



autism
tasmania

31st Annual Report 2022-2023



Our Appreciation

Autism Tasmania acknowledges the grant funding provided by our funder [The Department of Social Services](#).

We thank all individuals who supported us during the year and gratefully acknowledge the generous donations made by our members & the community.

Donors

Catholic Development Fund
Commonwealth Bank
Community Grant
Morgan Family - Point to Pinnacle
The Hon. Rob Valentine
Aurora Energy
Tasmanian Police Charity Trust
Robert Fergusson Family Foundation
Payroll deductions
Private Donors

Our Program Partners



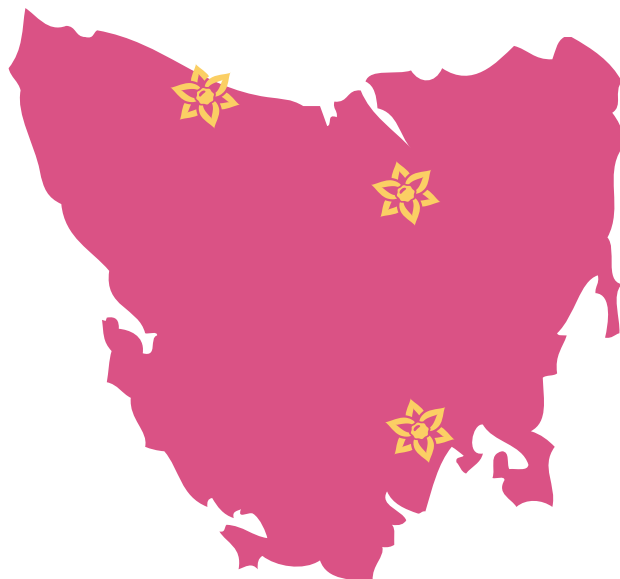
Contents

- About Us 5
 - Our State wide Location 5
 - Our Vision & Mission 6
 - Our Core Values 6
- About Autism 7
- About the Tasmanian Autistic Community 8
- 30th Anniversary Celebrations 9
- State of the State Report 10
- Be Open to Autism 11
- National Assistance Card 12
- Key Outcomes in 2022-23 13
- Our Board 15
- Chairperson’s Report 16
- Our Team 17
- Chief Executive Officer’s Report 18
- Our Service Performance
 - Autism Advice 19
 - NDIS Support Coordination 21
 - Learning & Development 23
 - Peer & Social Networks 25
- Representing Members 27
- Member Library 29
- Affirming Neurodiversity 31
- Terminology Policy 32

Attachment #1
Audited Financial Statement 2022-23

About Us

Autism Tasmania acknowledges the Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the lutruwita (Tasmania) Aboriginal land, sea & waterways. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.



Our Office Locations

Hobart

Level 2, 168 Collins Street
Hobart, TAS 7000
(opened August 2022)

Launceston

39 Tamar Street
Launceston, TAS 7250
(opened April 2021)

Burnie

9 King Street
Burnie, TAS 7320
(opened July 2021)

Our Vision and Mission

Our vision is optimal outcomes for all Autistic Tasmanians.

Our mission is to work with, and for, the Tasmanian Autism Community to:

- **Create** the right conditions for Autistic Tasmanians to achieve.
- **Grow** community knowledge about autism and how to make a difference.

Autism Tasmania is the peak independent voice for the Tasmanian Autism Community. We work closely with our members and the extended Autism Community. We provide autism advice, service connection, support coordination, peer networks, parent workshops, learning & development and free membership to Autistic Tasmanians and their immediate family to access additional benefits, such as our members library and Enews.

We also work with service providers and businesses to provide learning and development in organisations to grow knowledge and confidence. We promote awareness for autism and the simple adjustments that make a difference. Our systematic advocacy ensures that the voice of the Autistic Community is heard and improvements are made.

We have three offices across the state of Tasmania; in Hobart, Burnie, and Launceston. We support the Autistic Community as a community-based, not-for-profit, incorporated association and registered charity.

