



Australian Autism Employment Strategy



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Context

In 2022, the Australian Government unveiled the **National Autism Strategy**, addressing critical reform areas for all Autistic Australians, spanning services, healthcare, education, and employment. Informed by input from autistic individuals, families, the autism sector, and researchers, the strategy aims to guide a unified national approach throughout life stages. With a **growing number of Australians on the autism spectrum** facing disparities in education, employment, health, and family functioning, the strategy seeks to bridge gaps, improve life outcomes, and establish a coordinated national framework.

Unemployment in the Disability Space

In the past, federal policymakers have overlooked **employment for Autistic Australians** – a significant issue for the community. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) series of reports on Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) conducted in 2018 revealed a **stark disparity in employment opportunities** for Autistic Australians compared to other groups. Of the 287 respondents who engaged in the survey, approximately **62%** of individuals reported being **unemployed**, of which **57.3% wanted to be working in a paid job**¹.

Employment conditions of individuals with ASD

Over half of the participants said they would like to work **more hours**, highlighting the **strong preference for employment**. The report also draws attention to the lack of support and understanding that serve as **significant barriers to employment**. With **70.3%** of respondents supporting the claim that **adjustments should be made** for autistic people, public opinion is clear that initiatives should be taken to better support individuals with autism¹. The **government** plays a significant role in this process to **oversee changes** and **provide financial support** to improve general employment outcomes.

34.1%

Unemployment rate for people with ASD¹

- 10.3% - with a disability
- 4.6% - without a disability

38%

Labour force participation rate among 94,600 of with ASD¹

- 53.4% - with a disability
- 84.1% - without a disability

Source: 1. ABS, 2018



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


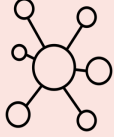

Executive Summary

This report aims to ‘**address the lack of autism employment support in the government**’ and understand the underlying reasons that contribute to lower unemployment in autistic individuals’ comparative to Australians with other disabilities. We will provide suggestions and recommendations for the federal government's proposed **National Autism Strategy**, targeting employment outcomes to ensure the necessary support for individuals with autism to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

The first section of this report analyses the **effectiveness of current government schemes** that addresses employment outcomes of individuals with autism. Drawing upon existing successful domestic and overseas schemes and general public opinions, we have identified specific issues within current schemes that require attention, providing suggestions for improvement or upscaling for longer-lasting impact reaching the wider group. We have grouped these recommendations into 3 key areas of focus:

<h3>Employer Support Systems</h3>  <p>Highlights the importance of inclusive hire practices, aiming to improve accessibility and ease of employment through educational initiatives</p>	<h3>Employee Training & Support</h3>  <p>Upskilling employees, helping them develop the necessary workplace skills through personalised development.</p>	<h3>Autism Awareness</h3>  <p>Identifying negative stereotypes and inaccurate media representation of autism, implementing initiatives to transform these beliefs in the workplace environment</p>
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The second part of this report will provide **holistic recommendations** to address the gaps in the general employment landscape. We developed 3 recommendations with the aim of improving employment outcomes:

 <h3>Government Quota</h3>	 <h3>AREA Model</h3>	 <h3>Workshop Initiatives</h3>
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By addressing these existing issues, we aspire to comprehensively bridge the existing gaps in employment support for individuals with autism. By promoting **inclusivity, awareness, and tailored support**, Australia's National Autism Strategy can support and empower individuals with ASD to achieve their full potential in the workforce and lead fulfilling lives.



**CURRENT POLICY
ANALYSIS**

Australian Governmental Schemes: An Overview

In the ongoing pursuit of creating a more inclusive and equitable workforce, governments and organizations worldwide have implemented various systems and initiatives to support individuals with disabilities in finding meaningful employment. These systems aim to break down barriers and foster an environment where people of all abilities can thrive professionally. This overview will examine the existing systems in place and the major issues they currently face. We will also discuss the need for autism-specific programs and the importance of feedback systems.

Numerous systems and programs have been established to assist individuals with disabilities in securing employment. These initiatives span government-led efforts, such as Disability Employment Services (DES) and the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF), aimed at creating diverse and inclusive workplaces. These programs offer a wide array of services, from job placement and support for workplace modifications to financial assistance for equipment and accessibility services.

Difficult Application Process

Many individuals encounter **hurdles during the application process** for these programs. The **criteria can be complex** and challenging to navigate, which can lead to confusion and frustration among applicants. The need for a more accessible and transparent application process is evident.

Generalisation

There is a **lack of programs tailored specifically** for individuals with autism. Autism is a unique condition with diverse characteristics and challenges, requiring specialized support. Existing systems often do not adequately address the distinct needs of this community.

