

AUTISM SA ANNUAL REPORT

2017/18





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About Autism SA



Autism SA is an established, well-governed, registered, for purpose, charitable organisation. People with autism and their families established Autism SA in 1964. It was the first organisation of its kind in Australia. The founding members were families driven by the desire to ensure that they had access to the best information, education, treatment and support. They advocated for acceptance and understanding. They encouraged research and leadership in the community.

Since 1964, Autism SA has been single-minded in its focus upon supporting the autism community.

Autism SA has been at the forefront of service development and advocacy with a strong legacy of being responsible for bringing many firsts to the community in South Australia and nationally.

Today the organisation has a long and rich history of being a recognised leader for the provision of specialised consulting and services to people on the autism spectrum, their families and the broader community. Autism SA prides itself on a strong values-driven culture of empowerment of, and support for, individuals living with autism.

Autism SA has over 13,000 registered individuals on the autism spectrum. Autism SA's workforce of currently over 260 staff provide a range of quality services and supports, that are innovative and follow evidence based practice, to individuals across the lifespan, their families and professionals in a range of locations including clinic, in-home, and schools. Autism SA aims to improve life outcomes for people on the spectrum by providing and facilitating the very best information, connections, expertise, education, services, support and a strong representative voice for people in our community.

Autism SA has earned a positive and consistent reputation for autism specialisation among individuals with autism and their families and supporters, disability stakeholders and the general public. It is our policy that our activities must be sustainable and meet our high standards for service quality, ethical practice and generate positive, person-centred outcomes for individuals, families, carers and others supporting our community.

We also support and encourage activities that build community capacity and support to create conducive environments to improve the social and economic contribution of people on the spectrum.

Our Vision:
Each individual on the autism spectrum lives the life they choose in an inclusive society



Our strategic goal is for Autism SA to remain true to its foundations whilst taking advantage of the biggest social reform for the disability sector, the National Disability Insurance Scheme. With over 50 years' experience in providing these services and programs, we are ideally poised to continue to expand our services to meet what individuals on the autism spectrum, and the autism community, want.

Autism SA is quality certified, and is a registered provider of:

- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA);
- Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package;
- Better Start; and
- The Government of South Australia Disability Services Provider Panel.

Vision and Mission

Our vision is for each person on the autism spectrum to live the life they choose in an inclusive society.

Our mission is to be the first choice for individuals on the autism spectrum, supporting them to turn their potential into reality.



Chair's Report - by Troy Mohler



Last year I described the past year as one of continued change for Autism SA; this continues to be true. We always knew that this year would be a year of transformation, not just for Autism SA, but for the whole disability sector.

The Board had anticipated that the level of change required for 2017/2018 would necessitate significant re-investment back into the organisation. To accomplish this, we forecasted a significant deficit to fund the required transformation. It soon became apparent that this would not be sufficient to continue to transform, and meet increasing demand and an evolving National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding model.

The changes to the disability sector by NDIS have been more challenging than many foresaw. This is evidenced by the number of mergers that have occurred in the sector, along with major remodelling of some businesses, and decisions to cease providing services in a number of key areas, including peak body activities.

The adaption of block funded not-for-profits into more commercially focused organisations will continue to present the sector with significant hurdles. At Autism SA we still have many challenges to overcome, both internally and externally.

Despite the level of transformation still ongoing we are forecasting a positive result for 2018/19 from our hard work, as efficiencies are expected to be achieved and new opportunities are realised.

Last year I spoke of a new paradigm being required, to function like a commercial entity to be sustainable, whilst not losing sight of the organisation's mission and vision. This still holds firm and any organisation in the sector that cannot adapt, may not survive in the new environment.

Whilst the NDIS presents the autism community opportunity to finally receive the service and support that they desperately need, the challenge to the sector is to ensure that all the required services are delivered in a sustainable and effective manner. One challenge for Autism SA is to determine how to continue some of the much needed work and services that it provides to the sector, despite these not being funded under the NDIS.

The financial stress imposed by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) onto organisations in the disability sector cannot be understated, with the need to fund service gaps and manage the increased transactional load. But those organisations with the will and capability to transform, as well as an asset base to act as a safety net, will survive. Agility will remain a key attribute of organisations that will prosper in the new environment.

The Board is intensely focused on ensuring that the organisation delivers its services in an effective and sustainable way. The past year has seen significant change in the leadership of Autism SA as the CEO builds the team capable of developing and implementing the change required. The Board will continue to work with the Leadership Team and staff at Autism SA to ensure the success of Autism SA to the betterment of our community.

I would like to pay tribute to the staff of Autism SA. They are the real stars of the organisation, working with our community to help those on the spectrum live the best life they can. I would like to thank them for their patience and commitment as the organisation undergoes continued change to adapt and transform to the new disability market.

I would like to thank Brad Manuel, who regrettably resigned in late 2017 due to work commitments. Brad provided valuable input and insight to the Board with his background in the sector as well as his commercial acumen and experience. I wish Brad all the best for the future.

Last calendar year was my last full year with Autism SA. Over the next 12 months I will transition to new leadership of the Board. It has been a privilege to be associated with Autism SA and the Board for the last 10 years. I have gained a tremendous amount from being on the Board, and leaving fills me with a mixture of sadness as well as pride in the level of change that I have been involved with since 2008.

I will always have a soft spot for Autism SA due to the personal nature of my involvement, and keenly look to a future of a strong, reliable Autism SA working closely with the autism community.

CEO's Report - by Jenny Karavolas



It has been a year of significant navigation in the sea of change, both internally and externally.

The organisation has worked hard in continuation of its transition program to thrive in a sector struggling with meeting the needs of the evolving NDIS landscape. Further financial investment was required to dedicate time to support participants to understand, navigate and advocate in the changing disability sector and fund gaps to enable critical services to continue, whilst at the same time expand services and increase organisation capacity and efficiency.

We expanded our service footprint this year with the opening of our Northern service and support hub and continued with our plans for the Southern hub. We were delighted to realise service growth and expand the scope of services across all age groups to meet more of what people want. We also provided autism advisory and early days workshop services to the Northern Territory, and supported local service providers and government agencies.

We continued with critical peak body activities as people have needed access to clear information, credible answers and linkages to reach positive outcomes now more than ever. We worked with individuals and families to support post diagnosis pathway navigation, transitioned loved ones to community living, and provided support in numerous NDIS meetings. We supported individuals and educators through our early intervention pathways, foundation skills and school inclusion services. We also provided counselling and social skill building to adults.

Furthermore we worked with various organisations and partners to increase the employment opportunities for individuals with autism.

We played a role at a state level through sector development and collaboration initiatives. We also played a role at the state and national level for advocating for the needs of people with autism and their families. This included Board roles on the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorder and the Australian Autism Alliance.

Our sector capacity building continued with a wide range of initiatives all of which had the underpinning goal of capacity building and increasing participation in society for people on the autism spectrum and their families. This included training and consultancy of individuals, families, agencies, organisations and professionals. We also provided expertise under the Positive Partnerships program. We proudly supported the showcasing of three internationally renowned autism experts, Dr Temple Grandin, Dr Peter Vermeulen and Dr Wenn Lawson.

We were engaged in a number of research initiatives and collaborated with Autism CRC, universities, tertiary institutions and community organisations to advance knowledge in the field of Autism and promote best practice. We shared our knowledge at the Asia Pacific Autism Conference (APAC) 2017 and participated in the Flinders University Program to support and mentor educators to achieve whole of school changes in the education sector. We supported transition of knowledge internationally by hosting a number of Chinese delegates.

We continued to have strong interest and participation in our Diagnostic Service training for professionals to develop their competencies in carrying out diagnostic assessments. The Diagnostic service team also continued consulting with Autism CRC regarding the National Guidelines for diagnosis of ASD in Australia, and has worked with the NDIS regarding its understanding of ASD, the diagnostic practice and appropriate supports.

We also prepared to expand the reach of our Autism Friendly Charter, with the support of the NDIA, through the rollout of live training in every Australian capital city and the development of additional resources to make training and the Charter accessible across Australia. We further engaged with the autism and wider disability communities at various expos and community events throughout the year.

In conclusion, the last 12 months has been a very progressive year. We have worked hard to progress our future path. I would like to recognise and provide thanks to the our funding bodies for their support including the Department of Human Services, Department of Social Services, Department for Education and NDIA.

