



UNSW  
SYDNEY

Australia's  
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University

# DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN - PROFILES

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2018





## Cam McPhedran

### Mediation Researcher & Practitioner

Cam McPhedran graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (History and Criminology) from UNSW Arts and Social Sciences in 2014 and went on to complete a Master of Criminal Justice and Criminology at UNSW Law in 2017. A year prior to commencing his study at the University, he was diagnosed with depression and after his first year of study he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, a mental health condition associated with strong changes in mood and energy. While living with bipolar disorder presented significant challenges during his time at UNSW, Cam's experiences have ultimately taught him to be persistent, not take things for granted, and live life passionately.

**"In some ways, I would choose to have bipolar disorder because of the urgency and sense of meaning recovering from difficult periods gives me."**

To manage his mental health, Cam studied part-time, which he found difficult because it meant not having a cohort. Strong support from family, friends, as well as faculty staff and leaders made a huge difference: "The willingness of program staff to respond to my special provisions needs, when my energy levels were so variable, was outstanding; I felt nothing but supported by them."

**"There are many amazing leaders and role models at the University who advocate for the rights of people with disability and provide support behind the scenes."**

Cam excelled both academically and socially at UNSW, achieving first place in Criminology in 2012, going on exchange to UC Berkeley in 2013, founding the UNSW Criminology Society and serving as editor of student newspaper, Tharunka, as an undergraduate. He also completed a study abroad course in Chile during his Masters and served as member of UNSW's Disability Advisory Group, a body established by the University's Diversity Champion for Disability in 2016.

"I am a global thinker and don't rest until I achieve what I feel is valuable to me and society. I always try to make the best out of situations and make the most of my own capabilities."

Cam wrote his Master's thesis on mediation between LGBT+ youth and their parents during relationship breakdown, and has completed a professional qualification in mediation. He is now looking to establish a service in this area, while continuing to present at international academic conferences from the theoretical and practitioner aspects of this research topic.



## Gemma Carey

### Associate Professor and Research Director, Centre for Social Impact UNSW

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Associate Professor Gemma Carey is Research Director at the Centre for Social Impact (CSI) UNSW and an NHMRC Fellow, and was formerly a senior lecturer in the School of Business at UNSW Canberra. She holds a PhD in social policy and population health from the University of Melbourne and a Masters in Anthropology from the University of Adelaide.

In 2012, Gemma was diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS), a rare condition in which the immune system damages the peripheral nervous system. This affects her ability to move and requires longterm management. “While people usually make a good recovery from GBS, it can have lifelong consequences. For me, this is chronic nerve pain, fatigue and muscle weakness.”

“I have to watch my work-life balance and pace myself throughout the day.”

Still living in Canberra, Gemma commutes to Sydney every week to the CSI, and also works from home. Access to travel funding, adjustments and a supportive work environment at the University have been invaluable to her along the way.

**“UNSW has been incredibly supportive of my needs, from individual staff and managers, through to central support enabling me to travel internationally for work. Access to the University’s Disability Travel Assistance Fund has meant that I am no longer limited in my ability to attend overseas conferences and meetings, which is important to my research.”**

Gemma has not let her disability hold her back at all. “Completing a PhD when I had lost most of the use of my hands and arms, and building a research program on the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme despite having significant career interruptions due to GBS, are some of my proudest achievements.”

She’s also been involved in driving change at the University. “Being part of the establishment of the Public Service Research Group and Disability Innovation Institute, have been some of the highlights of my career.”

Launched in 2017, UNSW’s Disability Innovation Institute brings together disability studies with STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine) and HASS (humanities and social sciences) research to design accessible and inclusive living, working and learning environments.

**“Across UNSW, there is a fantastic commitment to research which improves people’s lives.”**

In her spare time, Gemma enjoys bushwalking and hanging out with her adorable Bernese Mountain Dog.



## Ria Andriani

### Braille Specialist, Vision Australia

Ria moved to Australia from Indonesia with her family when she was 16 and attended Canterbury Girls High School in south-west Sydney. Having lost her sight in early childhood, she learnt Braille fluently at a young age, and became a Braille music reader through developing a passion for music at high school. Ria graduated from UNSW Arts and Social Sciences with a Bachelor of Music/Arts (Classical Voice and English Literature) in 2015 and says that while her experience at the University “wasn’t perfect”, she learnt valuable life skills such as effective communication and self-advocacy.

“I learnt a lot about communication at UNSW - personally liaising with lecturers and Disability Services, way-finding to places I wasn’t familiar, and how to enjoy a good party! Dealing with challenging experiences also taught me to stand up for myself.”

For people who are blind or have low vision, access to materials is essential to participation and this was no different for Ria as a student.

**“Having support such as accessible materials in electronic format and peer note-takers were some of the things which made my time at UNSW easier, especially academically. There was a lot of goodwill between the students and staff when I was faced with problems.”**

Ria thrived at University, forging new friendships through social activities and work experience, and enriching her knowledge about access and inclusion. “It strengthened my resilience and made me a passionate advocate for disability rights, even to this day.”

Fostering a sense of belonging is something she also says is vitally important for organisations. “To belong is to be included in all activities, regardless of my disability. That includes access to materials, physical activities, social interactions and representation in peak body organisations.”

**Ria has worked in diverse fields and pursued her interests in singing since graduating, even being invited to sing in Westminster Abbey (London) as part of St James Church choir tour in 2016. She also made a cameo appearance with the Collegium Musicum Choir at UNSW in 2017.**

Ria currently works for Vision Australia as a Braille transcriber and proof reader, and has also done a lot of travelling to the UK, where she plans on relocating in 2019.

