

SPECIALISTERNE



ANNUAL REPORT

SPECIALISTERNE AUSTRALIA 2020-21





**ENABLING
12,000 CAREERS
FOR PEOPLE ON
THE AUTISM
SPECTRUM BY 2030**

CONTENTS

About us	04
A Word from Specialisternes Global Founder - Thorkil Sonne	05
A Message from Our Board Chairman	06
A Message from our CEO	08
Our last 12 months of work	10
The journey so far and the road ahead...	12
Our People	14
Case Studies	16
Our work in numbers	24
Financial Statement	27
Our Supporters and Contributors	28

In the spirit of reconciliation, Specialisterne acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



ABOUT US

Established in 2015, Specialisterne Australia is a non-profit social enterprise that provides a range of programs, products and services to businesses across Australia.

We work predominantly with government agencies as well as a variety of domestic and global non-government organisations across the IT, consulting, finance and other professional sectors. We have also progressed into more niche areas involving highly technical or detailed activities to find work for talented autistic individuals in fields that are well suited to common autistic traits. Some of our more niche activities include Sunpork, Weir Minerals and RISE at the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

While the majority of our social enterprise work is client fee for service (FFS) activity, around 30% of our revenue is secured through attainment of grant and philanthropic funds to help drive more of our more innovative and future practice and capacity building social change work.

Our grant programs are important as they have enabled us to develop and create new programs and activities outside of our original “dandelion” program methodology approach and standard FFS social impact/enterprise work.

Our current and previous grant programs include:

- A rural and remote Autism Advantage employment program to increase employment opportunities in regional settings;
- A two year funded “Discover your uniqueness” skills identification and confidence boosting academies for candidates;
- A 2 year National Employer business capacity building grant program - Autism and neurodiverse demo academies and business education tools;
- Employing Autism Advantage “new sectors and industries” grant.



"It is rare to work with a bunch of like minded people who are driven by the same sense of purpose and passion and who have shared values such as making a difference to the lives of neurodiverse individuals whilst creating systemic cultural change within Australian workplaces."

**- Kate Halpin,
Specialisterne Australia
Business Development
Lead**

A WORD FROM SPECIALISTERNE'S GLOBAL FOUNDER - THORKIL SONNE



Thorkil Sonne, Global Founder

In April 2021 Specialisterne Foundation had the privilege as a NGO associated with the UN Department of Global Communications to co-host the [UN World Autism Awareness Day Event](#) and facilitate the important global discussion of challenges and opportunities for inclusion in the workplace in a post-pandemic World.

Specialisterne Australia has done a phenomenal job managing challenges and opportunities and has demonstrated how you can adapt to the new situation with health protection of employees, candidates and clients as first priority, while increasing activities and impact. I would encourage all to learn from Specialisterne Australia's example and adapt internal processes and procedures that will lead to more competitive and neurodiverse workplaces after the pandemic.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIRMAN



When we established Specialisterne Australia in 2015 we faced a world where the special talents that so many people on the autism spectrum could contribute to the workplace and society were only beginning to be appreciated. Adopting the Specialisterne Foundation model from Denmark, and with lots of support, we began the journey to adapt to Australia’s unique needs.

Roll forward five years and this year we found ourselves with a unique set of challenges served up by the pandemic that would test the resilience of any organisation. I am proud to say that our very special Team met and overcame the challenges and delivered yet another year of increased income and growth. As I look at Specialisterne Australia today, I see a more resilient, efficient and focused organisation than we have ever had in our brief journey so far. Unable to travel to deliver our services face to face, the Team embraced technology to broaden and expand our assessment, recruitment and training services to support more candidates, while also training over 6000 peers and colleagues across workplaces. The depth and breadth of our government sector programs are now a solid cornerstone of our organisation, while clients like Westpac and IBM continue to provide an example for all businesses.

Looking to the year ahead we are already off to a flying start as our “well oiled” machine is harnessing its newfound capacity and efficiency. New clients and new programs offer an ever-expanding range of opportunities. Our long-term goal of launching 12,000 careers in Australia (as part of the 1 million global goal) remains intact. Additionally, we are also now moving to a new stage of growth where we not only achieve our goal by placements and support that we manage directly, but by empowering our clients to embed the recruitment processes into their organisations as “business as usual”. We are inspiring and supporting new organisations to join in the journey with us. We are also now positioned to widen our focus beyond autism alone and to embrace neurodiversity more broadly - by expanding from the core technology focused roles to new skills and industries.

THANK YOU for your continuing support to help us deliver a better future for some many uniquely talented individuals toward the achievement of a truly diverse and inclusive workforce and society.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Craven".

Regards,
John Craven | Specialisterne Australia Board Chairman

OUR BOARD



John Craven, Chairman



David Springs, Director



Johanna Barker, Director



Julie Smith, Director



Steen Lohse, Director



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Throughout 2020/21 we have continued to see the evolution of businesses, new innovations and changes to their products and services, as we evolve, adapt, and live with covid in our day to day lives. These circumstances continue to present challenges and opportunities for all of us.

Like many businesses and organisations, Specialisterne has had to be responsive and adapt. We have used the time and experience to look introspectively at ourselves and create new, different and improved ways of working with both businesses and candidates.