Lack of Feedback

Feedback is a vital component of any program's success. The absence of structured feedback channels within these systems makes it challenging to **gauge their effectiveness**, identify areas for improvement, or address specific concerns of participants and employers.

It is evident that there is a pressing need for more autism-specific programs and **improved feedback mechanisms within existing systems**. Moving forward, it is essential to consider how these suggestions can be effectively implemented.




To address these challenges, there is a clear opportunity to develop and implement programs that are tailored to the unique needs of individuals with autism. These programs should prioritize accessibility, clarity, and user-friendliness throughout the application process. Furthermore, they should incorporate feedback channels that encourage open communication between participants, employers, and program administrators.

The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)

Job Access

Driving disability employment




The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) serves as a financial resource for individuals with disabilities and mental health conditions, along with their employers, to acquire work-related modifications, equipment, Auslan services, and workplace support. This initiative caters to eligible individuals who are commencing a job, self-employed, or currently employed. Additionally, it extends its assistance to those seeking Auslan support or specialised equipment for job preparation ¹.

Issues	Current Scheme	Improvements
<p>EAF does not benefit people with Autism if they are unemployed</p> 	<p>The EAF can only be granted if an individual are already employed. This means there will be a long process in between the time of employing an Autistic person and them being able to work at the company once everything has been implemented.</p>	<p>Grant the program to individuals pre-emptively to reduce the waiting time between employment and onboarding.</p>
<p>Does not focus on workplace attitudes</p> 	<p>Improves workplaces but does not state anything that will address workplace attitudes.</p>	<p>Implement an education session too for the workplace.</p>
<p>Focus on Physical Disabilities</p> 	<p>The program primarily focuses on physical disabilities and does not provide adequate support or services for individuals with mental health conditions, which are also significant barriers to employment.</p>	<p>Focus on supporting the mental support needs of applicants.</p>



Source 1: Department of Justice, 2022

The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)




Success	Current Scheme	Improvements
<p>Reduces employment turnover rate</p> 	<p>Provides employers with funds to create a work environment that can accommodate for people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Create a blueprint plan that includes what people with Autism require.</p>
<p>Increasing the employability of people with Autism</p> 	<p>By providing funds to support the needs of individuals with Autism, hiring them become more feasible to a business as it reduces the cost they otherwise would have had to provided themselves.</p>	<p>Provide these equipment at a large scale at once to reduce the cost of the grants/be able to spend more on equipment.</p>
<p>Autism Awareness</p> 	<p>By adding modifications to the workplace, it is raising awareness for the needs of people with Autism in the company.</p>	<p>Explicitly run a program for other employers on how they can cater to people with Autism.</p>






Disability Employment Services (DES)



The Disability Employment Services (DES) program plays a crucial role in facilitating employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This program aims not only to aid in job placement but also to provide sustained support to ensure job retention. It offers a comprehensive range of services, including career guidance, employment preparation, training, job search assistance, and ongoing workplace support, which encompasses financial aid for essential workplace modifications and wage subsidies to employers¹.

Issues	Current Scheme	Improvements
<p>Criteria too Convoluted</p> 	<p>There is a compulsory assessment before individuals enter the program. However, criteria for accessing state of disability can be unclear.</p>	<p>Clearer more comprehensive rubric and staff that provide clarification.</p>
<p>Mismatched Job Placements</p> 	<p>DES may struggle to adequately match job seekers with disabilities to suitable positions within a company. If a job seeker is placed in a role that does not align with their skills or needs, both the employee and employer may face challenges, potentially leading to job dissatisfaction and turnover.</p>	<p>Conduct thorough assessments of job seekers' skills, abilities, interests, and career goals which can help identify the most suitable jobs.</p> <p>Establish strong partnerships with employers and work closely with them to understand their needs, job requirements, and company culture.</p> <p>Offer job trials to assess a job seeker's fit within a company before formal placement.</p>
<p>Lack of awareness and misunderstanding of DES</p> 	<p>Some workplaces may lack awareness about disability-related issues, accommodations, and the support available through DES. This lack of knowledge can result in reluctance to hire individuals with disabilities or an inability to provide necessary accommodations.</p> <p>Employers and coworkers may fear that providing accommodations for individuals with disabilities will be burdensome or costly. This fear can discourage employers from hiring people with disabilities or cause resentment among coworkers.</p>	<p>Run promotion and advertising campaigns to collaborate with businesses.</p> <p>Share success stories of employees with disabilities who have benefited from accommodations, showcasing its utility.</p> <p>Provide information on the cost accommodation, many are low-cost or free, and the benefits of retaining and supporting skilled employees often outweigh the expenses.</p>



Disability Employment Services (DES)