Core Values

Inherent worth

We recognise and celebrate that people on the autism spectrum are valuable members of society, capable of contributing to and enriching the lives of those around them.

Social justice

We value equality and recognise that some people need a greater share of resources in order to have equal opportunity.

Individual dignity

We value individuality, acknowledge that everyone should be treated with respect, and we believe that all people should have the opportunity to be involved in choices relating to their own well being.

Respecting language and identity

We acknowledge the differing views within the Autism Community for describing autism and respect the right of individuals to choose the language which they believe most powerfully represents them.

Evidence-based practice and policy

We value evidence based practice and consult with and seek the input from the Autism Community to influence better policy outcomes.

Collaboration and community

We value partnerships with other organisations, and celebrate the diversity and achievements of the community we represent.

Professionalism and accountability

We strive to operate our organisation transparently and with the best interests of our members and the Tasmanian Autism Community in mind.

About Autism

Autism occurs when the brain develops differently. It affects the way people experience and interact with the world.

Given the extraordinary complexity of the brain it is easy to appreciate the range of both positive and negative impacts of autism. Autism is one of a number of neurological profiles that contributes to neurodiversity.

Autism affects the way people sense, communicate, behave, and interact with the world. It is talked about as a spectrum meaning that everyone on the autism spectrum is unique!

There are however some common Autistic traits. Signs of these traits that others may see include:

- Different communication behaviours such as not making eye contact, unusual speech patterns, or being non-verbal.
- Not responding to the behaviour, emotions and non-literal language of others in a neurotypical way.
- Strong preference for structure, routine and intense focus on areas of interest.

- Repetitive noises or movements (known as stimming).
- Sensory hypersensitivities to certain sounds, smells, touch, taste, movement, or visual stimuli.

All, some, or none of these traits may be obvious to others or only noticeable in difficult settings. Some Autistic people make a lot of effort to hide their autistic traits.

Just like every person, each Autistic person has their own unique strengths, interests, potential, and needs. Although autism is complicated, the good news is that community understanding, accommodations and access to expert supports improves outcomes.

Our logo symbolises the rare native Tasmanian orchid (Thelymitra or sun orchid). This fascinating plant is a significant part of the flora of Tasmania. Its flowers are blue, pink, or yellow. This logo inspires our mission. Just like the Autism Community, this extraordinary plant blooms “only when the conditions are right!”



About The Tasmanian Autistic Community

“There is a growing number of people being diagnosed with autism and with other neurodevelopmental conditions. For many Autistic people life outcomes in education, vocation, health and family functioning continue to be worse than they should be. The National Autism Strategy will improve life outcomes for all Autistic people in Australia. It will provide, for the first time, a coordinated national approach to services and supports for Autistic Australians and their families”.

- National Autism Strategy, Announced October 2022

Prevalence

Autism prevalence (number of diagnosed individuals in a total population) and incidence (number of new diagnoses per year) is not accurately known. Nationally consistent diagnosis criteria and data collection processes are emerging, however at present remain focused on childhood diagnosis and on disability. Not all people impacted by autism identify as having a disability. Autism is a lifelong condition. Autism Tasmania adopts the prevalence estimated by Autism Spectrum Australia at 1 in 70 persons, or 7,500 Tasmanians, however believes this is vastly underestimated due to the rise. In Tasmania, autism is the second most prevalent disability and 1 in 4 families are impacted by autism.

NDIS

As at 30 June 23, 35% or 4505 of the 13,371 Tasmanian NDIS participants are Autistic. 58% of NDIS participants under age 18 are Autistic.

Education

Tasmania's Department of Education (DoE) recognises 7,064 students with disabilities in Tasmanian Government Schools. DoE data shows there are 339 students with autism in kindergarten to grade two; 420 in grade three to six; 294 in years 7 to 10 and 61 students across years 11 and 12. Although this data is not definitive, as not all Autistic students are identified as requiring adjustments, it does support the view that the prevalence of autism in Tasmania is higher than that estimated through ABS data.

