





Enabling
12,000
careers for
people on
the autism
spectrum
by 2030.

“Everyone benefits from having a more diverse workforce.”

THORKIL SONNE

ABOUT SPECIALISTERNE FOUNDATION

Specialisterne (which translates from Danish as ‘The Specialists’) is an innovative social business concept originally founded in Denmark in 2004 by Thorkil Sonne.

It started as a grass root initiative by a family who did not accept the situation with high underemployment and unemployment rate among autistic people and people in similar conditions.

Shortly after launching Specialisterne, Thorkil was contacted by individuals and families in more than 100 countries asking for help to create hope for meaningful and productive jobs and to turn hope into action.

Thorkil’s response was to establish Specialisterne Foundation in 2008 as a not-for-profit organisation with the goal to generate one million jobs for autistic people and people in similar conditions around the world.

Specialisterne Foundation has since established Specialisterne operations in 12 countries and works with World Economic Forum, United Nations and Ashoka to promote the benefit of a diverse workforce and how autistic people can add value in accommodating work places.

— www.specialisternefoundation.com



Thorkil Sonne hosting the ‘embracing neurodiversity’ hub at the world economic forum.

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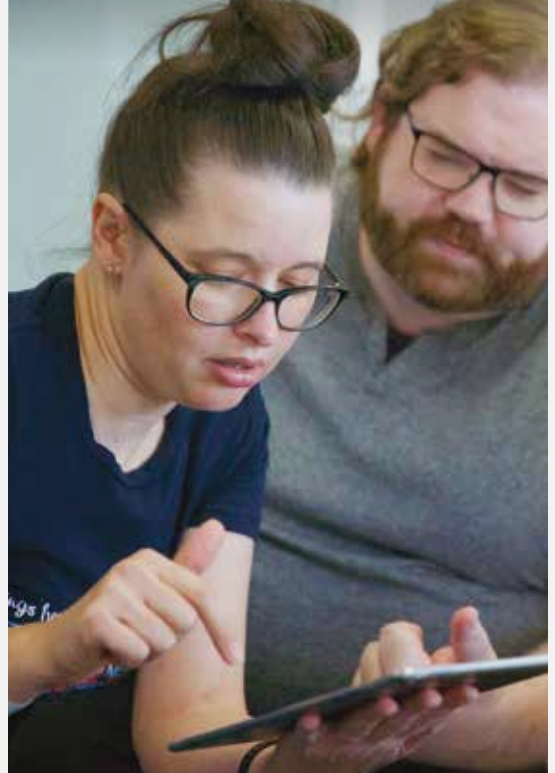
"Very successful placement for a very high performing and valuable new team member."

AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE BRISBANE MANAGER

"This program did allow us to see some very talented candidates, very suitable to our business."

IBM MANAGER

Candidates at a Specialisterne Training and Assessment Centre



"It [the tailored talent program] eased me into the position by giving me the time to get to know my co-workers & managers before the job started greatly reducing any anxiety about whether I'll fit in or not."

CANDIDATE

"I simply cannot praise Specialisterne enough for what they have done."

CANDIDATE

“The world needs different kinds of minds to work together”

TEMPLE GRANDIN

SPECIALISTERNE FOUNDATION CHANGING MINDSETS

In 2015 the United Nations invited Specialisterne Foundation to co-arrange UN Autism Awareness Day event to promote how autistic people can realise their potential in welcoming workplaces.

The theme ‘The Autism Advantage’ was chosen and the former Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated a Call to Action for employers to hire autistic people. Specialisterne Foundation and UN Department of Global Communication have continued the promotion through Autism Advantage Luncheons at UN headquarters and regionally.

Thorkil has been awarded a Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneur fellowship and has taken an active part in the World Economic summits in Dalian/Tianjin, China, and in Davos, Switzerland. Thorkil is working with the World Economic Forum community to promote inclusive growth and harvest the multi stakeholder benefits of inclusive diverse workforces.

This short video was made for the World Economic Forum to highlight Thorkil’s story, mission and purpose.

To view video:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6518875477636194304/>



Thorkil Sonne, Governor Markell & General Secretary Ban Ki-moon at the World Economic Forum

“Great program, I’m looking forward to the new experiences working with our new employees will bring.”

IBM

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

It is with much pleasure that I present Specialisterne Australia’s Annual Report for the year ended June 30 2019.

2019 has been a milestone year for Specialisterne Australia. Early in the year we were thrilled to announce the appointment of our first fulltime CEO, Julie Robertson, and her impact already has been immense. Our staff complement now stands at 11 and we are represented in all of the east coast capital cities which allows us to deliver consistently to a broad range of clients and to provide strong support to our autistic talent pool. By the end of June 2019 we had delivered over 63 direct career opportunities and our track record of retention and success has continued. In this Annual Report you will be able to learn more about those who are at the heart of the Specialisterne initiative – the autistic talent who have responded to the challenge and achieved so much individually and for the workplaces in which they now belong.

Major achievements this year include the very successful Federal Talent Hub at ATO, DHS and ABS which allowed us to establish a new model for employment of autistic talent across the Federal Public Service, this year to be rolled out more broadly and to a much expanded range of roles. This model is also providing more flexibility for our other clients as we continue to expand in reach and roles. We were also pleased to welcome IBM to the program as they expanded in Ballarat in what is to become an international employment program to harness autistic talent. And in Melbourne, DHHS continued to expand their commitment to the Autism Advantage by expanding the available roles and providing new opportunities to existing talent.

In the year ahead we are gearing up for another year of expansion as we continue to drive towards our goal in Australia of 12,000 careers by 2030. To achieve that we are broadening our scope to collaborate more with organisations to enhance our client

workspace support and training to facilitate the creation of sustainable long term, self-sufficient programs at a broad range of businesses.