Success	Current Scheme	Improvements
<p>Workplace accommodation guidance</p> 	<p>DES providers offer guidance on workplace accommodations and modifications. They help employers identify and implement reasonable accommodations, ensuring that employees with disabilities have the tools and resources they need to perform their job effectively.</p>	<p>Construct a systematic way for people with Autism to indicate workplace accommodations to speed up the process.</p>
<p>Resume building training</p> 	<p>Run programs that help people with improve their employability through resume building and training.</p>	<p>Ensure that training is specific to disability, in this case, ensure that resume building includes autism specific needs and workplace plans in workshop.</p>
<p>Promotion of Inclusion</p> 	<p>DES promotes the inclusion of individuals with disabilities within the workforce. By actively supporting the hiring and retention of employees with disabilities, DES sends a clear message that the workplace values diversity and equal opportunities for all. This can lead to a more inclusive and accepting environment.</p>	<p>Access to Inclusion Resources: Provide employers with a toolkit of resources, best practices, and guidelines for creating inclusive workplaces. These resources should cover topics such as accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and inclusive leadership.</p>



National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)



The Australian Government, through the Department of Social Services, has conceived the "Employ My Ability" Disability Employment Strategy. This strategic framework aims to provide comprehensive guidance to governmental bodies, employers, and the broader disability community, with the overarching objective of enhancing employment prospects for individuals with disabilities¹.

Issue	Current scheme	Suggestions for improvement
<p data-bbox="49 652 357 756">Lack of clarity in the application assessment process</p> 	<p data-bbox="402 652 913 797">Currently, the application involves a number of processes to ensure eligibility and type and amount of support and funding required.</p> <p data-bbox="402 818 913 1004">For individuals with autism the application process lacks accessibility due to the lack of guidance in the initial application process, with little to no clarification on the details from the website.</p> <p data-bbox="402 1025 913 1170">ASD is very different for everyone therefore there should be no generalised approach. The NDIS initially categorises autism into three broad levels</p>	<p data-bbox="928 652 1380 797">Partner with advocacy/ support organisations to hold interactive educational workshops, providing tips on efficient application.</p> <p data-bbox="928 859 1380 1149">Implementing a points system similar to UK's national disability support system, Personal Independence Payment (PIP)². This could provide further clarity in addition to the existing three categories and serve as a stronger foundation for further assessment.</p> <p data-bbox="928 1170 1380 1357">The assessment process should steer away from pure diagnostic evidence, instead focus on understanding the needs and goals relying less on medical diagnosis.</p>
<p data-bbox="49 1419 357 1502">Lack of understanding of ASD</p> 	<p data-bbox="402 1419 913 1502">A lot of feedback regarding the inadequate support:</p> <p data-bbox="402 1522 913 1709">"The NDIA asks participants to submit evidence from health professionals about their disability and needs. But participants believe NDIA staff often do not read, understand or factor in this evidence."³</p>	<p data-bbox="928 1419 1380 1585">Adequately train staff to understand the true needs of people with disabilities rather than basing on assumptions or prior cases.</p> <p data-bbox="928 1605 1380 1773">UK's PIP scheme provides access to healthcare professionals with experience in assisting individuals with disabilities to ensure adequate support and funding is provided.</p>

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Success	Current Scheme	Improvements
<p>Adequate funding</p> 	<p>According to past NDIS report (September 2022), autism stands out as the most frequently observed condition among participants, with 34% of individuals having autism as their primary disability. 64% of those individuals are under the age of 15 and 90% under the age of 25¹. During the quarter a total of \$1.54 billion was paid in funds, a 23% increase from the previous period.</p>	<p>The scheme allocates a substantial amount of funding towards autism support; however, its effectiveness could be further improved to maximise outcomes. The scheme should focus on improving the underlying quality of the support received to ensure that the funding is effectively utilised.</p>
<p>Improving employment</p> 	<p>As of 31 December 2022, 23% of all participants with autism reported employment in the latest assessment, which is a 7% increase from the first reassessment¹. This is an improvement of 1% from the previous quarter.</p> <p>The majority of NIDS' current plans focus on funding and assistance for independent living, which serves as a great basis to ensure individuals are able to purchase equipment and receive care.</p>	<p>Evident from the 2018 ABS report on SDAC, there is an appetite for employment within autistic individuals². In general, more resources and discussion around the different options can encourage applicants to consider employment support instead of pure funding.</p>



my Gov



centrelink



Source: 1. NDIS, 2022. 2. ABS, 2018


Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE)



Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) constitute a specific form of supported employment that offers on-the-job assistance to individuals with disabilities. Historically funded directly by the Government and referred to as sheltered workshops, ADEs now require access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), with participants utilising NDIS funds to cover costs associated with ADEs.