A huge thanks to our grant providers for sharing in our vision –Variety SA – the Children's Charity, Liquor Industry Golf Club, NDIA and the Commonwealth Bank for your support this year. I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support of our many stakeholders that are vital to the success of the organisation. This includes our many business partners, ambassadors, volunteers, fund raisers, sponsors and life members. Thank you to the dedicated work of the Board who have been unwavering in their commitment to the autism community as they have responded to the challenges of the NDIS. In addition, I would like to thank our staff who continue to demonstrate their steadfast dedication and commitment to the autism community and the organisation's vision. They bring their exceptional talent and passionate spirit to make a real difference to the workplace every day. Finally, I would like to thank all the individuals on the autism spectrum, families and carers for who we exist for continuing to inspire us to strive to better meet the needs of the autism community.

It is with all of you that we are able to progress towards achieving our vision of each person on the autism spectrum living the life they choose in an inclusive society.

Autism Awareness Month



This year on 2 April, the United Nations sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day had a theme of empowering women and girls on the autism spectrum.

In recognition of the theme, Autism SA released a motivating video comprising of females on the spectrum, who shared with us the person who most inspires them. There were many inspiring idols. One of our young participants shared that she was inspired by Stephen Hawking, who broke all expectations.

As April often falls during school holidays, we were excited to be able to offer a wide range of free and discounted community events in partnership with a number of much loved, autism friendly businesses.

The program of activities included events at the South Australian Museum, Megazone, Pumpit, Boneshaker Cafe, Latitude, The ARC Campbelltown and Bounce. This enabled over 450 individuals and their families to enjoy quality time together in an autism friendly environment, and to have a lot of fun.

We look forward to welcoming many new activities in the next financial year. On top of hosting over seven holiday activities, we also gave away prizes, toys, night lights, fidgets, vouchers and tickets to numerous events and outings including the Adelaide Zoo, the Circus, the Adelaide Youth Theatre, and the Kidz Gigantic Day Out.

During the month we featured global thought leadership content, on the topic of autism, on our digital channels, as well as sharing NDIS information, and relevant television shows and movies that had newly aired.

Strategies from our own staff were shared including tips and tricks for managing the school holidays, and simple steps to help businesses to create an autism friendly environment.

Our CEO, Jenny Karavolos, featured twice on FIVEaa radio – once with two individuals on the autism spectrum, and once with a parent – to share their insights and personal stories with a wider audience.

Autism SA was also featured in Link Disability Magazine and held a month long digital presence at SA Power Networks on Anzac Highway, spreading right across the state the word of standing tall for autism - awareness, understanding, acceptance and inclusion.

In supporting Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders (ATSI) on the autism spectrum, we attended, for the second time, the annual Strong Aboriginal Expo, themed this year as Deadly Kids. The expo proved to be once again a great success in building relationships and creating connections in the community.

Heading beyond the boundaries of Australia, we welcomed to our head office at Netley a number of Chinese delegates, travelling to Adelaide specifically to learn more about autism after having met with some of the Autism SA team the year before.

“It’s nice to have other kids like me to make friends with. It’s awesome and a fun night out and has helped me make friends.”

– Participant

The delegates’ goal is to change the understanding of autism in China, and to learn about inclusive practices that can be implemented to support individuals on the spectrum. The delegates undertook a professional development training day, and were also treated to presentations by a number of individuals on the autism spectrum themselves, and parents, who shared their personal stories with the group.

Carrying through the theme of sharing personal insights, we then produced a second video which highlighted the importance of acceptance and inclusion by asking individuals to share one thing they wish everyone knew about autism.

Their insights highlighted the need for greater autism awareness, with one individual sharing “I would like people to know that it [autism] is not a lack of empathy, it is a mismatch in expression”.

Each year, Autism SA is backed by individuals and organisations that go over and above during Autism Awareness Month, standing tall for autism through awareness, understanding, acceptance and inclusion raising activities, and by raising funds for the organisation.

The incredible support throughout April raised over \$10,000 – to go towards the organisation’s vision for each individual on the autism spectrum to live the life they choose in an inclusive society.

The final highlights of the month were meeting two young men that are supported by Autism SA’s Community Support and Inclusion team, and learning about their latest successes.

One family shared that their son spent his first successful night away from home, on his very first mini holiday during the month; and another stepped into his work boots to help renovate his much loved southern respite house.

Thank you to the amazing autism community for sharing your personal stories and to our fabulous supporters for making this year one of the biggest Autism Awareness Months. We certainly spread the word, standing tall for autism - awareness, understanding, acceptance and inclusion - far and wide, thanks to the many individual and unique voices of our community.

“We’ve seen our son develop over the two terms, from being resistant at first, and needing significant coaxing to get there, to asking every day when he’s next going to south house. We’re really overjoyed that our son has developed relationships and a group he can call friends. One recent example last week was when our son left to go home, there were high fives from one boy, which isn’t unusual, then another boy came up to our son for a high five and they hugged and said goodbye. Our son can be a bit intolerant of others on the spectrum and this to me showed his development and the bond the boys have all developed.” – Parent

Our valued volunteers

Our passionate volunteers play an integral role in the organisation, helping Autism SA to make a difference to the individuals and families we support.

Working across many areas of the organisation our volunteers assist, by applying their skill sets, with making visual resources for our therapists; cleaning and gardening at our respite houses; collecting donations at events or out in the community; revitalising offices and therapy spaces; assisting at Autism SA stands - raising awareness and collecting donations; assisting at events; assisting with internal administration tasks, and much more.

Speaking with our volunteers revealed that working with Autism SA has provided many of them with new opportunities, and given them an insight into autism and disability - sparking new passions, creating education opportunities and kick starting career paths.

On reflecting on his years as a volunteer at Autism SA, one volunteer shared “it has seen me grow so much. It gave me more insight into autism and disability and has guided me to develop an interest in this area of work. I have since completed a Disability Certificate IV and have just started a Certificate IV in Mental Health, as well as a Disability Developmental Education Degree.”

Thank you to each and every one of our volunteers, who generously give their time to help each week. Autism SA sincerely values the passion, dedication and commitment of each and every one of you to make a real difference to the lives of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

Services and Support



Therapy Services

With our leading edge team of Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Counsellors and Behaviour Support Specialists, our Therapy Services continued to respond to the growing demand for our service throughout 2017/18.

Highlights included:

- Provision of service delivery throughout the year;
- Delivering group intervention such as What's the Buzz and Handwriting Without Tears;
- Providing, on average, 16,000 hours of direct therapeutic services to young children, adolescents and adults in a range of settings, including at home, Autism SA sites, at child care facilities, schools, kindergartens and elsewhere;

"This day was engaging and all topics were covered well. I've walked away with many useful ideas for the classroom. Excellent! Well done! Best handouts, well planned."

– Participant

- Growing our Counselling service, including the provision of counselling training with parents and adults, and running social, therapeutic and parent support groups;
- Supporting more than 600 people on the spectrum to develop skills and independence, and supporting participation and engagement in activities and the community;
- Capturing countless progress reports and developing multiple concise National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reports outlining achievements and growth toward individual aspirations;
- Delivering a range of multidisciplinary, individualised programs - including social skills, problem solving, communication and improved relationships;
- Facilitating well attended school holiday groups;

"Thanks for providing such a highly skilled session of workshops that supports the work of teachers and staff at our school site."

– Participant

- Undertaking training in areas of contemporary practice to supplement skills and expertise;
- Delivering professional training for teachers, health professionals, community workers and others; and
- Representing Autism SA in a range of forums and committees.

"You were amazing. The whole of the Barossa is buzzing with excitement after being held to attention the entire day... Every comment about you was of highest regard for the way you presented, your knowledge and the way you kept them engaged."

– Participant

More than
16,400
hours of therapeutic sessions provided

Diagnostic Service

For over 50 years the central role of the Diagnostic Service has been to undertake diagnostic assessments in accordance with the current internationally recognised standards for best practice. In the 2017/2018 financial year the service received over 400 referrals for an assessment. Our team of allied health professionals conducted over 240 diagnostic assessments, seeing children and adults in metropolitan Adelaide at our purpose built diagnostic suite, and in four areas of regional South Australia as part of our Regional Diagnostic Service clinics. 70% of these assessments resulted in a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The Diagnostic Service works in partnership with other publically funded assessment services and professionals in private practice to maintain diagnostic standards in South Australia. Reports following diagnostic assessments that have been conducted by these appropriately qualified and trained professionals are forwarded to the diagnostic service for review, with parent or individual permission, to enable the family or individual to become clients of Autism SA. In the last financial year, Autism SA received on average 110 new diagnostic reports a month.

The interest in the Autism SA's Diagnostic Service's training for professionals – training for those who wish to develop their competencies in carrying out diagnostic assessments - continues to be strong with the waiting list for the intensive and hands on training program being extensive.

