

# Hey Neighbour!

How Transport's Neurodiverse Neighbourhood  
enables an inclusive culture



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[transport.nsw.gov.au](https://transport.nsw.gov.au)

Acknowledgement of  
Country

Transport pays respects to Elders past and present, and recognise and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

# Agenda

1. About us
2. Inclusion and Diversity
3. The Neurodiverse Neighbourhood
4. Key Takeaways
5. Questions



# 01

## About us





# About us

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More than 25,000 employees across NSW  
Public transport including active transport  
and point to point



Roads and waterways



Transport infrastructure



Wired and unwired



Frontline and enablement

# Why Viva Engage?



Fewer  
emails



Fewer  
newsletters



More authentic and  
personal comms:  
From the heart and  
short and sharp



Crowdsourcing FAQs  
and connecting our  
people to subject  
matter experts  
during change



Humanised  
leadership:  
Breaking the  
barriers between  
leadership and  
the frontline



Leaders  
responsive to  
ongoing employee  
feedback and  
ideas

# 02

## Inclusion and Diversity at Transport



# Inclusion, Diversity & Wellbeing @ Transport

Our strategic Purpose is to enable an inclusive workplace that is a positive and differentiated experience for the people of Transport.

We do this via our three key portfolios



Inclusion & Diversity



Reconciliation



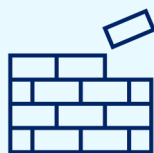
Wellbeing



# Inclusion, Diversity & Wellbeing @ Transport (continued)

Each portfolio leads Transport-wide action plans to support Inclusion Diversity and Wellbeing outcomes across Transport.

These plans are built around the three pillars of our strategy:



Foundations of Inclusion



From Silos to Community



Building a Future Workforce that  
includes you

# 02

## The Neurodiverse Neighbourhood



# Origin Story...

Started with a



3  Individuals



in August 2022



# Our Glorious Purpose

Use the Viva Engage community to provide a safe space for all our neurodivergent colleagues to share, educate, learn and connect and for our neurotypical colleagues to learn and engage!



**733**  
Members



**867**  
Replies



**78%**  
Interactivity



**191**  
Posts



**4254**  
Reactions



**Catalyst**  
Persona

# What we observed

**High interaction with  
long form posts**

**Open, honest,  
vulnerable  
conversations**

**No  
moderation**

**Action  
focused**

# Stories of the community

## Happy & HFF everyone! 😊

To somewhat follow on from last week's theme of raw emotions & vulnerability (in regard to loss and grief), but also do a complete 180..

### Navigating new love, chemistry & the 'honeymoon period'- Neurodivergent style!

As an Autistic person, emotional processing/regulating/refining can be a tough battle at the best of times.

For my own personal lived Autistic experience, one of my big challenges is my emotions. To myself, most of my emotions are raw, powerful & passionate. It's almost like I experience my emotions at wide extremes. When I'm happy, I'm ecstatic & beaming with a giant grin. When I'm sad, I'm melancholic.

While this can be exhausting at times, I think I prefer it. It makes me more passionate, determined & in-tune with the world around me.

Anyway, to start to bring this to a point, I recently got into a new relationship. So there is a brand new rollercoaster of emotions I'm riding at the moment. Which is exhilarating, exciting and yes, exhausting (at times).

While I do sense some ND traits about my gf, my base assumption is that she's NT. So part of the navigating has involved explaining what being Autistic is to me. Part of that has been to explain the way I feel emotions. I've explained that for myself, what might visibly look like a 10 (on a 1-10 scale) emotion, might even feel like a 10, but equated to NT emotional processing, is a 5.

Last week I dropped her off at the international airport as she was visiting family back home (USA) for a month.

I had zero clue as to how I was going to react in the situation. When you put me in a brand new situation, I've got no prior memories/experiences to rely upon to guide me through nor understand how I'll be.

