

Federal Election 2022

Shifting the Dial on Autism



EDUCATION
OUTCOMES



EMPLOYMENT



PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL HEALTH



SOCIAL
CONNECTIONS

Autistic people face much worse life outcomes

Autism affects a large number of Australians. Australia's autistic population is estimated to be around 650,000 with 1 in 4 having an autistic family member. Over 3% of school students have an autism diagnosis.

Autistic students are half as likely to complete Year 10 than the general population, and only half as likely to complete VET or Uni courses than those with other disabilities

Autistic people are 3 times more likely to be unemployed than others with disability, and nearly 8 times the rate of people without disability

50-70% of autistic people experience mental health conditions, with a suicide rate 9 times the general population

More than two thirds of autistic people report feeling socially isolated

The 4 key commitments needed

Autistic people have unique and diverse talents but still experience significantly poorer outcomes in most aspects of life than other Australians, including other major disability types. In the leadup to the 2022 Federal Election, we are calling on all major parties to make the following commitments to improve the lives and lifelong outcomes for ALL autistic Australians and their families:

- 1. Develop and fund a National Autism Strategy**, co-designed with autistic people and their advocates, to provide a coordinated national approach. This must include targets and actions for people of all ages to improve: access and participation in early learning, education and training; employment rates; social and economic participation; community awareness and attitudes; health and wellbeing outcomes; justice; domestic violence and research. Given that the generic disability response has not driven measurable improvements, a dedicated autism strategy is needed. This would best sit as a complementary component to the new Australian Disability Strategy.

The lack of coordinated action comes at high cost to autistic people, their families and the broader Australian community.

2. **Convene an 'Autism and COVID Summit' in 2022** to identify initiatives in education, training, employment and mental health that address the longtail adverse health, social and economic impacts of COVID. Autistic people overwhelmingly want to work and have much to offer. Tailored responses would enable them to be part of the solution to current and future workforce shortages. The COVID response should also build on recommendations for change from the Select Committee on Autism, expected to report in March 2022.
3. **Develop a National Roadmap to improve health and mental health outcomes** as has been done for people with intellectual disability, given the appalling health and mental health inequalities currently faced. The Disability Royal Commission has documented the systemic barriers in accessing health services, and we support their call for initiatives to improve understanding of autism among health professionals, addressing affordability and communication barriers in the health system, and providing more autism-friendly health services.
 - ▶ 20-36 year lower life expectancy
 - ▶ Autistic children and teenagers 10x more likely to present at emergency departments
4. **Ensure an enduring and effective National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** by recommitting to its original vision. We encourage the government and community to focus on the long term individual and collective benefits of the NDIS, rather than the short term costs. Disability supports must be continuously improved by:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Expanding support and services for those not eligible for individual NDIS support packages b. Stronger regulation and care standards to ensure quality supports and to protect participants safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. More deliberate market stewardship to ensure better access to services across Australia. d. Co-design in planning and delivery with autistic people, their families, and representative organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ One third of NDIS participants are autistic ▶ The NDIS has been life-changing for autistic people and their families ▶ Research shows a \$2.25 community wide benefit for every \$1 invested.
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About the Australian Autism Alliance

As a diverse national network of key autism organisations representing and led by autistic people, peak bodies, service providers, and researchers, we can provide expert advice including direct access to autistic people and their families and carers. We reach over half a million people through our communication channels and provide support to people with autism across the lifespan. We look forward to working with the elected government after the election to implement these changes and continue discussions about other areas of reform required to improve the lives of autistic people.

For more information connect with us at australianautismalliance.org.au or contact Alliance Co-Chair Jenny Karavolos at chair@australianautismalliance.org.au or 08 8462 0655.