The Diagnostic Service has continued consulting with the CRC regarding the National Guidelines for diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Australia, and has worked with the NDIS regarding its understanding of ASD, the diagnostic practice and appropriate supports.

Training, Consultancy and Research

More than 5400 individuals accessed training and consultancy services through Autism SA during the 2017/18 year, achieving an increase in sector development and capacity. Participants were drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, including individuals on the spectrum, families, carers, the education sector, autism professionals and other disability sector participants.

The following highlights were achieved by the Training and Consultancy team throughout the year:

- Providing over 270 professional and family workshops through Autism SA's Professional Development Series, Tailored Support Packages and Family and Early Days Workshops (5.6 sessions per a week, over 48 weeks);
- Delivering two incredibly well received conferences to over 500 participants, showcasing international presenters, Dr Peter Vermeulen and Dr Wenn Lawson as part of the 2018 Autism Conference Series;
- Facilitating and delivering training to 260 Autism SA staff members to enhance their professional practice and keep them informed of evidence informed practice; and
- Strengthening research partnerships with a range of local and national institutions including Autism CRC, Flinders University, Adelaide University and Griffith University.

Foundation Skills Group

Autism SA's Foundation Skills Group delivers a group early intervention program for children on the Autism Spectrum, of preschool age. The team, comprising of an Occupational Therapist, Speech Pathologist and two Educators, worked collaboratively with families to set meaningful goals and develop targeted skills. Children participated in a range of structured whole group activities and facilitated play, and were supported in following the typical daily classroom routines they are likely to experience in a school or kindy setting. Intensive therapeutic blocks were delivered in smaller groups, or 1:1, where therapists and educators focused on developing skills in line with the children's individual therapy goals.

In 2017/18, the Foundation Skills Group team:

- Delivered the program to 68 children and families;
- Successfully implemented an intensive toilet training program for 11 children;
- Transitioned from curriculum driven to person centred programming; and
- Delivered 3 group training sessions for families.

246
diagnostic assessments performed in metropolitan and regional areas

841
registered participants in family focused workshops

700+
hours of workshops delivered to individuals on the spectrum, families, carers and professionals

68
children attended Foundation Skills Group

Services and Support



Community Support and Inclusion (CSI)

Autism SA's CSI team thrived as the trend of increasing demand for support to individuals continued into 2017/18. Autism SA was able to provide a tailored range of person-centred individualised support, as well as group based support, in a variety of settings, such as; centre-based, supported living, in-home and in the community. These services provide high quality supports for clients of all ages; from young children to adolescents and adults.

We continued to offer a variety of supports, including; Day Option programs (both centre based and community based), individualised support, mentoring, supported living, group and individual short term accommodation and school holiday programs.

In the 2017/2018 financial year we created opportunities for individualised supported holidays, increased social skills groups, as well as further diversifying our tailored supports to ensure we maximise successful support for people to meet and exceed their goals and develop skills for independence.

Achievements included:

- Significant and continued growth in the provision of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) community support services and non-NDIS community support;
- Expansion of personalised Day Options programs;
- Creation of adult Respite and Short Term Accommodation group supports;
- Expanding supported living with great outcomes in personal goals and activities;
- Being privileged to support individual client goals via supported holidays;
- Providing responsive emergency respite supports with huge personal individual outcomes;
- Growing our operational program coordination and rostering team to enable a more effective service; and
- Expanding the support leadership of teams in day to day service excellence and support to clients.

“Our support leader has also kept us ‘in the loop’ regarding future options and respite care. So many are critical of the NDIS, we are not. We value the opportunities it has given us to engage with more support... and at the same time, build a network. It was previously an isolated and at times, lonely journey. The professionalism of your staff deserves recognition and we are very grateful”

– Caregiver

“If you ever wonder how much of a difference you make I can tell you it was, and is, immeasurable.”

– Caregiver

1,600+
hours of emergency support provided

20,100+
hours of group-based short term accommodation delivered

Giving Taylah a voice and building her independence

“It’s such an awesome feeling seeing her walk down the stairs”,



Merissa excitedly explains that Taylah, her 10 year old daughter, has reached a milestone today – taking the stairs for the first time. Due to depth perception issues Taylah has not been able to use the stairs, as she couldn’t see them. “Through ongoing practise and support, Taylah has learnt to hold onto the railings and to think about the stairs and how she is going to descend them, before taking her first step” states Merissa, “it is a huge achievement for her”.

Taylah was diagnosed with Global Development Delay at the age of two years old, and not long after, was also diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Over the past few years Taylah has been working with a number of therapists at Autism SA, and has successfully reached a number of milestones over the past twelve months.

“The help of her therapists has been instrumental in teaching toileting skills. Taylah has now learnt to tell me when she needs to use the toilet, by either signing or using her communication deviceand Taylah can also now get herself in and out of the bath.” says Merissa.

One of Taylah’s biggest challenges, other than depth perception, has been the development of her fine motor skills and strength. Taylah, during her weekly therapy sessions, is currently working towards using a knife and fork, as well as requesting other things she needs or wants by using her pointer finger, which until recently was not strong enough to use, to push the buttons on the communication device herself. She is now navigating her iPad herself, another milestone, and consistently has something to say. “It [the iPad] has given her a voice,” explains Merissa.

“We would like to acknowledge and thank you for the work of your various therapists... who have provided outstanding support to our daughter (young adult with ASD). Their professionalism and time has been so appreciated and we felt valued and our personal choices respected.”

– Caregiver

Community Liaison

The Community Liaison team provided clear, consistent and expert information throughout 2017/18 to individuals with autism and their families/carers to assist in identifying available services and resources. This also included identifying and supporting pre-diagnostic pathways and engaging with diverse communities around autism awareness. The Community Liaison Officers are responsible for the running and daily operation of the Autism SA Infoline, answering community calls for impartial advice and information related to autism, responding to Live Chats and addressing walk-ins.

Key achievements by the Community Liaison team included:

- More than 5060 queries responded to by Autism SA’s Infoline;
- Attending more than 10 expos to connect with the community; and
- Providing over 50 hours of Autism Friendly training in South Australia.

“My son really looks forward to his fortnightly night, whether it be learning new things at the house or using new skills in the monthly excursion. I also value having someone else to help teach him these skills.” – Parent

77
participants attended Early Days Workshops in the Northern Territory

2,000+
children supported in school or early intervention settings

5,000+
queries responded to by Autism SA Infoline

1,867
post diagnostic notifications resulting from verifications of an autism diagnosis

Services and Support



School Support

Autism SA assists individuals reach their full potential by utilising a strengths based, person centred approach in educational settings. The support provided by Autism SA is short term and intensive and focuses on developing essential skills and building capacity to assist individuals to participate in the education setting, and learn more effectively.

Utilising a consultant and facilitator model to improve educational outcomes, Autism SA worked with over 1,800 students in schools across the state throughout the past year by:

- Supporting students on the autism spectrum in all educational settings;
- Supporting preschool aged children in metropolitan and regional areas;
- Providing support in the classroom environment for teachers and SSO's;

- Providing one to one support to students in the education setting;
- Setting up groups within the school environment for students to develop social skills;
- Working with the school leadership team to develop strategies, facilitate training and to implement interventions and appropriate support;
- Developing the capacity of the school staff, and helping to develop confidence and role model strategies, supports and use of resources, and how they can be modified for the students on the spectrum;
- Improving educational outcomes by ensuring the student is able to access the education and classroom setting through knowing social rules, reduced anxiety, emotional regulation, developing friendships and by reducing any behaviours of concern;
- Supporting successful transitions between education settings and year levels; and
- Providing consultancy to school communities consisting of information and advice on behaviour management techniques and strategies, curriculum adaptation, teaching methodology, resources and specific programs to support an individual's needs.

“These sessions greatly supported my child and myself at a crucial time to help with interoception and responding appropriately to emotions / feelings. So grateful.”

– Parent

“Clear concise smart goals.” – School



Early Intervention and Information

Post diagnostic information is vital for families and individuals that receive a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. During 2017/18, Autism SA's Autism Spectrum Advisor's offered post diagnostic appointments to families and individuals, providing an opportunity for them to discuss the diagnosis, and to assist the family (and the individual) in identifying appropriate pathways for services and supports. Autism Spectrum Advisors also supported many families and individuals to transition to the NDIS. This involved providing goal planning meetings in order to prepare for NDIS planning meetings. Families and individuals were offered support to define what their goals were, what reasonable supports are under the NDIS to achieve these goals, and information to assist them understand the NDIS planning process.

