

Submission to Disability Care and Support

I would like to bring to the attention of the Australian Government Productivity Commission the difficulties adults with Asperger Syndrome confront and vital assistance which is required in order to assist them in their lives. I am an adult with Asperger Syndrome and I was diagnosed as having Asperger Syndrome in 1998 while a final year Bachelor of Arts Student at the University of New England. Since my diagnosis and up until the present, I have and continue to experience difficulty in adapting to and being understood by mainstream society. I suffer largely from social isolation and furthermore the negative stereotype in that I am only able to undertake menial and routine employment with any incentive to go beyond my current means facing continual difficulty and hardship. I have worked in the same position for the last 5 years and advancing beyond my current means is immensely difficult and frustrating. I am current on a Disability Support Pension and can only work part time due to performance issues and having the choice to work rather than remain on the Disability Pension and not demonstrate my skills and abilities is something I wish to do. I have held down some positions but being able to find a quality of life and being accepted by people around me is met with difficulty. I have few friends and I find a relationship constantly difficult to understand and to obtain. In 2008, I was fortunate to have met another female with Asperger Syndrome in the United States and due to my having a disability and the immigration process, this engagement and relationship ended to now a distant friendship with very little contact. What could have been a possibility was met with heartache and pain and I feel I will never find a relationship again.

I constantly battle in being accepted by society and living up to a quality of life that provides me with my support needs. Although I am a very intelligent person, I am not able to demonstrate my skills and abilities within employment. Whereas others in my age group have houses, families, a good career and a happy lifestyle, I find myself dealing with anxiety and loneliness and the possibility of when my parents get older, that I will have no support and services available. It truly concerns and worries me for I am unable to afford my own dwelling and where I will live and what will be my fate is something of a major concern. I feel adults with Asperger Syndrome are overlooked within the community as people do not see at first hand the struggles and the hardships. Just because we look like everyone else does not mean that we are functioning and don't need assistance and understanding. Asperger Syndrome is an invisible disability in that it is not seen and people cannot relate to it unless they have a friend, family member or partner who has Asperger Syndrome. There is no rental support and no means of linking adults with Asperger Syndrome to the community. What is also important is the lack of vital services available and employment for adults with Asperger Syndrome. I know many adults like myself that experience it tough and I have been instrumental in setting up support groups for adults with Asperger Syndrome in Brisbane and a Skype for adults with Asperger Syndrome on a global basis. I feel that awareness of Asperger Syndrome needs to occur and more importantly this has to happen soon. Finally, I am currently undertaking a Master of Philosophy/Phd on the difficulties and adult has with Asperger Syndrome in navigating the social world both socially and economically, and I hope this research may prove valuable in pioneering awareness of Asperger Syndrome in adults on a wider scale. I am also involved and have been recently appointed to the University of Queensland Sub Committee as a Staff Member with a Disability and establishing an adult group for staff and students with Asperger Syndrome in the

University of Queensland. This group is being looked after by Disability Services at the University of Queensland. Should you require any further information please feel free to contact me via this Australian Government Website or through the University of Queensland or Asperger Services Australia.

Regards

Garry Burge