



# Understanding Down syndrome in the Workplace



Down Syndrome  
Australia

# Acknowledgement To Country

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**I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present.**

# Session Overview

- **Liz Christodoulou- National Project Manager**  
Employment Connections Down Syndrome Australia
- **Eoin Gibson - International Ambassador and Employment Ambassador**
- **What is Down syndrome?**
- **Common characteristics**
- **Language & Communication**
- **True or False Game**
- **Let's hear from Eoin**

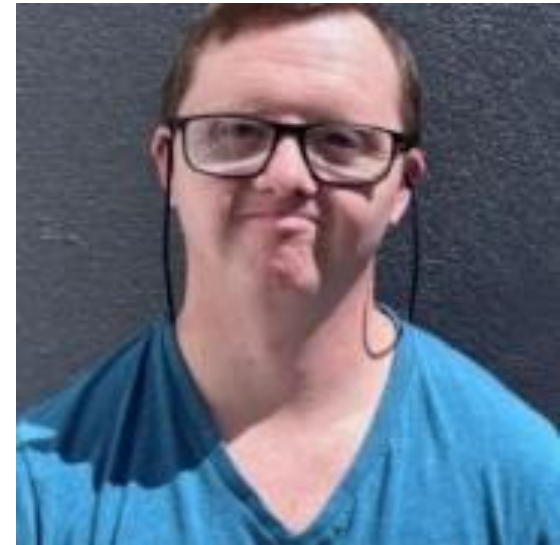
# Eoin Gibson

International Ambassador  
For Australia

I have three Jobs

I love sports

I am here to help you hire  
people just like me



# A word from My boss



# What is Down syndrome?

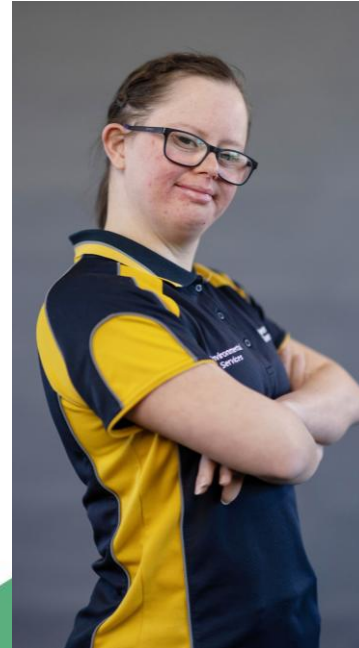
- Down syndrome It is NOT an illness or disease.
- Down syndrome is a Genetic Condition. It can affect how a person learns and develops. It can also affect some physical features and parts of a person's health.
- Every person with Down syndrome is different, so these things can be different for each person.



Down Syndrome  
Australia

# WE ARE THE HOMIES WITH EXTRA CHROMIES

- Down syndrome is the most common genetic cause of intellectual disability. It is caused when a person is born with an extra chromosome.
- There are approximately 13,000 people in Australia who have Down syndrome.



Down Syndrome  
Australia

# Down syndrome: A genetic Condition

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## KEY MESSAGE

All 3 types **are** Down syndrome

Every person is different

People with Down syndrome can Learn, Work and live full lives.

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# About Down syndrome

People with Down syndrome may have:

- areas of strengths and other areas where they need more support, just like everyone else in the community
- some level of intellectual disability
- some characteristic physical features
- increased risk of some health conditions (many of which are treatable)
- some developmental delays
- No two people are the same and there are over 120 characteristics people with Down syndrome may have

# Did you know?

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It is common for a person with Down syndrome to have another diagnosis such as

- Hearing loss
- Autism
- ADHD and
- Other medical conditions

# Benefits of Employment

- Independence
- Earning money
- Learning new skills
- Meeting new people
- Building confidence
- Belonging
- Achieving and succeeding
- Feeling valued
- Having a purpose



# Benefits of Employment



- Job loyalty and enthusiasm
- High attendance
- Brand reputation
- Client/customer satisfaction
- Team culture and moral

# In The Workplace

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## **Get to know your new staff member**

Break down and customise workplace tasks and supports

Provide feedback, adjust supports and promote independence

# In The Workplace

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**Gaining an understanding of employees with Down syndrome is crucial for creating a supportive and productive work environment.**

# In The Workplace

- Determine areas where additional support may be required
- Identify the employee's current skills, knowledge, and role understanding
- Learn the most effective way for them to absorb new information
- Recognize the employee's strengths and how they can be utilized in their role

# In The Workplace

- Utilise various strategies
- Breaking down tasks into small, manageable steps – Task Analysis
- Chaining
- Visual Aids
- Prompts
- Adjust strategies to fit the individual

# In The Workplace

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# Language

## **PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE**

- People With Down syndrome
- E.g. Sally has Down syndrome
- Person with a disability
- Person with an intellectual disability

# Communication principles

- Always **communicate and engage directly** with the person with Down syndrome
- **Explain things simply using clear and simple language**  
No jargon, no acronyms and no complex terminology
- **Be specific** - don't use abstract concepts or open-ended questions

# Communication and Language

- Assume competence
- Very often, people with Down syndrome can understand a lot more than they can express with words
- Always communicate and engage directly with the person with Down syndrome, not the person with them
- Ask if they need support and provide it according to their individual requirements
- Have patience, don't answer for the person

# Practical Strategies

- **Don't ASSUME** all people with Down syndrome are the same.
- **Respect** the team and establish a good communication system
- Support **does not** mean being a mum or dad
- **Don't rush** the person
- Talk **Directly** to the person

# Practical Strategies Continued

- **Do not** provide multiple talking points at once
- Break the information down into **smaller parts** which allows time to **process** the information
- Background noise and lighting can be **distracting** for people
- Have **patience** and don't rush the person with Down syndrome
- If the person is feeling rushed or anxious it can **impact** their speech

# One Last word



# Question time



# Resources

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- <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/>  
Resource Hub