



EMPLOYABLE ME

MEET SOME OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST EXTRAORDINARY JOB SEEKERS

PRESS KIT



3 PART SERIES, TUESDAY 3 APRIL, 8:30PM ON ABC AND ABC IVIEW

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overview.

IT'S HARD ENOUGH FINDING A JOB NOWADAYS, BUT WHEN YOU HAVE A DISABILITY IT CAN BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE.

Employable Me follows people with Neuro diverse conditions such as Autism, OCD and Tourette Syndrome as they search for meaningful employment.

This uplifting, warm and insightful series draws on experts to uncover people's hidden skills and to match jobseekers to roles that can harness their strengths.

We all deserve a role in society. That's what this show is about: striving to belong and play your part. The series looks beyond first impressions to reveal there's always more than meets the eye.

The series follows nine participants as their job searches unfold. From the fun loving Marty, who just wants people to treat him the same as other people regardless of his Fragile X Syndrome, to the socially withdrawn Tim, who suffers extreme anxiety every time he leaves his home. As a result, he's never had a job.

We meet Kayla, a 21-year old woman burdened with a complex and rare form of Tourette Syndrome where she suffers uncontrollable movement tics and profane swearing outbursts. Despite these challenges, she is determined to find an employer who will give her a chance.

Participants are warm, funny and generously open. Each story is told from their own perspective. Neuro-psych testing by experts substantiates their skill sets, revealing an astounding cognitive brilliance in some. The job searching results in some truly surprising results.



episode one.

TIM, ROHAN AND KAYLA

Tuesday 3 April, 8.30pm on ABC and ABC iView

In the first episode of **Employable Me**, cameras follow three young people who aim to prove that having a neurological condition, such as Tourette's or autism, shouldn't make them unemployable.

Experts draw on science to uncover the hidden skills of neuro-diverse conditions and the results will certainly challenge misconceptions about disability. For example, with a quirky and lovable nature Rohan's autism is apparent, but his neuro-psych testing stops everyone in their tracks with what it reveals.

Tim is also on the Autism Spectrum, which is as wide and varied as the participants of the series are individuals. In contrast to Rohan's engaging personality and sense of humor, Tim has such extreme social anxiety and sensitivities associated with his Autism, he cannot leave the house alone. At age 28 he has never had a job and yet he has extraordinary talents.

We also met Kayla who suffers the rarest form of Tourette's Syndrome, demonstrated by her jerking, repetitive body movements and gestures are challenging enough. But it is her uncontrolled outbursts of swearing and inappropriate obscenities, that make searching for a job so challenging. A musician at heart, Kayla is desperate to find someone to give her a chance. Kayla's bravery and determination is revealed.





episode two.

JONATHAN, KRYSTYNA AND BEN

Tuesday 10 April, 8.30pm on ABC and ABC iView

In the second episode of **Employable Me** we meet three young people who represent the extraordinary breadth of the autism spectrum.

Jonathan is determined to be an accountant. He confidently throws his hat in to the ring with so called 'neuro-typicals' to compete for highly sought after cadetships amongst the global financial companies. He hopes his affinity for numbers and his 'weapons grade autism' will put him ahead of the pack. In preparation, he has perfected the art of the interview using persuasive 'power words' and dressing in colours to invoke the feeling of success. With a copy of the Financial Review ever-present under his arm, Jonathan is striving for the top.

Krystyna's autism represents a different set of the traits. It is common for people with autism to be obsessive about particular things and Krystyna is utterly and completely obsessed with geography. Name any place in the world and she'll be able to instantly give you it's latitude, longitude, capital and weather patterns. The problem for her and her family is what to do with her extreme skill set.

Ben has also been dealt the obsessive trait commonly associated with autism and his overwhelming need for order, structure and rules dominates his life and infiltrates every aspect of his job hunting. Some of his obsessions result in his very entertaining compulsion to dress as his favourite film and TV characters. We follow him as he attempts to put the positive and useful aspects of his condition forward to potential employers who might utilise those skills, leading to his first paid job.



episode three.

MARTY, JESS AND CAIN

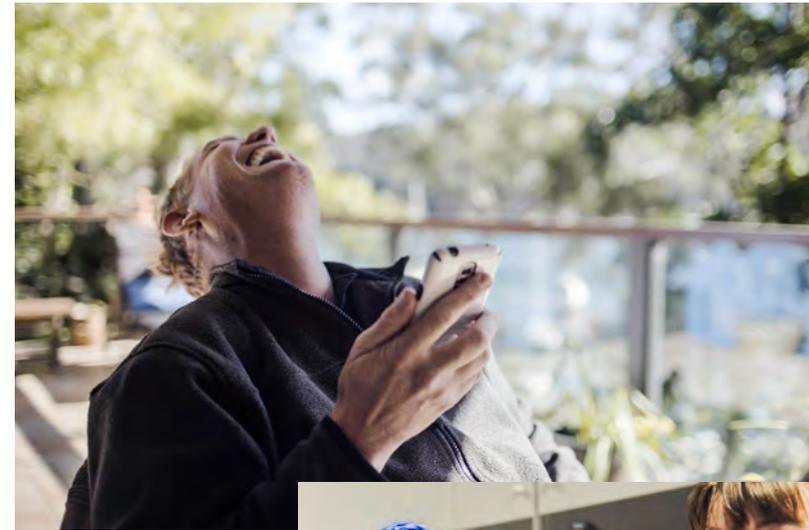
Tuesday 17 April, 8.30pm on ABC and ABC iView.