While most of our work continues to be delivered online, utilising a full suite of virtual programs and services - from talent sourcing, through to business coaching and consultancy - we acknowledge the need to balance the variety of options and interactions as businesses and community seek to regain and re-establish human contact.

For many businesses there has been uncertainty around capacity to continue operations. This has included lockdowns, maintaining safe workspaces and supporting the mental health and well-being of your teams, while continuing to ensure regular products or services can be delivered to your customers. A juggle for all of us! and one that takes leadership, teamwork, flexibility, resilience, and adaptability. I am very pleased and proud to say that based on our experiences at Specialisterne, and in our work with current and newer business clients, there has been awesome support to adapt and work together. Our work would not be possible were it not for the openness and willingness of our client and partner businesses to look at things differently - to mature and grow the culture of their organisations to both embrace and value diversity, and the skills and innovation that come with that. So for that, we thank you!

For many autistic and neurodiverse people working or seeking employment in the last 12 months, it has been an interesting and mixed experience. For many newly employed individuals, the notion of working from home, flexibility, adaptations, and adjustments may not seem like anything outside the norm. However, many autistic and neurodiverse people who would have struggled to find an inclusive employer, and flexible working conditions, prior to the pandemic, would now know that this has been a massive positive shift in their opportunity to maintain and secure meaningful employment. As the world normalises and settles after covid, we hope that the continuation of more flexible and inclusive working conditions remains a positive reminder of the change that can happen. We are also committed to continue to work with both the autistic employees employed during this time, together with their managers and colleagues - to plan and manage the adjustments required as workers return to the physical workplace.

To all the autistic and neurodiverse individuals in the community who we meet, learn from and are inspired by every day, we thank you for sharing your challenges, and experiences with us. For being a reference point and sounding board to help us shape and guide our activity to work better and improve how we represent or assist the autistic and neurodiverse community in your interactions with employers.



Lastly our work would not be possible were it not for the dedication, passion and determination of our team to drive our mission and encourage the changes in

business and broader society that we are looking to shift. The Specialisterne team have a genuine and shared passion and commitment to this work. While the work and environment in which we operate has not been easy through the last 18 months, the team's commitment to deliver the outcomes that we want to achieve for autistic and neurodiverse individuals has been unwavering. I particularly acknowledge the team's willingness to adapt, change, try new approaches, mix things up, take risks and sometimes just work with trial and error as we adjust to the new world.

I also extend my thanks and gratitude to The Specialisterne Australia Board. As an experienced group of mentors and professionals, your guidance, advice, permission to take risks and trust in myself and the team, as we needed to be responsive in the last 12 months, has been invaluable.

From both myself and the Specialisterne team we are excited to share with you an overview of our work from the last 12 months and some insights into what's ahead for us in the next few years.

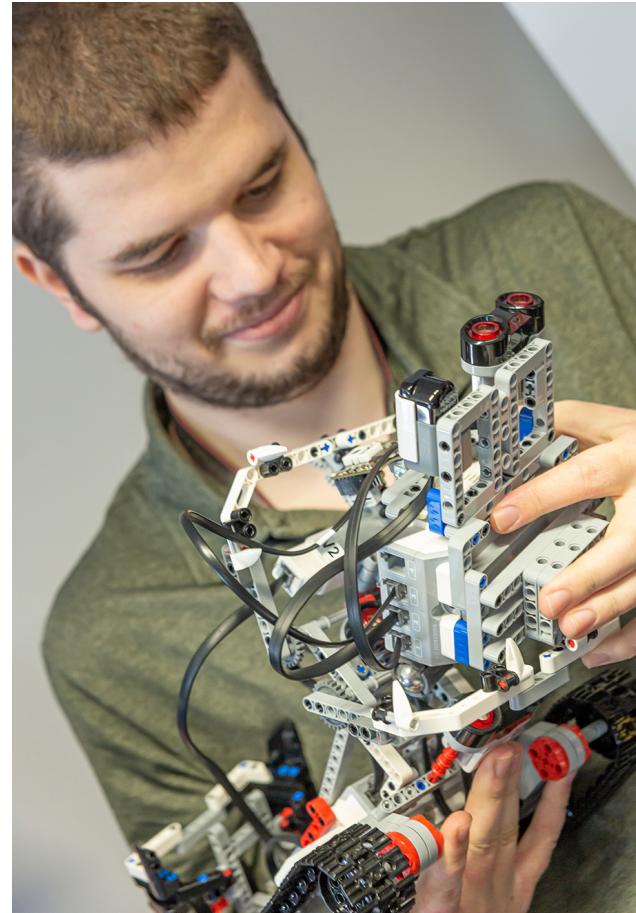
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Robertson', written in a cursive style.

Julie Robertson | CEO

OUR LAST 12 MONTHS OF WORK

While COVID-19 may have had an impact on all of us, it certainly hasn't stopped us in continuing to pursue our goals of shifting business mindsets to better understand the value, highly employable skills and qualities of autistic and neurodiverse individuals and to create more meaningful careers and job opportunities.

