

Ms Vicki Gibbs, Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)

Gibbs: Hello everybody. Can I just get a show of hands as to how many of you would say that you had a good knowledge of what autism is, just to start off with?

Gibbs: Good start. How many of you would have some knowledge about autism? All right. How many of you don't know anything about autism? Okay. All right. So, mostly working for the sums. Look, with the handout it's a lot more involved; I'm going to talk to some. For people who have no knowledge about autism there'll be a lot more information in the handout, that you can, kind of, read through later.

What I'm going to try and get through today is to give you an overview of autism, so, to go over it again, so we all, kind of, come to the same page – talk about what it is for a person who has autism, what are the core impairments. I'm going to talk about assessing adults with autism, which is quite a challenging task, talk about what a good assessment might look like, and then I'm going to talk about the kinds of associated difficulties and psychological problems that people with autism have and particularly the way that that might relate to offending behaviour, and getting caught up in the legal system, and talk about the legal implications of autism for sentencing and reoffending behaviour.

So, what are autism spectrum disorders? Essentially, people with autism have difficulty in three core areas. First of all, social interaction; secondly, communication and third, what we call *restricted or repetitive interest* activities or behaviours.

What do we mean when we say that they have difficulties with social interaction? We're not just talking about poor social skills here; lots of people have less rather than more in the way of social skills. We're talking about quite a distinct quality, in terms of social relating.

There are four characteristics that people with autism may present with. First of all, they have a marked impairment in the use of nonverbal behaviours when communicating, and by that I mean – look, when we communicate we talk but really that's quite a small percentage of our communication. About 80% of our communication is our body language, our body posturing, our facial expression and our gesture. People with autism, even the ones who develop very good speech, will certainly will have a history of delayed or difficult use, in terms of all those other multiple nonverbal behaviours like eye gaze and gesture. It makes their communication style appear quite different and quite odd.

Failure to develop age appropriate peer relationships. People with autism have a history of having very little interest in forming social relationship; they might be described, as young children, as just not wanting to have friends or preferring to isolate themselves. Some young children with autism actually avoid social contact; they'll be the ones in the corner when everybody else is doing something. And then, it, kind of, can work it's way up to people who do want to form relationships with other people, actually do have a lot of social interest, but don't have the skills and don't have the wherewithal to, kind of, form

successful relationships so there's that whole spectrum there, but there will be difficulties with having age appropriate relationships with their peers.

Thirdly, a lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests or achievements with other people, so they don't seek to share enjoyment. They may really be enjoying something they're doing, or be excited about something, but a lot of people with autism will be excited within themselves, rather than what most people do, [which] is want other people to be excited with them. Little children are a classic example: most little children if they see something interesting will point that out to other people because they want other people to look at it, and if you tease out people's history with autism that's something they often didn't do as young children, is seek to, kind of, share things with their parents, even giving toys or showing toys to people.

Fourthly, lack social or emotional reciprocity, which is a long-winded way of saying that there isn't that normal social and emotional give and take, and what that might look like is, they may not notice when other people are upset, and if they do it may seem as if they don't care.

They may not respond to people. Most people know that if somebody says, 'hi, how are you going?' you just say, 'Good, thanks' – it's socially appropriate – whereas [with] people with autism those kinds of social rules, those unspoken ones that in a sense we're never taught directly – they actually don't know them. So, in terms of their social and emotional responsiveness there can be just that, either totally devoid or odd and inappropriate.

That's what the social interaction problems look like. Most people with autism won't have all of these symptoms; it's a mix of the characteristics, and more or less of each of them, but generally they're the kind of characteristics you'd be looking at. In terms of communication, they often have a delay in, or total lack of, development of language. Some people with autism, their language development is normal but many will have a history of language delay. Some people with autism never develop language.

Difficulty initiating and sustaining conversation; this is more, probably, the types of individuals with autism that you would come across, would be people who've got relatively good speech, but what you will notice is that you will have a lot of difficulty having a give-and-take type conversation about everyday things. They may be able to talk in a monologue about something they're interested in, and be quite fluent, but to actually converse with somebody – *social* chat is what I'm talking about, the talk about the weather just to fill the space – 'oh, it's a nice day today', that type of talk – that's something that people describe as something you aren't probably able to have with this person.

They can have unusual language. They may repeat chunks of movie phrases, or just want to repeat the same things over, and over again and, again back to childhood – and you can see this in adults too – a poverty of imagination. As young children, anything imaginative, imaginative play can be either very delayed or it just never happens; the whole concept of creativity and imagination can be quite limited.

When we talk about restricted, repetitive and stereotype patterns, one of the characteristics there is that some of them will have these very, very strong interests. Sometimes the interests are very normal, like a young man being interested in Rugby League or cricket; it's a very normal thing to be interested in, but if you spend three years collecting names,

posters all over your room, seeking out information on the internet for six hours a day, only conversing to other people about those topics and nothing else, then somebody might describe that as an overly intense interest.

On the other hand, they may develop interests that are quite odd in and of themselves, so being fascinated with fans and just wanting to know everything about ceiling fans, knowing the makes of ceiling fans, the best quality – been reading reviews in Choice – knowing what brands are made in what country. So, that's the kind of unusual interest.

So, you have these unusual interests, or normal interests with an unusual kind of intensity. Some people with autism have very fixed routines and rituals, that they just have to follow through; they have to do things in a certain order and can have quite eccentric routines built into their lives.

Thirdly, stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms; this is generally in [the] much lower-functioning. The hand-flapping is a classic, or jumping up and down, or spinning on the spot.

Lastly, persistent preoccupation with parts of objects. Some people with autism will become very interested, or fixated, on parts of objects. A classic one [with] young children is the wheels of cars, just wanting to spin wheels on cars for hours, and that's how they engage with their toys.

Look, the autism spectrum, there's a whole range, so those difficulties that I talked about, in terms of communication – social, and 'restrictive and repetitive' – any individual with autism will have a very different profile. Some of them will have a very marked social impairment, reasonable speech, and not that much in the way of 'restrictive and repetitive', just maybe somebody who, kind of, has a few interests and prefers to do that. Another person might have very little speech altogether, be a person who does seek out contact, doesn't have to much success with it, and have lots of 'restrictive and repetitive' interests, so everyone is different in terms of their profile, but they will have some degree of difficulty across those three areas.

There are features that we see associated with autism. Many people who have autism have epilepsy. I would say all have a learning difficulty of some kind, even when they have normal IQ; it's often learning difficulties associated. They're vulnerable to psychopathology for several different reasons, anxiety, depression.

Some have gross and fine motor difficulties as well. I can't show a video clip, sorry; it was interesting, but just the way the technical stuff's set up I can't show that. It's just a young man with autism on a Sixty Minutes episode.

So, the different categories – you may see these in your reports that come through to you – these are all forms of autism. I've just put them there so you're familiar. They're really talking about the same type of thing: autistic disorder, Asperger's Disorder or Asperger's Syndrome, and this hideously named 'Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified' – PDDNOS – essentially means, 'I'm really sure this person has a form of autism but I can't classify it as autistic because they don't have enough ... or they don't meet certain rules; I can't classify it as Asperger's for the same reason, but I'm sure they have a form of autism', and they go into this third bag, but this bag is a form of

autism spectrum disorder. Some people will call that 'atypical' autism, meaning, 'this is not a typical case'.

They're the labels you might come across. I'm not going to go into that because I could talk [about] that for ages, but basically there's not a lot of difference between a young man with autistic disorder with normal intelligence and a young man who's got a diagnosis of Asperger's.

As I said before, [with] common co-morbidities, like ADHD, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, the guys are much more highly represented with autism spectrum disorder, somewhere between four-to-one to eight-to-one, so this is just much more likely to be seen in males. The latest prevalence rating puts it at about 1/160, and that tells us that about 43,000 people in New South Wales will have a form of autism, and about 130,000 in Australia. I'm not going to go into causes; that's a whole talk. We don't know what causes it, but we do know that there's a strong genetic component.

Assessing adults with ASD is difficult because people with ASD learn skills just like everybody does throughout their lifetime. By the time they get to adulthood it can be quite difficult to work out whether this person actually has autism. Just going through the literature, some of the studies that have gone into forensic settings, like Broadmoor in the UK, gone in and done really thorough assessments for autism have actually found that there are a lot of people with autism who have been misdiagnosed with either a personality disorder of some kind or schizophrenia. It's often not picked up, particularly in higher functioning individuals; I guess that's the category we're talking about here, people with normal intelligence and reasonable speech.