Support provided in the early years is crucial for a successful transition to school, as is ongoing support throughout the lifespan. In the first two terms of reception and at preschool, improved educational outcomes are achieved by ensuring the student is able to access the education/ classroom settings by knowing social rules, reduced anxiety, emotional regulation, reducing any behaviours of concern, developing friendships, and addressing toileting and eating concerns.

“I found [the workshop] thoroughly engaging, relevant and useful. Well worth attending and would definitely recommend to others.”

– Participant

In 2017/18 the combined teams:

- Provided more than 1400+ hours of post diagnosis assistance;
- Under MAC funding provided support for more than 2000 children in early years intervention settings;
- Delivered a range of groups designed to provide individuals with specific learning opportunities, develop social skills and improve social networks;
- Provided support across the state in the form of direct visits, telephone consultancy and email information with input from Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists and Psychologists;
- Worked with preschool and school staff to develop their capacity to build confidence and to role model strategies, supports and the use of resources, and how they can be modified for the students on the spectrum; and
- Delivered Early Days Workshops and Preschool Educators Workshops to more than 300 participants in South Australia, in a supportive environment that connected attendees with others in a similar situation.

“At all times we have felt our needs mattered and we are more than a name on a list.” – Caregiver

“Our family would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts, for your kindness, patience and care.” – Caregiver

Social Work

In the complex world of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) we began providing Social Work support this year to assist individuals build capacity in a range of areas.

Our Social Worker assisted families address issues in their lives which prevented them meeting their health, social and disability needs and outcomes. With a focus on empowering individuals, the social work support assists people achieve goals using a wide range of evidenced based therapeutic interventions and tools. All Social Work supports delivered are designed specifically with and around an individual.

Support Coordination

The Support Coordination team continued to provide three levels of NDIS Support Coordination throughout 2017/18, providing over 1780 hours of support to individuals and their families with NDIS plans. This included:

- Support Connection - helping participants find the right supports to meet their individual needs;
- Support Coordination - going a step further than support connection by assisting individuals coordinate and implement both their funded supports and mainstream services; and
- Specialised Coordination of Supports - supporting individuals in points of crisis and addressing barriers with the participant to their plan being a success.



The Autism Friendly Charter goes national



autism friendly
an Autism SA initiative

For the past three years, Autism SA has been developing the Autism Friendly Charter, aimed at non-related specific autism businesses and mainstream organisations who share our vision to create a more welcoming and inclusive community for individuals on the spectrum.

Owners, management and staff attend the free, live Autism Friendly Charter training run by our Autism SA staff and take what they've learned back to their workplaces - to provide autism friendly environments for both their customers and their employees. As a result of the training, these engaged businesses sign the Autism Friendly Charter Principals, signifying their commitment to the principles in the training and being autism friendly. These organisations then receive an Autism Friendly label for their premises to identify themselves as "Autism Friendly". They are also listed on the "Autism Friendly" website to enable our community to identify businesses that have been trained and are offering a friendly experience for our autism community.

Autism SA was delighted to be successful in being awarded an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Grant (ILC Grant) to extend the Autism Friendly Charter nationally, and to develop additional resources to make training and the Charter accessible across Australia. The ILC Grant enabled Autism SA to prepare the rollout of live training in every Australian capital city, to spread the word and facilitate many others to join us in our Autism Friendly movement.

Additionally, the Autism Friendly Charter is being prepared as an online series of webinar modules, which will include an automated sign-up journey, via a new website. A series of videos, in partnership with three of our wonderful, generous Autism Friendly Charter members; Drive Smart, Bounce and Impact Church; also exist to tell the story of the benefits of being "Autism Friendly".

In June 2018, we were also successful in being awarded an additional ILC Grant to develop an Autism Friendly Charter app, specifically designed to increase accessibility of linking autism friendly businesses with the autism community, nationally.

Thank you to all the members of our autism community and Autism Friendly Charter businesses who have committed to making the vision of an Australia-wide movement that values the rich contributions of neurodiversity in the community, come true. We're very excited to continue to build on the future movement of an "Inclusive Society" and we hope you continue to too.

Small changes make an impact

Impact Church decided to sign up to the autism friendly charter because they wanted advice from professionals. "We wanted to be a church and community service that was inclusive of everyone. We knew that Autism SA offered the Autism Friendly Charter, and we thought that would be the best place to start". ...It is quite empowering when you do the training, you have a bit more of an understanding of how things affect the families and the children. I think it's been great for us to know how to be inclusive. It is simple things, but it makes such a big difference to families."

The Autism Friendly Charter team worked with Impact Church to provide the tools they needed to actively engage with and support people with autism.

"Our play centre is an amazing space, we actually have rooms in there that are all glass but we can close doors. We have sensory things in those rooms that the children can use, and we can turn the lights off.

If they start being overwhelmed by their environment they have a place that they can go to, to calm down, and join back in when they are ready. As a business, it has opened us up to people coming here that wouldn't normally come. At the moment we have children that are on the spectrum but they will grow older, and I believe that we have an environment that is inclusive... they can now become part of our community."

50+

hours of autism friendly training provided in South Australia

Autism Conference Series



Happiness, Neuroharmony and Empowerment at the 2018 Autism Conference Series – delegates applaud 'inspiring' presentations

On Monday 26 February, almost 300 enthusiastic delegates heard from international autism expert, Dr Peter Vermeulen PhD, in an exclusive Adelaide appearance - Happiness, Neuroharmony & the Predictive Mind.

Julian Jaensch, Master of Ceremonies, introduced Autism SA's Chief Executive Officer, Jenny Karavolos, who officially opened the Conference and welcomed Dr Vermeulen.

The focus of the morning session was on autism and context blindness, and sharing strategies to 'push the context button' in everyday conversations. The afternoon's presentation addressed the topic of happiness and how focusing on wellbeing from the perspective of the individual on the autism spectrum can lead to better outcomes in many areas of life.

"Thank you for organising such a wonderful conference opportunity." – Participant

Through this session the audience learnt that by focusing on positivity and happiness in all situations rather than on the "deficit" model - from diagnosis, to intervention, through to employment - the individual on the autism spectrum can lead a happier and more successful life.

In May 2018, we successfully hosted speaker Dr Wenn Lawson, an inspirational individual with a powerful message, presenting to delegates over three days, in three locations across Adelaide.

Dr Lawson used his own incredibly inspiring story to highlight the challenges people on the autism spectrum can often face, and shared strategies and tips on how to harness their strengths and passions to empower them. The conference explored his research around object permanence, central coherence, demand avoidance, communication differences and relationship difficulties.

The session also highlighted the need to harness passion to engage an individual in meaningful learning experiences, a notion supported by Dr Lawson's research around how the brain processes and activates gamma (the fastest documented brainwave frequency range).

Dr Lawson is internationally renowned for his significant and personal work on autism, and gender dysphoria, which he elaborated on during the sessions. Dr Lawson shared that the key to greater awareness and acceptance of gender dysphoria and autism is through education. Participants left the session wanting to further spread understanding and inclusiveness, firmly agreeing that 'we are all unique and valuable'.

The resounding feedback from the 2018 Autism Conference Series was that both speakers were 'engaging', 'inspiring', 'brilliant' and 'motivating' – maintaining the high standard set by previous Autism Conference Series events, and leaving those in the room with positive expectations about future speakers.

"Sensational day! Thank you Autism SA and Wenn for the connection you made with me with all your in sight and personal stories. You are an amazing person. Thank you for sharing your world ... I want to further spread that understanding and inclusiveness. Yes, we are unique and valuable!"

– Participant

"Wenn was amazing. I learnt so much more than what I had expected. The lived experience and stories help solidify my understanding and I'm excited to take my learnings back to my colleagues and manager."

– Participant

Over 500 delegates attended the 2018 Autism Conference Series

98% Attendees rated the Autism Conference Series as excellent

4,559 participants attended Professional Focussed Workshops

4,408 participants attended Professional Development Workshop series and Tailored Support Packages

Autism SA Board

Autism SA has a highly qualified, skills based and diverse Board, structured to bring a range of expertise to ensure the effective governance of the organisation. The 2017/18 Board was comprised of the following people:

Name	Qualifications	Position	Appointments	Dates	Committees	Attendances at Meetings
Jenny Karavolos	B.Acc, CPA, MBA (Brooke Scholar), AIPM, MAICD	Company Secretary	Managing Director	(appointed 14/09/2016 ceased 29/11/2017)	Finance & Risk Committee	12 Board meetings + AGM 8 Finance & Risk Committee meetings
Troy Mohler	B.Com, GAICD, MBA	Board Appointed Director Chair	Re-elected Chair	29/11/17	Finance & Risk Committee	12 Board meetings + AGM 8 Finance & Risk Committee meetings
Ben Willington	B.Com, CA, Registered Company Auditor	Board Appointed Director Treasurer	-	-	Finance & Risk Committee	11 Board meetings + AGM 6 Finance & Risk Committee meetings
Luke Dale	B.Com, LLB (Hons), GDLP, Notary Public	Board Appointed Director	-	-	-	11 Board meetings + AGM
Voula Nisyrios	B.Sc (H), MAICD	Client Representative Director	Re-elected (2 year term)	29/11/2017 (AGM)	Finance & Risk Committee	7 Board meetings + AGM 4 Finance & Risk Committee meetings
Brad Manuel	B.Psych, MBA	Board Appointed Director	Resigned - personal circumstances	8/11/17	-	3 Board meetings
Donna Dias	AdvDipBusAdmin, Dip ECECD, Dip Bus, Dip FI&SW, Cert IV CS, Cert CM	Client Representative Director	Resigned - personal circumstances	29/11/17	-	3 Board meetings
Julie McMillan	PhD, MEd, BTeach	Board Appointed Director	Re-appointed Resigned - personal circumstances	29/11/17 (AGM) 13/09/2018	-	5 Board meetings + AGM

Autism SA Governance Statement

The Board of Autism SA accepts overall responsibility for the corporate governance of the organisation and is committed to ensuring that the principles of good governance are implemented with integrity.

Autism SA Governance

The Board is required to act in accordance with the objects of the Autism SA Constitution to:

1. Lead performance improvement of Autism SA through strategy formulation, policy development and monitoring management actions; and
2. Ensure compliance of Autism SA and the correct conduct of Directors, both as individuals and collectively, as a Board.

Corporate Governance Statement

The Charter clarifies the responsibilities and boundaries of the Board in setting the strategy and direction of Autism SA and managing and controlling the organisation.

As extracted from Autism SA's Board Charter, 'Autism SA is a Company Limited by Guarantee and operates as a not-for-profit organisation with the status of a public benevolent institution. It is governed by a constitution approved by members.'

The Board delegates the responsibility for the management of the organisation to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Board reports to members through the Annual Report, Annual General Meeting and such other meetings as may be called by the Board or the membership.

Membership

Membership of the Company comprises of two classes: Ordinary Members and Associate Members who pay an annual fee. For further information regarding organisational membership, please refer to the constitution of Autism SA, which is published publicly on the Company website at www.autismsa.org.au

Composition of the Board

The composition of the Board is determined in accordance with the Autism SA Constitution. The Board is comprised of no less than five and no more than eight Directors. This includes two Client Representative Directors (elected by the Ordinary Members) and between three and six Directors (including the Managing Director, if any) with the skills and expertise that the Board determines it requires.

The Board has a Board skills matrix and is responsible for succession planning and making Board appointments. Details of Directors' experience and qualifications are included in this document. They are all advocates and champions for the rights of people with a disability.

Board members serve on a voluntary basis, except for out of pocket expenses.

Board Committees

The Board has established a number of committees to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities. The Board determines the membership, role and responsibilities of each committee.

Ethical Standards

Autism SA is committed to maintaining the highest of ethical standards. The organisation follows good practice in governance to ensure integrity and influence. This includes the Board placing great importance on Board members declaring any existing or potential conflict of interest in relation to their duties as Directors.

The organisation has also developed extensive policies and maintains third party certification against the Service Excellence Framework (SEF) as part of its quality assurance and continuous improvement framework.

Privacy Policy

Autism SA values support from the community and is committed to ensuring the privacy of the personal information that is entrusted to the organisation by responding to the 13 Australian Privacy Principles in the Privacy Act, as amended 2012, dealing with the collection, use, disclosure and data security of personal information. The respect for privacy forms part of the ongoing trust the organisation wishes to maintain with stakeholders.

Details regarding the Board and Autism SA's financial position are outlined in the audited financial report for the year ended 30 June 2018. This report can be obtained online from www.autismsa.org.au

Treasurer's Report - by Ben Willington



It's been another challenging year from a funding point of view this year for Autism SA.

Changes to our funding sources continue to require our wonderful staff to work hard to adjust to new processes and procedures to better align ourselves with the various new requirements and expectations of being an NDIS provider.

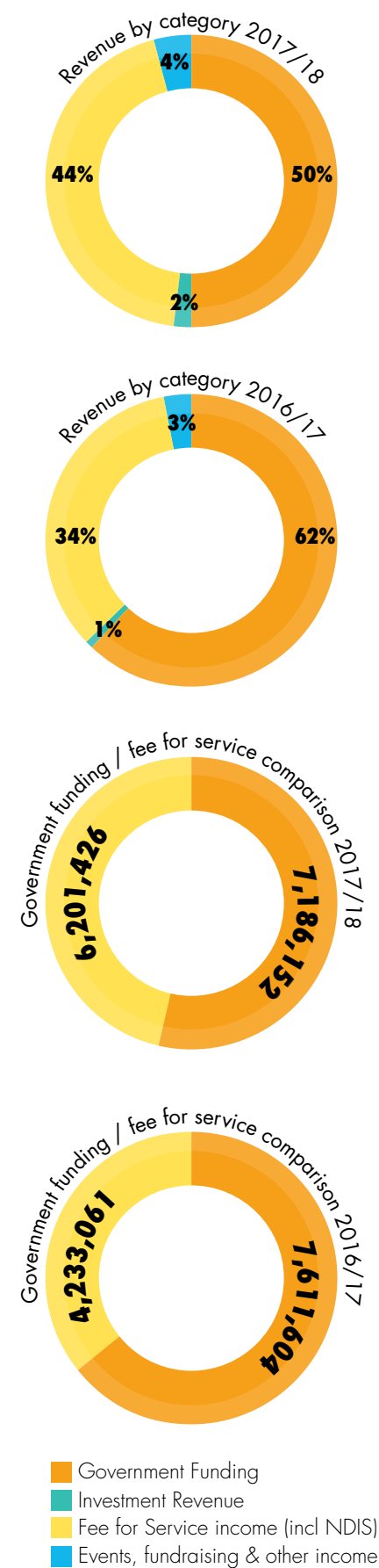
Both the Finance & Risk Committee and our Board have worked diligently to adapt to the new environment, and are seeing improvements in efficiency and communication whilst ensuring we continue to provide skilled, experienced and caring services to our clients.

The net financial result for the consolidated activities of the Autism Association of South Australia and the Autism Trust Fund of South Australia for the year ended 30 June 2018 was a deficit of \$1,156,756. This result reflects the challenges faced in transitioning from block funding to individualised funding for the same work. With payments received in arrears and delays of up to more than a year, significant additional administrative and transactional work is required in the new environment to assist individuals transition, establish services, verify and receive payment.

During the 2017/2018 financial year we also continued to invest in capacity building, providing services in plan gaps, skill development, service innovation, peak body activities not covered and adapting to new ways of working in order to maximise outcomes for the autism community in the evolving NDIS environment.

The total revenue of the consolidated entity for the year ended 30 June 2018 was \$14,262,088 (an increase of 16 per cent from the prior year). The largest increase related to additional fee for service income generated by services provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Government funding increased by 6 per cent from the prior year and represented 50 per cent of total revenue for 2017/18. As a proportion of total revenue, this represents a decrease from 62 per cent of total revenue in 2016/17. Government funding includes for the provision of peak body type services that are not individualised under the NDIS and also due to the successful award of the competitive Information, Linkages and Capacity (ILC) building grants. Fee for service income, which includes services provided to NDIS participants, increased by 46 per cent and represented 44 per cent of total revenue for 2017/18, as compared to 34 per cent of revenue in 2016/17.



The increasing proportion of fee for service income has been the trend since the launch of the NDIS trial sites in the 2013/14 year, and is expected to continue in future years as the rollout of the NDIS progresses. In contrast, government funding as a proportion of total income is expected to continue to decrease as funding transitions from existing grants into the NDIS.

The change in the proportion of government funding compared to fee for service income is illustrated in the graphs adjacent.

Expenses have increased by 25 per cent from the prior year, which relates primarily to an increase in employee expenses in the current year, due to an increase in employee numbers to facilitate transformation whilst also operating in the evolving NDIS market with increased administrative transactions.

The financial performance of the consolidated entity is summarised below:

Table 1
Profit and Loss Position

	2017/18	2016/17	% change
Operating revenue	14,262,088	12,337,865	16%
Operating expenses	15,418,844	12,344,470	25%
Net surplus/(defecit)	-1,156,756	-6,605	-102%

The net asset position of the consolidated entity decreased by 35 per cent from \$3,482,273 as at 30 June 2017, to \$2,270,035 as at 30 June 2018 as presented below:

Table 2
Balance Sheet

	As at 30/6/18	As at 30/6/17	% change
Current assets	1,787,272	2,162,765	-17%
Non-current assets	3,302,946	3,836,205	-14%
Total assets	5,090,218	5,998,970	-15%
Current liabilities	2,597,626	2,316,798	12%
Non-current liabilities	222,557	199,899	11%
Total liabilities	2,820,183	2,516,697	12%
Net assets	2,270,035	3,482,273	-35%

Total assets decreased by 15 per cent, primarily represented by a decrease in the cash assets and a decrease in the value of available-for-sale financial assets (investment portfolio).

Total liabilities increased by 12 per cent due to increased payables and employee entitlements' liabilities, resulting in part from increased employee numbers, offset by a decreased liability for revenue received in advance.

I would personally like to thank all of the amazing Autism SA staff and volunteers, the Finance and Risk Committee, and the Board, for their genuine hard work and continued focus on what we're here for – each person on the autism spectrum lives the life they choose in an inclusive society.

The Financial Report of the Autism Association of South Australia and controlled entity for the year ended 30 June 2018 has been audited by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu and is available at www.autismsa.org.au

We value our people



We continue to value our staff who are the lifeblood of the organisation. In 2017/18 Autism SA employed over 260 people, which is more than a 30% increase in staff. As we continue to transform and evolve to meet the changing NDIS landscape, our workplace resource profile is changing. The majority of our staff are employed in delivering services and supports directly to individuals on the spectrum and their families and other supports in order to meet more of what people want.

There has been, however, a need to increase staff in areas of customer relations, pathways supports and functional areas supports in order to facilitate transition to the NDIS and support the transactional nature of the NDIS whilst also continuing to provide critical peak body supports that are not provided for under individualised NDIS funding.

Our staff continue to demonstrate their unwavering dedication and commitment to the autism community despite the sea change they are enduring, and with the changing funding landscape that required a further year of internal transformation. They bring to the workplace every day their exceptional talent and passionate spirit of being bold, brave and brilliant to make a real difference and enable individuals on the spectrum and their families to live their potential.

Our focus has been for 2017/18 to operate as One ASA (Autism SA). This includes:

- Business reform and transformation through improved processes, practices and performance measures;
- Creation of capacity to enable innovation and creation of new services that people want;
- Recruitment and retention strategies;
- Flexible work arrangements; and
- Continued support for career paths including training and professional development.

Workplace Gender Equality Report

In accordance with requirements of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Act), on 30 May 2018 the Autism Association of South Australia lodged its annual compliance report with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. Positively 71% of all staff are female and great gender diversity exists across our Board, Leadership and Management teams.

The report is available on the Autism SA website at: www.autismsa.org.au/governance

Staff milestones

Autism SA would like acknowledge the following people who have reached length of service milestones during the period 1 July 2017 - 30 June 2018.

Five Year Milestone	Ten Year Milestone	15 Year Milestone
Emma Barrett	Jessica Steyn	Catherine Barry
Emma Moyle	Lauren Davey	Melanie Dolphin
Jesse Rance	Dianne Ford	Lexie Dryden
Alice Rohde	Pei-Yin Huang	Erica Handley
Sheku Sherrif		Susan Maschmedt
Maria Sitaras		
Sekou (Ben) Kaba		
Nicole Longmire		
Stephanie MacSkimming		

Shining brightly – A celebration of our stars across the organisation

In recognition and celebration of our staff, Autism SA headed to the city fringe for the 2017 Autism SA Staff, Team and Recognition (STAR) Awards. The night sky set over the Adelaide Pavilion parklands presented the perfect backdrop to celebrate all the achievements and outstanding performances of the many teams and individuals that work tirelessly every single day to deliver services and supports to individuals on the autism spectrum – and their families. Whilst all the staff are shining stars and deserve accolades, the following shining stars were recognised on the evening of 25 August 2017, for their outstanding contributions:

Kate Parker Exemplary Service Award

Recipient: Kimberly Carruthers

Special commendation: Cassie Raymond

Street Fleet Team Spirit Award

Recipient: Community Support team for JS

Special commendation: Payroll

Subnet Innovation Award

Recipient: Monique Watson

Special commendation: Brigitte Benker

Telstra Curiosity Award

Recipient: Maddison Cocks

Special commendation: Lyle McVeigh

The ARC Campbelltown Courage Award

Recipient: Rebecca Brett

Special commendation: Maddison Cocks

Person Centred Award

Recipient: Kellie Artis

Special commendation: Tara Fraztz

Living the Values: Ethics in Practice

Recipient: Julie Peters

Special commendation: Rachael Knight

A journey from childhood to motherhood



A journey from childhood to motherhood – how diagnosis and support helped pave the way

Jessy Spence's initial transition to school was not an easy one, with the then five year old experiencing anxiety from a young age, initially creating a huge barrier to a successful start to school. Things did not improve quickly with Jessy explaining "I had many difficulties at school in my primary years, including being picked on, and having no friends". It wasn't until 2003 that Jessy was diagnosed with autism (Asperger's), which helped her understand herself more. The diagnosis ultimately though had little impact on her life; that is until a visit from one of the school consultants in the Autism SA specialised school support team.

"After the diagnosis, the consultant came to my school and saw me, and helped not only me, but the school too with strategies and supports so that I could start to enjoy my time there. The consultant helped me to form friendships at school, and then further helped me to successfully transition to high school."

During this time, Jessy was also able to attend a girls group, which she says "was not only a fantastic way for me to make friends, but also created an opportunity for my mum to receive support from other parents too".

As a result of attending this girls group, and having support from a consultant at school, Jessy was able to understand a little bit more about how her brain works differently to other people's, and has learnt a lot about social etiquette, making it easier for her to maintain friendships.

"The strong point about having a friend like me, who is on the autism spectrum, is that I am always an honest and reliable friend with good intentions at heart."

Jessy is now a mum herself to three young children, Jayden, Reid and Evelyn, with her two boys being recently diagnosed through Autism SA. Jessy explains that "being on the spectrum myself meant it was easier to recognise the signs in my sons, and meant that I was able to seek early diagnosis and early support for them.

The assessment process was very straight forward, and both boys being diagnosed at the same time made it simpler for me – coming in one day with one child and then the following day with the next.

"Receiving a diagnosis isn't a life sentence; it won't change you or your child. It is a stepping stone onto a pathway, to access support that you or your child may need.

"A diagnosis is a good thing because ... it helps ease the feeling of being different when you have an explanation for the differences."

Jayden (5) will be starting school within the next twelve months and Reid (4) will be transitioning to kindy. Both boys have recently been visited by a school consultant at their early learning centre, who is co-incidentally the very same school consultant that supported Jessy during her primary years.

"It is a comfort to know they will be given the same support to help them transition successfully to school and kindy, from the same person who supported me all those years ago," says Jessy.

Jessy knows that this early support, along with her personal insight and experience, will help set her boys up for success at school, and throughout life.

"Being on the spectrum myself gives me a lot more insight to the reasons behind my children's particular quirks and behaviours and I think that makes me a great fit to be their mother!"

Grants

Throughout the year Autism SA was successful in being awarded a number of generous grants in a competitive field all of which had the underpinning goal of capacity building and increasing participation in society through autism awareness, understanding, acceptance and inclusion.

In October, Autism SA was announced as one of only eight recipients of grant funding from a combined \$1.2 million pool being offered by Variety – the Children's Charity of South Australia's Variety Sprout Fund. Autism SA was awarded \$150k (over a three year period) for the development of two sensory and social spaces, designed with the purpose of providing therapy and sensory experiences to children and teens on the autism spectrum in a safe haven. The first innovative space at our Elizabeth location is well under way, with a second space in the south of Adelaide to be designed as part of the next stage.

The two spaces, when complete, will offer an interactive, experiential and therapeutic experience through innovative technology. "Variety is excited to be able to provide this additional funding to help brighten the future of even more South Australian children," said Dr. Kathryn Zeitz, Chair of the Variety SA Board.

"We received a strong response to our call for applications and have made our selection based upon innovative programs that support a wider range of children in need."

In November 2017 Autism SA received news of an early Christmas present by way of being successfully awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Liquor Industry Golf Club Children's Charity Support Committee competing across a strong field.

The purpose of the grant was to purchase a mobile 'Magic Carpet', 500 apps and a child safe portable flooring, for the purpose of providing therapy and a sensory experience for children on the autism spectrum.

The Magic Carpet offers state-of-the-art sensory experiences by projecting onto the floor, table top or the wall, interactive images that can then be engaged with by moving on, or over, the projected images and games. This amazing piece of technology will contribute to the fundamental building blocks required for learning, including sensory regulation, joint attention, two way interaction and pretend play, and is something that people of all ages and abilities can engage with. The only limitation is the imagination of those living the experience!

In June 2018, Autism SA was awarded an additional two grants from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) as part of the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) funding.

The first grant, of \$187,199.52 (over two years) has been awarded for the purpose of building an Autism Friendly Charter app to link autism friendly businesses and mainstream organisations with individuals on the spectrum and their families, carers and support network. This project is to establish and populate an app which maps safe, autism friendly spaces, activities, businesses and services to assist individuals with autism, or their supporters, to plan outings and participate in mainstream activities.

The second grant, of \$339,087.47, was awarded for the development of a digital autism community "InfoLink" - an online resource which aims to address common community questions and needs, and a safe place to ask anything. Topics that will be assessable by the online InfoLink include: getting a diagnosis & what that means; a guide to therapies; a glossary; FAQ's; myths & realities; pathways to services and supports; making connections; and general topics about autism. The project aims to increase autism related knowledge and self-determination capabilities within the SA community, leading to improved access to, and comprehension of information.

To finish off the year, Autism SA was awarded with a grant, from the Commonwealth Bank Park Holme branch, who awarded the organisation \$10,000 to assist in the improvement of resources available to the community. Thank you to Variety - the Children's Charity, Liquor Industry Golf Club, National Disability Insurance Agency and Commonwealth Bank for your support this year. We couldn't achieve the goals for improving capacity building and an inclusive society without your support!



Recognising the inspirational autism community



The picturesque Belair National Park provided the perfect location to recognise and celebrate the autism community at the 2017 Autism SA Recognition Awards and Summer Fun Day, held on 19 November.

Families, friends and special guests, totalling over 300 people throughout the day, arrived at the Belair National Park carrying their picnic blankets to settle in for a fabulous day in the sun. The award ceremony kicked off at 11am, with nine individuals and businesses celebrated as recipients - determined from a record number of 65 nominations - for their personal and organisational achievements.

Following the ceremony, which was attended by a number of VIPs and expertly MC'd by David Palmer, Autism Ambassador and Autism SA staff member, guests gathered on the main oval to enjoy a range of activities, entertainment and food.

Little ones (and a few big ones) enjoyed lounging on the grass, bouncing on the jumping castle, playing in the ball pit, and firing the CFS hose over the bushes, while the older kids and adults got to test their skills at video games in the games truck, and played friendly games of cricket and soccer. Many very brave individuals tackled the climbing wall.

Throughout the afternoon, a convoy of food trucks provided delicious lunch, dessert and drinks for all in attendance, while musicians, stilt walkers and face painters wowed the crowds.

Congratulations to all that received an award or special commendation on this very special day.

Hilary Johnson Award

Recipients: Dee Economou and Meg Eusope

Special Commendation: India Lennerth

Individual Achievement Award (12 Years & under)

Recipients: Joshua Porter and Patrick Saunders

Special Commendations: Manoel Laranjeira, Taylem Pontt, Olivia Reardon, Mitchell Shayler and Cameron White

Individual Achievement Award (13 Years & over)

Recipient: Brodie Lunn

Special Commendations: Jack Savage, Georgina Sinclair and Madison Ward

Community Bridging Services Partnership Award

Recipient: Impact Barossa

Special Commendations: Autism Professional Learning Project and the Tintinara Regional Area Development Enterprises (TRADE) Committee

Ord Minnett Appreciation Award

Recipient: Northern Braves Special Olympics SA

Special Commendations: Zoran Bekric and Karsten Thole

Hendercare Special Inspiration Award

Recipient: Amanda Porter

Special Commendations: Lucinda Vonthehoff and Casey Waterhouse

Scout Talent Excellence In Education Support Award

Recipient: Aberfoyle Campus School OSHC

Special Commendation: Aspect Treetop School

Strong belief and advocacy



Fuelling the turning of potential into reality

Elijah was diagnosed with autism in 2004 at two and a half years old, but his autism journey really started when he was about 16 months of age when his mother, Maeghan, started to notice that he was having troubles with speech, social skills, sleep and behaviour.

"Well-meaning doctors, speech therapists, child health nurses and family all told us there was likely nothing wrong and that we just needed to be more disciplined in our parenting.

We had a successful hearing assessment done at about two years of age and had already started an early intervention program for children with speech delay, before his diagnosis.

"I had previously worked in the field of disability, so I sometimes reflect that the diagnosis was perhaps the easy part, as by that stage we felt that if a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) could not be made, then we really did not know what to do. "I think genuine feelings of parental grief and loss are often not clearly voiced following a diagnosis of autism. Whilst my husband was very practical in his early approach it was something, as Elijah's mother, I felt came in waves for about 3-4 years after he was diagnosed."

Elijah started primary school in 2008 with the school he attended being "one of the first state schools in SA to actively incorporate a group of children with autism within a mainstream class."

As he grew older, Elijah's parents experienced what Maeghan describes as "the deep rain and then the rainbow" stage, struggling to find therapy services that were right for them, but through the experience finding an incredible Occupational Therapist, a passionate kindergarten director and the opportunity to receive a formal diagnosis at Autism SA. "I remember the relief knowing I could leave Elijah with the [therapists and teachers] team and when I returned I would not be met by a list of indiscretions and negativity..."

"All these people at this time helped to restore our somewhat battered faith in good, genuine therapists and teachers committed to seeing the best in our child."

Transitioning to high school was a largely seamless process, which was assisted by a dedicated disability principal and teachers that are happy to understand the struggles of an adolescent with autism.

"Issues such as hiding in the lift, trying to buy a hot dog at the canteen without money and learning to get to class on time, have been met with a level of understanding we are very grateful for.

"Elijah loves high school and enjoys attending mainstream subjects in computing, photography, media arts and drama whilst still receiving support in a special unit for other subjects."

"Excellent facilitator, great knowledge and skills." – Participant

One of the most challenging aspects of the move to high school was the end of a formalised after school care program. "The Community Support and Inclusion team at Autism SA were instrumental in supporting Elijah to learn the necessary skills to get home from school independently.

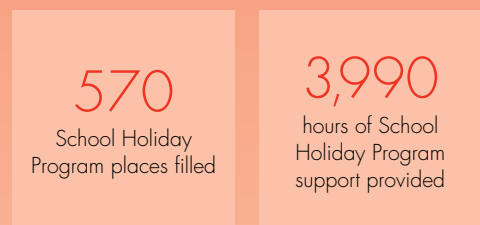
"Both primary and high schools we would describe as being a lesson in parental advocacy and not backing down. At times it has been a difficult fight to get the best for Elijah and contrary to my nature I have had to be a roaring tiger mother.

"In addition to in-school and therapist support Elijah has attended the school holiday program with Autism SA since the age of five and from the age of ten has attended respite weekends. Due to limited family support until this time we had never had an overnight break from Elijah.

"It was a hard decision to make but once we started the weekends away we realised the value of a break, time spent with our younger child and how good it was for Elijah.

"Now aged 16, Elijah's needs have changed and we haven't accessed weekend respite for some time, however the fortnightly social group at Autism SA has been a fantastic transition into independent living/socialising.

"Despite some of the challenges a diagnosis presents, we consider ourselves incredibly blessed to have this wonderful young man in our lives... and as a couple Elijah's diagnosis has brought us closer together and fuelled a lifelong determination to become strong advocates for the beautiful child we dearly love."