Employment

In Australia, the unemployment rate for people with autism was 31.6%, more than three times the rate for people with disability (10.0%) and almost six times the rate of people without disability (5.3%).

Diagnosis

There remain challenges to obtaining a consistent, timely and best-practice diagnosis. Tasmanians have limited access to both public and private options for diagnosis. In 2022-23, the public waiting lists have exceeded 18 months. Autism Tasmania estimates that 300 children are still currently awaiting diagnostic services. Medicare Items rebates for adults up to age 25 will commence in 2023.

Mental health

70% of people with autism experience mental health challenges including anxiety and depression.

Barriers to Optimal Outcomes for Autistic Tasmanians

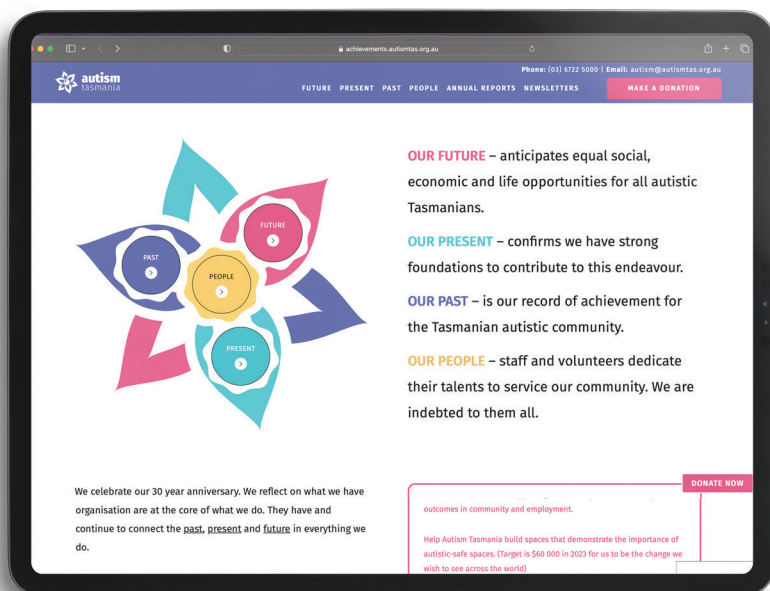
Autism Tasmania is working to reduce the following barriers.

1. Gaps in community and mainstream health, education and other professional knowledge and understanding about needs and strengths in the Autistic Community.
2. Gaps in employer knowledge and understanding about the strengths in the Autistic Community.
3. Gaps in supports and services due to:
 - Long diagnosis wait list
 - Low or no access to allied health practitioners and skilled support workers.
 - Incomplete knowledge of Autism across mainstream services (health, mental health, education, and justice).

30th Anniversary Celebrations

We launched our Ebook.

We celebrate our 30 year anniversary. We reflect on what we have done in the past, where we are now and what the future holds for Autism Tasmania. The people who have been on this journey with us as an organisation are at the core of what we do. They have and continue to, connect the past, present and future in everything we do.



State of The State Report

Autistic Tasmanians need to “*inform the reforms*”.

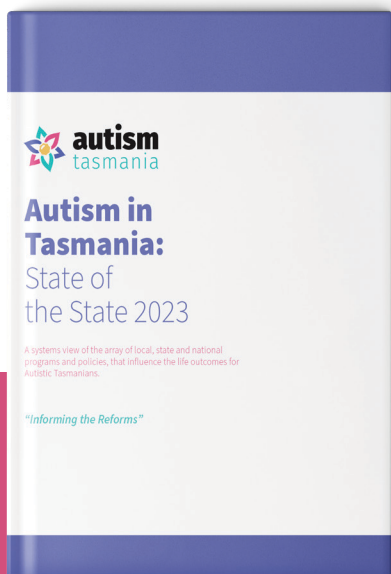
With a National Autism Strategy being developed, together with major changes that will impact Autistic Tasmanians, there has never been a more important time for cooperative action.

