

Autism delegation

TAFE Inquiry on Disability Access

*Informed by joint survey on
Vic TAFEs & Autism*

Nicole Rees – Deputy CEO Amaze

Very high prevalence of autism in the community and at TAFE.

High aspiration and huge talent in Victoria's Autistic community

Education and employment outcomes are very poor – among worst of any disability group.

- Cert III and above VET quals achieved at just over half rate as other with disability.

Poor outcomes not primarily caused by autism, but rather by the lack of an enabling and supportive environment.

TAFE the most common post-secondary destination for Autistic people but experiences very mixed

- TAFE can work well for Autistic learners – applied learning; structured curriculum; smaller classes; work placements

- But almost half don't finish; low and inconsistent adjustments; reluctance to disclose; low trainer knowledge of autism; low translation of training to employment

Understanding and support for invisible conditions – including autism – is lagging. Needs to be brought into sharp focus

Closed borders / covid recovery environment create both imperative and opportunity for clear TAFE-employment pathways for Autistic people

A systemic approach to supporting Autistic learners

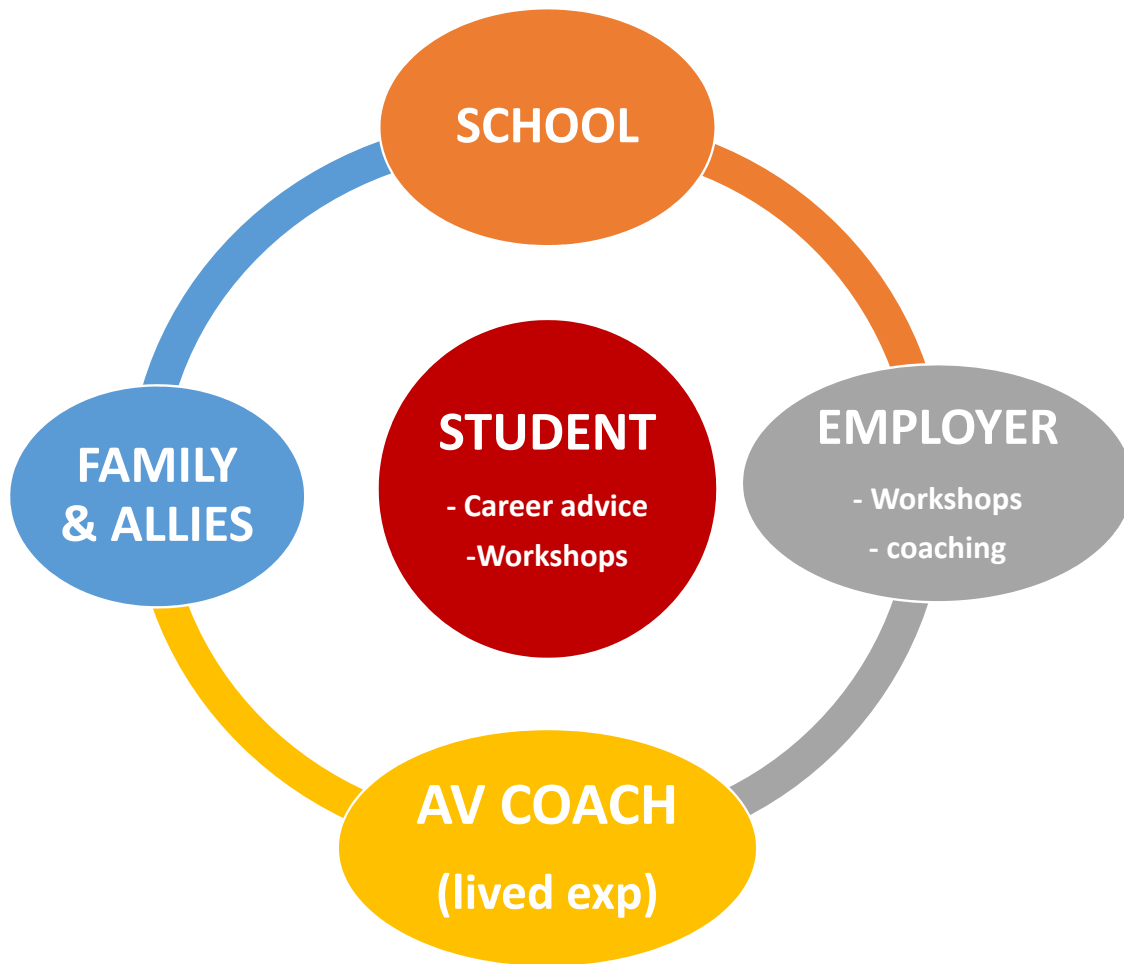
- Autistic students face discrete barriers – and benefit from discrete enablers – these can be missed in a generic disability response.
- Autism specific data, targets and measures are needed
- Vic's new Diverse Learners Hub & Autism Education Strategy could be extended to TAFE
- Network-wide charter of role/offering of TAFE Disability Support Services is needed
- Workforce competency and training in autism needed
- Models that combine training with work are effective
- Opportunity for pilot an end-to-end Autism Inclusion Program