In the last 12 months at Specialisterne we have doubled our efforts in building the capacity of employer businesses to better understand the value and contribution that autistic employees can bring to the workplace. We have provided training and professional development workshops to help businesses identify how they can be more inclusive in their hiring and workplace practices. We have facilitated capacity building workshops to over 6000+ managers and employees across businesses here in Australia. This has been made possible through grant funding from the National Disability Insurance Scheme – Information, Linkages and Community Capacity Building fund (ILC),



the Department of Social Services – “Autism Advantage at Work” capacity building grant and the Baker Foundation grant to broaden the knowledge and capacity of mainstream employer businesses and industries.

Through these grant funded activities we have been able to partner with a select group of established Recruitment Firms (including Brunel, ClicksIT, Chandler MacLeod, Hays and Manpower) to develop a specific recruiter capacity building program to build their knowledge and awareness of the barriers and challenges that exist in traditional hiring practices and to enable greater inclusion and engagement of autistic and neurodiverse candidates into the open market talent pool of mainstream employers and businesses. We will continue to drive these funded capacity building innovation activities throughout 2021 and 2022, including targeted activities in Victoria, Qld and the ACT.

We are excited to support the continued advancement and maturity in autism and neurodiversity hiring and workplace practices across two of our corporate client partner's - Westpac and IBM - and extending the breadth and depth of their programs across roles and areas of their

business. Through their continued commitment to develop and embed this capacity within their own organisations they continue to commit to providing a more inclusive environment that embraces and includes autistic and neurodiverse employees.

We are also encouraged by the ongoing commitment from government agencies, both State based and Commonwealth. We are particularly proud and impressed by the commitment and efforts of the Services Australia's Aurora Program sponsors and team for their continued commitment to enhance, grow and embed the Aurora Autism and Neurodiversity program as a standard pathway and practice within Services Australia.

This year we also commenced new client supporting activities with Leidos, Telstra and Accenture. We are excited to continue to progress our work and partnership with our new client businesses to support their commitment to further diversifying their workforce and extending greater opportunities for meaningful employment for autistic and neurodiverse jobseekers.

We look forward to our continued enablement work with our client businesses, partner organisations and community as we continue to pursue broader adoption and normalising of these practices across business.



"It surpassed all my expectations! Regardless of being successful or unsuccessful in gaining employment at IBM, it has been the opportunity of a lifetime. I was amazed at how much time we were given to interact with professionals and IBM. Having one-on-one time with them in the shadowing sessions is something that not many people are able to do, and can provide great networking opportunities. I also feel like it gave me a lot of personal and professional growth in such a short period of time. I have taken so much out of this experience and I am very grateful for it."

- Program Candidate, IBM

THE JOURNEY SO FAR AND THE ROAD AHEAD...



Not only was 2020 the year the world changed forever with the global COVID-19 pandemic, but on a more positive and celebratory note also saw the Specialisterne team celebrate our first 5 years following our establishment here in Australia. Since our humble beginnings we have seen our work and activity grow from one small, supported government pilot program placing up to 20 autistic employees, to working with more than 60 businesses across Australia to increase their understanding of the value and highly employable skills that autistic and neurodiverse individuals can bring to the workforce.

We have worked with a variety of governments, as well as a number of international and national non-government organisations to assist these businesses to pursue and employ the skills of almost 500 autistic talents here in Australia. Through our work as thought leaders in this space, and with our globally recognised patient practiced “dandelion methodology”, we are pleased to have inspired the growth of several like-minded businesses here in Australia who are also committed to driving meaningful employment opportunities for autistic and neurodiverse adults. Through growth and support of this movement we have observed that these organisations have supported and inspired meaningful job opportunities for almost 1000 autistic and neurodiverse Australians in the last 5 years. To those organisations we acknowledge, respect and are encouraged by your shared commitment to enable greater representation of autistic and neurodiverse people in the workplace.

"I didn't realise just how well I could work within a team when I was heard and respected as a worthy individual, recognised for my autism but not being treated as lesser as a result or treated like a savant. I'm only human and so is everyone else! That was my big surprise with TfNSW and public sector work."

**- Program Candidate, NSW
Public Service Commission**

In the 18 months since the global pandemic hit, Specialisterne's programs and services have evolved from a predominantly on-site, face to face process, to a range of virtual, remote and online programs and activities, while still maintaining a blend of personable face to face delivery, where possible. Our covid response has enabled greater flexibility and adaptability in the type of programs and activities we can offer and deliver and has extended the reach that we can have across Australia.

2021 has also seen us complete our first full strategic plan. Our team have been working with our clients, candidates and other key stakeholders to help envisage and plan our new strategic objectives for the next 3 years. We will launch our new strategic priorities, goals and objectives in 2022.

"I have learned that I am capable. Especially having no previous experience in the tech industry I keep doubting myself, and why I am here. However, I have been able to finish every task given successfully, so I am starting to believe that I am here for a reason and that I am capable of doing a great job."

- Program candidate, IBM

A summary of key focuses and priorities that our new plan will be centred on include:

To educate and shift mindsets of businesses about the value of engaging neurodiverse employees in the workplace and to recognise the highly employable traits, skills and characteristics of autistic **and other neurodiverse conditions**.

Focus on continuing to build the **capacity and enablement within businesses to adapt more inclusive recruitment, hiring and workplace practices across all areas of their business in the long term**. By continuing to build the capacity of other businesses we will have greater success in creating a more inclusive employment market and enable broader growth in job opportunities.