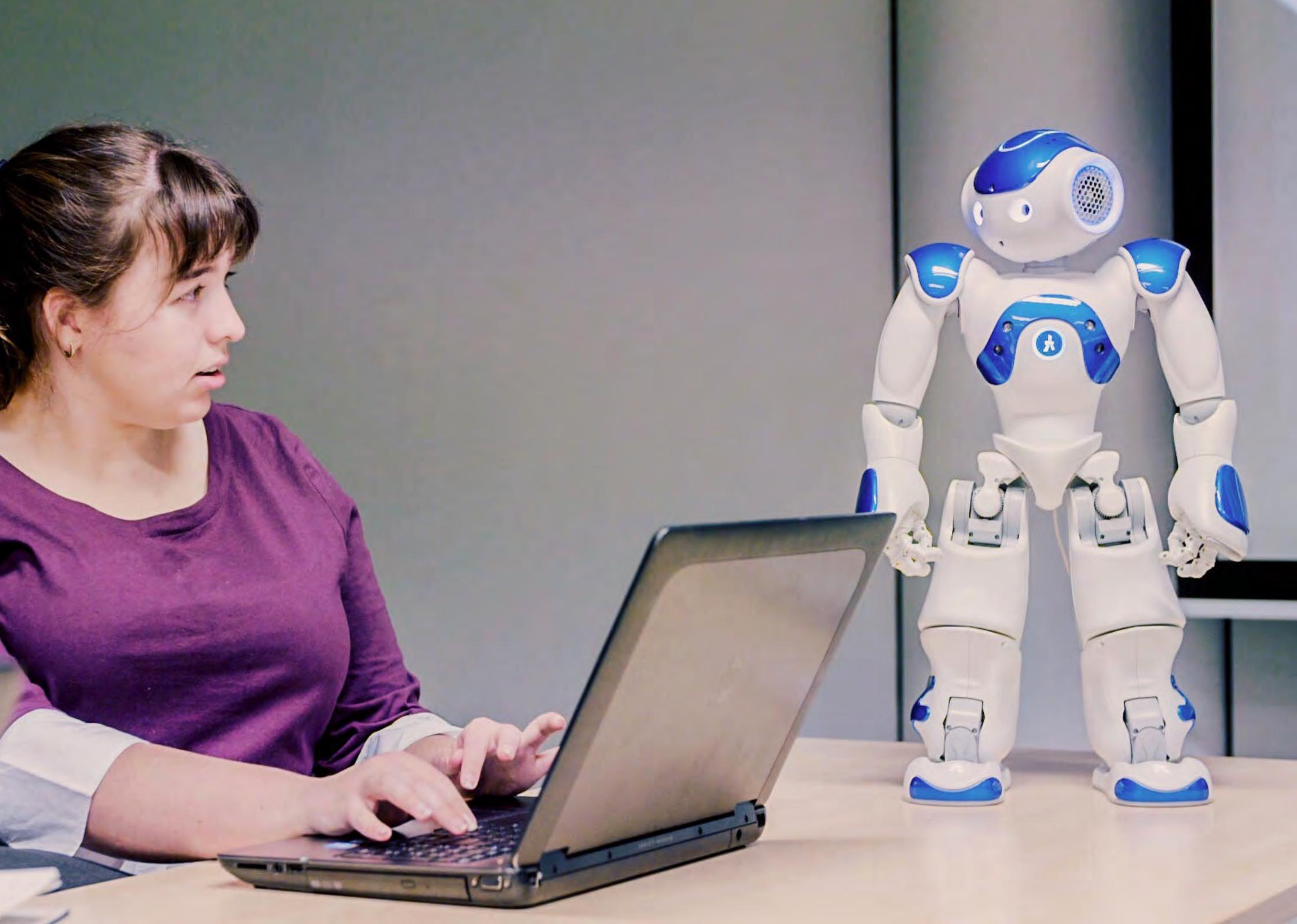
In the final of three-part series **Employable Me** we meet Marty, Jess and Cain. All are searching for meaningful long-term employment and looking to find their role in society.

Marty has Fragile-X, a genetically inherited intellectual disability which gives him an emotional proclivity that can sometimes complicate his work place relationships. With his determined job coach Susan at his side, he hits the pavement hoping to find an employer who will give him a chance. His booming, infectious laugh is his calling card.

Jessica is an unforgettable character. Her love of Japanese anime and American cartoons influence her way of speaking. Clearly she is skilled in the area of Information technology and when she undergoes neuro-psych assessment at the University of Sydney, Brain and Mind Institute, her abilities shine. Buoyed by the confirmation of her skills she wows her devoted parents by pushing on and selling herself to employers, targeting in particular a company that targets neuro-diverse people for their unique talents.

It's hard to imagine Cain's struggle when we first meet him. He comes across as a well-adjusted young man, but the reality is his self-esteem is rock bottom. Non-verbal until the age of four, Cain suffered terribly at school because of his autism. Other children bullied him to the point where he withdrew into isolation and depression. He found a creative outlet in film review and now he aspires to be the next David Stratton. Cain pulls together the self-assurance to chase down his dream with some delightful and unexpected consequences.





director's statement.

CIAN O'CLERY



As a director, the most interesting projects to me not only offer the potential to tell stories that are meaningful, but provide the opportunity to bring insight, humour, pathos, and ultimately a connection between the audience and the people on screen.

When we started the process of looking for participants for the documentary our remit was simple, seek out people with neuro-diverse conditions who want a job but are struggling to find one. We began to make calls, and we started to hear the same story over and over. People we spoke to really wanted to work, but weren't being given a chance. They felt that their disability was something employers couldn't see beyond, and were being rejected over and over again.

I have always felt that the sense of purpose a job brings is underappreciated. At times when I find myself out of work I can feel lost, useless, often depressed. I wondered what it must be like for our participants to deal with not only the lack of a sense of purpose, but that constant rejection.

