experience of graduation as well.

JACK: Yeah. I think both are the way like, getting the process prior to graduation, like getting your gown and all that stuff done worked really well, I think, just me being able to go with someone and, like, jump the queue, basically, to get ready within the time we needed. And then I think having the stage set up how it is so that everyone just follows the same route up the ramp, and you get your certificate, and then down the ramp the other side, it just worked out really well that it works out the same for everybody.

KYLIE: So I might just share with you some of the outcomes that we've had from our graduations. So we have seen a significant increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students actually wanting to attend graduation over the last three years. You can see in 2019, the most students that we had attend graduation were 24 students. We introduced Aboriginal ceremony into our graduations from 2022, and by the end of this year we will have the largest number of Aboriginal students attending their graduation ceremonies in the history of UOW.

The feedback from students around their graduation experience was extremely positive and that's continued to grow over that period. One of the things that I didn't mention earlier is that, particularly with our international student cohorts, one of the complaints that we used to get a lot about with graduation was that their names weren't pronounced correctly. So one of the things that we have put in place from 2022 onwards is we actually get a linguist to come in, and equally students can provide the phonetic spelling of their names as well. And all of our names of students who cross the stage are pre-recorded by a voiceover artist, so that our Executive Deans or our Senior Exec are not having to read out 500 or 550 names in a ceremony. They're all accurately pronounced via a voiceover artist as well.

So the feedback from guests, feedback from students, feedback from staff has been overwhelmingly positive. I remember going and sitting down and grabbing lunch after running our first graduations in 2022 in this way, and staff from the university coming up to me and saying, "I feel so proud to work at UOW." So it's been a really transformative experience. And the feedback from students, the feedback from guests, and the feedback from staff about how powerful and how transformative the bringing together of those westernised practices which we have kept a number of as well as Indigenous practices as well has been really, really positive as well.

So I'm going to pause there. I know we've got about 20 minutes left, but very, very happy to kind of take questions. And there's absolutely things that we haven't gotten to, so I'm very happy to share those as well.

DARREN: Thank you, Kylie. There's a lot to get to and there's a few questions that have been in there. Fantastic so far. Certainly Rita has asked how many graduation ceremonies do you have in a graduation round, and do you do this for every ceremony?

KYLIE: Yeah. No, great question. So I think this year we will graduate about 3,500 students, and our graduation ceremonies, we can graduate about 550 students within a two-hour graduation ceremony or less. And so our graduation ceremonies, we run four ceremonies in October, we run six ceremonies in April, and we also hold our graduation ceremonies at our regional campuses. So Bega, Batemans Bay and Shoalhaven.

I'll make two points. The first point is in terms of do we do this for every ceremony? Yes, absolutely we do. However, it looks a little bit different for each ceremony because this is not a cookie cutter approach. And so what we tend to find is our very first ceremony in a round is a bit more we'll often have the yidaki and things like that as we come in because it's the first time in that period that our Indigenous community is leading us out. And certainly in our very last ceremony for our graduation round, our Indigenous community will stay for the whole ceremony and then they'll lead our academic procession out at the end.

So it's not quite the same every ceremony. The formula is there, I guess, but there is elements that change each and every ceremony, and that also requires a lot of trust from my end as well in working with our Aboriginal community, because I don't know exactly what they'll do for every ceremony and I need to be okay with that.

DARREN: There's probably been some pleasant surprises as well with that.

KYLIE: There's never been any negative surprises ever but when you're trying to orchestrate different people and being in different places, the surprises are always positive.

But the other thing just to mention as well, my amazing colleagues that work at our regional campuses at Bega, Batemans Bay and Shoalhaven, those ceremonies look really different down there as well. So equally, those staff and with my team, we've worked with those communities in those regions. And, for example, in Bega, the role of women in that community is really highly valued. So the women actually run the ceremony largely at our Bega campus, which is different to Wollongong where we have the men doing the ceremony and the women doing the Welcome to Country. So each of our ceremonies are contextualised to the place and the space that we're operating in.

DARREN: Absolutely brilliant. Another question here from Ree who is writing what steps do you take to ensure booklets and websites are accessible, and are your grad booklets hardcopy or digital, or both, I would assume.

KYLIE: Yes. So my team actually does a lot of this, so I probably can't speak to the detail of every step that they go through to make sure that the graduation booklets are accessible but I'm happy to grab Ree, if you like, I'm happy to grab the procedure and shoot it through to you after the recording today.

However, we have had hardcopy booklets to date, however we are going to pilot for next year moving to a digital copy only, but we do. At the moment we have both. There's a whole heap of we've got an onsite printery here at UOW that does all of our booklet development and there's a range of things that we do in collaboration with the printery to ensure that those are accessible, but I will get that information from my team, in terms of they've got a very clear process of what they do in terms of making that booklet accessible, and I can absolutely share that with you after the webinar today but I don't know it step by step offhand. Yep.

DARREN: Excellent. Thank you. Another question here from Ree as well: can you speak to the logistics of having your graduations captioned. What options do you offer? Are the captions onto a screen or onto an app that people can follow along with on their phone?

KYLIE: Sounds good. We do a live streaming of our graduation ceremonies. We engage an audiovisual company to work with us, and those live streams are captioned. We have had Auslan interpreters in the past as well at graduation, and we have our audiovisual company that we engage has done some live captioning for us as well and they engage a company to do that. So once again, I'm happy to follow up with the exact details if that's of use for people as well.

DARREN: No, very good. That's the questions for now. Thank you, Kylie.