Meaningful engagement and active involvement of Autistic Tasmanians, their families, loved ones and allies is critical to shaping future reforms and informing how change is implemented. Autism Tasmania has combined experiences shared by our community, with available data and policy analysis to develop this Autism in Tasmania: State of the State Discussion Paper.

This paper seeks to strengthen our collective understanding of the circumstances faced by Autistic Tasmanians. It also provides some thought starters about practical opportunities for improvements in the current environment. The paper is intended to help inform and advance discussions with Autistic people, their families and loved ones, government agencies, community organisations and service providers.

We thank the community members and organisations who generously provided input into draft versions of this paper. Their insights and lived experiences are quoted throughout this paper.

To influence change, we need to work together.



Be Open to Autism

The **'Be Open to Autism'** Campaign has now been launched within the Tasmanian market to invite curiosity and positive action around the neurodiverse community.

Using exaggerated and humorous scenarios, the campaign is designed to highlight how bland and uninspiring the world would be if everything was the same, and the audience is encouraged to embrace diversity and celebrate what makes people unique. It goes on to invite neurotypical people and businesses to find out more about the Learning and Development Programs on offer through Autism Tasmania, and introduces the National Assistance Card Autism Trial (Tasmania) to both the Autistic Community as well as the rest of community.



National Assistance Card

Autism Tasmania invites members of the Tasmanian autistic community to participate in the National Assistance Card Autism Trial (Tasmania).

We are excited about this opportunity because the National Assistance Card is designed to make it much easier for people to communicate their unique needs for understanding and/or assistance. It is also an important step toward fostering greater community awareness and acceptance of autism. Across Australia, the National Assistance Card is available for people living with brain injury. In Tasmania only, the National Assistance Card is now available for Autistic people too.

The Autism Trial has been developed with and for the Autistic Community.

A team of 12 Autistic Community members, family members and carers formed the Autism trial Advisory Group and together tailored the National Assistance Card to meet the needs of the Autistic community and developed:

- The set of standardised wording of the most common autistic traits
- The communication resources for their community and the broader community

**NATIONAL
ASSISTANCE
CARD**

First Name
Last Name



Your understanding and
assistance is appreciated.

DOB: 01/02/1964
Card No. 0001/2022

**I am autistic. I may need
understanding/ assistance due to:**

Scan this QR code to
find out more about me
or how to assist.

[Personalised list, for example]

- Difficulty with social cues/interactions
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Getting stuck on a topic/behaviour
- Information processing difficulties
- Sensory overload: lights,sounds,smells,touch

My nominated contact person (if required) is:
CONTACT PERSON NAME
phone number

Police Assistance Line: 131 444 www.nationalassistancecard.com.au

In 2022/23 we grew Autism Tasmania...



STRATEGY

This year we focussed on developing our 4 Programs and measuring their impact towards building sustained capacity for 3 areas:

1. Autistic Individuals.
2. Broader community.
3. Autism Tasmania.

We have strengthened our systemic advocacy capabilities in readiness for national and local opportunities to influence change.



PARTNERS

- We strengthened existing and established new partnerships.
- Care2Serve will help us all better recognise and support autism carers.
- With Nexus we co designed our Autism Capability Development Program.
- The National Assistance Card Autism Trial in Tasmania - we are ready for national rollout.



STAFF

- 8.8FTE staffing at end of year. 35% increase.
- 14 team member at end of year. 17% increase.



FINANCE

- Secured 2 grant extensions until 30 June 24.
- \$55,000 Donations increased by 420%
- Balanced budget achieved.
- Invested in our Learning and Peer programs.



SYSTEMS

Continued to improve our operational IT and applications systems.

- New CRM for Support Coordination to simplify and track activities.
- 50% of client contacts now arrive via online forms.