As we got to know people more we realised that for many of them they have had to deal with rejection most of their lives. Today they are being rejected when trying to get into the workforce, but as children they were rejected by their peers, unable to socialise 'normally' they were bullied, teased, shamed for being 'different'. Most of our participants had very few friends growing up, some had none at all. The impact that can have on people is profound.

Yet here they are, allowing their struggles to find employment to be filmed and broadcast nationally. It was a brave thing to do, and hopefully by being a part of this series they will help raise awareness and understanding. I want to thank all of them and their families for letting us in to their lives, they are the reason this was such a satisfying experience for me. Getting to know each and every one of them was an absolute pleasure.

We ended up filming the stories of nine participants, all of them very different people with their own unique personalities. What I think they all have in common is humility, a respect for others, a real lack of malice or spite, even though they have been 'through the ringer' so to speak. In simple terms, I hope this series gives our subjects a voice and allows the audience to get to know them as people, not as labels. Hopefully employers out there will start to realise the value of diversity in the workplace, and see that beyond certain differences there can be great talents and gifts. But more importantly, I hope for a broader understanding and acceptance of people who are 'different' to the norm.

“ It would be better if people didn’t judge... After all, we’re all different”

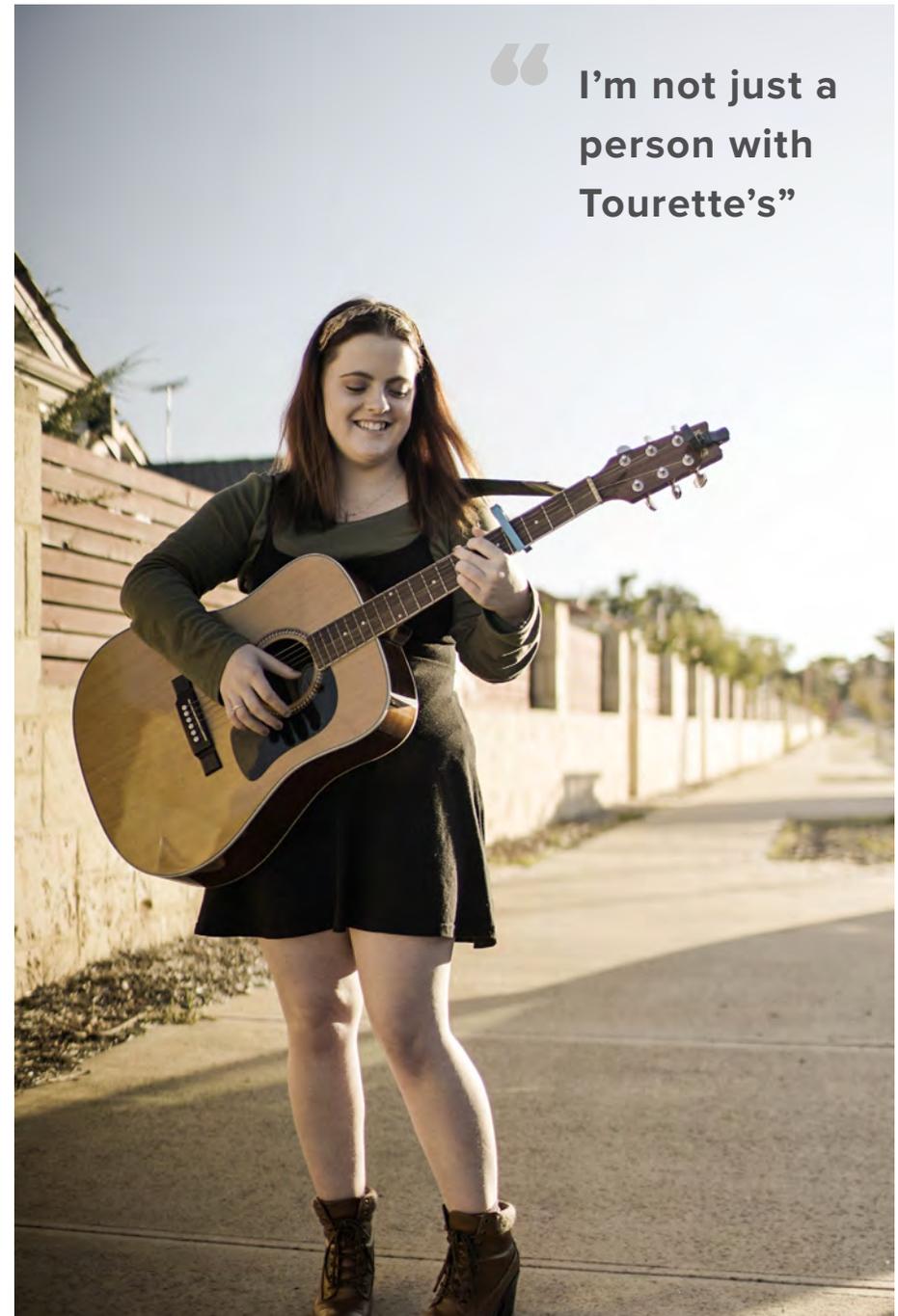
Kayla

TOURETTE SYNDROME

Kayla has Tourette Syndrome, a neurological disorder, which most often begins between the ages of 2 and 21 and lasts throughout life. It is characterised by rapid, repetitive and involuntary muscle movements and vocalisations called “tics”.

Kayla suffers the rarest form of Tourette Syndrome. Her jerking, repetitive body movements and gestures are difficult enough to live with. But when potential employer’s impressions are challenged by uncontrolled outbursts of swearing and inappropriate obscenities, Kayla’s bravery and determination is revealed.

Following an assessment where her skills and traits are identified by a neuro psychiatrist she changes her job hunting direction.



