

Unlocking enormous potential: the neurodiverse geospatial workforce revolution

Geoffrey Smith (Australia)

SUMMARY

Australian Spatial Analytics (ASA) is a work-integrated, not-for-profit social enterprise on a mission to revolutionise the geospatial and engineering sectors. ASA's story began in 2020 with a simple yet powerful observation: the potential of young neurodivergent adults was vastly underestimated and underutilised. For example, autistic Australians face a staggering 34% unemployment rate in Australia. ASA saw a world where their unique strengths in data analysis, attention to detail, and pattern recognition could be harnessed to address critical skill shortages in the geospatial industry. □□However, significant barriers existed, including archaic recruitment practices and a lack of inclusive workplaces that could empower these talented people to shine. ASA exists because it recognises the talents of this untapped talent pool. Through tailored professional and personal training and mentorship programs, ASA empowers its 80% neurodivergent workforce to develop their skills and confidence, eventually transitioning them into sustainable and fulfilling careers within ASA or partner organisations. □Key to this success is ASA's focus on collaboration. They work closely with all levels of government and industry clients, providing them with a skilled and reliable workforce while simultaneously addressing their data needs and helping deliver Australia's critical infrastructure. ASA's unique employment model bridges the gap between exceptional talent and the geospatial industry, ensuring successful project outcomes while fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect.□□ASA's vision extends far beyond its achievements, which, to date, has provided careers for over 220 young neurodivergent adults. ASA is committed to scaling its impact across Australia, creating a national network of opportunities for young neurodivergent adults, and advocating for making neurodiversity in the workplace mainstream. ASA aims to become a leading model for inclusive workplaces, inspiring a paradigm shift in how we value and empower neurodiversity across all industries. □□This presentation, delivered by the 2025 Queensland Australian of the Year, Geoffrey Smith, will explore ASA's journey from inception to current success and will show how any organisation can

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harness the immense potential of a neurodiverse workforce—paving the way for a more equitable and prosperous future. □□**PLEASE NOTE: Geospatial Council of Australia CEO Tony Wheeler invited Geoff Smith to speak at LOCATE25 in a plenary session. This submission is just to formalise this**□

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