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| Disability Awards Elise Muller - video transcript |
| Department of Health and Human Services |

The world around me was really, really loud and it hurt. Lights were too bright. Sounds of things were too loud. It was just really overwhelming. I didn’t really understand people and how they could talk to each other and understand. When I got to about 12 years old, I was diagnosed with autism and that explained why the world

was so loud and so overwhelming for me – it was the sensory side of it. It explained why I couldn’t understand the world and I just felt really isolated but sport was something that I could do well.

My name’s Elise Muller, I am an Indigenous athlete – female athlete – from Wurundjeri and Palawa country. And we are in the Essendon football grounds which is my football club.

Sport for me was my outlet. There’s a comradery about football and I loved that. It’s a very selfless game and I guess it was my way of forcing people to have a friendship with me through loyalty, through team care

without relying on my social skills.

I had a list of things that I wanted to become when I got older and it was already things

I knew I couldn’t do but getting the diagnosis of autism instantly I was like, having a label, it just made me feel like it was a done deal, I could never achieve that.

After that I was just, I learned “hey, this is confirmed that something’s wrong with me”.

And that perspective came from having low self-esteem. So, it’s like put a label onto you but if you still believe that you’re not good enough then that label is gonna either be a reason why you’re not good enough or

you’re not going to attach yourself to it.

And there was a lot that I couldn’t control but, all of a sudden, I was introduced to a world where I could be connected to the world and it wasn’t through language and it wasn’t through the things that were overwhelming,

but it was through sport.

When I was younger, people used to say to me “Elise isn’t going to get anywhere” or they’d say to my mum, the doctor used to say, “Elise isn’t going to get anywhere because she has autism”. Being a female

with autism I realised that I don’t want to be seen as different. There’s a stereotype

that people with autism don’t like sport but the autism strength of hyper-focus, it just, I just practiced and practiced, and I don’t think that I’m the first ever person with a disability to play AFL.

I’m the first person who’s out and proud. I want to change the language that we talk

about disability and if we can eliminate the fear, if we can create flexibility and patience,

then that’s going to make the world of difference but that’s only going to come when the society

has hope that, by putting in that time, by putting in that extra effort, something big

or something great is going to come from it.

But only when we see role models is society going to do that because, unfortunately, people

need to see to believe.

[Text on screen]

Authorised by the Department of Health and Human Services

50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne