



BANKWEST CURTIN ECONOMICS CENTRE

# AUTISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Maximising the potential of  
employees on the autism spectrum

## PROGRAM

Friday 29 April 2016  
from 8:45am to 12:00pm  
The Hyatt  
North Ballroom  
99 Adelaide Terrace  
Perth, WA 6000



# About the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre is an independent economic and social research organisation located within the Curtin Business School at Curtin University. The centre was established in 2012 through the generous support from Bankwest (a division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia), with a core mission to examine the key economic and social policy issues that contribute to the sustainability of Western Australia and the wellbeing of WA households.

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre is the first research organisation of its kind in Western Australia, and draws great strength and credibility from its partnership with Bankwest, Curtin University and the Western Australian government.

The centre brings a unique philosophy to research on the major economic issues facing the state. By bringing together experts from the research, policy and business communities at all stages of the process – from framing and conceptualising research questions, through the conduct of research, to the communication and implementation of research findings – we ensure that our research is relevant, fit for purpose, and makes a genuine difference to the lives of Australians, both in WA and nationally.

The centre is able to capitalise on Curtin University's reputation for excellence in economic modelling, forecasting, public policy research, trade and industrial economics and spatial sciences. Centre researchers have specific expertise in economic forecasting, quantitative modelling, micro-data analysis and economic and social policy evaluation. The centre also derives great value from its close association with experts from the corporate, business, public and not-for-profit sectors.

# Program

8.30am	Registrations open
8.45am	Arrival coffee & tea
9.00am	<b>Welcome</b> <b>Professor Alan Duncan</b> Director Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre
	<b>POLICY ISSUES &amp; RESEARCH FINDINGS</b>
9.05am	<b>Mr Timothy Marney</b> Mental Health Commissioner Mental Health Commission
9.10am	<b>Ms Joan McKenna Kerr</b> Chief Executive Officer Autism Association of Western Australia
9.20am	<b>Ms Rhonda Brighton-Hall</b> Director Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI)
9.30am	<b>Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre Research Note</b> <b>Dr Marita Falkmer</b> Postdoctoral Research Fellow Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism & School of Occupational Therapy & Social Work, Curtin University
10.20am	<b>Morning tea &amp; networking</b> <b>WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE</b> Case study session
10.50am	<b>Autism Academy for Software Quality Assurance Video Presentation</b> Maximising the potential of adults with ASD
11.00am	<b>Curtin University's Autism Academy for Software Quality Assurance, Curtin University</b> <b>Associate Professor Tele Tan</b> AASQA Deputy Director Associate Professor, Faculty of Science and Engineering
11.10am	<b>Bankwest</b> <b>Mr Jason Knibbs</b> Head of Customer Delivery, Retail and Technology <b>Mr KC Soon</b> People Manager, Apps Team Solution Engineering, Bankwest Enterprise Services <b>Mr Michael New</b> Software Tester Intern, Bankwest Enterprise Services division
11.25am	<b>Autism Association of Western Australia</b> <b>Mr Russell Thomas</b> Executive Manager, Employment and Community Options, Autism Association of Western Australia
11.40am	<b>Case Study Panel Discussion</b>
11.55am	<b>Vote of Thanks</b> <b>Professor Alan Duncan</b> Director Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre
12.00pm	Event concludes



# Welcome from Professor Alan Duncan



**W**elcome to an important workshop event – Autism in the workplace: Maximising the potential of employees on the autism spectrum.

In Australia it is estimated that there are around 157,000 working-age adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). These numbers are expected to increase over the coming years as young adults with ASD transition from school to employment and diagnosis improves. Adults with ASD are more likely to experience poorer labour market outcomes, with greater rates of unemployment and lower overall participation rates compared to other people with disabilities and the general population.

This workshop brings together leading researchers, practitioners and stakeholders to discuss how we can work together to maximise employment opportunities and outcomes for working Australians on the Autism spectrum.

New BCEC funded research sheds light on the associated benefits and costs to employers of employing adults with ASD and we anticipate this research enhances our understanding of factors that promote improved job retention, performance and worker wellbeing, taking account of the viewpoints both of employees with ASD and their employers.

We would like to thank the Chief Investigator of the BCEC Research Note entitled Autism in the workplace: Maximising the potential of employees on the autism spectrum, Delia Hendrie, and the co-authors, Marita Falkmer, Torbjörn Falkmer, Andrew Jacob, Richard Parsons and Melissa Scott.

We also thank our speakers, Mental Health Commissioner Timothy Marney, Autism Association of Western Australia Chief Executive Officer Joan McKenna Kerr, Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) Director Rhonda Brighton-Hall, Curtin University's Autism Academy for Software Quality Assurance (AASQA) Deputy Director Tele Tan, Head of Customer Delivery, Retail and Technology at Bankwest, Jason Knibbs, People Manager, Solution Engineering, Bankwest Enterprise Services at Bankwest, KC Soon, Michael New, Software Tester Intern at Bankwest and Russell Thomas, Executive Director, Employment and Community Options, Autism Association of Western Australia, for their contributions to the event and for adding such depth and perspective to such an important topic.

Please enjoy the workshop and networking with friends, colleagues and new acquaintances.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Duncan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Professor Alan Duncan**  
Director, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre  
Curtin Business School, Curtin University





## Alan Duncan

### Director, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

Prior to becoming the Director of the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and the Bankwest Research Chair in Economic Policy, Curtin Business School, Professor Alan Duncan was the Director of the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra. Alan has a range of research interests including welfare policy evaluation, childcare affordability, employment incentives, population dynamics, labour market and welfare program participation, poverty and inequality, and economic and social wellbeing.

In 2000 Alan was awarded the Frisch Medal from the Econometric Society for excellence in applied economic research. He has served on a number of senior advisory panels and boards for government and public sector organisations in the UK, Europe and Australia, advising on areas including tax policy, pensions, labour markets and household welfare.

Since becoming Director, Alan has led BCEC research teams in the delivery of major research reports with a focus on West Australian issues – income and wealth, housing affordability, workforce and skills, poverty and disadvantage – and presented extensively at public forums on economic and social issues of concern to the WA economy and society. He looks forward to expanding the Centre’s reputation within WA and nationally.



## Marita Falkmer

### Postdoctoral Research Fellow

### Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism & School of Occupational Therapy & Social Work, Curtin University

Marita is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism, and is a researcher at School of Occupational Therapy & Social Work at Curtin University. Autism CRC’s Program 3 focuses on conducting longitudinal studies and randomised controlled trials covering vocational educational assessments, employment outcomes and health and well-being in adulthood in people with autism. Marita has extensive experience working with individuals on the autism spectrum and in working with consultations and education in staff groups, and she has 58 publications which focuses on autism. forward to expanding the Centre’s reputation within WA and nationally.





**Timothy Marney**  
**Mental Health Commissioner**  
**Mental Health Commission**

Tim has been instrumental in the development of the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025, which maps out the optimal mix of contemporary and high quality services for Western Australians over the next 10 years.

A graduate of Murdoch University, Tim has more than 20 years of experience in economics and finance with the State and Federal Governments. He joined the Western Australian Department of Treasury in 1993, where he held the position of Under Treasurer of Western Australia from 2005 to 2014.



**Rhonda Brighton-Hall**  
**Director**  
**Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI)**

A former HR Leader of the Year and Telstra Business Woman of the Year, as well as current Director of the AHRI (Australian Human Resource Institute) and Chair of FlexCareers, Rhonda is most aligned with practical plans that make a difference, and is a staunch advocate of mainstreaming diversity and inclusion into the way organisations are run. She is a past Patron for ASPECT (Autism Australia), and remains heavily involved in ASPECT and other organisations that work closely with disability, the indigenous community and other structurally excluded people or groups.

Rhonda's son Hugo was on the Autistic Spectrum, and Rhonda and her husband Michael are heavily involved in fund-raising and supporting Autism organisations.