ADEs are a form of employment assistance tailored for individuals with disabilities who necessitate substantial support to engage in work. Unlike open employment, which is accessible to all, ADEs predominantly cater to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Issue	Situation	Improvements
Lack of regulation 	<p>Repeated reports of exploitation and neglect of individuals with disabilities in the workplace, as individuals were getting paid as low as \$2.37 per hour in 2022¹.</p>	<p>Enforce stricter guidelines regarding wages, benefits and workplace treatment. Provide a transparent feedback channel, ensuring constant check ins with participants, fostering open communication.</p>
Few opportunities for skill development and job progression 	<p>As mainly offered by NFTs, these job often require minimal skill guidance, focusing more so on providing a supportive work environment</p>	<p>Run upskilling workshops within these enterprise, educating and encouraging career progression.</p>

Success	Current Scheme	Improvements
Open opportunities 	<p>On 1 July 2020 the NDIS introduced new pricing for support in employment that gives participants greater choice and control about where and how they work, who provides their support, and creates new opportunities for providers².</p>	<p>Educate participants in the NDIS regarding this opportunity to increase the spread of this format of support. Partner with for profit companies.</p>

Source: 1. Royal Commission. 2022. 2. NDIS. 2021

Private Australian Initiatives: An Overview

Private Australian initiatives, such as the Australian Autism Alliance, Autism Awareness Australia, and state-level autism organisations, have been pivotal in advancing autism-related causes. Established in 2018, the Australian Autism Alliance serves as a nationwide collaborative platform, bringing together various stakeholders to coordinate efforts in autism advocacy, research, and support. Founded in 2007, Autism Awareness Australia has been a driving force behind increasing autism awareness across the country, offering programs and resources to educate the public about autism spectrum disorders.

Statistically, autism prevalence in Australia has been on the rise, with approximately 1 in 70 individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)¹ however this figure varies within age groups and is increasing. These private initiatives have played a vital role in addressing this growing challenge, providing essential services, support networks, and educational resources for affected individuals and their families. By working in tandem with state-level autism organisations, which were established to cater to local needs, these private initiatives help create a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals on the autism spectrum throughout Australia

Fragmented Services

Fragmented autism services in Australia, with each state operating independently, create a range of problems. These include **inconsistent access to services, communication gaps, and a lack of coordination among organisations**. This situation leads to **inequities in care**, hinders research and data collection, and wastes

resources due to duplicate efforts. The absence of a comprehensive national strategy, aside from the 5 years Victorian Autism Plan in 2019, means that there is no unified approach to addressing autism needs across the country². To ensure consistent, high-quality care for individuals with autism and their families, there is a pressing need for a more coordinated and integrated approach to autism services at the national level.

Inaccurate Media Representation

Inaccurate **media representation** of autism in Australia carries several **detrimental implications**. Frequently, autistic characters are reduced to stereotypes, depicted as either:



Different



Magical





Undiagnosed


Such portrayals not only **perpetuate misconceptions** but also limit the potential for nuanced storytelling that can authentically reflect the diverse experiences of individuals on the autism spectrum. Despite a noticeable improvement in societal attitudes toward autistic people, there is a concerning lack of corresponding knowledge enhancement when people are exposed to fictional representations of autism in TV series or novels. This disconnect between attitudes and knowledge underscores the **urgent need for the media to portray autism more accurately**, promoting better understanding and empathy for individuals on the spectrum while challenging outdated stereotypes.

Source: 1. Autism Spectrum Australia, 2018. 2. Victorian Government, 2023. 3. Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange, 2020

State Providers




State services that provide government support are relatively similar within each state,. These state organisations aim to recognize and promote the rights of disabled people within each state; providing, resources, developing inclusion strategies and engaging with the autistic community.

Issues	Current Scheme	Improvements
Inconsistencies in state level organisations 	<p>Each state has their own organisation which acts independently, communication gaps, lack of coordination.</p> <p>The recently released Victorian Autism Plan 2019 is the only whole of government autism plan in Australia.</p>	<p>Streamline and centralise the state organisations.</p> <p>Create National strategy/website to consolidate all the services, create one main point of contact or at least have websites of similar consistency.</p> <p>Make mental health programs more prominent and accessible on the website.</p>
Inadequate emphasis on mental health 	<p>There is a large deficiency in Mental health only just above 50% have been able to get appropriate help, while 50-70% have co-occurring mental health issues.</p>	<p>Increase funding and resources to mental health services that tailor themselves to autistic individuals such as Sane Services.</p> <p>Change the diagnosis process to also include a mental health check, for young children implement a developmental process that includes regular check-ups to monitor their mental health as they grow.</p>

Success	Current Scheme	Improvements
Successful lobbying 	<p>Collectively have lobbied so that there is an agreement from the Coalition, Labor, and the Greens to introduce a new National Autism Strategy</p>	<p>Hold the Government accountable by participating in elections, support whistleblowers like WBA, media coverage on how the government fails to keep promises, advocacy campaigns</p>

Media Portrayal

Media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes toward various groups, including autistic people. The portrayal of autism in the media can have a profound impact on how society views and interacts with individuals on the autism spectrum. It is important for influential individuals and organisations to approach the portrayal of autism with sensitivity, accuracy, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Likewise, audiences can play a role by being critical consumers of media, advocating for accurate representation, and supporting content that promotes understanding and acceptance.