Continue to **grow the range of employer industries and sectors in which we work**.

Extend and grow the variety and types of jobs roles and opportunities that embrace the skills, traits and interests of autistic and neurodiverse individuals.

Use our experience to innovate and **create more accessible and sustainable programs and practices that make it easier for candidates and businesses to participate**.

We look forward to launching and sharing our full new Strategic plan with you in 2022.

OUR PEOPLE

Our Australian team has a wealth of experience in the autism and employment space. Our team is dedicated, hard-working and passionate about placing autistic jobseekers into employment, spreading the word about autism awareness and acceptance, and telling anyone who will listen about the amazing skills in this virtually untapped talent pool. Our strength lies in the diversity and experience that our team brings to work each day.

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Julie Robertson
CEO



Jason White
National Manager, Business
Development and Engagement



Vicky Little
National Manager
Quality and Practice



Angela Bueti
Program Manager Qld, NSW and NT



Nick Giustino
Program Manager, Vic, Tas,
SA and ACT



Maurice Gartland
Finance and Operations Manager



Jacinta Head
Operational and Administrative
Coordinator

OUR TEAM

37% of team identify as neurodiverse or have lived experience of neurodiversity in their immediate family



Brett Maverix
Technical Lead



Georgie Walker
Consultant



Hannah Bennett
Consultant



Hayley Lloyd
Consultant



Kate Halpin
Business Development Lead



Natalie Hall
Consultant



Polly Harding
Consultant



Steph Carayannis
Impact and Outcomes Consultant



Susan Reddrop
OBES Consultant

To find out more about our team and what we do go to: https://specialisterne.com.au/our_team/

CLIENT CASE STUDY:

NSW Public Service Commission 2020

The New South Wales Public Service Commission (NSW PSC) worked with Specialisterne on a Tailored Talent Program to attract the skills, talents and abilities of prospective jobseekers on the autism spectrum, who could contribute to a number of employment opportunities across several New South Wales Government agencies.

The NSW Government is a proud employer of a diverse range of people. It is committed to reflecting the diverse community it serves and creating an inclusive workplace for all people, where everyone feels valued.

Program nominated for NSW Premier's award

The NSW PSC values the mutual benefits to both the incoming candidates sourced through the NSW PSC Tailored Talent Program and the valuable skills and abilities people on the autism spectrum can offer.

Specialisterne worked with various New South Wales Government agencies to source suitably skilled and motivated candidates to fill a number of roles predominantly across the IT sector but also within the STEM, Project Management and Finance space. Agencies included NSW Police, Greater Sydney Commission, Transport for NSW, Sydney Trains and NSW Department of Customer Service. Out of the 19 autistic jobseekers assessed, 14 individuals have been successfully secured meaningful roles across NSW PSC.

The NSW PSC Tailored Talent program was nominated for the prestigious NSW Premier Award in 2020.



"I didn't realise just how well I could work within a team when I was heard and respected."

- Program Candidate, NSW Public Service Commission

What the hiring managers and candidates have to say:

“The program is great. Enjoyed the process and meeting everyone. I would not use Autism as the reason why we need to hire. It should be based on skills and ability. Use the program as a foot in the door for groups who struggle to get good employment opportunities.”

Manager, NSW PSC Agency

“I think that the NSW PSC employers were friendly and amazing people who are committed to hiring neurodiverse employees and believe we have the strengths to do the jobs regardless of our qualifications or experience.”

Candidate

“I have not previously discussed my autism with prospective employers, this reduced the possibility of employment greatly, as I would have been perceived as aloof, and way too direct. When the employers were “educated” by the Specialisterne team, about what to expect from, and how to treat people with autism, this made the whole process far less daunting. There is no doubt in my mind, I would still be unemployed without Specialisterne.”

Candidate

“Most recently he [the new autistic employee] created a script which takes 30 seconds to do what took 3 hours before he joined us, truly wonderful!”

Manager, NSW PSC Agency



Being employed has improved my confidence in other areas of my life.

- Program Candidate, NSW Public Service Commission

CLIENT CASE STUDY:

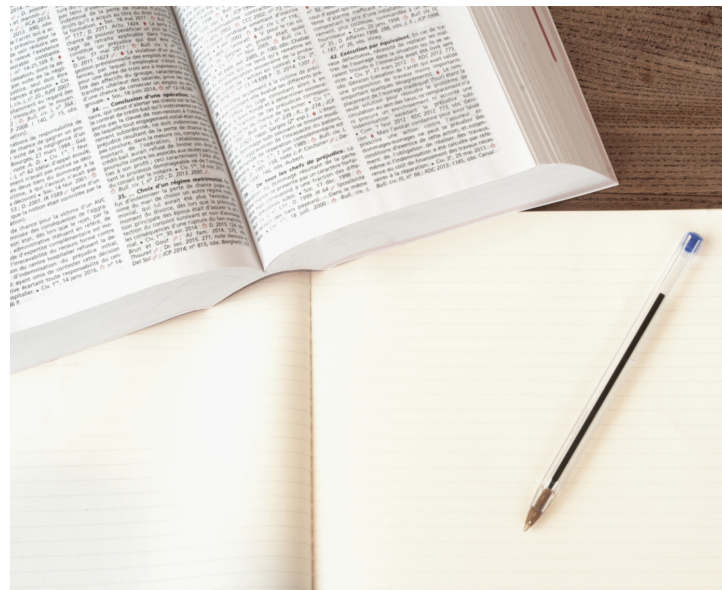
Legal Aid NSW find a skilled, work-ready autistic employee through the Talent Match pathway

In 2021 Legal Aid NSW partnered with Specialisterne to tap into neurodiverse talent via their Talent Match pathway which provided a fast-track option to immediately fill a vacant role within the agency with a skilled, work-ready individual on the autism spectrum.