## Joan McKenna Kerr

**Chief Executive Officer  
Autism Association of Western Australia**

Joan is Chief Executive Officer of the Autism Association of Western Australia, a large organisation providing a range of clinical and support services to children and adults with Autism.

Among the services to adults is the AIM Employment Service which she established in 1999 as the first specialist employment program for people with Autism in Australia.

Joan is involved with the disability sector both at a state and a national level. She is a member of the Premier of Western Australia's Partnership Forum. She is also a member of the Commonwealth NDIS Independent Advisory Council providing advice on the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Joan is Chair of NDS nationally and Deputy Chair of NDS WA. She is also Vice Chair of the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders; and former Chair.

As part of the Sister-State initiative between Western Australia and East Java, Indonesia, Joan is currently involved in establishing multi-disciplinary Autism Teams in 5 regional areas within East Java.



## Tele Tan

**AASQA Deputy Director  
Associate Professor, Faculty of Science and Engineering  
Curtin University**

Tele Tan obtained his PhD degree in Electronics Engineering at Surrey University (UK) in 1993 in the area of computer vision. He served as a Senior Member of Technical Staff at the DSO National Laboratories in Singapore before moving to research and then to academia in 2000. He is currently an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Curtin University and Deputy Director of the Autism Academy for Software Quality Assurance. His research interests are in assistive technologies and rehabilitation engineering, using them to solve health and societal challenges in our community. His main teaching and learning passion is the adoption of work integrated learning to support the learning experience of Information Technology undergraduates. Tele established a working group with key partners in education, industry and autism organisations to help create opportunities and to remove barriers for individuals with autism to enter the IT job market. This has resulted in a development of programs that ensure continued and sustainable employment for IT graduates with autism.





## Jason Knibbs

**Head of Customer Delivery, Retail and Technology  
Bankwest**

Jason has 20 years' experience in delivering project, program, change and information services, within the Finance, Resources, Education, Travel and Transportation industries across Europe and Australia. Jason sits on the advisory board of the Autism Academy for Software Quality Assurance, through which he has been able to help drive an internship program at Bankwest, adapting workplace practices to include a sector of the community, who are vastly under-represented in the workforce.

A proud father to two teenage boys, the eldest of which is on the autism spectrum, Jason battles the onset of middle age in his spare time through running marathons, ocean swimming, triathlons and playing rugby while occasionally finding time to enjoy a good film.



## KC Soon

**People Manager, Apps Team  
Solution Engineering  
Bankwest Enterprise Services, Bankwest**

KC Soon is a People Manager at Bankwest, currently leading a team of software engineers and testers in the Solutions Engineering Apps Team. He is responsible for growing and developing colleagues, as well as contributing to the growth of the Bankwest development community.

KC has over 25 years' experience in the technology sector, mainly in the Banking and Finance industry. Passionate about technology with a focus on people and leadership, KC is active in corporate community activities and has supported programs such as Coderdojo. He is a member of the Bankwest Autism Internship working group which is currently piloting a program to adapt Bankwest workplace practices to support the Autism sector of the community.

A keen photographer in his spare time, KC is trying hard to fix the imbalance of having more cameras than good photos.







## Michael New

**Software Tester Intern**  
**Bankwest Enterprise Services, Bankwest**

Michael New is a Software Tester intern at Bankwest through the Autism Academy for Software Quality Assurance program. He is responsible for testing various Bankwest applications and making sure they work as intended.

Currently a student in his final year at Murdoch University, Michael is studying a Bachelor of Science majoring in Computer Science and Games Technology. He is the current President of the Murdoch IT Society, and is the founder and champion for CoderDojo Murdoch at his university. Outside of his studies Michael has been volunteering for five years at the Riding of the Disabled Association where he helps lead horses for children with various disabilities.

A keen lover for all technology, Michael likes to spend his spare time playing computer games, immersing himself in their world and enjoying the story they have to tell.