Thank you to all for your support



Autism SA Ambassadors (past and present)

Katharine Annear	Lachlan Earl	Kathryn Michaelsen	Charlie Stone
Jean Boulter	Alison Gaskin	Helen Neale	Miwa Stynes
Gloria Bryant	Barbara Green	David Palmer	Julie Taylor
Brooke Clark	Julie Julian	Annette Paterson	Amanda Tulloch-Hoskins
Katy Correll	Alison Keast	Melissa Poole	Donna Webb
Abbey-Leigh Dalton	Stephanie Kowalski	Kristen Richards	Diane Whitaker-Lockwood
Tara Davis	Stephen Loveridge	Linda Sandell	Josie Wilson
Matt Deighton	Vivienne Mangos	Zoe Sandell	Stewart Wymer
Nadia Demasi	Jon Martin	Tamara Sernecki	
Kristie Dix	Bruce Meatheringham	Vaughan Smoker	

Life Members

Roma Aimes	Lloyd Cox	Dr Ruth McIntyre
Mary Angel	Leigh Hall OAM	David McLean
Rose Baker	Ruth Halpin	Anne Nottage
Assoc Prof Verity Bottruff	John Harley	John Rosevear
Richard Bruggemann	Joy Johns	Dr Peter Tillett
Jean Bryant	Betty Jordan OAM	Bernard Vaughn
Cheryl Casey	Dr Margaret Kyrkou	Margaret Wilson
Jean Cox	Judith Leeson	

In Memoriam

Betty Davis
Ken Foggo OAM
Nerida Higgins
Hilary Johnson AM
Valerie Retallick
Mae Saun
Matthew Tiddy OAM
Dudley Wilson

Steggles Charity Nest – partnering for a better outcome for individuals on the autism spectrum.

The Steggles Charity Nest was started by members of the Baiada family, leadership team and staff in the early 2000s with a focus on assisting charities from all around Australia. This support is driven by the staff who continuously raise funds for the Charity Nest through salary contributions, and fundraising activities each year. So far, over \$8 million has been raised by the Steggles Charity Nest's initiatives for these supported charities. Autism SA is privileged to be one of the charities supported by the Steggles Charity Nest.

Thank you Steggles, for your ongoing invaluable support, helping us to make a difference in the lives of people on the autism spectrum and their families.

Major Corporate Partners

Baiada Poultry – Children's Charity Nest	Variety SA – the children's charity	National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
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Supporting Partners

Adelaide East Education Centre	Deloitte	Liquor Industry Golf Club (LIGC)	Saab Australia
Adelaide Youth Theatre	Dragonhartz Gaming	Modbury U3H Garden Club	Scout Talent
Alpha State	Edwardstown Primary School	Ord Minnett	South Australian Museum
AON	Fairview Park Kindergarten	Patch of Blue Theatre	Street Fleet
Australia Personnel Agency	Fay Fuller Foundation	Pumpt Pty Ltd	Subnet
AV Styles	HenderCare	Plympton Primary School	Telstra
Bounce	Heuzenroeders Lawyers Trust	Ride for Awareness	TerryWhite Chemmart Marion Compounding
Bujinkan Sargent Dojo Buddies	Holden Elizabeth Plant	Riot City Wrestling	The ARC Campbelltown
Circus Quirkus	HWL Ebsworth Lawyers	Rose Park Primary School	Trinity College Gawler
Commonwealth Bank	Latitude	SA Health	Tyndale Christian School
Community Bridging Services	Lions Club of Brighton	SA Power Networks	Westpac
			YMCA

Thank you also to our individual donor and fundraisers, and everyone who has helped to support Autism SA this year. You help to make a real difference, and help us to achieve our vision for an inclusive society.

Building awareness, acceptance and inclusion



This year Autism SA focused on building acceptance, understanding, awareness and inclusion for people on the autism spectrum and their families through the many initiatives that took place.

Autism SA kicked off proudly supporting Dr Temple Grandin, renowned autism and animal science author and speaker, in her visit to Tintinara. Dr Grandin inspired the attendees of the multi day conference by sharing her journey through life with autism and her love for agriculture.

Autism SA shared its knowledge at the Asia Pacific Autism Conference (APAC) 2017. One of our fabulous staff members presented their preliminary results of the effectiveness

"I wish to express our appreciation of the work done by Foundation Skills... The staff have been most impressive in their knowledge of autism and the loving care with which they treat all the children."

- Grandparent

of Acceptance Commitment Therapy with Autism at the conference that brings together members of the international autism community from across Australia and around the world. The 2018 Autism Conference Series engaged two internationally renowned autism experts, Dr Peter Vermeulen (February 18) and Dr Wenn Lawson (May 2018) resulting in over 500 families, professionals and individuals coming together to hear from them.

With a focus on the great outdoors, Nature Play SA and the Belair National Park joined forces with Autism SA to deliver the very first Autism Friendly Cubby Town event in the July school holidays, exclusively for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families to enjoy.

With the public event usually attracting more than 5000 families, the autism friendly event made the day accessible for many that would have missed out due to the overwhelming numbers and noise of the event.

As iconic South Australian manufacturer Holden drew closer to closing its doors, the manufacturer welcomed 30 car enthusiasts and their parents and carers in the last public tour of its Elizabeth plant. Touring throughout the factory for the last time our families learnt about and observed all the complexities of a working plant as it assembled the different stages of each car. At the end of the tour, everyone was treated to a complimentary BBQ lunch by the generous Holden staff.

For the eleventh year, we celebrated the Autism SA Recognition Awards, holding it for the first time in the Belair National Park. During the day, we greeted over 300 guests, and recognised incredible members of our community in the awards ceremony.

"I cannot speak highly enough of the support we have received ... in catering for children with autism... The facilitator was able to understand our context, and find what we are doing well, and what we could try to improve in our quest to provide world class education for each child."

- Preschool Director

With Christmas fast approaching, a number of activities were arranged for the many youngsters, and the young at heart. Starting the festive season with a dedicated space at the Adelaide Christmas Pageant, a space gifted to us, to share with many families the chance to see the man in red arrive in town. The Magic Cave, The Christmas Garden at Mawson Lakes, and other shopping precincts opened early, and created an autism friendly environment for families to see Santa and provide him with their Christmas lists; and those with a love for music and Christmas songs were welcomed to The Carols at Civic Park, where a dedicated sensory space to view and participate in one of the state's largest Carols gatherings was arranged.

With Christmas behind us and the start to a new school year approaching, Williams the Shoemen offered families the opportunity to purchase school shoes outside of regular shopping hours, in an autism friendly environment and with the store almost to themselves. Our autism friendly initiative continued to grow further with a variety of events and activities held throughout the year in partnership with a number of signatories of the Autism Friendly Charter. New partners included the South Australian Museum who put on a roaring display of dinosaurs, in an autism friendly morning for 100 families to roam the museum.

Turning to educational highlights, Autism SA CEO, Jenny Karavolos, joined the Minister for Disabilities, Autism SA Board members and other guests at the Flinders University Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Scholarship Program presentation day. The Flinders University ASD Program supports and mentors participants, with the presentation day highlighting the outcomes of significant whole of school changes that have been achieved.

We further engaged with the autism and wider disability communities at various expos and community events throughout the year such as the KYD-X Disability Expo, the Disability, Ageing and Lifestyle Expo and various National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) expos held within metropolitan Adelaide, and regionally. Spreading awareness further, our ambassadors attended a number of local events to speak about life as an individual on the autism spectrum, and we once again worked with a number of people - big and small - as they found unique and inspiring ways to raise money and awareness for someone they knew on the autism spectrum.

There were also a number of other activities including supporting a number of research opportunities; appearing in a number of on air radio interviews and news articles; supporting Sunpork's autism inclusion employment opportunity and revitalising the fabulous resources on autism that are available in our library.

To round out a busy year we welcomed our first clients as we opened the gateway to South Australia's north with the start of services and supports at our new Northern Hub at Elizabeth, and made the final preparations to launch our Autism Friendly National Roadshow and Autism Friendly online webinar training.

Thank you to everyone who was involved in creating such an amazing vibe of awareness, understanding, inclusion and acceptance throughout this last year, and thank you to all those who stood tall for autism to support our vision for each person on the autism spectrum to live the life they choose in an inclusive society.

"We have seen significant improvements in this area. I am also very pleased that he has a special bond [with the therapist] as trust is quite a big thing in my view for children on the spectrum. Both [the therapists] have provided us with resources that we have found helpful and use every day at home. We could not have gotten this far without them."

- Caregiver

"Getting some ideas and a different perspective of what was needed"

- School

110,900+
hours of support
provided

26,281
hours of Day Options
support provided

To help support the work of Autism SA, please make a tax deductible donation via our website at autismsa.org.au

Autism SA provides the following supports and services:

- Information
- Diagnosis
- Planning
- Life skills
- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Psychology
- Social
- School inclusion
- Behaviour
- Counselling
- Training and Consultancy
- Community support
- Respite
- In-home support
- Day options
- Supported living
- School holiday Programs
- Groups
- NDIS planning
- Pre-planning
- Autism Friendly Charter and capacity building
- iMsocial tm
- Foundation Skills
- Early Intervention
- Autism Advisory
- Social Work
- Support Coordination

Infoline 1300 288 476 | www.autismsa.org.au

Netley | Elizabeth | Salisbury East | Craigmore | Onkaparinga Hills | Darwin