Through this pathway Specialisterne aimed to assist Legal Aid NSW in meeting an immediate hiring need while also building and developing an approach that would have a far-reaching, long-term impact on the capacity of Legal Aid NSW to pursue, hire, support and integrate autistic individuals into their workplace.

To ensure the role requirements were met, Specialisterne completed a comprehensive job matching process which included evaluating the candidate's suitability against the role requirements through a series of practical online assessments.

Another critical element of Specialisterne's work is to educate and enable the employer to recognise and value the talents of people on the autism spectrum. Via the Talent Match pathway, Specialisterne worked closely with Legal Aid NSW to develop their understanding of practical, non-traditional approaches to recruitment in order to source the unique talents of autistic individuals, and to ensure they had the tools to support their employees to thrive. Via this process, the new recruit, Claire (alias) was successful and offered the role of Business Analyst within Legal Aid NSW.



The next stage of the process included the development of an individualised Employment Support Plan in consultation with Claire to identify her unique skills and strengths, and to detail any workplace modifications or adjustments that were required. This plan was then developed into a comprehensive tailored training piece and delivered to the new manager and the team on how to best support Claire to ensure she thrives in her new role.

Once Claire started her new role, Specialisterne commenced Ongoing Business Enablement Support (OBES) which comprises of one-to-one mentoring and coaching sessions with Claire and her new manager over a three-month period.

Legal Aid NSW talk about the Talent Match pathway

How did you hear about Specialisterne and why did you seek the services of Specialisterne to recruit for this role?

I became aware of Specialisterne through their partnership with the NSW Public Service Commission, and I was impressed by the results of the Tailored Talent Program the two organisations delivered collaboratively. Wanting to achieve the ambitious target of 8% of Legal Aid NSW staff with disability by the end of 2023, we were keen to partner with Specialisterne to employ the best possible candidate for the vacant Business Analyst – Data & Analytics role within my team.

What were you hoping to achieve as a result of working with Specialisterne?

People with autism have a great deal to offer the NSW Public Sector, however their opportunity to demonstrate this may be reduced through the traditional recruitment methods used across the sector. Working with Specialisterne meant we could recruit using a method that allowed candidates with autism an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths. The partnership with Specialisterne also provided a very good onboarding experience for both the new recruit and the team, and supported a seamless transition into the organisation.

What benefits can you see in your workplace as a result of hiring neurodiverse talent such as Claire?

We were seeking a Business Analyst – Data & Analytics recruit with analytical expertise, technological aptitude, and an ability to have a deep focus on the data. We were also looking for a person that is innovative, and importantly has a high level of integrity. People with autism often have one or more of these characteristics. Claire has all the characteristics we were looking for and brings a wealth of experience and capability to the team.

Have you personally benefited from working with us in terms of your understanding of autism, diversity, inclusive recruitment, your management skills or other?

Specialisterne provided us with tailored, candidate-specific onboarding and ongoing support guidance. Through this partnership I have increased my understanding that it is not a one size fits all approach. To enable success, it is important that we address how we can unfetter each person's strengths and provide the best kind of support to areas where this may be required.

Would you recommend Specialisterne to other organisations looking to diversify and support their workforce with autistic staff and why? What would you want them to know?

I would recommend Specialisterne to other organisations. The recruitment exercise was very straight forward, and I have great confidence in Specialisterne's candidate matching capability. Our partnership with Specialisterne meant the recruitment of Claire was given the best possible opportunity to succeed, for both the organisation and Claire.

Specialisterne were always on the front foot, are dedicated, and are committed to achieving the best outcome for the candidate and the hiring organisation. It is a pleasure working with Claire and I look forward to working with Specialisterne again.

What will the organisation look to do in the future? Any plans to expand on their neurodiversity recruitment initiatives?

Since hiring Claire earlier this year, NSW Legal Aid has used the pre-assessed talent match option to successfully recruit a Solicitor and is currently in discussion for a further role in their Sydney branch.

CLIENT CASE STUDY:

Annaliese Smith-Platts



Annaliese Smith-Platts

I am a stay at home mum to three young children. After the birth of my first born I left employment, and after 10 years, I have decided to try to get back into the workforce. My background is in IT, and I am an artist in my spare time.

Last year I was diagnosed with autism. It clarified so many things that made me wonder why I was different to others, but it also gave me a sense of relief, and freedom to embrace my autistic identity.

I had spent much of my life masking (which is attempting to disguise my autistic traits), and after being diagnosed I was able to trace back periods of burn out and depression with excessive masking.