## Russell Thomas

**Executive Manager**  
**Employment and Community Options**  
**Autism Association of Western Australia**

Russell has headed up the Autism Association Employment and Community Options program for the past ten and a half years. Russell started as a Trainee Social Trainer with what was then called the Mental Deficiency Division of the Mental Health Department in 1974. He remained with this department in various roles including education and training, and special community projects as it evolved into the Division for intellectually handicapped, then The Authority for the Intellectually Handicapped and eventually becoming the Disability Services Commission. He left DSC to take up a 12 year role as a Regional Manager with Intework before joining the Autism Association in 2005.



## About the Author



Delia is a senior lecturer in the School of Public Health at Curtin University, where she lectures across several areas in the Health Systems and Health Economics program. Delia's interest in teaching is accompanied by a strong background in health services research. Her main research fields are policy and program evaluation, in particular in relation to evaluating their effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, and health policy and systems research, with a focus on financing and the allocation of resources. Delia also has a keen interest in social equity in the formation of public policy, especially in regard to equity in health care. Delia is currently chief investigator on several nationally competitive grants, publishes widely in the academic literature, and collaborates extensively in her research with health professionals, government agencies, private sector organisations and community groups.

**Dr Delia Hendrie**  
Senior Lecturer  
School of Public Health  
Curtin University



# Attendees

**Mrs Anna Afzal**

Employment Coordinator  
Essential Personnel

**Mr Stuart Anderson**

Employment Coordinator  
Essential Personnel

**Ms Lucy Axton**

Student  
The University of Western  
Australia

**Mr Aaron Basile**

Employment Consultant  
Autism Association

**Ms Michelle Beresford**

Policy Officer  
Housing Authority

**Ms Meredith Billett**

Health Lecturer  
North Metropolitan TAFE

**Ms Colleen Blevins**

People and Culture Manager  
Gladys Newton School

**Miss Masha Boskamp**

Occupational Therapist

**Ms Sarah Brameld**

Occupational Therapist/Job  
Support Coordinator  
EDGE Employment Solutions

**Ms Rhonda**

**Brighton-Hall**

Director  
Australian Human Resources  
Institute (AHRI)

**Mr Rodney Buckland**

Consultant  
Attree Real Estate

**Mrs Kathleen Byrne**

Employment Consultant  
Autism Association

**Associate Professor**

**Rebecca Cassells**

Principal Research Fellow  
Bankwest Curtin Economics  
Centre

**Ms Jacqueline Chadwick**

Education Assistant  
Willetton Senior High School

**Miss Chelsea Clapham**

Personal Assistant  
Bankwest

**Ms Sheree Colley**

Occupational Health and Safety  
Consultant  
Department of Education

**Ms Shirley Collins**

**Mrs Julie Considine**

Principal Analyst  
Housing Authority

**Mrs Sara Cuevas**

Employment Consultant  
Workpower Incorporated

**Mr Peter Darch**

Senior Project, School-To-Work  
Transition  
National Disability Services

**Ms Gilda Davies**

Manager Training and  
Development  
Volunteering WA

**Ms Alison Davis**

Chief Executive Officer  
Autism West

**Mr Leon Delpech**

Chief Human  
Humble Impact

**Associate Professor**

**Michael Dockery**

Principal Research Fellow  
Bankwest Curtin Economics  
Centre

**Ms Kelly Dudgeon**

IR and Safety Policy  
Chamber of Commerce and  
Industry of WA

**Professor Alan Duncan**

Director Bankwest Curtin  
Economics Centre

**Mr Jim Ellis**

Chair, AASQA Advisory Board  
AASQA – Autism Academy for  
Software Quality Assurance

**Dr Marita Falkmer**

Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
School of Occupational Therapy  
& Social Work, Curtin University  
and Cooperative Research  
Centre for Living with Autism  
(Autism CRC)