As always it is our dedicated team, lead by Julie and my passionate Board, contributing to our successes, which is based on their passion for our vision backed by their broad experience and willingness to face the challenges that continue to present as we drive forward.

At a recent conference in Vancouver John Powell, one of the keynote speakers made the following observation:

“When we see “others” as “belonging” real progress occurs. This is the issue for the 21st Century”.

We at Specialisterne Australia are dedicated to ensuring that access to an inclusive workplace is available to all Autistic Talent. By harnessing the Autism Advantage the world will be a better place.




John Craven

“Very suitable, driven by proficiency in systems and understanding of broad concepts and continued willingness to learn.”

ATO BRISBANE MANAGER

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

The last year has been a very big year for the Specialisterne Australia team and I would like to start by acknowledging our team’s continued hard work, passion and dedication to our work. We have been involved in some really exciting and purposeful activities to help us to continue to work towards our Australian goal of enabling 12,000 career opportunities for autistic Australians by 2030 while also promoting and advocating for broader systemic and cultural change to help our Foundation reach our global goal of 1 million jobs by 2030.

In addition to some of the major highlights our chairman John Craven shared, we have also had great success in continuing to have impact through the extension of our grant programs in Victoria in both the Jobs Innovation Fund and the State based Information Linkage and Capacity (ILC) building programs to engage with autistic and neurodiverse individuals to identify their strengths, employable skills and unique talents. Additionally, through our grant work we have had success in assisting a number of small to medium sized business enterprises to learn more about the benefits of hiring autistic and neurodiverse talents and build their capacity to engage and provide supportive environments for these candidates in the workplace which has resulted in a number of talented individuals taking up roles within smaller organisations.

We have continued to learn more about our work and its impact through the release of Latrobe University’s independent evaluation of our award winning DHHS RISE Program (TechDiversity Award Winner) published in February this year. Our Westpac Tailored Talent Program evaluation was also finalised this year providing us with valuable insights about the work and the positive impacts and outcomes specific to Westpac.

The voices and thoughts of people on the spectrum, their communities, businesses and clients are crucial to us and over the last 12 months we have undertaken a range of activities engaging the community as well as establishing our Specialisterne Expert Advisory Panel, represented by autistic individuals, government and non-government representatives and professionals.

We have also given significant focus to raising awareness of our mission and purpose. We have been engaging with and campaigning to government and non-government businesses, recruitment organisations and professional membership bodies to increase overall awareness of the advantages and benefits of employing autistic and neurodiverse candidates into the workforce. We have also been pursuing a broader influencing and change narrative about the need for systemic and cultural change to ensure that careers within the open market become more accessible and inclusive for autistic and neurodiverse people.

As we move into our fourth full year of operating we have spent a great deal of time in the last year consulting with and listening to autistic individuals, community representatives, business professionals, our staff team and board to identify our priorities for the next three years. We have identified five key strategic objectives with specific target outcomes that we want to achieve and will use these objectives to guide and direct our work over the next three years. Our goals will focus on the following:

- We will use our influence and experience to help grow the number of businesses who participate in autism and neurodiverse recruitment and talent programs;
- We will build the knowledge and capacity of business employers to adapt their practices to ensure they can engage talented autistic employees into their workforce;

- We will engage with autistic individuals to learn more about their unique talents, strengths and employable skills through innovative talent programs and activities that lead to meaningful employment opportunities and career pathways in the open market;
- We will test and innovate new programs and approaches to best identify the skills, strengths and talents of autistic and neurodiverse individuals across a range of professions and industries.
- We will continue to grow and build a strong and financially sustainable social impact enterprise model.

We look forward to sharing with you more about our strategic goals and objectives in this annual report. Lastly, I would like to say thank you to all our candidates, the community, our clients, stakeholders, collaborators and partners for your ongoing support and contribution to our work.

Julie



Julie Robertson

"We work with organisations to develop a culture of inclusion which fosters innovation through diversity of thought and harness the unique strengths of individuals on the autism spectrum."

KATE HALPIN

OUR PEOPLE

NATIONAL MANAGER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & ENGAGEMENT

—

Jason White joined Specialisterne Australia in 2016 as Employment Services Manager based in Melbourne. Jason has worked in various programs under the Australian Government's Employment Services initiatives for more than 10 years. Since 2009 he has worked exclusively with the autism community, with a focus on assisting young adults on the spectrum to participate in employment. Jason has a passion for engaging employers and the community at large to highlight the capabilities of individuals on the autism spectrum and the positive benefit that can be enjoyed from employing them.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

—

Maurice Gartland and Lou Dixon respectively manage the finance and administration functions of Specialisterne.

NATIONAL MANAGER QUALITY AND PRACTICE

—

Vicky Little is responsible for ensuring quality and practice methods and approaches across all Specialisterne services meet high standards as well as program delivery, business development and managing client relationships.

Vicky joined Specialisterne in October 2017 as an Employment Services Manager based in Sydney. Vicky is a passionate disability advocate, trainer and mentor with over 11 years' experience in the field of autism employment in Australia and the UK.

PROGRAM MANAGER (QLD, NSW, NT)

—

Angela Bueti has a strong background in training and education, with extensive experience managing workforce development programs across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Her passion is assisting disadvantaged job seekers to secure meaningful and sustainable employment, and assisting businesses to recognise and harness the talents of each individual.