Issues	Current Scheme	Improvements
Inaccurate media portrayal 	Characters are often portrayed as either "magical/savant," "different/quirky," or "undiagnosed/unlabelled," restricting the potential for nuanced storytelling ¹ .	Improve effort to display full spectrum by providing monetary incentives, accurate portrayals lead to larger grants
Little to no educational value in widespread media 	Although recording significant improvement in people's attitudes towards autistic people, no improvement in knowledge after viewing a short segment from a fictional TV series or novel that depicts an autistic person	Improve effort to include educational value in fictional media via stricter guidelines surrounding media representation. Encourage consultations and communication between experts on Autism, advocacy groups, individuals with autism and media organisations Establish regulatory body to maintain representation standards.
Success	Current Scheme	Improvements
Improvement in media representation 	Significant improvement in people's attitudes towards autistic people were recorded in academic studies.	Increase output of media that represents autism through providing media grants, creating autism media guidelines and funding public awareness campaigns



RECOMMENDATIONS

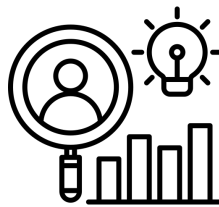
Government Quota

This policy is aimed to identify suitable departments or roles within the public sector that can be effectively managed by individuals with autism, with the ultimate goal of **enhancing their employment opportunities**.



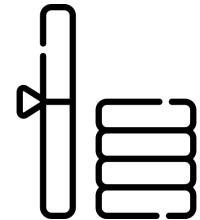
Collating Information

Collect information on **common attributes and skills** of autistic individuals, understanding the level of support require



Identifying Jobs

Identify **specific** job categories that **align** with the skills and capabilities of autistic individuals



Establishing Quota

Quantify the percentage of job openings within these identified departments that will be **exclusively allocated** to individuals with autism

Execution of this policy will be facilitated through the **collaboration with existing disability schemes**, such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). These schemes will play an **intermediary role**, connecting individuals with autism to specific job opportunities within the public sector. Building upon the foundation of support already provided by these schemes, the policy introduces the option for individuals to engage in contracted or paid roles within government departments.

Employment contract terms such as duration and frequency will be discussed extensively with government representatives, scheme advisers, and the individual or their guardian. These discussions aim to identify unique strengths and preferences, creating a tailored work environment, supporting sustainable employment.



Job Access

Driving disability employment

This policy's primary objective is to establish specific, measurable guidelines mandating the provision of permanent, paid positions for individuals within the autism community within the government sector

Government Quota

There are **several potential barriers and issues** that this policy may run into in achieving its goals, of which should be carefully considered in implementing this recommendation

Robustness

As there has yet been a policy of similar nature implemented in Australia, and there is **little quantifiable results from overseas cases**, the implementation of the policy will be subject to a lot of trial and error, possibly resulting in ineffectiveness

Restrictive

By directly quantifying the allocation of tasks increases **difficulty of implementation**. Prior research and analysis will be required of each individual group of jobs available in order to determine the best suited role allocation

Generalisation

Enforcing generalised figures across a large department may result in a **lack of suitability** to autistic individuals. To the varying nature of ASD, the matching of jobs should be completed on an **individualised basis**, therefore it requires the identification of specific jobs

Public Response

Certain people may view this policy as **unjust** as it will affect employment opportunities of others with disabilities, or even the general public, decreasing the likelihood of public support