KYLIE: No problem. So I think I mean, look, if I could just kind of reflect on, I guess, my key takeaways and what are the things that were really challenging and what were the things that, you know, broke down those barriers in order to enable us to do this. Look, I think that the secret ingredients for us were having a really supportive leadership and senior executive, that was really important for us, and a senior executive that understands our student cohorts. So I could not speak more highly of our executive at UOW, and how they provide the space and also the support, I guess, to enable us to take what is perceived, I think, sometimes as a risk, and to be a bit innovative and to really put that equity, diversity and inclusion lens on what we're doing.

DARREN: Excellent. Sorry, there's a couple of quick questions that just popped in that are still relevant to the current and then we'll jump back to your last part. A couple of people certainly asking around those grad… the accessibility notes, if you can forward those through and we'll put them up on the website as well, along with the webinar if you're happy to share them.

KYLIE: Absolutely, yep.

DARREN: A good question I thought of and then forgot, Emma is asking a logistics question around managing the smoking ceremony indoors and the fire systems.

KYLIE: Yes. So we've got a really wonderful security team here at UOW. So basically our fire system is still on. However, we turn the alarm off for the short period whilst the smoking ceremony is occurring, and our security guards stand in front of the fire system to monitor the system basically as well. So we've done a full risk assessment around it. So if anyone is interested, happy to have a discussion around what that risk assessment looks like, but it was really about bringing onboard our security team. Graduation is not something that is done by one team at our university. This approach has really been a university wide effort so, yeah.

DARREN: And Jason is asking what's the gap between students finishing their studies and attending graduations?

KYLIE: Yes. We have rolling conferral periods here at UOW. So a student can confer on a monthly basis. So a student could confer in January, February, March, et cetera, et cetera. So it depends on when they confer as to when they attend their graduation ceremonies. We hold our regional and metropolitan campus graduations around January, and then we have two graduations, one in April and one in October. So a student can graduate anywhere, I guess, from one month to five months before they attend their ceremony because we do have those rolling conferral periods. Yeah.

DARREN: And another very logistics question here with the voiceover system for students' names as they go across the stage. How do you manage if there's no shows? So a lot of work happens beforehand.

KYLIE: Yeah, great question. So I have to say my team are like the queens of quality assurance with this type of work. So what we basically do is behind each student we have a PowerPoint which has their name and the degree that they're graduating from, and that has the voice over artist file attached to it. Students can also elect to have the country that they're from listed on their graduation slide as well.

So we go through a process of when students register, they take a booklet, which has their name and their seat number on it, and when they come and sit then in graduation there's a process of marking students off so that we know whether they're here or not. We then take those marked lists and we then remove the PowerPoint slide from the suite of PowerPoints. So if a student is a no show the PowerPoint slide gets removed and the voiceover subsequently gets removed.

We do have, obviously, circumstances where students will show up late and so that can be anywhere between typically zero, we do have some anywhere from zero to maybe 8 to 10 students per ceremony, depending on the ceremony, and in that case, we do provide the Dean with a list of students and he or she will read those students out. Yeah. Yep.

DARREN: Sorry, I was just muted there. Thank you, Kylie. I'll let you carry on for a few minutes then.

KYLIE: No problem. I think leadership was a really big takeaway for us and having the support of the senior exec. And then the other two things, I guess, were around a willingness to ask why. Why do we do things like this? Why has it always been done here? And is this something that is relevant to who we are as a university, and then having those really candid and collaborative those conversations and developing that trust between stakeholders and with community as well has been incredibly important. Yeah. And I think I can see one final question.

DARREN: Sorry, just scrolling through. There we go. Yes, do you offer bursaries, financial assistance for students to attend graduation?

KYLIE: So we do have students who will reach out to us who need financial support for graduation, and we can either offer that student a payment plan, or there has been times, pending on circumstances, where we have waived the graduation fee for a student as well. Yep.

DARREN: Yep. Excellent. Look, I think lots of love certainly in the chat. Lots of inspiring things, as we all love our graduation ceremonies to be just that bit more inclusive. You've gone a bit more than a bit more inclusive in a fairly holistic approach. But I would just ask everybody to join me in thanking Kylie very much for the presentation today. And certainly all the best for Jaymee as well.

Look, it was certainly inspiring to see just that process and the honesty to go through that process that's happened in those discussions and how they're there. So any last thoughts, Kylie?

KYLIE: I just wanted to say a huge thank you to our colleagues in Woolyungah Indigenous Centre for your ongoing support and guidance on our journey, and also to my amazing graduation team at UOW as well. So every few months they pull off what seems like a miracle. So thank you, everyone, and thank you so much, everyone, for listening today. Very, very happy to share any of the work that we're doing as well.

DARREN: No, again, join me, please, in thanking Kylie for her presentation today. All right. An email will be sent out shortly to participants of this webinar when the video of this webinar will be made available on the ADCET website, and please feel free to share this with your colleagues, which I'm sure is going to happen.

We'd also like to ask that you please complete a short survey on this webinar and sign up for our newsletter if you're not already there, and links to these will be added into the chat box.

Please look out for our upcoming webinars as well, which is on Unmasking Literacies: A model for developing academic literacy in the neurodiverse enabling classroom. Details of that will be added to the chat box as well. Thank you, everybody, for joining us today. I feel uplifted from seeing that today and seeing the really good work that's going on. Who says that rethinking things post COVID certainly can't have an impact and a change? And I think it's wonderful the work that's been done there at the University of Wollongong, so kudos to Kylie, you and the team and everybody who has been involved. It takes a village to change these things but I think the results are there to show the meaningfulness and the impact this can certainly have on community and place. So thank you, everybody, and thank you again for joining us, and enjoy the rest of your day.