



Media Release

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Autism@Work employer roundtable to help employers continue to invest in neurodiversity employment programs to benefit people on the autism spectrum

Autism CRC and its partners DXC Technology, ANZ, SAP, Peoplebank and Symantec announce the forming of an online Autism@Work employer roundtable to help employers continue to invest in neurodiversity employment programs.

The online Autism@Work employer roundtable will allow employers who are investing in neurodiversity employment programs to share their learnings on the benefits of employing people on the autism spectrum, recognising their strengths and skills they bring to an organisation and allowing them to gain and sustain employment. The roundtable will also help employers to gain an understanding on the latest in related research and employment tools from Autism CRC and other research initiatives.

An increasing number of Australian employers are investing in workforce neurodiversity and implementing employment programs for individuals on the autism spectrum – better engaging with this significantly untapped talent pool within our diverse society.

Like many, autistic individuals have strengths and skills that might contribute to more productive and innovative workplaces. Often though traditional employment practices and environments make it difficult for those strengths and skills to be recognised and for autistic individuals to gain and sustain employment.

Organisations currently operating autism employment programs report benefits beyond the programs themselves, with the changes made to employment processes to better engage autistic individuals, also leading to the greater recognition and use of the skills of all their workforce.

As Colin Brookes, President and Managing Director, SAP Australia points out, “Across ten countries, SAP now has Autism@Work employees in IT project management, graphic design, data analysis, finance administration and much more. We started small in Australia, focusing on everyone’s unique ability to contribute rather than their perceived limitations and this has helped us see new possibilities with this ground-breaking program.”

In recognition of the growing investment in neurodiversity workplace programs, Australia’s first Autism@Work Forum was held in September 2017 bringing together employers, autistic employees, researchers and policy-makers.

The newly formed Autism@Work employer roundtable will build on the connections and learning formed at the recent Autism@Work Forum with forum organisers Autism CRC and DXC Technology and sponsors, ANZ Bank, SAP, Peoplebank and Symantec, all taking part.

“The significant increase in autism employment programs across Australia and the recognition of the benefits of neurodiversity in the workplace is very encouraging,” said Andrew Davis, CEO of Autism CRC.

“However, with the ABS putting the unemployment rate for those on the spectrum at over 30% - three times the rate for people with disability and almost six times the rate of people without disability – there remains a significant opportunity to engage this talent pool to the benefit of individuals, workplaces and society.”

“Autism CRC’s vision is to see autistic people empowered to discover and use their diverse strengths and interests. Obtaining meaningful employment and economic participation enables greater quality of life, health and wellbeing. We are very pleased to continue the work with our employer partners in expanding and enhancing evidence-based neurodiversity employment practices across Australia,” said Mr Davis.

“The Autism@Work employer roundtable will enable employers to share experiences and learn from the research being undertaken by Autism CRC. This will enable us to better prepare individuals and our organisation to promote and sustain employment for people on the spectrum,” said Seelan Nayagam, Managing Director, DXC Technology Australia & New Zealand.

“We are proud to be part of a growing number of organisations that recognise the strengths and talents of autistic people. There are many advantages to being able to share and learn with each other in this way – including the most important of all, helping people in the autism community to thrive,” said Gerard Florian, Group Executive Technology, ANZ.

“The Autism@Work employer group provides an opportunity for like-minded organisations to come together to share and collaborate. Together, we can work to integrate neurodiversity into our mainstream recruitment practices and breakdown many of the misconceptions surrounding this area,” said SAP’s Colin Brookes.

Peoplebank CEO, Peter Acheson, said they were pleased to support the employer group initiative. “We aim over time to learn more as an organisation on how we can support, place and sustain candidates who are neurodiverse. This commitment is in line with our Social Purpose of making lives better by helping people achieve their goals.”

“Symantec strives to have a positive impact in the communities where we operate. We are very pleased to be working closely with Autism CRC to help spread awareness and enhance quality of life for the autism community. As part of this program, Symantec will also be providing work experience to students on the autism spectrum, through the help from program partners in higher education,” said Ian McAdam, Managing Director, Pacific region, Symantec.

About Autism CRC

Autism CRC was established in 2013 and is the world's first national, cooperative research effort focused on autism. Autism CRC's vision is to see autistic people empowered to discover and use their diverse strengths and interests. Its program takes a whole-of-life view, from diagnosis and the early years to the schools years and into adult life.

Autism CRC provides the national capacity to develop and deliver evidence-based outcomes through its unique collaboration with the autism community, research organisations, industry and government. Currently, Autism CRC has 55 participant organisations and other partners based around Australia and internationally.

Autism CRC is committed to inclusive research practices and co-production of outcomes with those on the spectrum and their families. This will further ensure research provides practical and tangible outputs that benefit the community. For more information, visit www.autismcrc.com.au.

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