Government Quota

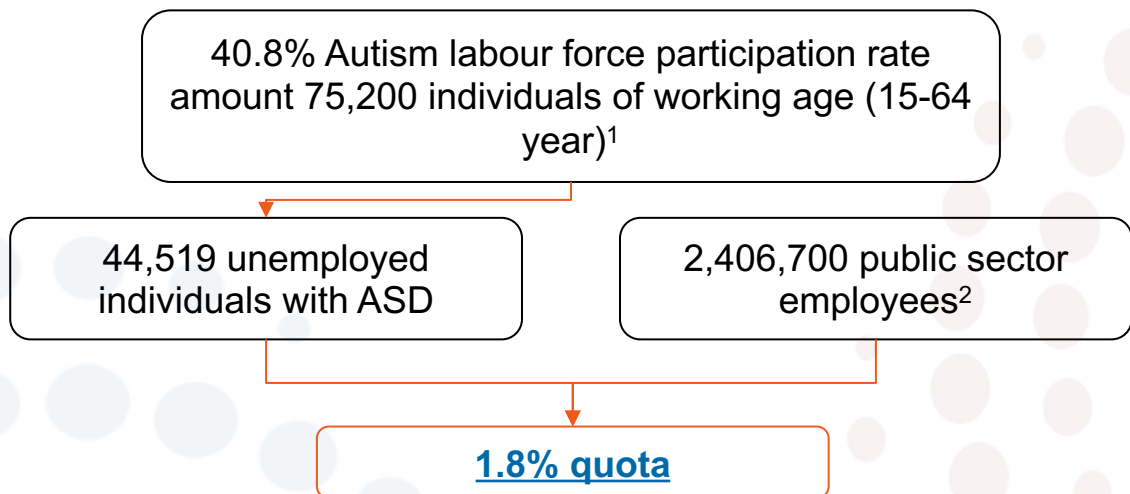
Rationale

The decision to focus on government-level implementation aims to ensure a transparent and efficient adoption of these guidelines. By setting out clear rules for the public sector, the policy seeks to create a standardised and accountable framework for the inclusion of individuals with autism in the workforce. This approach not only aligns with principles of fairness and social responsibility but also leverages the government's influence to lead by example.

The decision to omit the private sector from these particular regulations is a practical choice.

Private organisations often vary significantly in their structures, industries, and resource capacities. Attempting to generalise tasks and establish uniform rules across diverse companies could prove impractical and may encounter resistance. Additionally, the complexity and financial considerations associated with larger private entities make it challenging to prescribe one-size-fits-all solutions. Consequently, adopting a government-centric approach provides a more feasible and focused avenue for the effective implementation of policies aimed at improving employment opportunities for individuals with ASD.

Examples Results (2018 data):

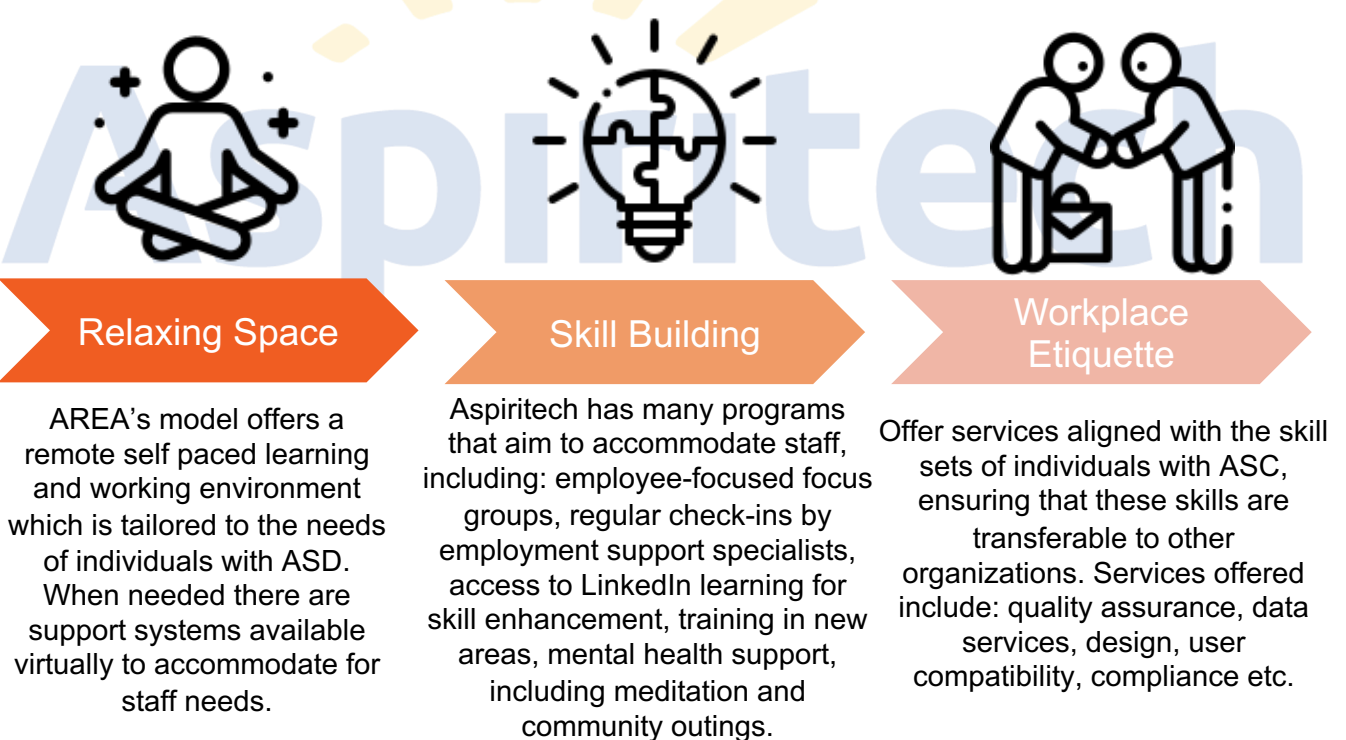


These figure does not take into consideration individuals that are severely autistic or unwilling to work. Realistically the quota figure will likely be much less and differ across states and departments.