“ I’m not just a person with Tourette’s”

“ I fear I may be a basement dweller, a 40-year-old virgin living in my parent’s house... I don’t want to do that; I want my own life”



Rohan

AUTISM

Rohan lives in the Blue Mountains, NSW with his parents, brother and two dogs and needs a job to be independent and live his own life.

His lovable and enthusiastic character is illustrated during his work trial experiences.

Participants in the series are assessed by renowned autism experts in regard to their skills and strengths and the results will certainly challenge misconceptions about disability.

The results of Rohan’s of Rohan’s Neuro psych testing will stop everyone in their tracks with what it reveals.

“ Tim seems to have more to offer than we can even touch, I think he would take on board anything an employer gave him. That’s a very classic strength within autism, that analytical processing”

- Clinical Psychologist, Steve Den Kaat about Tim



Tim

AUTISM AND ANXIETY

Tim’s Autism is associated with an extreme social anxiety and means simply leaving the house is torture for him. It’s heart breaking to see him demonstrate his IT skills in software testing only to know the difficulty and suffering he would have to endure to be able to travel to the workplace.

At 28, he still lives with his parents and has never had a job. He describes himself in one word – ‘anxious’.



Cain

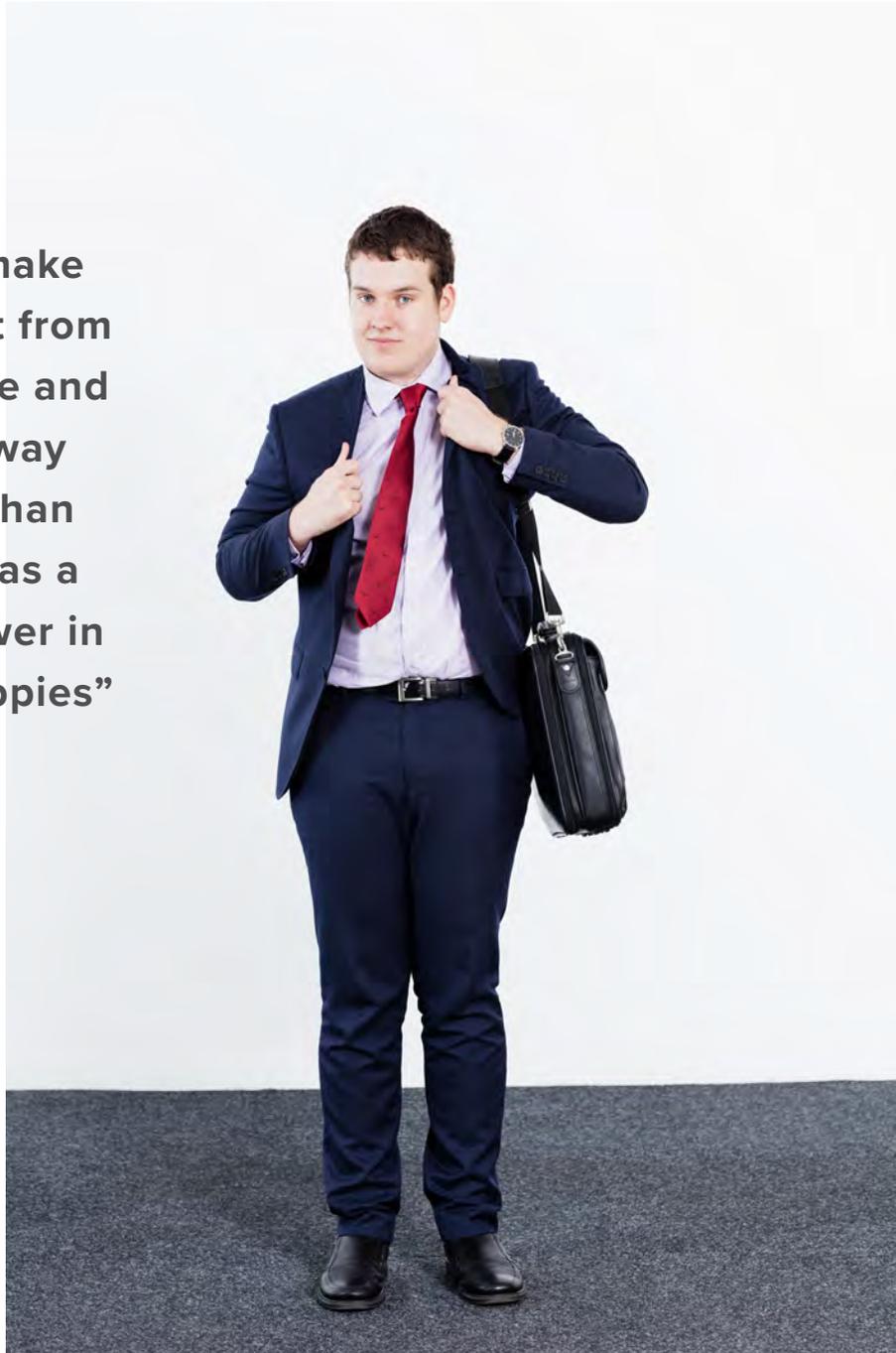
AUTISM

As a result of extreme bullying as a kid because of his autism, Cain has very low self esteem and really doubts his ability. His film review blog illustrates his strengths and intelligence. With the support from autism expert psychologists he steps outside his comfort zone.

“ **There are people who view people like me, people who are on the spectrum, as damaged, needing to be fixed, needing to be normalised so they can think like everyone else. But they have to understand, that we are still people too”**

“ **We are human beings the same as you. We just look at the world a little differently”**

“Autism will make me stand out from everyone else and what better way to get a job than to stand out as a giant sunflower in a field of poppies”



Jonathan

AUTISM

You can see Jonathan's mind working overtime to figure out how to communicate the right way, this combined with his quirky and humorous manner makes getting past interview phases of job hunting difficult.

