

Victorian Parliament
Inquiry into Sustainable Employment for
Disadvantaged Jobseekers 2019



Aspergers Victoria



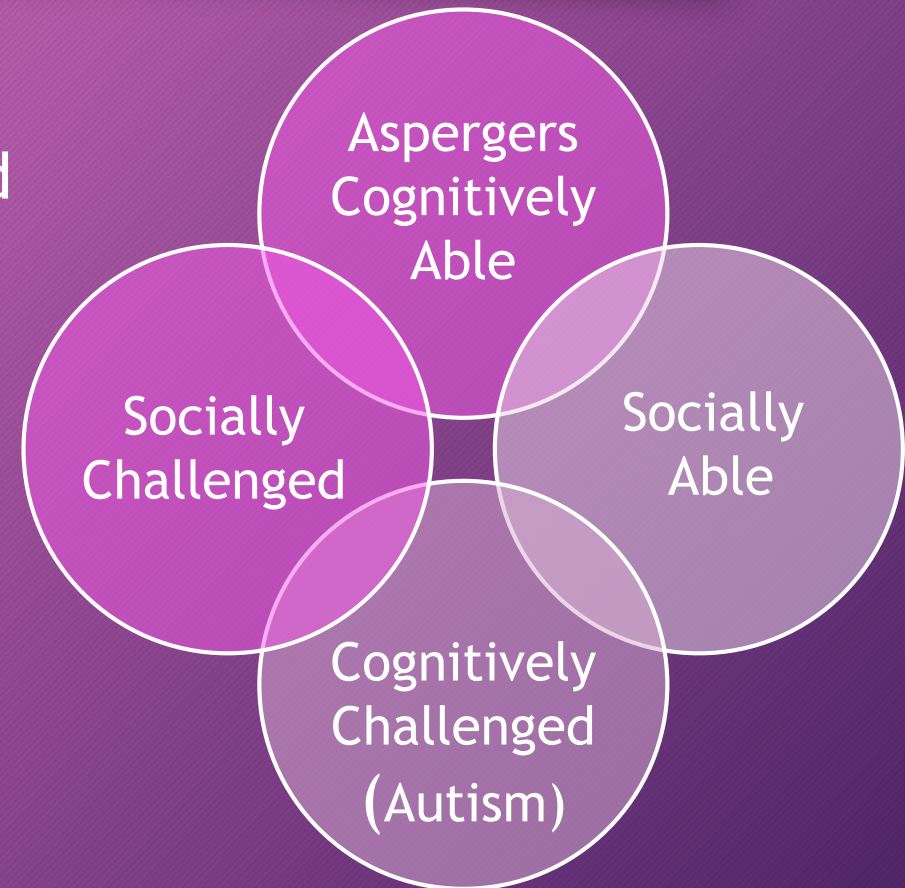
Aspergers Victoria & Employment

Autism includes:

- Cognitively able and cognitively challenged
- Socially able and socially challenged

Aspergers subpopulation includes only:

- Cognitively able
- Socially able and Socially challenged





Asperger Unemployment

| Unemployment Rate (ABS 2017) | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| ASD | 40.8% |
| People with disability | 10.0% |
| People without disability | 5.3% |
| Costs of Autism | \$8.1-11.2bn |



Diversity benefits all

How workplaces benefit from employing people with Aspergers:

- Better managers for all workers
- Better work atmosphere and interaction among co-workers
- Generalisation of understanding by co-workers to personal life
- Adds innovative thinking - different perspectives - thinking outside the box
- Improved work systems and processes
- Increase in productivity

(Curtin University, HPE SAP, Rise DHHS, DWELF, DET)



Why high unemployment rate for Aspergers

Misunderstanding of Aspergers by Employment Agencies - Jobactive/DSP

- Understanding is predicated on expectations of what is 'normal'
- Employment Agencies don't understand that Aspergers is a Different Culture : Different Language
- No single Aspie profile:
See one Asperger, You've seen one Asperger

-



Why high unemployment rate for Aspergers

- Job selection processes don't suit and disadvantage Aspies
- No on-the-job support to maintain employment for at-risk Aspie workers
- Jobseeking experiences traumatizes Aspergers
 - withdraw from the jobseeking market &/or
 - develop serious mental health problems &/or
 - eventually end up on DSP due to mental health problems



Representing our diverse Aspies

- Aspie jobseekers we represent today not cream of the crop or easy to place
- Cognitive strengths can be overshadowed by social, language, sensory issues
- Talking at the Inquiry would present extreme sensory and language challenges
- Create Anxiety that would take days to recover
- Same hidden challenges faced in work place: not understood by job agencies

Misunderstanding of Aspies disadvantages and traumatises

| | On the surface | Below the surface |
|----------------|--|--|
| Samuel (19) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor social skills IT guru | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PTSD (typical of Aspies) Sensory sensitives (travel, food) |
| Lana (34) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Personality Presents well | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensory (light and sound) Executive functioning (time/planning) Slow processing, auditory processing |
| Hanna (29) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme anxiety Slow processing (=iD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligent (120 IQ) Very Creative Detail focused |
| Paul (31) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor social skills IT skilled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor Executive Functioning Context Blind: can't generalize tasks No independence/helicopter parents |