ADVOCACY

- 2 National NDIS consultation submissions, 1 Early Childhood consultation submission.
- 1 State consultation submission.
- Building our first State of the State report.



GOVERNANCE

3020 members, overall 15% increase this year across two membership categories

- Full membership. (95% of total) increased by 13% driven by a 30% increase in Autistic Individuals membership
- Associate membership (5% of total) increased by 77% increase.

11 Board and subcommittee meetings.



COMMUNICATION

- Spectrum Enews - 12 editions, average 840 member engagement each.
- Facebook - 5369 Followers (11% increase). Reach grown to 143649 (530% increase).
- Facebook private group member - 667 (48% increase)
- LinkedIn - 143 followers (new this year)
- Website - 183,252 website visits (42% increase)

AUTISM ADVISORY SERVICES

3149 requests for advice or information from 1473 individuals or organisations. 4% increase.

39% from Autistic Individuals a 84% increase.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

48 Learning and development workshops this year with a 20% decrease from last year.

There were 519 participants which was a 36% increase.

NDIS SUPPORT COORDINATION

76 participants received 2254 hours of support coordination.

A 6% decrease in clients and 9% increase in hours

PEER AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

3 active peer support groups.
70 registered members of groups.
6 volunteer facilitators.

... To strengthen the impact of our Programs.

Our Board

CHAIRPERSON

Skie Mitchell

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

Kieran McDonald

SECRETARY

Vacant

TREASURER

David Donald*

(Direct appointment March 2023)

BOARD MEMBERS

James Baker**

Dr Lisa-ann Gershwin

Laura Godfrey

Pip Atkinson

Michael Gammon**

Desmond Fitzgerald *

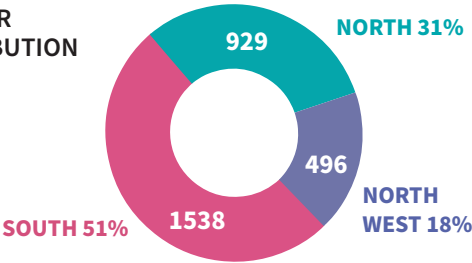
At the ATM held on 26 October 2023, members:

1. Celebrated 30 year anniversary and launched our e-book recording the past, present and optimism for the future.
2. Elected 4 Board members (**) for a 2 year term in accordance with our Constitution Clause 34.7. As one electee was unable to accept the appointment, and the Treasurer role was not filled, the Board appointed persons to fill the vacancies. (*)

TOTAL MEMBERS: 3020 (Full: 2884, Associates: 136)

Total new members in 2022-2023: 396

MEMBER DISTRIBUTION



Autistic Community Advisory Subcommittee (ACAS)

The Board established the Autistic Community Advisory Subcommittee, in accordance with Constitution Clause 39.9. The following 12 Autistic individuals are appointed for a two year term. In May 2023, inaugural meeting was held.

AZAR, Tara
BERRY, Lisa
BESWICK, Tamara
BRAKE, Pen
FLETCHER, Carol Ann
HAMILTON, Fiona
HILL, Ashton
LA PAGLIA, Heidi
OLIVER, Megan Co-Chair
PECL, Nadja
SECOMBE, Rebecca
WILLIAMS, Riley Co-Chair

Autism Family and Carers Advisory Subcommittee (AFCAS)

The Board is pleased to have approved the recommendation to appoint 12 individuals from the Autism Community.