Tamsin Jowett – President AV, lived experience parent

AV's Vision: a world where the strengths of all Asperger autistics are celebrated, realised and valued : Through programs supporting relationships, communication & employment

- **AUTISTIC INCLUSIVE CULTURE & ENVIRONMENTS NEEDED:** value hidden differences, improve all systems
- Specific **funded** autism **inclusion program** for different learning styles with **KPI reporting & transparency**
 - Teacher compulsory **autistic** training Reasonable accomodations easier Environment design
 - Include allies/parents (resource) Mental health supports (as per school) Flexible curriculum
- **Transition support:** from School learning supports knowledge & funding follow autistic into TAFE
 - Expand Support Officers/DLO role
- **Listen** so Include TAFE **autistic lived experience** in universal design options & reasonable accommodation approach & teacher training
- **Supported work experience programs:** AV's Teen Work Experience Program so ready for employment

Teen Work KnowHow Program: supported inclusion model



Autistic lived experience design
Workshops build career capacity
Supported employment experience

OUTCOMES

Student:

Self understanding & Self advocacy
Grow Exec Function skills via coach
Career awareness
Improved study and hope

Employer:

Understanding from direct experience & supports

Parent: Hope & more empowering

Katie Koullas, Founder & CEO Yellow Ladybugs

Lived experience expert, former VET trainer

Low understanding of autism in VET workforce lead to lack of adjustments

Compulsory training and professional development is needed

Majority of Autistic students also experience mental health challenges

Gendered analysis

Jan Davis, Holmesglen TAFE

Motivated by need to help students in Cert I in Work Education secure work (targeted at young people with additional needs and disability)

Developed Holmesglen's Integrated Practical Placement Program – first piloted in 2018

Majority students are Autistic

TAFE trainer and DES partner co-located with industry partners

Small group classes (capped at 10)

Aim is mainstream employment

Outcomes - Integrated Practical Placements

Very promising outcomes. 2018 student cohort:

- 80% into mainstream employment
- 100% job retention after 6 months

Volunteers - Hawthorn Football Club Hidden Disabilities program

Significant benefits for families; employers/workplaces (become inclusion champions) and the broader community

Small ILC grant 21/22 (\$250K) to research and replicate approach in 2 other metro and regional TAFEs in Vic

Industry Collaboration Award winner

Rebecca Hope, lived experience expert

Graduate of multiple TAFE courses at different Institutes

Moving from school to TAFE

Examples of TAFE working well

Moving from TAFE to work

Thomas Quine – AV volunteer; Rise@DHHS Program

Experience at Victoria University (dual sector)

- Undiagnosed at Tertiary: fewer autistics than TAFE
- Lack of understanding about hidden learning differences
- Sought help from support services:
 - Only given extra time
 - When told to outline what required requested mentor & that was refused
 - No interest in listening or building his success: looking behind issues
- Placement with no support: failed & traumatic
- Listen to lived experience

Kyal Kay, I CAN Network Mentor

Lived experience expert

Former student at South-West TAFE (VET in School)

Importance of self advocacy

Mentoring of young Autistic people: peer connections / social supports

Support for TAFE to build understanding of autism