How might you know that somebody in front of you might have an ASD? If you're sitting there dealing with somebody who's not come through with a formal diagnosis, in an adult this is what you might look for: you might look for their eye contact; are they talking to you and looking at you at the same time? Facial expression: do they exhibit a whole range of facial expressions? If you watch people communicating with you throughout the day, their faces move all the time; I mean, it's just a natural thing. People with autism will sometimes have extremes, like a smile or an 'angry' face, but they don't have those more subtle expressions. You'll notice when you're talking to them that something 'feels odd about this person', but that might be the thing that's making you feel like that; it's just there's not a lot of facial expression there.

Similarly, with the use of gesture, like when I'm sitting here talking to you, you know, the hands move, and people, 'I don't know', and that type of thing, and often when people with autism are talking they're saying all the words but there's not a lot else going on and, just, there's something odd about their communication style.

They have difficulty understanding their own emotions. A hard question for them can be, 'what do you like doing that makes you happy?' You could have a very fluent young man in front of you and yet when you start talking to him about emotions, either of himself or of other people, like, 'how did that person feel when that happened?' it's like they don't really have a clue, and it will be in marked difference to everything else they might be able to talk about, so that's an area of particular difficulty for them.

Same with relationships: if you ask them about friendships, 'what's a friend?', you know, 'why do people get married?', and ask them those kinds of relationship-type questions,

often their responses are just a bit left of centre, often devoid of the emotional content part of relationships.

Unusual rapport with the person: generally, when you're talking with people you can feel comfortable. Often when you're talking to a person with autism there's a lot of, kind of, dead spaces; you're often having to talk to them to keep conversations going.

Conversation skills: can the person talk with you in a normal give-and-take type of way or are they, kind of, just giving you a bit of a monologue, or giving you a really minimal response, like, 'do you have brothers and sisters?' 'Yes'. Most people would say, 'yeah, I've got two brothers and a sister'. So, it's that kind of very limited social interchange that requires a lot of probing and prompting to get going.

Their voice features: a lot of people with autism have unusual voices. Sometimes, no vocal tone, so just talking in the one tone all the time. Sometimes very high pitch. Sometimes, very, very fast, in a way that impedes being able to understand them, and sometimes unusually slow. Also, their interests: if you've got somebody in front of you and their talking *at* you about something in this incredible detail, a PlayStation game and what level, and this, that and the other, despite you, kind of, saying, 'look, I don't know a lot about that', you know, 'can we move on?' continuing to go on with that type of thing, you might sit and think, 'this person's a bit over the top', in some areas.

Also, any ritualised or compulsive behaviours that might be evident.

In terms of criminal activities, often the biggest clue that you're dealing with someone with a form of autism might be just looking behind whatever they've done, looking at the motivation. Usually with a person with autism it's not going to be your typical motivation. The reason why they've got into trouble is often down to either [that] they've got a strong interest or fixation that's gotten them into trouble, they've had some sort of panic reaction to environmental factors. [For] many people with autism noise is a huge issue, noise or flashing lights; I've had cases of people with autism and you find them in a foetal position because someone has taken them to one of those Galaxy Worlds – you know, the centres with all the games and the flashing lights; they can't deal with sensory input. So, sometimes they get into trouble just because of some panic reaction as a result of either noise, or something in the environment.

Lack of common sense: they'll often just get into trouble because they're so, so naïve. Again, when they get involved with police and with lawyers, they might look like they're not caring too much about it. They might sit there and say, 'yeah, I did that', and people will say, 'God', you know, 'what a cold fish; he's just sat there and told me exactly what he's done', but generally it's because they don't have a good understanding of the repercussions of their behaviour. They therefore don't try to conceal it and they just, kind of, tell what happened in quite an open way.

It's very unlikely that their motivation is malicious. If you were dealing with somebody and you thought, 'does this person actually have autism; do I need to get this', kind of, 'checked out?', comprehensive assessment for adults with suspected autism would have to include this type of thing, where somebody has access to somebody who knows this person from a young age. You do need to know about the developmental history, so somebody has to be able to access those types of things, and conduct an interview with a person keeping all those characteristics in mind. You could use a sibling, a close family friend, ideally parents, and get some of the history there.

In terms of what features of ASD are relevant to criminal actions, it's usually related to either their psychological deficits, that get them into trouble, or those abnormal repetitive and narrow interests. [Of] the psychological deficits, the main one that's going to get them into trouble is what we call 'theory of mind' or 'mind-blindness'.