Jason White



Vicky Little



Angela Bueti



Maurice Gartland



Lou Dixon

SPECIALISTERNE CONSULTANTS

Our program consultants, Nicholas Giustino, Steph Carayannis, Georgie Walker, Kate Halpin and Wade Leonard, work directly with employer organisations to source, develop targeted assessments and simulations to help identify suitable candidates for the types of skills they are seeking. Our team work directly with candidates to help identify their strengths, skills and showcase their talents to potential employer organisations.



Georgie Walker working with candidates in a Training and Assessment Centre.



Kate Halpin



Nicholas Giustino



Georgie Walker



Wade Leonard



Steph Carayannis

CASE STUDY

ABS and ATO Canberra

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is Australia's national statistical agency. The role of the ABS is to provide trusted official statistics on a wide range of economic, social, populations and environmental matters of importance to Australia.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is the principal revenue collection agency of the Australian Government. Their role is to manage the tax and superannuation systems that support and fund services for Australians.

Both the ABS and ATO understand the value of a neurodiverse workforce and were both interested in tapping into autistic talent in order to improve their efficiency and create a more diverse work environment. Through the Specialisterne Australia Federal Government Talent Hub they were able to create a new pathway for suitable candidates on the autism spectrum and as a result nine individuals were subcontracted into roles within the agencies' IT department. These roles included entry-level security, testing and systems administrations.

In November 2018, twelve candidates were assessed over a four week program in Canberra. This program was uniquely tailored to the needs of the ABS and ATO and used our patient practical approach in order to effectively evaluate and assess the strengths of the candidates and their suitability for the available roles. The four week program consisted of a variety of onsite workshops, simulated activities and practical work experiences. With the program being offered onsite it allowed the ABS and ATO hiring managers be actively engaged in the recruitment process and to observe the participants interactions with other candidates as well as to observe how they handled the various activities.

The approach enabled participants to slowly ease into the program in order to reduce any additional stress or anxiety that can sometimes surface during traditional recruitment methods. By avoiding the anxiety of completing an interview, participants were able to take the time to become more familiar with the workplace environment and to better understand the organisation and its culture all whilst obtaining valuable hands-on experience.

"I was amazed by the dedication of Specialisterne to provide an in depth and fair program that was fully supported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Taxation Office."

ABS EMPLOYEE

Throughout the four week period the candidates enjoyed being challenged with a variety of tasks and activities directly related to work they may be involved with at the ABS and ATO. A highlight of the program included an innovation challenge where participants used Mindstorm Lego robotics to solve potential security vulnerability issues and automation within the agencies and presented their solutions to their group including hiring managers and guests from ABS and ATO.

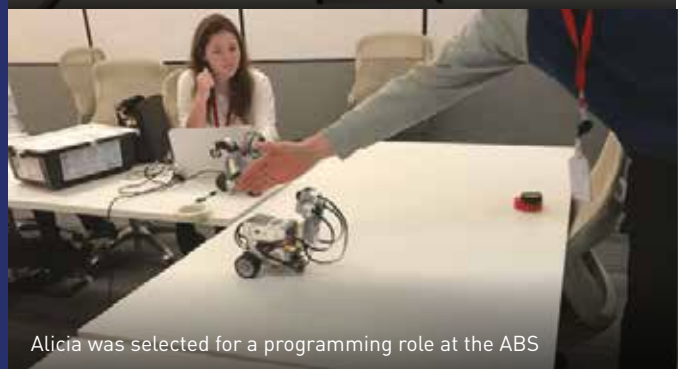
Throughout the entire program Specialisterne worked with the ABS and ATO to build their capacity and aimed to enable their staff through a series of autism specific training and awareness programs and three months of post placement support.



Christopher and Darien at the ABS tailored talent hub



James, Ian, Nick (Specialisterne), Darien, Jack, Brenda, Christopher, Lisa and Alicia at the ABS tailored talent hub



Alicia was selected for a programming role at the ABS



SPOTLIGHT

Adam Walton

Adam Walton is an employee at DHHS (through Specialisterne's Autism Talent Hiring Program).

He is passionate about advocating for people on the autism spectrum and is an important supporter to Specialisterne, giving his time to talk to a sell-out audience of business clients at our Canberra autism awareness event.

Adam kindly answered some questions we posed to him.

"I was 24 when I was diagnosed. It answered a lot of my questions as to why I felt so different to everyone else."

CAPTION

Adam Walton addressing an audience at Specialisterne's Autism Awareness event in Canberra.

WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO GET A JOB BEING AN AUTISTIC ADULT?

"Unconscious bias. We might have trouble maintaining eye contact in the interview, or some other part of our body language puts people off."

WHAT WAS THE MOST COMMON BARRIER YOU FACED IN REGARDS TO GAINING AND MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT?

"I was getting to the interview stage, but wasn't getting jobs. I wasn't sure what I was doing wrong. I was very self conscious in interviews about my stimming, and body language. I'm going to say appearing nervous or fidgety in interviews."

HOW DID THE SPECIALISTERNE TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT FORMAT DIFFER TO OTHER EMPLOYMENT/RECRUITMENT PATHWAYS YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED?

"The training and assessment process at Specialisterne was unlike any I'd ever experienced before. A full three weeks on site at DHHS. It was very beneficial in the end, as we all got familiar with the task, and with our team, by the end of the training. I don't think you can truly get to know a candidate, or an employer, in a standard half hour interview. This training allowed us to demonstrate our skills in a longer, more in depth setting."

YOU WERE SUCCESSFUL IN GAINING A ROLE AS PART OF THE RISE@ DHHS PROGRAM. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE AND WHAT A TYPICAL DAY MIGHT LOOK LIKE?

"I currently work as a records officer. A typical day will involve entering hundreds of files into our online electronic document management system, called TRIM. We work with both hard copy records (thousands of boxes of them), and electronic documents."