Effectiveness of JVENs in assisting Aspergers

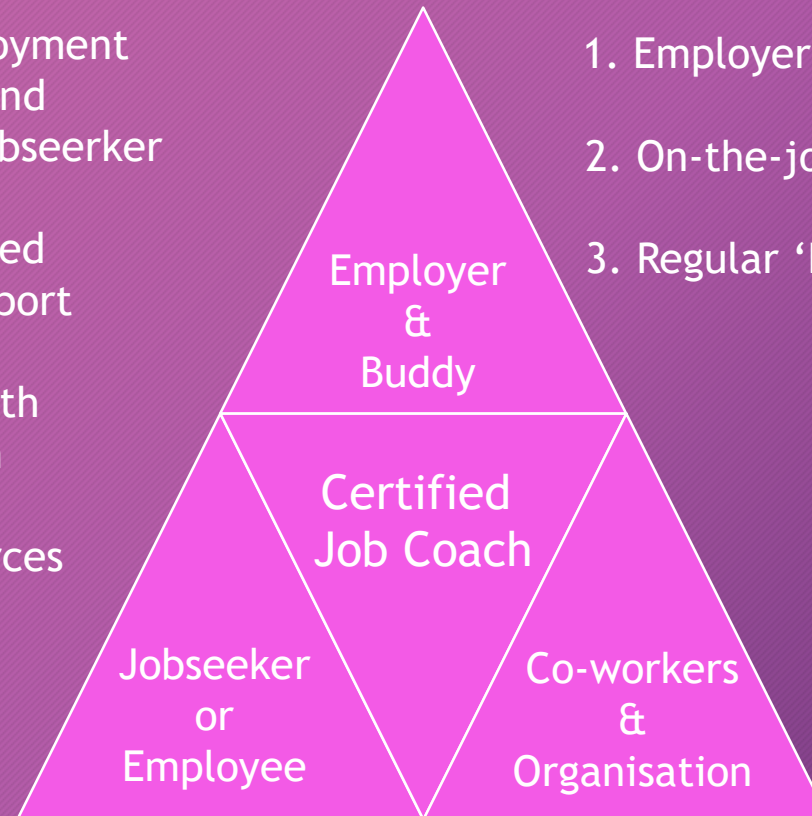
- Aspies are misunderstood. Fall through the cracks
 - Agencies don't understand Aspergers or provide enough appropriate support
 - Only eligible for DES/DSP when mental health is critical or can't get NDIS
- JVEN easier to access than DES (doesn't requires DSP qualification)
- But many don't know they can access JVEN: Often not eligible for targeted programs
- State responsibility: more responsive to local market issues
- JVEN struggle with Aspies with more challenges
- Jesuit Social Services joint program at DET



Education and support of the whole workforce

What makes a successful employment program

1. In-depth pre and post employment evaluation of the strengths and challenges of individual jobseeker
2. On-going individually tailored as-required on-the-job support
3. Scheduled review of job with Employer, buddy and coach
4. Directed to external resources to address non-work issues
5. Minor adjustments
Professionally conducted environmental scans



1. Employer & Buddy education - Aspiespecific & person centred
 2. On-the-job mentoring & support - individually tailored
 3. Regular 'Buddy' program reviews
1. Ongoing specific education co-workers
 2. HR training
 3. Review of employment processes
 4. Create Neurodiverse support group

Summary of Successful employment programs for Aspies



Based on our joint programs with JSS at DET and Specialisterne at DHHS, DWELF, Linfox

1. Employment coaches with specialist knowledge of Aspergers
2. Indepth pre & post placement assessment of Aspie employee's support requirements
3. Implement Buddy support system for Aspie employee
4. On-going, employee-specific Employer and Buddy education and training
5. Education of co-workers
6. Education of total work environment

Reduce Discrimination in the Workplace



Strategies to facilitate Aspies gaining and maintaining employment:

- HR: training re employment requirements of Aspies
- Restructure recruitment practices and other HR strategies to suit diversity
- Creation of neurodiversity employee groups within organisation (DHHS & Medibank)
- Monitoring of Employment practices: Aspergers Victoria endorses Job Watch's Submission to this Inquiry



Aspergers Victoria

We believe that expansion of our work with Aspergers Victoria, will help narrow the gap in services available to the uniquely talented group of people they are attempting to assist.” Rob at JSS

- AV’s employment programs are in their infancy but have proven to be integral to Aspie’s success
- AV programs support existing funded employment programs: not duplicate services
- Currently partnering with a range of agencies to provide specialist input to their programs e.g Jesuit Social Services, Specialisterne, Untapped
- AV provides:
 - specialist Aspergers education to businesses, organisations and schools
 - on-the-job expert coaching focusing on ensuring collaboration between all parties in a workplace
- Aspergers Victoria is a volunteer run organization and receives minimal government support



Summary

Aspergers is only a **difference not a disability.**

Learning to understand and speak Aspie is the key

Reasonable and targeted adjustments in the workplace.

Making adjustments to suit Aspergers creates a better environment for all



Thankyou

Questions



References

- Harvard Business Review article June 2017
“Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage“
- Curtin University Research
- OTARC World Autism Day presentation 2018
- Report of The RISE@DHHS Autism Hiring Program, Feb 2019
- Report for the Willing to Work National Inquiry 2016
- DES 2018 Discussion - response by AND