Theory of mind is what just about everybody's got, and that is being able to understand the motivations and the beliefs of other people. If I see somebody doing something I can come up with lots of hypotheses about why that person might feel like that – 'Jeez, they're having a bad day', or 'they might be running late and so they've lost their temper'. I'm able to, kind of, in a sense, put myself into somebody else's shoes and come up with some ideas about why they might behave the way they do. People with autism find that incredibly difficult, and as a result can get themselves into a lot of messes socially. I mean, can you imagine what that would be like, to not be able to understand the reasons behind people's actions?

Their perspective-taking skills are very poor, and as a result they don't understand the intentions and motives of other people. They don't understand, often, the effect of their behaviour on other people. They have difficulty predicting how other people are going to behave in situations. They have difficulty understanding deception, often get into trouble just 'cause somebody's, kind of, set 'em up; other people would just pick that up quite quickly. They have difficulty adhering to social norms, social and legal rules; they often don't know social rules. They have difficulty understanding pretend, and fact and fiction. So, they may be genuinely unaware of harm that they might be causing somebody else, and therefore they don't express remorse. Some might think they are quite psychopathic because they're not saying they feel sorry about it. They may not be able to read the necessary interpersonal cues, telling them to 'back off'. You know, if they're approaching somebody and [that person] just gives them a foul look, that might be not enough for somebody with autism; they often need to be told something very, very specifically. [They] may not be able to predict the impact, or social and legal consequences, of their actions.

Secondly, people with autism aren't good at taking bits of information and making sense of it. They tend to focus on a bit, and see it in isolation. All of us, when we go about our daily lives, are picking up bits of information all the time – we're not even conscious of it – and we can, kind of, put that together and understand the situation. People with autism can just get stuck in one element of it, which then ends up [with them imposing] their own perspective on events, and they can often be very noncompliant, especially if they're focusing on something that they're interested [in] or fixated on. [00:19:24] They have difficulties with executive functioning, and that's all the higher order processes. The one that's going to get them in the most trouble there is emotion regulation. When we get upset or worked up we have ways of controlling ourselves, just saying, 'this isn't the place for me to let this all hang out; I'm going to go home and kick the dog', or whatever you do. But people with autism aren't able to control themselves, a lot of the time, and so they'll have 'explosions', and get themselves into trouble that way.

Often their offending behaviour is associated with their narrow interests, for example a man fixated on transport, who's really into diggers, and bulldozers and that type of thing, and he ended up getting arrested because he was driving trains and buses and flagging traffic around construction sites; it was just what he liked doing.

There's a lot of stuff in the literature about stalking cases. An adult with autism getting really fixated on a particular person and just following them around, following them around, and totally oblivious that they're frightening them or that they really don't like it. They see it as a way of being close to them, of keeping in contact. It kind of can develop into an obsessional interest.

Another big one is fire; people with autism really like fire, and end up getting involved in arson.

Research findings: compared to other developmental disabilities, autism seems to be a little bit over-represented. We don't know whether people with autism are at greater risk of being caught up with the law than typically developing people; the study so far, kind of, [is] mixed.

When autistic people do get caught up there often is a violent element associated with it.

Environmental factors are important; if they have an obsessive cognitive style and very poor social skills, and they have family dysfunction, they're the types of factors that predict whether they're likely to get into trouble again.

I've just got a case study here. One example is a volunteer fireman charged with murder. He was accused of starting a fire to obtain insurance money. The fire killed his daughter and injured his wife. He was initially diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder, due to the fact that he was very cold and he wasn't remorseful, for example, he said to the officers, you know, 'I'm going to go and buy a new jet-ski with the insurance money' – from his daughter's death. Someone was brought on to do a full assessment of this person, and what they found when they did that was that, look, he had little facial expression; he didn't use body language at all, he had very little emotion overall. When they looked into his history, he'd never been able to relate to peers; he'd never had any friendships; he'd been bullied right through school. When his investigators asked him to talk about friends in the current time he named all these friends, but when the investigators went to these people they were, [really], 'him ... ?' Like, you know, [they] might not talk to him twice in the last two months, but he's identifying them as his friends.

He had difficulty reading social cues and understanding cause and effect, and everyone who'd ever known him had always considered him kind of, you know, 'retarded', or 'backwards', right through his life yet he had normal intelligence. The reason was because of his really poor social functioning. I mean, he always had a long history of fixation, with fire related themes.

