

POSITION STATEMENT



Terminology Policy

The language used to describe autism is important.

Many different preferences are evident and expressed by autistic Tasmanian's and their loved ones.

No single terminology preference is right or wrong

Preferred Terminology

The terminology used by Autism Tasmania in its communications and publications is guided by the advice of the Autism Cooperative Research Centre (Autism CRC): <https://www.autismcrc.com.au/language-choice>
Importantly, this advice is consistent with preferences expressed in two recent member surveys:

1. The Autism Tasmania Members Survey September 2018
2. The Autism Tasmania Members Survey September 2020 to inform Autism Training for Allied Health Professionals

Autism Tasmania's **published materials and communications** use the following terms interchangeably:

- Autism
- Autism spectrum
- Autistic person
- Person on the autism spectrum
- Person on the spectrum
- Autistic community (refers collectively to people on the autism spectrum)
- Autism community (refers collectively to people on the autism spectrum and their family, friends, and allies).

When in personal communication with someone on the autism spectrum, it is respectful to follow their lead in terms of how they would like to be referred to in regards to their autism (for example: autistic, person on the autism spectrum, person with autism, person with ASD, Person with Asperger's/ Asperger's Syndrome).

Non-preferred Terminology

Autism Tasmania is guided by the recent member surveys and by position statements of key national and international autistic-led or autistic-informed organisations (ASAN-NZ, Australian Autism Alliance, Autism Journal, National Autistic Society UK) to avoid use of language which pathologises or stigmatises autism. In particular, the following terms are avoided:

- Functioning labels (e.g. High/low, severe/mild): Many autistic adults and family members express that dividing autistic people into categories does not fully represent the diverse abilities and challenges faced
- Has autism
- Person/child/adult with autism
- ASD / Disorder (unless in specific reference to the diagnosis).

References

ASAN-AU/NZ: <https://www.asan-au.org/autistic-the-word/>

Autism CRC: <https://www.autismcrc.com.au/language-choice>

Autism Journal: https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/autism_terminology_guidelines.pdf

National Autistic Society UK: <https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/help-and-support/how-to-talk-about-autism>

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Working with and for the Tasmanian Autism Community

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