WERE ANY WORKPLACE MODIFICATIONS OR ADJUSTMENTS REQUIRED?

"Not for myself, but some others asked to be placed at certain desks away from noise, or excessive light. DHHS have been very accommodating of our needs."

DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE CHANGED/ GROWN AS A PERSON OVER THE LAST 18 MONTHS OF EMPLOYMENT AT DHHS? IF SO WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS?

"I've grown in ways I never would have imagined during my time here. I've not only got experience of working in the public service, but I've discovered a love for advocacy and public speaking. I get involved as much as possible within the DHHS, such as the Autism Support Network and the Enablers Network. I intend to continue the public speaking. Something I never would have imagined 18 months ago."

WHAT CAN AUTISTIC ADULTS DO TO ALLEVIATE THE STIGMA THAT EMPLOYERS MAY HAVE FROM EMPLOYING AUTISTIC ADULTS?

"Autistic adults can get involved in educating employers. Training sessions, presentations, etc."

DO YOU BELIEVE THE STATEMENT THAT ONE OF THE BIGGEST AIDS TO CHANGING ATTITUDES IS EDUCATION?

"Absolutely. Things are better than they were a decade ago, for neurodiversity, but there is still much to be done. Education is a big contributor to this."

WHAT WOULD YOUR ADVICE BE TO EMPLOYERS IN REGARDS TO HIRING AN INDIVIDUAL ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM?

"Remember, we are as diverse as any other group of people. We have different backgrounds, strengths, abilities."



OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JOHN CRAVEN

John is Managing Director of Craven Innovation a boutique consulting firm that assists clients to harness technology to achieve real results through business innovation. Working with senior executives and boards of directors, Craven Innovation identifies innovation opportunities, establishes and directs programs to implement them and develops business strategies to drive transformation and deliver value. It also assists to implement effective Governance over the technology agenda. With more than 40 years' experience in management consulting and information technology, John has worked with Australian and Asian clients within the communications industry as well as in government, banking, manufacturing and distribution.

DAVID SPRIGGS

David Spriggs is the CEO of Infoxchange, the leading Australian practitioner in providing services that enable a more digitally inclusive society. A not-for-profit social enterprise that employs over 100 people across Australia and New Zealand, Infoxchange works towards achieving its vision of 'Technology for Social Justice'.

David has over 20 years of experience working in senior management positions in the not-for-profit and technology sectors. He is passionate about creating a more digitally inclusive society and the role technology can play in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the not-for-profit sector. He holds a Bachelor of Information Technology from the University of Queensland and a Certificate in Theology from Trinity College at the University of Melbourne.

JOHANNA BARKER

Johanna (Joh) Barker has extensive corporate, banking and IT experience particularly in the establishment and management of Shared Services. Formally an executive with ANZ and SMS, she has held senior finance, technology and governance positions. Currently she serves on several boards and committees, assisting both start up and corporate organizations with the introduction of new technologies to business practice. With over 30 years experience across both private and public sector boards, she shares a passion for promoting neurodiverse perspectives across the business community.

JULIE SMITH

Julie Smith is a marketing and communication professional with over 30 years experience working with organisations to build brands and transform their strategies in line with the development of digital technology. She has been a member of the executive leadership team of major companies in the retail/wholesale sector including Mitre 10, and gained experience internationally when working with Emirates Airline in Dubai. She holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Queensland and an MBA from The Melbourne Business School.

In addition, Julie has worked with a not-for-profit organisation that assists people re-entering the workforce and is a consumer representative assisting medical researchers at the Walter Eliza Hall Institute.

THORKIL SONNE

Thorkil Sonne is the founder and chairman of Specialisterne Foundation and a director at Specialisterne Australia. Thorkil Sonne's commitment to expanding opportunities for autistic people began with his son Lars. When Thorkil and his wife learned that Lars was autistic they worried that he would be misunderstood, and face barriers to a successful working life. Thorkil became active within the autistic community and established Specialisterne to change the global mindset around autism and employment. His vision was to create new possibilities for autistic people and influence society to adopt a more positive attitude towards autistic people. The goal is to provide meaningful and productive jobs for one million specialist people on a global scale.

"We need to develop workplace processes that harness the autistic attributes, not fight against them"

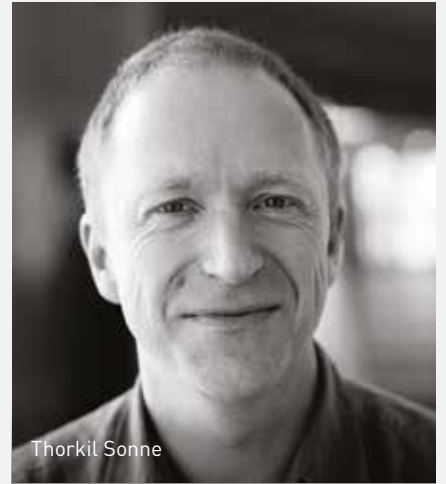
JOHN CRAVEN



John Craven



Johanna Barker



Thorkil Sonne



David Spriggs



Julie Smith



Johanna Barker

ABOUT SPECIALISTERNE AUSTRALIA

Specialisterne Australia was established in 2015 with the goal to enable 12,000 careers for people on the autism spectrum by 2030. We are one of the first companies in the world to highlight the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce.

WHAT WE DO

Specialisterne Australia assists organisations in recruiting and supporting people on the autism spectrum. We recognise that autistic individuals offer a range of skills that can be of benefit to any job. We also recognise that the traditional recruitment process disadvantages those on the autism spectrum.