If you're thinking of the difference between ASD versus non-ASD offenders, it's kind of a table of the clues. People with non-ASD often have a long history of drug and alcohol abuse. You know, you pull out their sheets and it's there, right throughout their history. With ASD, very little history of drug and alcohol abuse, in most cases. With non-ASD, typically they've got that history of having some early criminal activities, and it gradually builds up. With an ASD person, they're just going to appear in the legal system, typically out of the blue, and they don't have that criminal history. People with ASD are very quick to confess, and show little guilt or remorse; they just, kind of, will tell what happened, whereas people with non-ASD will be trying to get out of it any which way they can, maybe coming up with some ... trying to deny it, may say they're sorry.

People with ASD have no understanding of the implications and repercussions of their behaviour whereas people without ASD seem to understand the legal consequences, have an awareness of the court process. They might be getting sentenced: people with autism, you're like, you know, 'do you *know* ... ?' – that this might be happening – and all that side of it seems to be missing.

Look, if you do have someone with ASD, [if] there's a suspicion there, you need to get that person assessed to confirm the diagnosis, and it's not just automatic that if someone's got autism therefore, you know, they're let off the hook, in a sense. It's, kind of, more complicated than that; whoever's doing the assessment has to look at this particular individual with autism, look at their particular characteristics, look at the crime and look at, 'okay, what degree', you know, 'what', kind of, 'contribution did this person's disability make to how he got himself into trouble?' So, they need to determine the degree to which the diagnosis is related to the offence, and depending on that obtain recommendations for sentencing and/or treatment to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

So, every case should be considered on its own merit, while taking into account the type of crime, its severity and it's direct connection to the disabilities caused by the disorder. You have to think about, when you're going through the court process with this person, do they understand legal concepts? They might need to have that explained to them very directly. What were the reasons underlying the offence? What programs could be used to reduce the likelihood of reoffending? If the person is sentenced, what's the implications of their disability on their safety, particularly while they are just such victims waiting to happen because of how naïve they are? Other people in the court system will pick them out within two seconds; they could be your assessors, actually.

Pre-court appearance: they might need some help there. They might need to visit it, to see what a court looks like. They might need to be told the rules directly. I mean, most people going to court know not to bounce up and start talking. People with autism may not understand those kinds of rules. You might have to explain to them, 'look, you talk when you are asked a question', and, 'this is the way it goes', and 'this person's going to be sitting up there ...' Yeah, tell them the rules directly. Explain non-literal language; maybe talk to the people in the court who are going to be involved in his case. You can't really use that, sort of, slang, or metaphor, or [just] any type of language because they are very literal in their interpretations of things. Prepare the court. Yeah, let people know, 'look, if this guy is not looking at you when he's talking it's not because he's being shifty; it's because he just doesn't make eye contact with people; if he's sitting there rocking and covering his ears he's not trying to be difficult, or make a racket; it could be that the lighting or the noise is disturbing him.'

Have few people [present]; have a family person or a mentor [present]; regular breaks ... ideas there ... look, depending on the person's profile, [there are] some treatment options, if they are going to gaol, to stop re-offending. They might need social skills training; they might need to be told particular social rules and conventions, and might need to be told very specifically what is accepted and non-accepted behaviour. They can be taught perspective-taking skills; we do it with young children all the time. It's more difficult with adults but there are programs to do that.

Similarly with social communication skills and nonverbal behaviour, they may need treatment for anxiety management; that's been shown to be very successful with typically developing people and there is reason to believe that, especially with high functioning

individuals with autism, you can teach them how to manage anxiety, and therefore lessen the likelihood that they're going to get into trouble as a result of a panic-type reaction.

Pharmacological intervention.

And – wish list – what could be there to help you guys in your work? Wouldn't it be nice if there was somebody in the system who was an autism expert, who could look after it in terms of assessing, letting you know if this is what you're dealing with, and [giving] you information about the relationship of the crime to their disability, and talk to you about particular treatment options for that person?

Presenter (♀): Thank you.

Edgely: A question for Vicki. My name's Michele Edgely from Griffith University. I'm just concerned the extent to which people suffering, perhaps, from the more severe cases of autism have the capacity to understand right from wrong which, as you'd be aware, is a legal test. Just listening to you, I got the impression that in a lot of cases there would be a lot of impairment of that capacity.

Gibbs: Yep, you're right. I mean, as I said, it would have to be on an individual basis. I've met young people with autism who I think would be able to know right from wrong, because they're at that level, but [it's] probably more the case that it would be quite limited. It really is on an individual basis.