Taking a new partner to the airport & see her off for a month (right in the middle of the honeymoon period no less!) was an emotionally heavy moment. I forgot to take my sunflower lanyard to see if I'd have a better experience. I also forgot airports to me are like hospitals, I do not like to be there. Too many people wandering around in a million different directions. No order, full chaos.

As we got closer to the airport I could feel the nerves & anxiety kick in. I was feeling waves of intensity followed by calm as I tried to keep myself emotionally stable. This began to peak more once we got in.

I'll admit it. My masculinity isn't so fragile. Once it was time to say goodbye, the combination of being in an overwhelming place as well as saying goodbye to a new love left alone being tired (damn early flights and being there 3hrs prior) meant I was a teary/blubbery mess. 😭

As I walked away and began to calm down and escaped the airport to the train station (FYI, employee opals work at airport station) I took some deep breaths and recomposed as I had to navigate my way back home.

**POLL**

**E**

**I just filled in the People Matters survey and I had to think long and hard about how to answer this question: Am I disabled?**

**I don't like to use *disabled* to describe myself. I do not feel that fits me correctly. Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, history of Depression, history of Anger Management, Diabetic; those words are accurate descriptions of me that have been diagnosed by medical professionals. If I were to describe myself as disabled, I feel that I am stealing that word from another group. Different, yes. Weird, proudly!**

**Disability includes long-term physical, mental health, intellectual, neurological, or sensory differences which in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.**

**I know that this survey is attempting to get accurate data, I feel I am not being accurate stating one way or the other. As per the above criteria I tick at least two of those boxes. It feels weird that by their definition I am, but by my own I am not. I am much more comfortable describing myself as neuro-divergent.**

**How did you answer?**

Yes I am disabled	20 votes
No I am not disabled	4 votes
Prefer not to say	2 votes

26 total votes · Change vote · Reload

This is really a question for anyone, even a comment? Why the HELL does Health Direct (Australian Govt therefore authoritative) define ADHD as a developmental disorder. We ALL know that you don't grow out of it for a start. Context, its confronting enough having a possible ADHD diagnosis (truth be known we always knew - used to joke about Dr shopping) but I don't believe for one instance that my gorgeous sensitive daughter has a disorder- She just needs help developing self awareness and navigating social complexities as a young teen also biggy - understanding! I wholly acknowledge that for many people ADHD can be debilitating (perhaps because the world is so unforgiving!) but labelling it as a disorder is part of the problem for many surely? Anyone else have a story to tell?



Raw, vulnerable stories of authentic, genuine lived experiences which generate respectful curiosity and relatability

TL;DR: is anyone working on fixing recruitment already? I've gone through this recently and it's a very... neurotypical experience.

Hi all, have you ever done any work in how TfNSW recruits? I started here recently, and did a lot of interviews across the NSW public sector before finally landing a very cool policy role (probably like a lot of people in this group, I sound pretty great on paper, but don't always perform well in interviews). Some of the screening processes made me really cross - they seemed almost like they were specifically to weed out neurodivergent people. There was a test where you had to read facial expressions and explain an emotionally "appropriate" response, IQ tests (there's a lot of research about these being useful at all - but ND people in particular can be penalised by these kinds of timed "standardised" tests), and even the interview process...

The current process seems to be that you're asked a series of questions to which you need to quickly give relevant answers from your working history that also demonstrate the key competencies the interviewer is looking for (but only they know what these are!). I doubt anyone - neurotypical or otherwise - is going to perform at their best under these circumstances. You can request disability accommodations, and I would sometimes be offered the questions an hour before the interview to prepare. For one transport role I had to explain why this wasn't an unfair advantage over other applicants - and send them the NSW govt guidance around interviewing. (This was pretty humiliating, and while they apologised after I sent the information, I really didn't feel great about the whole process - plus of course had no desire to work in a team that didn't want to work with me).