HOW WE WORK

We work with companies seeking to diversify their workforce, and help to find talented autistic staff members looking for a career in that area, for mutually beneficial outcomes. We use a unique process to assess potential employees that aims to remove the barriers experienced by autistic adults in the traditional recruitment process. We then work to support the individual and employee in their transition, and build the capacity of the employer to support their autistic staff members. We help managers to understand the unique strengths of their employee/s on the spectrum, and implement strategies to help them thrive in the workplace.

WHO WE WORK WITH

We work with a range of organisations to assist in the recruitment of a range of positions. To date, we have helped to recruit employees in roles in information technology, records management, agriculture, and engineering. We are just getting started, and look forward to expanding the list of industries in which we work. We are equipped to engage and work with employers across a range of industries. Some of our recent success stories with clients include IBM, Jigsaw, Linfox, Xero, Australian Unity, PWC, the Federal Government (Australian Taxation Office, Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Human Services), the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Environment Land and Water Planning.

AWARENESS RAISING

Specialisterne Australia organised a series of awareness raising panel events in 2019 titled "The Future for Employing Autism and Diversity", to hear insights into the autism advantage in the workplace and to celebrate neurodiversity for World Autism Awareness. The events offered insights into the outcomes of employing people with autism through innovative autism hiring programs, discussed the challenges organisations face through the process and offered a forum for an important discussion about utilising this untapped talent pool to gain a competitive advantage and meet business needs. Each event opened with a compelling story from autistic employees who gained employment through Specialisterne's autistic talent programs, followed by panel Q&A's featuring employers who have experienced hiring autistic talent.



Australian Government



CASE STUDY

IBM

Following on from the global success of the IGNITE Autism Spectrum Disorder Program in the USA, IBM partnered with Specialisterne Australia to run the IBM Neurodiversity Program at the Client Innovation Centre in Ballarat, Victoria in March 2019. There were 10 various roles in IT identified including testing, developing, data analytics and business analytics.

There was a high level of interest across Australia resulting in over 50 applications. The applicants were shortlisted to 33 who were invited to attend a pre-selection workshop where candidate's skills were assessed with various hands on activities including a pre-selection activity created and administered by IBM. Each candidate's skillset was assessed by Specialisterne throughout observations of technical abilities using the LEGOMindstorm robotics kits. From the 33 candidates, 16 were selected to attend the 4-week training and assessment program.

Prior to the program commencing, Specialisterne worked with IBM to build the organisation's capacity and confidence through a series of autism specific training and awareness programs. These programs included several general autism awareness training sessions and tailored leadership training for the hiring managers.

"The week 1 & 2 tasks let me stretch my creativity, design & problem solving skills, as well as my best trait which is how quickly I can learn."

IBM CANDIDATE

Weeks one to three of the Training and Assessment Program comprised of weekly challenges and IBM lead activities that mimicked tasks in the workplace. The fourth week comprised of the "Day in the Life" work experience allowing candidates to shadow IBM employees throughout the differing businesses of the organisation. The challenges, IBM lead activities and "Day in the Life" experience provided the candidates with a solid understanding of what it would be like to work as part of the IBM team whilst also providing the IBM team with insight into the technical skills, suitability and individual needs of each candidate.

The 4-week training and assessment program allowed IBM to adapt their existing hiring processes for autistic individuals in order to create opportunities for them to demonstrate and showcase their skills that they would otherwise be unable to do in a traditional interview setting. The process also provided candidates with an opportunity to learn about different IBM processes and programming languages in a patient, supportive and enjoyable environment, offering them the optimum chance for success.

The ten successful candidates commenced employment in mid-2019.



Scott and Gareth working on the group innovation challenge



Lee and Adam presenting their experience of the 'Bugging and de-bugging' challenge.

Grow the number of autistic people employed into meaningful & sustainable careers here in Australia.



INTRODUCTION

WORK WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Since November 20th 2015 Specialisterne Foundation has been associated with United Nations Department of Global Communications (UN DGC). This association constitutes a commitment by Specialisterne Foundation to disseminate information and raise public awareness about the purposes and activities of the United Nations and issues of global concern.

Specialisterne Foundation is committed to the values enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter, respect for fundamental human rights, social justice and human dignity, and respect for the equal rights of men and women, serve as overarching values to which organizations working with Specialisterne Foundation are expected to adhere. Specialisterne Foundation is member of United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and is committed to UNGC 10 Principles.

The commitment includes promotion of Sustainable Development Goals - in particular SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth target 5 'By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.'

UN DGC has encouraged Specialisterne Foundation to promote the Autism Advantage through Autism Advantage Luncheons at annual global event at UN HQ and at regional events around the world.

SPECIALISTERNE AUSTRALIA MISSION

Specialisterne Australia's mission as a Not for Profit social impact organisation is to work directly with government and business employers to influence and change the traditional approaches to recruitment and perceptions of autism by shifting the cultural mindset. In doing this work we aim to enable 12,000 meaningful and sustainable careers for autistic adults by 2030.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

In developing our strategic plan we invested much time in looking at the end goal of Specialisterne Global Foundation, the broader system and culture changes required and the Foundations work associated with the UN to ensure that our strategic activities will support our Global Foundation in achieving our broader mission.

Since our establishment in 2015 and now in our fourth year of operation we have grown in size and matured through our experience of our programs and activities to date. Through our lessons learnt, consultation with our clients, community, advisory panel, team and board we have now identified and formalized a clear set of priorities and a strategic direction to help guide and shape our work and focus for the next 3 years until the end of 2022.

OUR STRATEGY



“It feels amazing to be employed.
I’m very grateful and loyal to Westpac
and Specialisterne for this opportunity”

CANDIDATE

OUR GOALS

GOAL 1

Use our influence to grow the number of employer businesses who offer alternative recruitment programs and options for autistic and neurodiverse candidates to access career opportunities in the open market.