Participant (♀): This question's actually directed to Judge French. I was just wondering, do you think that some people, who plead not guilty and are acquitted on grounds of mental illness are in fact worse off than some people who plead guilty, for the fact that they get a sentence of indefinite detention?

French (♀): The answer to that is 'yes'. Certainly, my experience is that in some cases, when people are dealt with under our mentally impaired accused system, they wind up being under custody orders for far longer than they would otherwise, if they got a finite term.

I think that's simply because it's all based on risk assessment all the time, and part of the difficulty is [that if] you take someone who's got chronic schizophrenia they're always going to be, their behaviour's always going to be, difficult, and it's going to be a life-long condition with many of them, but they remain under a custody order because no one is ever prepared to say, 'well, this person isn't a risk in the community any more'. There are a lot of people who are in the community who are at risk but they're not all kept in prison.

Of course the other problem is that we don't have enough places or appropriate facilities for people with mental illness, who come under that system, and so most of them are in prison anyway but they're in prison for far longer than they would if they just got a sentence for someone who's been convicted. That's another one of the more shameful aspects of the way the criminal justice system deals with mental conditions and mental illness.

Participant (♀): This is a question for the second speaker, about depression. I wonder whether there's been classification creep. I mean, many people get depressed when their parents die, or they've been locked up in gaol for a month or two waiting for a trial, and I wonder whether clinical psychologists are prepared to throw around the diagnosis of depression too easily in plea material?

Gibbs: That's a whole new ... well, a whole-day seminar, that one. The diagnosis of depression we'd go with would be what's in DSM4 at this stage; we'd be guided by the symptoms that are presented. There is growing interest in depression; if you have a look at the Black Dog Institute's work, that's coming out there, they're looking at dividing depression into three kinds, the psychotic depression, which is fairly unusual and pretty obvious when you see it, just for anyone – they're out there. Then there's the depression – which is also relatively rare – where there's a large component of psychomotor agitation or retardation; these people may end up attracting a diagnosis of bipolar or something similar. Ninety percent of depressions that present would be those in the melancholic line, which can respond to psychological interventions, often prescribed an SSIR [sic] and are usually treatable.

There is a growing story about the interaction with genetic predisposition. There does appear to be some stories about people who have a particular genetic structure, who when they are confronted with not one, or two but three traumatic instances in a short period of time may then be thrown into a depressive episode ...

Participant (♂): I get, in a lot of pleas, a psychological report saying they're 'depressed'. Well, of course they're depressed.

French: Oh, I see. Well, what you need to know is that what they were like at the time of the offence, and how we can justify that, and what you'd be hoping for, and what I would hope you would get, from your psychological reports, would be good triangulation. So, not just an interview when we get them, which is after the offence, but also interviews with people who knew them quite well, family members, friends.

Triangulation for what's out there as data, interviews with any health professionals they are involved with, we try to gather it, as much as we can, to give some indication of what's going on inside people's heads. I guess, in interpreting those reports that you get, I would recommend that you look at the preamble to the report, where people say how much time they've actually had with the offender, what resources they had available in making their assessment, and that will tell you whether they had the time and the resources – and the access to documentation – to allow them to allow them make a very comprehensive report, or not.

But yes, most people are depressed when they come in the system, and remain depressed while they are in the system, of course.

Cahill: Ron Cahill, ACT Magistrate's Court. A question for Vickie: in a small jurisdiction like the ACT I virtually have very little contact, over the last thirty years, with people that have raised autism in criminal sentencing. Although it happens occasionally, it tends to happen more in the area of educational needs and things of that nature. I was just wondering [if,] in your work in New South Wales, there's any statistical evidence about the role of autism amongst criminal offenders percentage-wise?

Gibbs: Nah, look, I did a literature review on this generally, and I probably found twenty papers worldwide – recent; I mean, I didn't go back into ancient stuff but in recent stuff, and certainly nothing specific to New South Wales or even Australia, for that matter. You can only infer from the handful of papers that I've had ... It's probably more from people's clinical experience that I would, kind of ... You were saying that clinically you're finding that there is a percentage that have autism or suspected autism, but there's nothing documented.

Cahill: And, I guess in relation to minor offending they're never going to make the court; they'll be diverted some way. It's only when there's a major offence occurs that it gets to court. Thank you.