He is determined to be an accountant and he confidently throws his hat in to the ring with so called neuro typicals to the intensely competitive world of cadetships and internships. He hopes his affinity for numbers and his 'weapons grade autism' will get him some attention; if not, maybe his dad jokes will help, or the ever present copy of the Financial Review under his arm.

His loving and devoted family long for his determination and intelligence to pay off.

Ben

AUTISM AND OCD

Ben's Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) means he has an extreme need for order and structure in his life. He spends his time dressing up for film premieres and is fanatical about Dr Who.

He is looking for a role that would utilize his demonstrated strength for organizing and sorting, inquisitive nature and ability to think outside the box approach to problem solving. He wants to put his OCD to good use.



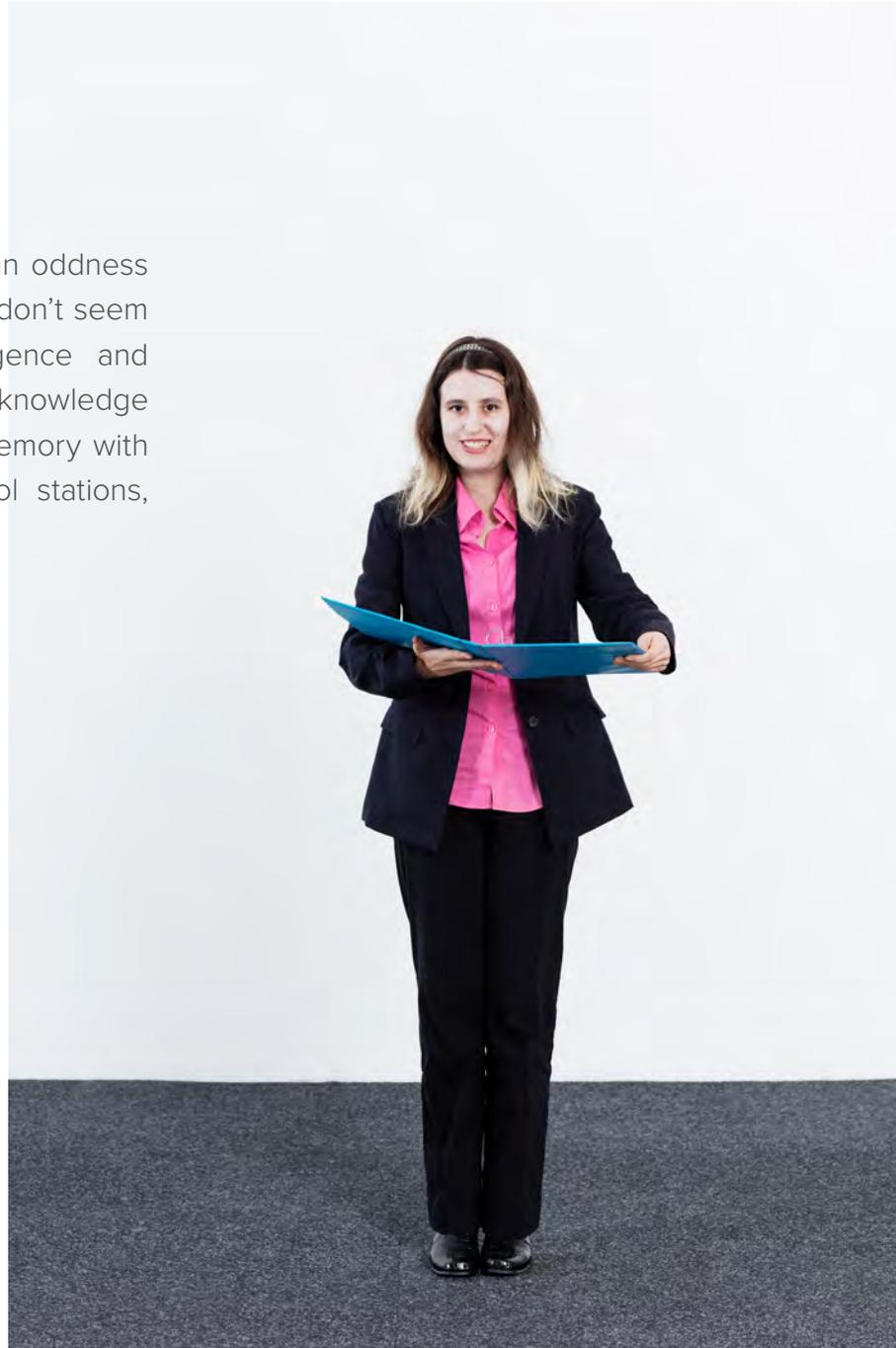
“ I have great difficulty with odd numbers – I absolutely hate odd numbers.”

“ Not having something in order can be so annoying and frustrating, I can't function if there is no order”

Krystyna

AUTISM

Krystyna's autism presents as an oddness and she behaves in ways that don't seem to correlate with her intelligence and abilities. She has a thirst for knowledge and an incredible long term memory with an obsessive interest in petrol stations, geography and climate.



“ Sometimes people underestimate my intelligence, they treat me like I'm intellectually delayed and I'm not”

“ We are not perfect; we are like most people we just think a bit differently have a superior intellect”

“ I’m an employable man!!”



Marty

FRAGILE X SYNDROME

Marty fills the room with his booming laugh. He has a syndrome known as Fragile X, which is caused by a gene common to autism and presents as an intellectual disability.

Marty lives on Scotland Island with his parents at 45-years-old because he can't find a job to support himself. We tag along as he applies for work at local marinas and car spray painters with his agency job coach.

**“ I am a hard worker,
I’m always on time,
always punctual”**

“ People have that stigma against autism – they think that autistic automatically means dumb or stupid or in the worst cases ... retarded”

“ I want a job. Why aren't you giving me a job? Is it because I am autistic? It must be... ”



Jessica

AUTISM

Jessica represents the complex and subtle way autism presents in females. Her unusual manner of speech is quite peculiar and intriguing and clearly one of the barriers that hides her strengths. She is perplexed that she can't find a job despite her 'immaculate' presentation, high level IT skills and tertiary education.

the experts.



STEVE DEN-KAAT

Clinical Psychologist, Diverse Minds Psychology Clinic

Steve is a Clinical Psychologist, specialising in the assessment and treatment of individuals and families impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He has 15 years experience in the area and has supported over one thousand individuals on the spectrum.

Steve is registered within the Australian Health Practitioner regulation agency and is a full member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS) and the APS College of Clinical Psychologists. He obtained first class Honours and Masters degrees in Psychology, with a Post Graduate Diploma in clinical psychology from Victoria University in New Zealand.



PROFESSOR ADAM GUASTELLA

Principal Research Fellow, Brain and Mind Research Centre, University of Sydney

Professor Adam Guastella is a Clinical Psychologist and NHMRC Career Development Fellow at the Brain and Mind Centre at the University of Sydney. He is internationally renowned researcher in the area of autism, leading first in world trials and research outcomes.



background facts.

WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodiversity refers to the concept where neurological differences are recognized and respected as any other human variation.

Neurodiverse conditions include autism, Tourette Syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and others.

For many autistic people, neurodiversity is viewed as a concept and there is a social movement that advocates for viewing autism as a variation of human wiring, rather than a disease. Neurodiversity activists reject the idea that autism should be cured, advocating instead for celebrating autistic forms of communication and self-expression, and for promoting support systems that allow autistic people to be accepted and live as they are.

“Neuro-diversity is a broad concept that embraces variability as part of the human condition rather than seen as abnormal”

Prof Adam Guatella

AUTISM

Autism is a lifelong neuro-developmental condition. It is characterised by differences in behavior, social interaction, communication and sensory processing. These differences can present people on the autism spectrum with challenges in how they interact with their environment.

To receive a diagnosis of autism, these symptoms need to be evident from childhood and impair the person’s daily functioning.

The word ‘spectrum’ is used to reflect the wide scope of differences in how individual people experience autism and their environment.

While some people on the autism spectrum also have an intellectual impairment or disability, many others have average intelligence, while others have above-average intelligence.

People on the autism spectrum may exhibit non-typical skills and focus.

This can include:

- unusually intense or focused interests, including savant skills
- excellent memory skills
- high level of attention to detail, patterns and codes
- either difficulties or exceptional skills with organisation

WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF AUTISM?

The behavioural differences of many individuals with autism are so apparent that it seems intuitive that the causes would also be obvious. But research over the past 70 years has indicated this isn't so.

Autism has no single, known cause. Current research suggests that both genetics and environment play a role. There is no evidence that autism is caused by a child's upbringing or social circumstances.

There is no known cure for autism. However, an early diagnosis and targeted intervention can assist in reducing the impact of a child's autism on their functioning.

For many years, anecdotal reports have described autistic people as having certain personality strengths, including being fair, authentic and reliable, loyal, free of social or cultural bias, and dedicated to seeking the truth. Recent research reports that the most frequent signature strengths of people on the autism spectrum are open-mindedness, authenticity, love of learning, creativity and fairness. Interestingly, open-mindedness, fairness and authenticity are all considered to be facilitated by the tendency to systematise.

AUTISM

An estimated one in 100 people has autism; that's almost 230,000 Australians.

Males are 4 times more likely as females to be diagnosed with Autism.

Autism now accounts for 31 percent of NDIS participants – the largest disability group in the scheme according to the NDIS Quarterly Report (June 2015).

myths about autism.

Autism spectrum disorder comes with a whole host of myths and misconceptions. It is a disorder that has been very much misunderstood in the past, from the concept of ‘refrigerator mothers’ to the idea that everyone with autism is like ‘Rain Man’.

MYTH – KIDS WITH AUTISM DON’T WANT TO MAKE FRIENDS

In most cases, simply not true. There are some children and adults who are very aloof and who choose to keep away from other people to a great extent. But the majority of children and adults on the spectrum do like to socialise. Being social is like a dance with very complicated steps and often requires quick thinking. It can seem too hard. But slow the dance down and explain the steps and our children can learn.

MYTH - AUTISM IS CAUSED BY BAD PARENTING

Bad parenting will not help any child but it will not cause autism. Many of us parents feel that we are not great at being parents because our children are not responding to us as a typically developing child does. This is very clear if we have several children and only one is on the spectrum.

MYTH - JUST LIKE RAIN MAN, PEOPLE WITH AUTISM HAVE SAVANT SKILLS

Not all people can recite the phone book or tell anyone they meet on what day of the week they were born. Certainly some people can do some amazing memory feats, but this isn’t common.

MYTH: ALL PEOPLE WITH AUTISM HAVE THE SAME SKILLS AND DIFFICULTIES

The facts: Although people with autism share difficulties in the core areas of social-communication, restricted and repetitive behaviours and sensory processing, every person with autism is unique and has different abilities and interests. Many positive characteristics are common in people with autism, such as the ability to focus intensely on detail and learn about topics of interest.

MYTH: VACCINATIONS CAUSE AUTISM

There is no reliable scientific evidence that childhood vaccinations cause autism. There is reliable evidence that not vaccinating children has led to an increase in preventable and sometimes life-threatening diseases. One well known but flawed research paper reported a link between the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) immunisation. When the flaws in the study were revealed, the paper was later retracted. Several large scale studies have since examined the possibility of a link between MMR and autism and have found no evidence to support the link.