GOAL 2

Build the capacity, confidence and culture within businesses to recognise the value of and support autistic and neurodiverse employees to thrive in the workplace.

GOAL 3

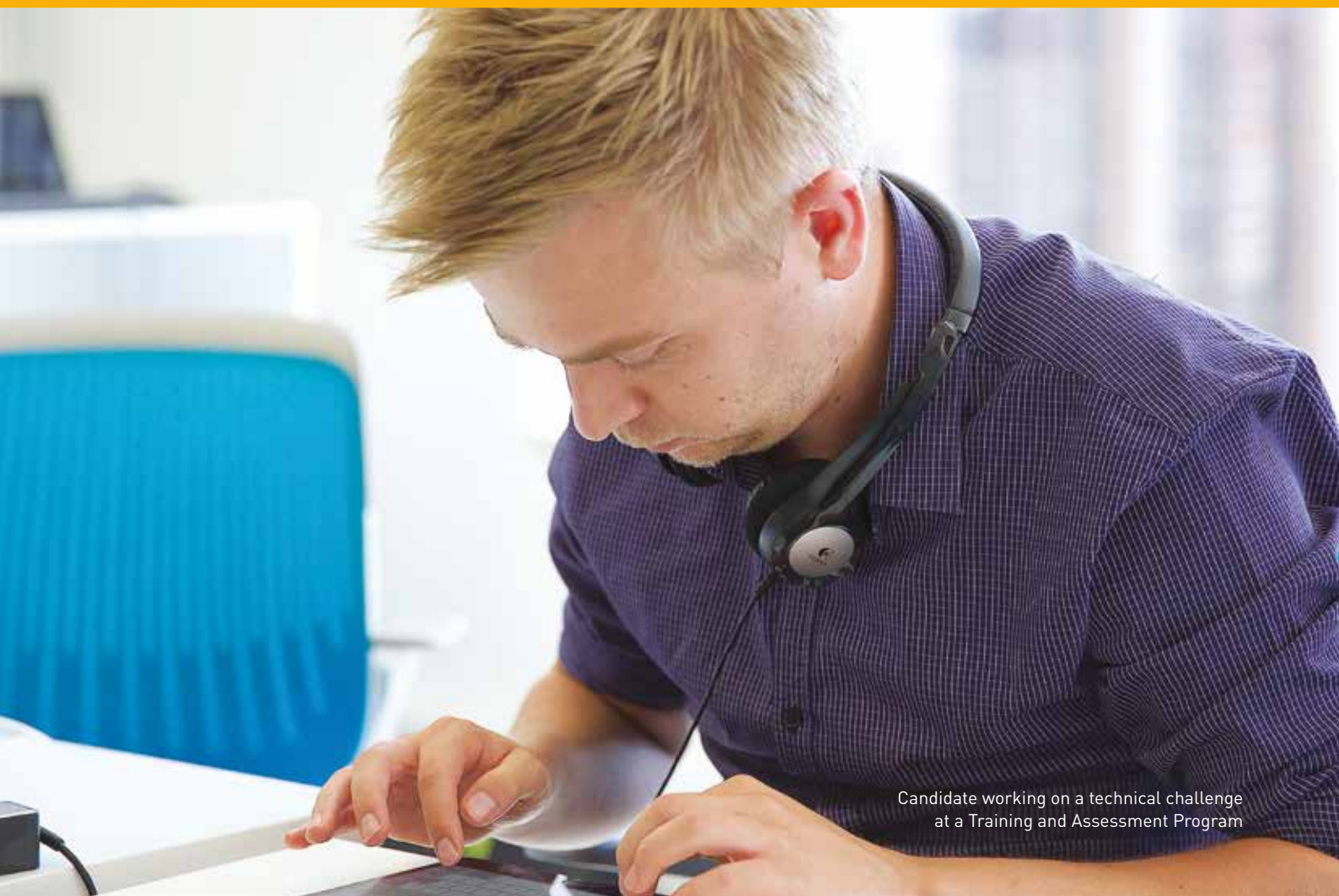
Assist autistic individuals to learn more about their unique talents, strengths and employable skills through innovative talent programs and activities that lead to meaningful employment opportunities and career pathways in the open market.

GOAL 4

Test new and innovative programs and approaches to best identify the skills, strengths and talents of autistic and neurodiverse individuals across a range of professions and industries.

GOAL 5

Continue to grow using sound business processes to ensure we can continue to grow a financially viable and sustainable social impact enterprise.



Candidate working on a technical challenge
at a Training and Assessment Program

GOAL 1

Use our influence to grow the number of employer businesses who offer alternative recruitment programs and options for autistic and neurodiverse candidates to access career opportunities in the open market.

THE SYSTEM ISSUE

Traditional recruitment practices rely heavily on candidates to sell themselves in a short period of time, focusing on sophisticated social and communicative abilities at interview rather than assessing or observing an individual's practical skills or technical abilities to fulfil a role. Many individuals on the autism spectrum are limited in their social and interactive communication and are often eliminated or excluded early on in the recruitment process.

INDICATORS FOR CHANGE | TARGET 2022

All state and territory governments set an annual allocation of public service roles to autistic and neurodiverse candidates.

Australian Commonwealth Public Service agencies and departments set an annual allocation of public services roles to autistic and neurodiverse candidate specific entry.

Top 20 Australian Non-Government organisation employer businesses engage in alternative recruitment and sourcing programs to employ autistic and neurodiverse candidates in open market employment.

Grow the number of employer businesses Australia wide that practice alternative recruitment and selection programs to engage autistic and neurodiverse candidates into their workforce.