I have also learned about the strengths that come from being Autistic. For example, I have a highly curious mind that loves to know the ins and outs of how things work, and I can apply that knowledge to problem solving in sometimes surprising ways.

I also have great attention to detail and having senses that filter information differently to the norm means I often pick up on things that others do not.

Another strength I have is my ability to empathise. It is a bit of a myth that autistic people do not have empathy, it is that empathy is often expressed differently by autistic people. In the workplace that high level of empathy means I strive to meet the needs of clients.

"When I found out about Specialisterne, I was so relieved because I knew their program would give me a chance at employment without worrying how or when I would disclose my autism to my employer, and whether they would provide support for my sensory needs and differences in the way I work"

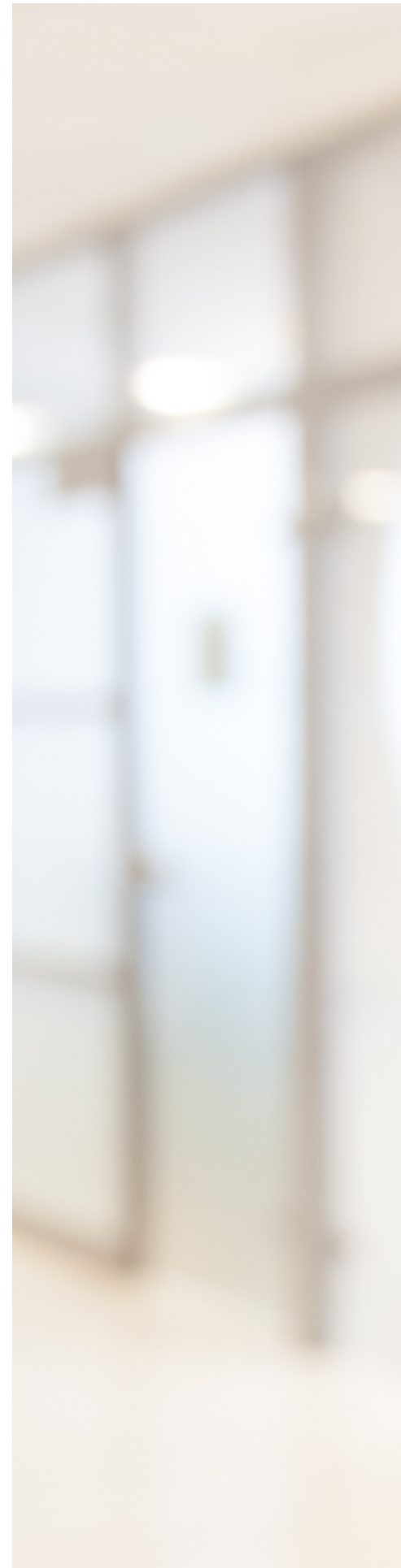
- Annaliese Smith-Platts

At the beginning of the year, I started job hunting, but was frightened about whether or not I should disclose my Autism diagnosis, whether I would get support, or whether I would even make it through an interview.

When I found out about Specialisterne, I was so relieved because I knew their program would give me a chance at employment without worrying how or when I would disclose my autism to my employer, and whether they would provide support for my sensory needs and differences in the way I work.

When I found out about Specialisterne, I was so relieved because I knew their program would give me a chance at employment without worrying how or when I would disclose my autism to my employer, and whether they would provide support for my sensory needs and differences in the way I work.

The training that Specialisterne is providing has greatly boosted my confidence by gradually challenging me to step outside of my comfort zone. The long break from the workforce had made me unsure of my abilities, but through the encouragement of both Specialisterne staff and the other candidates, I feel like I have a chance at employment, and really contributing with the strengths and abilities that come from being autistic.



AN INTERVIEW WITH SPECIALISTERNE AUSTRALIA CONSULTANT HANNAH BENNETT



Hannah Bennett

Hannah joined the Specialisterne Australia team as a Consultant in May 2021. We interviewed Hannah about her experience as a autistic female in the job market and how she found the process of applying for a job at Specialisterne Australia.

When did you receive your diagnosis and what impact did your diagnosis have on you?

I was diagnosed when I was about 8 years old, but my parents had been advocating for a diagnosis long before that.

When I was diagnosed I was able to receive specialist support at school, and my parents were able to identify my needs and provide for them whenever they could.

Diagnosis meant that I finally understood who I was as a person, and I realised I could work with my strengths and essentially adapt to a world made for neurotypical people.

I also learned how to ask for help, and who to ask.

What was your experience like in the job market?

Historically, it's been pretty negative. Trying to navigate the perfect cover letter and interview techniques was not something I ever really got the hang of. In the last few years I've managed to find employers who are inclusive and supportive, and who won't discount me as a candidate who is a little bit awkward at first, but it took a long time for me to find my place in the job market. There were a lot of days I wondered why nobody would give me a chance.

What have been the main barriers to you finding meaningful work prior to now?

I feel like in a lot of my previous roles I have spent so much time trying to fit in that I stopped enjoying my work and I felt really exhausted. I'm passionate about helping people, and those are the roles I've always been drawn to, but it's been hard for me to feel like I've found my place and that I haven't lost my passion for work when I'm in roles that don't take advantage of the things I'm good at.