BERGMAN-WELLS, Carol
CHOOBE, Loreta
COX, Denise
HAGSTROM, Lisa
HEALD, Chelsea
JENKINS, Samara
MARSHALL, Kim
MILLARD, Kylie
SUMAR, Sanjini
TAYLOR, Michelle
TRIMBLE, Allison Jane
VENETTACCI, Rebecca

BOARD MEMBER ATTENDANCE 2022/23

Board Member

ATKINSON, Pip (elected 2021)
BAKER, James (elected 2022)
DONALD, David (appointed April 2023)
FITZGERALD, Desmond (appointed Jan 2023)
GAMMON, Michael (elected 2022)
GERSWHIN, Lisa-Ann (elected 2021)
GODFREY, Laura (elected 2021)
McDONALD, Kieran (elected Oct 22)
MITCHELL, Skie (elected 2022)
STEVEN, Philip (elected 2020)
WRIGHT, Christine (elected 2020), resigned Aug 2023

Required	Attended
10	7
10	7
6	3
5	5
5	5
10	8
10	8
10	10
10	10
5	4
1	0

Chairpersons Report

It is my privilege to present the 31st Autism Tasmania Incorporated Annual Report.

In October 2022, we celebrated Autism Tasmania's 30-year anniversary. We marked 30 years of very active, relentless, community-based advocating for understanding and recognition of the need for urgent change. We thanked our Autism Community leaders who volunteered tirelessly across these past decades to realise our vision of better life outcomes for Autistic Tasmanians.

As I reflect on the events of this year, the words **'optimistically expectant'** best describes the opportunities and challenges experienced by everyone involved in improving outcomes for Autistic people, their families, carers and advocates.

This year marked the milestone where for the very first time, the need for major system-wide changes – in the form of Australia's first National Autism Strategy – has finally been acknowledged. We see early evidence of commitments to improve outcomes. We are optimistically expectant of meaningful investments following the commitments.

This year, in October 2022, Autism Tasmania launched our Be Open to Autism Community engagement campaign. With clever images this campaign connected the two words "Autism" and "Autism Tasmania". We urged the community to be curious about autism and to contact us to learn about autism and to develop their knowledge,

skills and confidence. I am delighted with the impact of this small, but effective campaign. In April 2023, we continued to build on this campaign and connected with new community through our state wide 26 'drop in' events across the state.

This year, Autism Tasmania established our first Autistic Community Advisory Subcommittee comprising 12 adults representing autism and its diversity. This Subcommittee advises the Board and the CEO on our strategic and operational activities to deliver our mission.

We are grateful to receive extended investment by the national Department of Social Services to fund our work to build and deliver sustainable programs to build capacity of our community, in parallel to build our organisation's processes and systems.

I thank our volunteer Board Members, Committee Members and our staff for their talent and commitment to developing Autism Tasmania to serve the autistic community.

Join us in optimistically expecting the continued momentum of the activities that work to transform the life's of all Autistic people, their families and carers in Tasmania.

Skie Mitchell
Chairperson

Our Team

This year, the following employed (E) and volunteer (V) team members have worked for Autism Tasmania as we transformed our organisation. Team members working across more than one program indicated as (*).

PROGRAMS, BUSINESS & OPERATIONS TEAM

Donna BLANCHARD (E) -
CEO
Allison LAPHAM (E) -
Business Manager
Robyn DAVIS (E*)
Lisa BERRY (E*)
Kristian RILEY -
Accountant
Izaak de WINTER (E) -
Accountant
Hannah REEVE (E*)

PEER & SOCIAL PROGRAM SUPPORT TEAM

Amanda GUNDERS (E*) -
Coordinator
Robyn DAVIS (E*)
Lisa BERRY (E*,V)
Kate COCHRAN (V)
Donna KENNY (E,V)
Pen BRAKE (E,V)
Geraldine ROBERTSON (E,V)
Solomon SMITH (V)
Hannah REEVE (V)
Tamara BESWICK (V)

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Amanda GUNDERS (E*) -
Coordinator AC
Jodie DENMAN (E) -
Coordinator PD
Roger O'MEAGHER (E*)
Alice Dudgeon (E*)
Donna Gibbons (E*)
Robyn DAVIS (E*)

