

29 January 2011

Garry Burge
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Senate Committee for Equity, Diversity and the Status of Women
The University of Queensland
Brisbane QLD 4072
Australia

Dear Chairperson

I am interested in applying for a position on the Senate Committee for Equity, Diversity and the Status of Women to represent people who have a disability. I have a disability myself known as Asperger Syndrome and know all too well the difficulties and struggles a person with a disability has within the work environment and in life in general. As you may or may not be aware, I have been involved with setting up the Asperger Syndrome Support Group for students with Asperger Syndrome on the University of Queensland Campus in 2009 and within my current capacity as a Service Support Assistant, I have also tried to assist students and staff members where possible in Asperger Syndrome awareness. Also within my spare time, I am actively involved with promoting Asperger Syndrome within the wider community and have set up two support groups for adults with Asperger Syndrome on Facebook. These groups being known as "Brisbane Adults with Asperger Syndrome", and "I have Asperger Syndrome and I have and want a job". In 2010, I have spoken Asperger Services Australia and am due to speak on Friday 5th November 2010 for Autism Queensland.

I would be interested in assisting on the Senate Committee for Equity, Diversity and the Status of Women as I am aware of the difficulties and struggles a person with has when living with a disability and I know and am aware of the need for more understanding and awareness to make life more acceptable and tolerable for a person with a disability. Prior to working at the University of Queensland Library, I worked in CODA (Carers of Disabled Adults) as an Administration Assistant. It was my role within this organization to assist the Staff member to find venues for people with disabilities within the community. I have a strong interest in assisting people with a disability within the community and within the University and attended a meeting of the Disability Sub-Committee with Joanne Rutherford last year to raise awareness of Asperger Syndrome within the University of Queensland environment. As I am a staff member with a disability, I know first-hand the difficulties a member of staff has within the University environment and I would like to raise and promote more awareness of disabilities and more so Asperger Syndrome within the University of Queensland environment.

In terms of skills and experience, I can only say that my own experience of having Asperger Syndrome makes me an ideal candidate for the role. Since being diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome in July 1998 by Dr Tony Attwood, I have been actively involved in setting up originally an adult support group for adults with Asperger Syndrome under the umbrella of the Asperger Syndrome Support Network which is now called Asperger Services Australia. This group started with 4 members in 1999 and grew to over 40 by the time I left it due to

work commitments in 2001. I also have been instrumental in having my own accounts spoken about on the Voice of America, and have assisted Dr Tony Attwood in some presentations he has given on Asperger Syndrome. Dr Tony Attwood is the leading specialist of Asperger Syndrome here in Brisbane, Australia. I have also spoken at Schools, Universities, Rotary Clubs and some sectors of the general public about my personal experiences of having Asperger Syndrome. Recently, I have also been mentioned in some publications, and am in contact with some adults who have Asperger Syndrome overseas. I also have close contact with Dr Tony Attwood here in Brisbane. Within my spare time, I also assist adults with Asperger Syndrome meet other adults with Asperger Syndrome to break down social isolation and to establish closer communication amongst themselves. This is a duty I never cease to do and I have empathy for anyone who has a disability within the community, especially the University of Queensland.

If I have the opportunity to serve on the Senate Committee for Equity, Diversity and the Status of Women, I would make it my aim to represent not only those with Asperger Syndrome but other members of the University who are affected by a disability. I would like to encourage and more so induce a much more disability friendly and aware environment for people affected by a disability. I would like to work with others to ensure that necessary support and assistance is available so that people feel included rather than distanced or excluded within the University environment.

As a committee member I also adhere the rules and regulations governing the University of Queensland and will to the utmost of my ability ensure my understanding and awareness of these if I am to be selected for the committee. I also would see an opportunity of being appointed to the committee as a means of furthering the representation and support for people with disabilities within the University community.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding my application and please feel free to contact me should you require any further information

Yours faithfully

Garry Burge