Source: 1. ABS, 2018, 2. ABS, 2018-19

AREA Model

Aspiritech is a for profit US based Quality Assurance company that hires individuals with Autism. They offers a 6-week unpaid internship known as the 'Aspiritech Remote Employment and Training Academy (AREA)'. The program aims to help autistic youths gain a basic understanding of Quality Assurance (QA) by developing basic QA testing skills in the hopes to improve employment opportunities.



Many individuals on the autism spectrum face challenges in finding and maintaining employment due to stereotypes, misconceptions, and difficulties with traditional interview processes and workplace social dynamics¹.

AREA's model works to provide meaningful employment opportunities to address this issue by providing long-term employment opportunities rather than short-term solutions. This helps individuals with autism build stable careers and achieve financial independence.

Individuals with autism often possess unique skills and talents². Their model promotes

diversity and inclusion by actively hiring individuals with autism and creating a workplace that values neurodiversity and using this model in other industries will only help to promote diversity. This will challenge the social narrative that autistic individuals aren't able to work in challenging roles and hold stable careers³.

By improving public perception, it will greatly increase autistic individuals self valuation and inspire greater level of confidence. Ultimately, foster a social environment that regards autistic individuals in the workplace as a natural part of the workforce

Source:1 Valencia 2019, 2 Remington 2022, 3 Chen 2014 <https://aspiritech.com/about-us/>

AREA Model

There are **several limitations** of this model that should be adjusted before it can be introduced to Australia.

Limited Openings

Program has a **two-week onboarding academy** before the internship starts. The actual program is **only available between July and August** each year with a **limited** number of spaces.

Individuals will face **greater competition**, greater difficulty for those who are severely autistic.

Time Costly Program

The program comprises a **unpaid 6-week remote learning**, featuring weekly 1-hour virtual classes, self-paced eLearning with practical tasks and readings, **demanding 5-10 hours of study per week** – noting that participants **won't engage with clients, with no assurance of future employment.**

Geologically Limited

Currently **only based in the US (Virtual)** Expanding to Australia could cause issues, e.g. time zone

The program is very **niche** and only targets **one line of work.**

To successfully implement this program into Australia, we recommend several key enhancements.

beyond entry-level tasks, recognizing that many individuals with autism possess skills that go beyond entry-level roles₂.

Increasing Opportunities

With the aim of increasing employment for individuals with autism, we recommend establishing an additional winter Internship program to increase employment and increase mentor training for a more comprehensive education. Furthermore, we suggest exploring different training options to diversify educational opportunities and improve accessibility₁.

Reasonable compensation

To make the program more valuable for participants, we recommend offering compensation during the internship, considering the significant opportunity cost associated. Moreover, the programs introduction into Australia should be followed with international expansion, creating branches in other countries can further the program's reach, fostering inclusivity and diversity.

Challenging Work

In terms of the internship experience, we advocate for exposing interns to client work

These improvements will empower autistic individuals in Australia and provide opportunities overseas, ensuring a brighter future in the workforce.

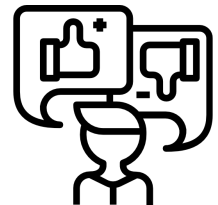
The AREA's model directly tackles the issue of underemployment and unemployment among individuals on the autism spectrum, creating meaningful and long-term employment opportunities.

Workshop Initiatives - Improve Transparency

This policy is aimed to prioritise transparency, feedback, and accountability in existing and future disability programs to ensure the effectiveness and success of improving the employability of people with autism.

Effectiveness on Autism

Transparent feedback and results will allow the government and communities to gauge the effectiveness of existing programs on individuals with Autism and help guide future initiatives. By sharing feedback and results, the government and communities can foster trust, accountability, and an ongoing commitment to improving the quality of life for individuals with Autism.