**Dr Sonia Fortuna**

Executive Coach  
Sonia Fortuna

**Mrs Jenny Fuller**

School to Work Transition  
Program Coordinator  
EDGE Employment Solutions

**Mr Luis Galaz**

Team coordinator  
Bizlink Inc

**Mrs Janette Gee**

President  
Western Australian Secondary  
School Executives Association

**Mr Andrew Gould**

Employment Coordinator  
Essential Personnel

**Mrs Maureen Grewar**

Clinical Facilitator Sessional  
Academic  
Curtin University

**Ms Barbara Grimm**

Employer Consultant  
Edge Employment Solutions



# Attendees

**Dr Nursen Guresin**  
Principal Consultant  
Nucleus Metallurgy

**Mrs Anne Hall**  
Principal Revenue Officer  
Department of Finance (Office  
of State Revenue)

**Ms Lynley Hampton**  
Employment Coordinator  
Options Employment

**Mrs Kumesh Haripersad**  
Business Manager  
Bankwest Curtin Economics  
Centre

**Miss Megan Hatfield**  
PhD Candidate and  
Occupational Therapist  
Curtin University

**Mr David Hilditch**  
Business Manager  
Curtin Graduate School of  
Business

**Mr Gordon Hobday**  
Business Analyst  
Bankwest

**Miss Danielle Hubbard**  
Employment Consultant  
Autism Association

**Mr Geoff Hutchinson**  
Stakeholder Relations Advisor  
Curtin University

**Mr Andrew Jacob**  
Student  
Curtin University

**Mr Nicholas Johnson**  
Intern  
Bankwest

**Mr Matthew Jones**  
Graduate IT Specialist  
Bankwest

**Miss Tracey Joynson**  
Technical Lead  
Bankwest

**Mr Shane Kennedy**  
Employment Coordinator  
Essential Personnel

**Ms Chantelle Kietzmann**  
Administration Officer  
Bankwest Curtin Economics  
Centre

**Mr Jason Knibbs**  
Head of Customer Delivery  
Retail and Technology,  
Enterprise Services  
Bankwest

**Miss Jessica Laird**  
Employment Consultant Edge  
Employment Solutions

**Mr Alan Langford**  
Chief Economist  
Bankwest

**Mr Sean Langton**  
Head of Solution Engineering  
Bankwest

**Mrs Lynn Lockett**  
Manager, Satellite Training  
Department of Corrective  
Services

**Mr Philip Lourdesamy**  
Cycling Infrastructure Grants  
Project Officer  
Department of Transport

**Mrs Jukieann Luscombe**

**Ms Diana MacTiernan**  
Manager Community Education  
Equal Opportunity Commission

**Mr Timothy Marney**  
Mental Health Commissioner  
Mental Health Commission

**Mr Timothy McDonald**  
Intern Software Tester  
Bankwest

**Mrs Joan McKenna Kerr**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Autism Association of Western  
Australia

**Mr Ian McTear**  
Program Support Manager  
Autism Association

**Ms Caroline Moore**  
Team Leader  
Identitywa

**Mr Paul Moss**  
Manager, IR and Safety Policy  
Chamber of Commerce and  
Industry of WA

**Miss Holly Mynott**  
Therapist Assistant  
KZ Speech

**Ms Melinda Neish**  
Occupational Therapy Student  
& Disability Support Worker  
Curtin University & Disability  
Services Commission

**Mr Michael New**  
Intern, IT Specialist  
Bankwest

**Mr Toan Nguyen**  
PhD student  
Bankwest Curtin Economics  
Centre

**Mrs Mandy Ninn**  
Education Assistant  
Willetton Senior High School

**Mrs Jasmin Norris**  
Educator, Curtin AHEAD in  
School  
Curtin University

**Associate Professor  
Rachel Ong**  
Deputy Director  
Bankwest Curtin Economics  
Centre

**Miss Ling Ong**  
Employer Consultant  
Edge Employment Solutions

**Mr Raj Pandey**  
Researcher  
Murdoch University



# Attendees

**Ms Marg Pickup**

Research Assistant  
Curtin University

**Ms Kelly Pohatu**

Events and Communications  
Officer  
Bankwest Curtin Economics  
Centre

**Ms Katie Pratt**

Graduate Recruitment Lead  
Shell

**Mr Branko Pravica**

Program Support Manager,  
AIM Employment  
Autism Association of Western  
Australia