MYTH: ALL PEOPLE WITH AUTISM HAVE AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Some people with autism also have an Intellectual Disability, however others have an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) within the typical range or higher.

MYTH: CHILDREN WITH AUTISM ARE MORE AGGRESSIVE

As with other children there are those with autism who may shout or hit out when they are distressed, but this is certainly not the case for all children with autism. When it does occur, this challenging behaviour is often related to a lack of alternative skills, or difficulties coping in the sensory environment, regulating emotions or communicating needs.

MYTH: PEOPLE WITH AUTISM DO NOT EXPERIENCE THE FULL RANGE OF EMOTIONS

People with autism may have difficulty expressing emotions, or may express them in a different way. Children with autism experience the full range of emotions. It is common for people with autism to have difficulty recognising and interpreting the emotions of others which can lead to misunderstandings.

MYTH: THERE IS AN AUTISM EPIDEMIC

The way autism is diagnosed has changed; we now recognise a wider range of characteristics as forming part of the autism Spectrum. It is likely that many children who have an autism diagnosis today would not have met the diagnostic criteria if they were assessed against our previous definitions of autism. Also, as awareness increases, parents and professionals are better able to identify early signs of autism and are more likely to seek an autism assessment. There is not enough evidence at this stage to say that the incidence of autism is increasing.

MYTH: AUTISM IS A CHILDHOOD CONDITION THAT CAN BE OUTGROWN OR CURED

There is currently no known cure for autism, however, through appropriate intervention children can acquire many of the skills they need for a successful and full life. Although some proponents of certain treatments may describe children who have been 'cured', it is more likely that these children have been particularly successful in acquiring skills which enable them to function more effectively through their everyday life.



Work Experience

SCENIC WORLD
SILVER MOUNTAIN
QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

STAFF

language guidelines.

People on the spectrum themselves may use a variety of different terms to describe themselves or autism. It is suggested to use person-first language.

WE DO NOT USE:

- suffering from autism
- coping with autism
- struggling with autism
- plagued by autism
- victims of autism
- retarded
- abnormal (given the context of the value of difference)
- person with autism
- living with autism
- ASD (or use the word disorder) outside of diagnostic contexts

WHEN TALKING ABOUT AUTISM, WE USE:

- the autism spectrum
- developmental condition
- disability
- cognitive disability
- developmental disability

WE DO NOT USE:

- disease
- illness
- special

WE PREFER NOT TO USE:

- disorder
- ASD
- autistic tendencies
- Asperger's, Aspie or autistic (but many people on the spectrum do when they talk about themselves)

It is acceptable to use words like autistic or Aspie only if this is the expressed preference of the individual.

WHEN TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM, WE USE:

- person on the (autism) spectrum
- individual on the (autism) spectrum
- has a diagnosis of autism

WE DO NOT USE:

- suffering from autism
- coping with autism
- struggling with autism
- plagued by autism
- victims of autism
- retarded
- abnormal



WHEN TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE NOT ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM, WE USE:

- neurotypical
- typically developing
- general or mainstream population

WE DO NOT USE: normal.

When talking about families, do not use ‘autism mum’ or similar.

WHEN DESCRIBING SOMEONE WITH AUTISM WE PREFER TO USE:

“For Julia, autism means...” or “For some people, autism means...”
This captures the individuality within the spectrum and avoids generalisations.

Focus on the person, not the impairment.

In Australia, best practice language is to use “person with disability” or “people with disability”.

Person-first language is the most widely accepted terminology in Australia. We also prefer to say “person without disability”, and do not recommend the terms “non-disabled” or “able-bodied”.

Don’t use language that implies a person with disability is inspirational simply because they experience disability. Conversely, don’t make out that people with disability are victims or objects of pity

Avoid euphemisms and made up words “Differently abled”, “people of all abilities”, “disAbility”, “diffAbled”, “special needs” and the like, are all euphemistic and can be considered patronising.

The most important thing is to simply focus on the person, rather than the disability.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE:

Autism Spectrum Australia’s language preferences:
<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au>

Australian Network on Disability – inclusive language:
www.and.org.au/pages/inclusive-language.html



faq.

How was consent sought from people with these disabilities?

In 2014 Northern Pictures carefully considered the legal and ethical issues surrounding the consent by people perceived as vulnerable to being filmed and included in television productions in the context of an ABC documentary on mental health, **Changing Minds**.

This previous, unprecedented experience left Northern Pictures well placed to develop a consent process for **Employable Me** that took into account the specific characteristics and disabilities of its participants.

To help us manage the consent and ensure duty of care, certain practices were adopted.

Participants' experiences of **Employable Me** would be greatly influenced by the quality of their relationships with Northern Pictures' production team. Senior members of the team had received a **NSW Premier's Award for Public Service** for their work with vulnerable people on **Changing Minds** and were nominated for a Human Rights Award. All other members of the production team have been selected specifically for their empathetic manner and interest in disability in the workplace.

The majority of participants in **Employable Me** have **neuro-diverse conditions such as autism and Tourette Syndrome**. These conditions do not affect participants' ability to represent themselves legally. They have full insight and live with the dignity of making their own decisions.

Some participants may have an intellectual disability but operate and live in society independently or with family or partners. We used the same release document for everyone – both participants and their supporters. We want participants to know and feel at the outset they are not being singled out or patronised because of their disability by being asked to sign a different release.

Even after a participant had given Northern Pictures their release and consented to being involved, they were not filmed at any time without their express verbal permission. Each day of filming was in consultation with them and dependent on their ongoing agreement.

At our request, **ASPECT (Autism Australia)** and the **Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia** helped provide specialist advice on how we manage our relationships with participants.

Northern Pictures also engaged two clinical psychologists as experts to work with us both on screen as part of the program and throughout the production process. They assessed and consulted with participants about their workplace and personal experiences and condition on camera. If the participants had any concerns about the program or any other aspect of their lives, the clinical psychologists extended an open offer to participants to provide support outside of filming for the program.

Northern Pictures' involvement with participants and their supporters does not end after filming. We have maintained contact with them throughout post-production of **Employable Me** and will continue to do so, up to and following the initial broadcast of the program on the ABC.

Does someone with autism have the capacity to consent?

Autism is not an intellectual disability.

We worked on an understanding that having autism, Tourette Syndrome or Fragile X does not mean a person should be denied the right to make their own decisions. Many people live in the community with neuro-diverse conditions and make many significant and legal decisions every day.

We considered the term '**dignity of risk**', a term used to describe the right of individuals to choose to take some risk in engaging in decisions about their own life experiences without the involvement and/or intervention from authorities, clinicians, service providers and even family members. Dignity of risk as a term was first championed by advocates for people with physical disabilities, where a person should maintain the right to make their own decisions whether it was considered right or wrong by others.

The participants of Employable Me live independently with the rights and dignity of making decisions for themselves. To ensure there were no misunderstandings in regard to agreeing to participate the producers had regular, open and detailed conversations with participants at the time of consent and ongoing. Though all participants are over the age of 18, the production team were also in constant communication with their families explaining and consulting in regard to filming.

Did you help participants get jobs?

The need to capture story steps and story progression within our production time frames meant we had to work collaboratively with the participants and disability employment agencies to research work opportunities for our participants. The extra hands on deck may have been the reason some potential employers were open to meeting candidates and for others it may have been a reason they were reluctant and may have hindered their prospects.

We, of course, needed to contact all workplaces ahead of time in regard to filming permission, in doing so, it was never spoken or implied by potential employers that they were only interviewing or providing work experience because of perceived benefits to them to be part of the documentary.

Many of the organisations we had contact with and are in the final series have specific autism hiring programs and significant diversity and inclusion policies.

To summarise, we did hit the phones, search employment sites and make calls ahead of participants making contact, but we did not have any undue influence around outcomes or processes.

What hurdles do people with disabilities need to overcome to find employment?

Barriers essentially are internal or external:

Internal barriers—broadly include a lack of confidence, an impoverishment of experience (you don't know whether you'll like something you've never tried!), and fear around the unknown.

In particular, for people with autism, the condition means they have difficulties in interview settings and with social interaction which means it is hard for them to be able to put their best foot forward and illustrate their skill set.

External barriers – Biggest barrier is fear on the part of employers – what if it goes wrong? What if I have to counsel or terminate the employee? Is the person going to be a liability? Are they safe, are they dangerous? What will other staff members think?

Generally, there is a lack of awareness and understanding around the needs of disabled employees, and reluctance to accommodate changes in order to allow the hidden skills and abilities of neuro-divergent people to flourish.

There is also a lack of understanding regarding the range of presentations or span of the autism spectrum. No two people are alike and labels create unfair misconceptions.

Have the cast had ongoing genuine employment opportunities?

The participants have ongoing relationships with the employers featured in the series.

We can confirm three of the participants are still employed in the work they found during filming. Two have completed paid internships and have ongoing opportunities with the companies they trained with. Two others have returned to studying whilst doing work experience placements. Another is doing work experience on an ongoing basis. Only one remains unemployed, but we're hopeful things will change for him soon. No doubt this series will create new prospects for them all as well.

links.

ASPECT (AUTISM AUSTRALIA)

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au>

TOURETTE SYNDROME ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

<http://www.tourette.org.au>

FRAGILE X ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

<https://fragilex.org.au>

NOVA EMPLOYMENT

<http://www.novaemployment.com.au>

NORTHCOTT EMPLOYMENT

<https://www.northcott.com.au>

BREAKTHRU

<https://breakthru.org.au>

UNSW AUTISM CRC

<https://www.autismcrc.com.au>

NSW FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au>

NORTHERN PICTURES

<http://northernpictures.com.au>



partner quotes.

“ The ABC is committed to telling significant stories of diversity and inclusion that can make a positive change to the lives of Australians – especially those who are disadvantaged. ‘Employable Me’ will be another example of distinctive content delivered by the ABC that encourages a national debate about this important topic.”

- ABC MANAGING DIRECTOR, MICHELLE GUTHRIE

“ The use of science to reveal the unique talents and skills of those living with neurological conditions impressed us as a particularly compelling way to inspire confidence in the value of employing people with disabilities in the workplace. We are proud to support Northern Pictures to make Employable Me and hope it will challenge perceptions and create opportunities.”

- SCREEN AUSTRALIA'S SENIOR MANAGER OF DOCUMENTARY, LIZ STEVENS

“ Research shows that across all sectors, a critical barrier for jobseekers with a disability is the attitude of prospective employers. The NSW Government is delighted to provide funding for Employable Me in line with the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan. I hope that the series will contribute to building positive community attitudes on employment for people with a disability.”

- MINISTER FOR DISABILITY SERVICES, RAY WILLIAM MP

“ Create NSW has lead the industry in developing programs that support professional opportunities for people with disabilities, including the Screenability program. We are very pleased to partner on Employable Me which will further shine a light on the capabilities of people with disabilities as well as the challenges they face.”

- MICHAEL BREALEY, CEO OF CREATE NSW

credits.

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PRODUCED BY

Northern Pictures

CREATED BY

Optomen Television Limited

Format licensed by All3Media International Limited

PRINCIPAL FUNDER



FILMED AND POST PRODUCED IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

FINANCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF

THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES and CREATE NSW



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