GOAL 2

Build the capacity, confidence and culture within businesses to recognise the value of and support autistic and neurodiverse employees to thrive in the workplace.

THE SYSTEM ISSUE

Autistic adults experience some of the highest rates of unemployment than any other marginalised groups with three times higher unemployment rates than people with other disabilities and 6 times higher unemployment than non-autistic individuals. Employer businesses are lacking in their understanding of autism at work and the potential benefits skills and talents that autistic individuals can bring to the workplace based on existing preconceptions and biases of what autism is. Businesses are now focusing more and more on diversity and inclusion within their workforces but have yet to develop their capacity and knowledge to adapt and make changes to their processes and practice within their business culture.

INDICATORS FOR CHANGE | TARGET 2022

Businesses across Australia develop a greater understanding and awareness of autism and neurodiversity in the workplace.

Existing client businesses endorse and adopt an ongoing autism and neurodiversity hiring pathway and culture support practice within their business.

Businesses nurture and engage their autistic employees to thrive and grow within their workplace.

GOAL 3

Assist autistic individuals to learn more about their unique talents, strengths and employable skills through innovative talent programs and activities that lead to meaningful employment opportunities and career pathways in the open market.

THE SYSTEM ISSUE

Many autistic individuals often have select and or skewed skills and abilities and special interests. However, even with these abilities and highly focused interests many autistic individuals do not complete their High School education or other post schooling academic subjects due to the skewed nature of their talents and the design of the current curriculums. On the other hand due to the challenges autistic adults experience in securing meaningful employment, many individuals revert to or stay within the tertiary education system as career academics as they cannot find work.

The current pathway between schooling, higher education into adulthood and career transition is not working for people on the spectrum. The program and support design of Disability Employment Services does not adequately meet the needs of people on the spectrum and does not support individuals to identify their unique talents and employable skills, develop their confidence or have exposure to open market employers or competitive hiring processes that are fair to autistic adults.

GOAL 4

Test new and innovative programs and approaches to best identify the skills, strengths and talents of autistic and neurodiverse individuals across a range of professions and industries.

THE SYSTEM ISSUE

Current recruitment processes that businesses use exclude and often disadvantage autistic individuals. Relying on resumes with consistent career employment experience; being able to sell oneself through social and communicative interaction in a short interview setting with strangers and being asked questions on the spot can be very challenging for individuals on the spectrum given the nature of their condition and common challenges with social and interactive communication situations and being unable to prepare or predict the world around them.

Specialisterne has had success to date in engaging a number of government and non-government employers to test and implement alternative recruitment and talent program for autistic adults however this work has mainly been focussed in the IT and Tech industries.

As not every person on the autism spectrum aspires to work in IT and tech based roles there needs to be greater shift in recruitment and hiring practices to pursue autistic talents across a broader range of industries.

INDICATORS FOR CHANGE | TARGET 2022

Autistic individuals are able to identify and demonstrate their uniqueness and employable skills and qualities to develop their confidence to engage in open market employment

Autistic individuals and families are aware of the career pathway options and alternative recruitment programs that exist to support their transition into meaningful work

Autistic individuals have the opportunity to pursue and progress into other areas of work using well developed career pathway pipelines

INDICATORS FOR CHANGE | TARGET 2022

Grow the number of autistic talent programs into other employer/business industries outside of IT and tech specific businesses.

Grow the range of non-IT and tech occupations/job roles that autistic individuals can pursue within employer businesses (e.g. agriculture, legal, hospitality, design and creative industries etc.)

Specialisterne use a range of innovative tools, simulation and assessment approaches in addition to robots to assess candidates skills and technical abilities for role.

GOAL 5

Continue to grow using sound business processes to ensure we can continue to grow a financially viable and sustainable social impact enterprise

THE NEED FOR FOCUS

Having structured but flexible approaches to our operations and practices will be critical to maximising our outcomes and impact. As a not-for-profit social enterprise our aim is to ensure we operate responsible and sustainable business practices.

INDICATORS FOR CHANGE | TARGET 2022

We will apply and implement effective management systems and operational processes to ensure our business practices are sound, effective and efficient.

We will collaborate and work with other like-minded agencies and organisations in the sharing of ideas, learnings and activities to enable greater career opportunities for people on the spectrum.

We will focus the majority of our revenue raising on our social enterprise Fee for Service business activities, not relying on grants to ensure ongoing financial viability and sustainability of our work to meet our impact goals and objectives.

We have strong governance structures that demonstrate transparency and accountability, to ensure we act ethically in all areas of our work.



WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT US

WHAT CANDIDATES SAY ABOUT OUR APPROACH

"The main difference was due to having a third party, Specialisterne, sponsor a candidate and reach out to a potential employer, and behind the scenes do the talking and negotiations for the candidate. The candidate only had to demonstrate their abilities, skills, and work ethic over a period of days instead of minutes like during a conventional interview process."

"Not only have I been able to show all that I am, it has allowed me to be ME in order to do it, and that has been the most refreshing part."

"I feel so proud of my accomplishment for getting this role, it makes me feel better about other things in life too. I also feel like it is a chance to learn so much. I also feel so good that there are people who want to support neurodiversity with programs like this."

"It has made me feel like I have more skills than I realised."

"I like how it [the tailored talent program] allowed me to express my interests and how they matched up with the job. I also really like the 3-week assessment program as it gave me an opportunity to not only see what the job was going to be like, but also show the employer what I'm capable of."

WHAT OUR BUSINESS CLIENTS SAY ABOUT THEIR EMPLOYEES ON THE SPECTRUM

"X has worked on a very complex piece of work in the past two weeks and has delivered a performance that is on par with and exceeding that of some team members who have more experience."

MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

"X has been going really well, turning up early or on time and pleasant to work with, there has been a lot to take in which he's taken in his stride."

TEAM LEADER, JIGSAW

"Very suitable, driven by proficiency in systems and understanding of broad concepts and continued willingness to learn."

MANAGER, ATO BRISBANE

"Great program, I'm looking forward to the new experiences working with our new employees will bring."

IBM



OUR LAST 12 MONTHS IN NUMBERS

107



Individuals fully talent and skills assessed ready for work opportunities.

— CUMULATIVE TO DATE: 342

63

People directly hired through programs.

— CUMULATIVE TO DATE: 274



168

Individuals attended initial screening workshops.

— CUMULATIVE TO DATE: 371

OVER

950

Co-workers in business client organisations trained in diversity.

— CUMULATIVE TO DATE: 3,150

290

Applicants applied for one of our tailored programs and sourcing activities.

— CUMULATIVE TO DATE: 503



96%



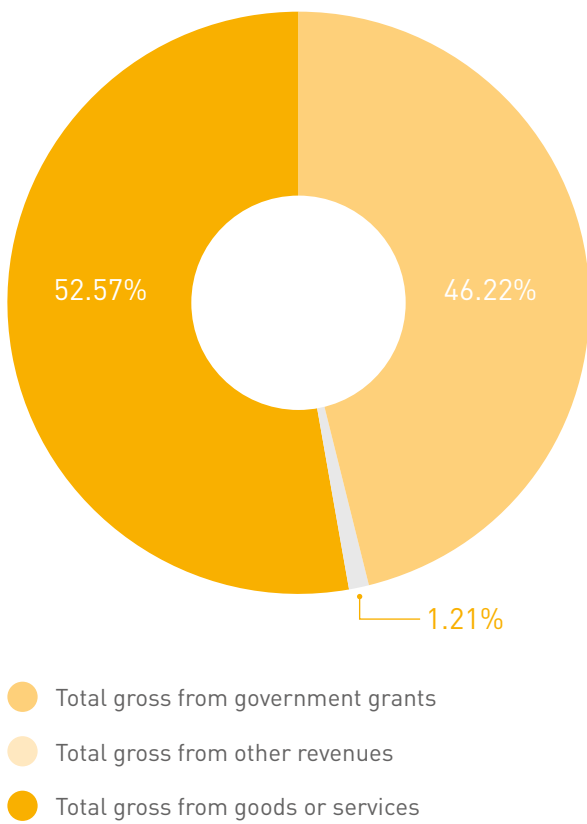
Retention rate of autistic people employed.

— AVERAGE TO DATE: 95%

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

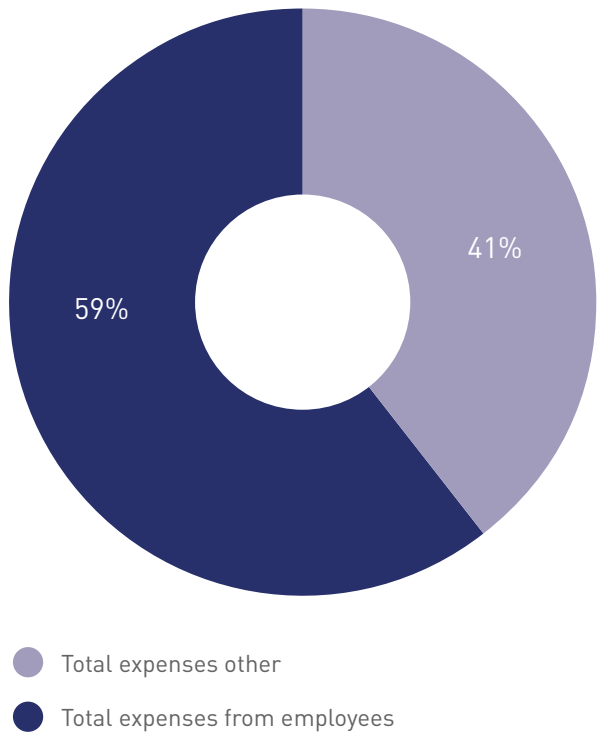
TOTAL INCOME

\$1,282,047



TOTAL EXPENSES

\$1,281,376



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

OUR SUPPORTERS & CONTRIBUTORS

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

CORPORATE SUPPORT

- Clayton Utz
- DFK Nugents
- KPMG
- Price Waterhouse Coopers
- Westpac Australia
- Peoplebank
- Apple
- Perpetual Trustees
- Summer Foundation
- Max Solution
- Clicks IT Recruitment

RESEARCH GROUPS

- Autism CRC
- La Trobe University
- Minds and Hearts

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (Commonwealth)
- Australian Tax Office (Commonwealth)
- Department of Economic Development, Jobs Transport and Resources
- Department of Health and Human Services (Vic)
- Department of Social Services (Commonwealth)
- NDIA - Information Linkages and Capacity Building Fund

EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL

- Matt Frost
- Chris Hofmann
- Yenn Purkis

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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


INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

- Ramon Barker
- Mitch Levy
- Shad Sears
- Adam Walton
- Ruth Bonser
- Robyn Brown



"It feels amazing to be employed. I'm very grateful and loyal to Westpac and Specialisterne for this opportunity"

A close-up photograph of a person's hand pointing at a laptop screen. The background is blurred, showing a desk with a smartphone and an open notebook. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.



“Very suitable, driven by proficiency in systems and understanding of broad concepts and continued willingness to learn.”

ATO BRISBANE MANAGER







Annual report for year ending 30 June 2019
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