**Ms Keren Provost**

Gladys Newton School

**Miss Kristen Robson**

Employment Consultant  
Autism Association of Western  
Australia

**Ms Lindsey Rutherford**

Support Coordinator  
BIZLINK

**Mr Troy Sabetta**

Support Co-ordinator  
BIZLINK

**Mrs Lina Sadek**

National Manager Work Perks  
Bankwest

**Mr Duncan Sanders**

Inclusion and Special Education  
Teacher  
Byford Secondary College

**Ms Ann-Louise Sargison**

Payroll Technical Specialist/  
Manager  
Water Corporation

**Miss Rachel Scales**

Support Coordinator  
BIZLINK

**Mr Carl Scarlett**

Senior IT Specialist  
Bankwest

**Ms Melissa Scott**

PhD Candidate Curtin  
University

**Mr David Smith**

Support Coordinator  
BIZLINK

**Mr KC Soon**

People Manager Apps Team  
Bankwest

**Mr Mitchell Spring**

Notre Dame University

**Miss Lynda Suchodolski**

Senior Policy and Project officer  
Department of Education

**Dr Tele Tan**

Associate Professor  
Curtin University

**Ms Kerry Tate**

Employment Coordinator  
BIZLINK

**Mrs Maria Teku**

Student  
Curtin University

**Mr Russell Thomas**

Executive Manager  
Employment & Community  
Services Autism Association of  
Western Australia

**Mrs Michele Thomas**

Senior Advisor  
Autism Association of Western  
Australia

**Ms Lorna Thomassen**

Education Assistant  
Willetton Senior High School

**Miss Dana Topchian**

Employment Consultant  
Autism Association of Western  
Australia

**Mrs Kerry Valentine**

Manager, Program Operations,  
Curtin School of Business,  
International  
Curtin University

**Mr Gaelen Williams**

Project, School-To-Work  
Transition  
National Disability Services

**Ms June Williams**

People and Culture Manager  
ZettaServe Pty Ltd

**Mr Robert Williamson**

Chief Executive Officer  
Red River Group

**Mr Danny Wong**

Team Leader  
Options Employment

**Mrs Anna Zieba**

Assistant Director  
Department of Social Services

**Dr Tanja Zolin**

Product Manager  
Bolton Group





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#Autismintheworkplace

#AutismPotential



# BCEC Upcoming Events

Express your interest to attend by email [bcec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:bcec@curtin.edu.au) and for further information, contact the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre on Tel: +61 8 9266 2873.

## Housing Affordability: the Real Costs of Housing in WA

**Date:** Tuesday 7 June 2016,

**Time:** 7.15am to 9.00am

**Venue:** The Hyatt, Grand Ballroom, 99 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, WA 6000

This second Housing Affordability Report Launch in the Focus on WA series further addresses the issue of housing affordability in WA. The report explores data on housing costs and uses a survey of over 4,000 households to examine the real impact of housing affordability. Comparisons are made between WA and two other States, NSW and Queensland, and between metropolitan and regional areas. The report also explores housing affordability within key demographic groups and uses personal stories to illustrate the impact of housing costs on wellbeing.

## The Road to Low Carbon Energy: Impacts on WA Households

**Date:** Friday 17 June, 2016

**Time:** 8.45am to 12.00pm

**Venue:** Bankwest Place, 300 Murray Street, Perth, WA 6000

Bringing together experts from academia, industry and government, this 'WA in the Spotlight' workshop explores the effects of decarbonisation and rising energy costs across different household types and discusses the implications for future policy.



## Contact

### **Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC)**

Level 4, Building 408

Curtin University

GPO Box U1987

Perth WA 6845

Tel: +61 8 9266 2873

Email: [bcec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:bcec@curtin.edu.au)

[business.curtin.edu.au/bcec](http://business.curtin.edu.au/bcec)

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