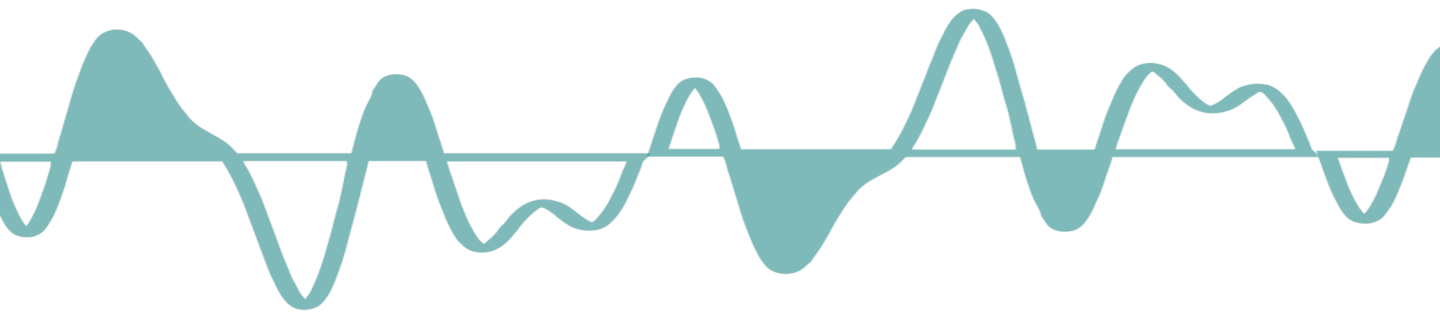


Continuous Improvement

Open feedback channels and sharing results create a culture of continuous improvement. When program participants and employers can provide feedback and see that it leads to positive changes, it encourages their active participation and input. This, in turn, helps to refine and optimize the program's effectiveness over time.

There are currently no policies in Australia that specifically help with the employment of individuals with Autism, with other policies holistically addressing the issues of unemployment with people with disabilities. Because of this, individuals with Autism often face unique challenges when seeking employment. In the absence of specific Autism-focused policies, individuals with Autism are often left to navigate existing systems that may not fully address their requirements.

Increasing visibility of data and impact of services on Individuals can improve feedback systems, community groups and individuals in discerning best steps forward.



Workshop Initiatives - Skill Building Workshops

Resume Building

Resume building workshops for individuals with autism enhance employability by equipping them with tailored resume-writing skills, boosting self-confidence, and increasing job search success. These workshops provide crucial support, empowering individuals to pursue meaningful careers with confidence.

Interview Training

Interview skill-building for individuals with autism focuses on enhancing communication, body language, and self-presentation, boosting their confidence and ability to convey qualifications effectively. Tailored programs address their unique needs, increasing success in job interviews and empowering them to pursue meaningful careers.

Workplace Etiquette

Training workplace etiquette for individuals with autism involves targeted instruction to enhance social interactions, communication, and behavior in a professional setting. These programs foster a deeper understanding of workplace norms, helping individuals with autism navigate office dynamics effectively.

Results:

According to research a key barrier and reason why people with disability are unemployed is their self-efficacy. By building their skills and confidence, they will be more driven to apply for jobs whilst also being more capable ¹.

In a study done by researchers to improve the employability people with Schizophrenia, participants underwent video interview simulations to train their interviewing skills. The ratings of how useful this program was by the participants were extremely high on the Likert scale out of 10, which included 8.6 for interviewer felt real, 9.2 for enjoying the simulation and an 8.7 in overall usefulness. Not only did this help improve the skills of participants, but it also helped tackle the issue of expensive time and financial costs of running in person workshops for individuals ².

Skill building workshop initiatives will increase the employability of Autistic Australians through increasing expertise and confidence.



CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This report highlighted some key concerns within the current government systems which are currently not well targeted to address the issues of Autistic Australians. Thus, current schemes should be restructured to rectify these gaps; furthermore, any future policies should be constructed in accordance with these frameworks.

Suggestions

Employer Support Systems



Employee Training & Support



Autism Awareness



Recommendations

1

The first recommendation establishes a robust and adaptive system built on the existing government framework; **connecting public job opportunities with job seekers with autism.**

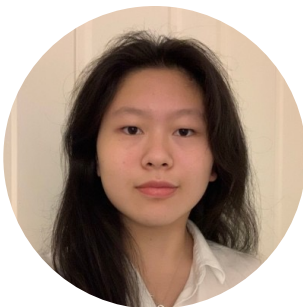
2

The next recommendation is **draws inspiration from a successful for-profit private company** based in the US, specializing in Quality Assurance, known as the **AREA model.**

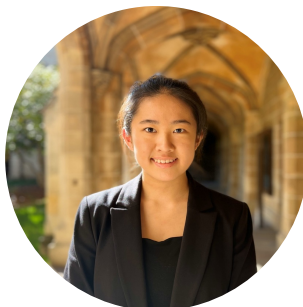
3

The final recommendation focuses on enhancing **transparency, feedback, and accountability** in disability programs through **workshops**, boosting the employability of individuals with ASD.

Team



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APPENDIX

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