Meaningful work for me is about finding a team that accepts you for who you are and can see your potential.

How did you find the Specialisterne recruitment process and how was it different to other recruitment processes you've been through?

I think after some time spent in the job market it can feel like you spend a lot of time "cracking the code" of what employers want. I found I was writing applications to a formula and rehearsing the same interview questions on repeat.

I found when I applied for my role with Specialisterne I could be honest with my application and really communicate my passion for social change. After I applied I was invited to present a short talk on autism in the workplace, and I really enjoyed putting that together. Honestly, it was the most fun I've ever had applying for a job.

Were you able to show your talents and passions throughout the process?

Being able to create and deliver a presentation on a topic that is close to my heart and informed by experience was so great. I was able to talk about where I'd come from and the personal and professional journey I'd taken so far. It was great to talk to a team passionate about the same things as I am.

Are you feeling supported and understood by your employer? How does this make you feel?

Even though I work from home on my own, I never feel like my managers are far away. From the start the team has made me feel like honesty is valued and that we're doing everything we can to address stigma together and regularly check in. Everyone has tried really hard to make my work a safe space and I really appreciate that a lot.

What do you enjoy about your role at Specialisterne and how has having this role impacted other areas of your life?

I enjoy working with candidates who see the world in a similar way to me. I love making connections and learning about the lives of

the people I work with when I'm delivering programs.

Seeing what each individual is capable of is really heartwarming for me. The recruitment space can be really hard to navigate when you're neurodiverse and I really enjoy being a part of an organisation that's actively trying to change that.

Based on your experience with the Specialisterne recruitment and onboarding process, how did this experience differ from previous recruitment and onboarding experiences?

For me, recruitment was different this time around, because it's the first time I immediately disclosed being on the spectrum when applying for a role, without any fear that I might be judged for it. If anything it was the first time that I was able to really communicate it as a strength.

Based on your recent experience with Specialisterne, what changes or improvements would you like to make to Specialisterne's recruitment and onboarding process?

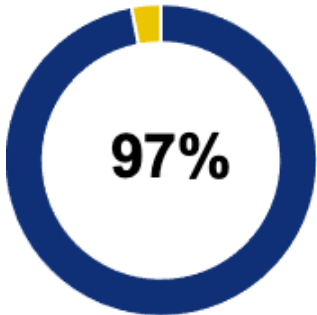
Based on my experience, I don't think I'd change anything :)

What are your dreams for the future?

I'd love to start a business and be able to grow it so that I can employ those in my community that need jobs, and share the profits with local charities. I have lots of ideas but so far haven't had too much time to really plan my vision. I'd also like to move with my family to a smaller town where I can keep working for Specialisterne (because I love it!) but where we also have the space to raise the children with a strong connection to the land.

OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

Since commencement



Average employment retention rate



Candidates placed in employment by Specialisterne were long term unemployed**

Autism Talent Programs



45 Delivered

Autistic candidates



Placed in ongoing employment

1,000+



Candidates screened and on our database



\$1.65m

Grant funded programs delivered

Autism Awareness training in workplace



10,307 Individuals trained

6,300+



Hours of Ongoing Business Enablement Support delivered



We have worked with since commencement in Australia

350+

Businesses and Employees



Received support from Specialisterne

393



Outcome and evaluation reports published

1000+



Inspired candidate placements***

** Long term unemployed = unemployed for 12 months or more

*** Based on like-minded Australian organisations who have developed and adapted their own autism and neurodiverse hiring programs

**Our last 12 months in numbers
(Period of July 20 – June 2021)**

457



Applicants applied for our tailored talent programs and sourcing activities (cumulative 1,410)

168



Individuals attended initial screening workshops (cumulative 789)

Autistic candidates

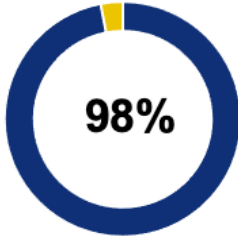


Directly hired through our programs (cumulative 417)

97



Individuals fully talent and skills assessed and ready for work opportunities (cumulative 580)



Average employment retention rate of autistic individuals employed through our programs



5,941

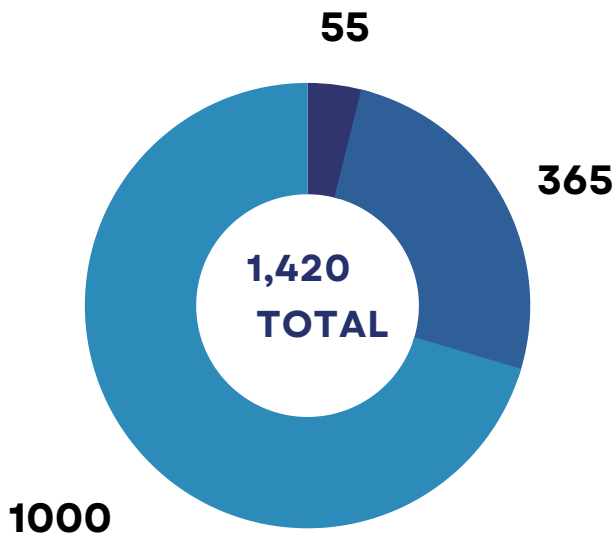
Workers in client businesses trained in Autism Awareness (cumulative 10,077)