You often need to demonstrate how "flexible" your thinking is, how quickly you can respond, how you can manage competing priorities. Questions don't ever really seem to relate, though, to how good you are at recognising patterns and linking ideas in novel ways, how your experience and way of thinking differs from other people's (which is ALWAYS a benefit on any team), how you can focus deeply on an area of interest, how your experience as a minority can help broaden the empathy and inclusiveness of the organisation as a whole.

To me this is one of those situations where accommodations could benefit everyone. I think everyone would appreciate the opportunity to prepare for their interview by knowing what kinds of questions they'll be asked, and the best way to communicate the answers. Everyone has different sensory needs and profiles. Everyone has different ways of approaching issues, different things they enjoy working on, different ways they need to interact to thrive.

My son has ADHD and I have Autism and ADHD; the conversations at our house mostly consist of trying desperately not to interrupt each other, interrupting each other because we can't hold it in any longer, and going off on tangents. It's chaotic at times but also funny to see where we end up 😊  
We're trying to get better at not interrupting but sometimes it's just nice to be free to communicate naturally for us.

(Note: not meant to be 100% accurate, just a meme that some people with ADHD might find relatable/amusing)

ADHDers interrupting people because what they said triggered a thought and that thought needs to come out right now before it's gone forever:



### \*\* Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) \*\*

This, is what I call as the 'not so much fun' part of my ADHD. It has been, and continues to be, my BIGGEST challenge. Statistically, 1 in 3 people with ADHD would agree with me.

RSD is one of the cluster of symptoms found in people who are ADHD. It results in a strong emotional reaction to negative judgements, exclusion, or criticism beyond what most people feel. Other people may see those with RSD as overly perfectionist, over-sensitive, or overly reactive to even the mildest types of criticism.

#### How RSD affects me personally, to list a few -

- Sometimes the slightest change in tone of someone's voice (manager, colleague, partner...) can put me in a panic mode. It could even be as simple as no emoji in a text!
- I can be afraid of disappointing others around me and hence expect myself to often work at unrealistic hyperfocus levels which can be exhausting.
- It can lead to avoid socialising as I would try hard to hide my faults in a big social gathering.
- I try hard to please people around me and might over commit in the process.
- I often set high standards for myself and stress out if I feel I am not able to meet them.
- Its sometime hard to process 'constructive feedback' and the tone of voice or email can have a big impact.

#### How I try to deal with it -

- Constantly remind myself of RSD and not be too hard on myself.
- I constantly seek feedback, personally and professionally, to keep track of what are the expectations from me and the level of emotional energy I need to invest.
- I try to disassociate myself from the situation and think of it from the other person's

# Stories of the community



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*We're trying to get better at not interrupting but sometimes its just nice to be free to communication naturally for us.*



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# Voice of the community

“

I no longer feel as misunderstood.. I have a whole network of awesome peeps who 'get me'

”

“

It has helped me strengthen my relationship with my niece and nephew and to be a better friend and support to others in my team and community. Thanks Neurodiverse Neighbourhood!

”

“

I see amazing people doing great things with their superpowers at work in the network and it gives me hope for my beautiful children they will be celebrated for their superpowers too when they enter the workforce.

”

“

I feel seen , accepted and hopeful.

”

“

I remember the first time I saw the title Neurodiverse Network, I thought "I have found my people!" It has been an incredibly affirming experience to be part of this community, learn more about how our brains work, and celebrate the things that make us... us!

”

“

I joined the network as some of the stories helped with the push I needed to get my diagnosis. I have found the support, initiatives and material shared within the network really useful and I am very happy to be here!

”



# 04

## Key Takeaways

# Key Takeaways



Don't be afraid to jump in and start your community.  
Your people will help define and refine the purpose along the way



Give people space to be their authentic selves at work. This has a positive impact on wellbeing and productivity and makes them feel included



Be guided by your organisation's values so you can live your organisation's values



Purpose over polish enables genuine engagement



**Just do it!**

# 05

## Questions