Australian Government

National Autism Strategy

National Autism Strategy 2025–31:

Review of Autism-Specific Employment Programs and Supports

Status

Complete

Related Actions

- *Commitment 6, Action 1 (a)* – Review the effectiveness of autism specific employment programs and supports across mainstream employment, open employment, student placements and internships.
- *Commitment 6, Action 2* – Identify ways to engage regional employer and service provider networks to better support Autistic people to find and retain suitable employment.

Who

Government funded La Trobe University – Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre and Department of Psychology, Counselling, and Therapy who partnered with Amaze, Autism Queensland, Aspect and Specialisterne.

Community engagement

186 **Autistic adults** engaged through **57** **interviews,** **13** **focus groups,** online surveys and a diverse lived experience project advisory group.

What they did

- Reviewed published research about employment services available for Autistic people in Australia and internationally and conducted a desktop audit of Australian organisations offering autism specific or autism inclusive employment pathways.
- Sought lived-experience views on pathways to employment, support needs and what meaningful employment would look like (including removing barriers).
- Investigated barriers and enablers across the employment journey, including recruitment, disclosure, workplace adjustments and ongoing support.

What we learned

- **Autism specific employment programs** can be effective when supports are tailored, structured, and autism informed. Though long term evidence remains limited. Mainstream hiring processes create barriers, while clear communication, flexible work, alternative recruitment methods and autism specific coaching can be key supports.
- **Neurodivergent-led** and **neuroinclusive workplaces** were often reported as providing the most positive employment experiences.
- **Self-employment** offers a valuable alternative to mainstream employment, providing greater flexibility and control.

Challenges

- Many employment systems are not designed with Autistic needs in mind, limiting retention and progression.
- Autism specific and autism inclusive pathways may be challenging for Autistic people and their families to find and learn about, with limited opportunities in regional and rural areas.

Next steps

- Findings informed design of Commitment 6, Action 1 (b) – Employment Training Resources Grant.
- Up to $900,000 is being provided to the Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand Inc. to deliver and promote autism specific employment resources for Autistic people and employers.

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