600+



Inspired candidate placements***

Autistic individuals placed in employment

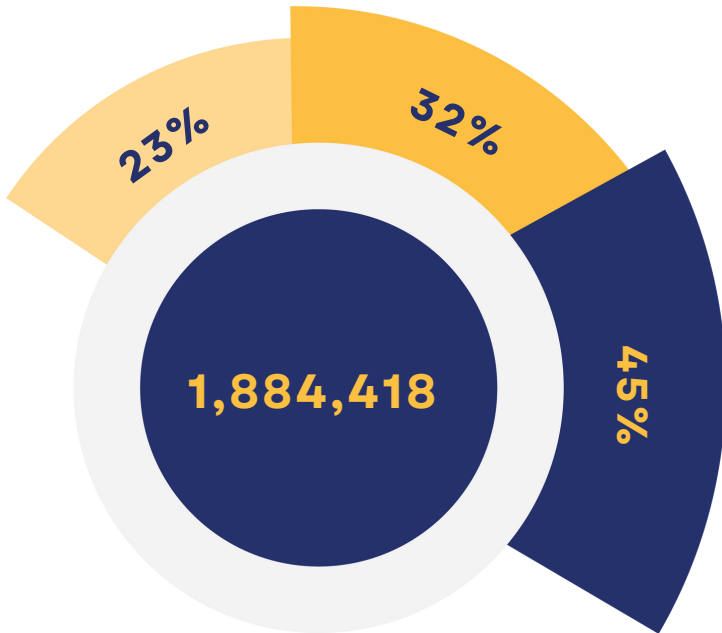


55 Autistic individuals placed in employment by Specialisterne Australia in 2020-2021

365 Autistic individuals placed in employment by Specialisterne Australia since commencement

1,000 inspired placements to date (based on like-minded Australian organisations who have developed and adapted their own autism and neurodiverse hiring programs)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

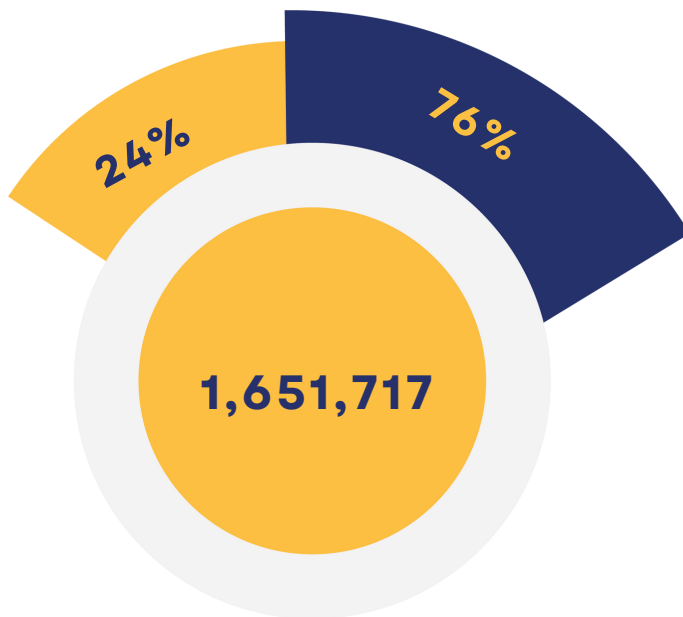


Total Income = \$1,884,418

Fee for Service = 45%

Grants = 32%

Other Income 23%



Total Expenses = \$1,651,717

Employee Expenses = 76%

Other Expenses = 24%

Full financial report and statements can be found on ACNC site under organisation annual reporting documents.

www.acnc.gov.au

OUR SUPPORTERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Specialisterne recognises and warmly thanks the organisations and individuals that have supported our work through programs, grants, fundraising, in-kind support and collaboration.

CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

- BPR Audit Pty Ltd
- Clayton Utz
- Clicks IT Recruitment
- DFK Nugents
- Employ for Ability
- IBM
- Nous
- Peoplebank
- Westpac Australia

CORPORATE BUSINESS CLIENTS

- Accenture
- Aurion
- Avdata
- IBM
- Leidos
- Westpac

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS CLIENTS

- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Australian Tax Office
- Department of Economic Development, Jobs Transport and Resources
- Department of Health and Human Services (Victoria)
- Services Australia

GRANT FUNDERS

- NDIS - Information Linkages and Capacity Building Fund
- Department of Social Services
- Baker Foundation

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Amaze
- Asperger's Victoria
- Autism Awareness Australia
- Australian Network on Disability
- Autism SA
- EPIC Employment Service
- HireUp
- Jigsaw (Fighting Chance)

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

- Amy Summit
- Andrew Williams
- Belinda Sheehan
- Clayton Trevilyan
- David Smith
- Kay Kerr
- Robyn Brown



Annual report for year ending 30 June 2021

Specialisterne Centre Australia Limited

ABN 21 607 985 973

PO Box 139 La Trobe University

Bundoora VIC 3083

03 9088 8052

info.au@specialisterne.com

www.specialisterne.com.au

CONNECT WITH US:

 [specialisterneaustralia](#)

 [SpecInAus](#)

 [Specialisterne Australia](#)