AUTISM ADVISORY TEAM

Krystyna MOYLE (E*) -
Coordinator
Courtney LANDERS (E)
Amanda GUNDERS (E*)
Grant MALONEY (E)
Alice Dudgeon (E*)
Donna Gibbons (E*)
Hannah REEVE (E*)

NDIS SUPPORT COORDINATION TEAM

Kerryn PAMMENTER (E) -
Program Manager
Jamie MITCHELL (E)
Rose BOSCO (E)
Vishmi MUTTHOJU (E)

*We have farewelled
Allison Lapham (Business
Manager - 14 year service) and
Kerryn Pammenter (Program
Manager- 6 year service).
We are grateful for their
enourmous contribution to our
community.*

Chief Executive Officer Report

Our results confirm that Autism Tasmania's transformation is gaining momentum and our endeavours as a sector; and as an organisation are increasingly being recognised.

In October 2022 our 30th Anniversary AGM celebrated our history and we were reminded that the aspirations of our founding members remain true today.

Forging greater understanding and appreciation of autism improves outcomes and their vision for Autism Tasmania to be an organisation with a place for all Autistic Individuals and all their supporters in on the way.

While resources are constrained and demand often exceeds our capacity, this year we are pleased with the momentum of four key areas of our transformation and our work with our partners.

Our Governance: Our Autistic Community Advisory Subcommittee and Autism Family and Carers Subcommittee are now established and will ensure Autism Tasmania has deep and diverse advice from the community we serve.

Our Programs: We invested in the expansion of two programs as central to our role in building reciprocal capacity between Autistic individuals and the mainstream services.

- Peer and Social Networks have grown both through our three offices and through our work with Neighbourhood House across Tasmania.
- Learning & Development program: We have built an autism capability program to ensure disability workforce have the autism knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to deliver quality. This program is readily transferable to other targets, employment, education, and health sector.

Our partners and Resources: We are enormously grateful for the extension of our national grants. We successfully attracted partners who value our work. This recognition has diversified our revenue sources and sustains our future. Care2Serve is helping us reach more autism carers. The National Autism Assistance card program is working alongside us to take our program nationally.

Our voice: Although systemic advocacy is not funded, we are delighted to have developed our capacity to engage and amplify the voice of grass roots Autistic Tasmanians. Now is the time, and we have made progress.

Special recognition must go to the Autism Tasmania staff who bring their talents and commitment and each day learn from our community and each other new ways to navigate a complex sector.

A note of appreciation to Chairperson, Skie Mitchell and all Members of the Autism Tasmania Board who together have led Autism Tasmania so ably as we navigate challenging terrain on our transformation journey. Together with our Peer Support Facilitators these people volunteer their time to further Autism Tasmania's aspirations and growth.

We close this year excited with the well overdue recognition of deep and complex needs of autistic individuals. We await the outcomes of the many reviews. We believe we are well positioned to improve through the greater community, education, services and supports that connect seamlessly across a person's life.

Donna Blanchard
Chief Executive Officer

Context

A mother contacted us in severe burnout herself and mental distress. Their child with intellectual disability and autism was having trouble in most areas of life. Family had relocated from a regional area to attend school with support needs, but wasn't working, lack of access to services were causing substantial issues with behavior and incontinence primarily. Limited family or community support.

Outcomes

After a series of conversations and emails with information to advance pursuit of NDIS support, education communication, accessing support workers and mental health and carer & community support a check in was scheduled for a month onward. At this check due to AT support, the Mother had been able to achieve a consistent carer in the home which had greatly improved her own wellbeing and limited incontinence impact. Their one was changed from extreme despondency and burnout to hopeful and lifted. We assisted with further information about education and peer and social. Another check in a month later, Mother had been able to have active engagement with school and AT assisted with other schooling options for more advanced needs. Their tone is still hopeful and energy now exists to tackle the strategies for continued improvement.

Context

A gentleman in his late 50's requested help to find autism assessment services after his psychologist who was treating him for severe social anxiety, recommended assessment.

Outcomes

We provided two supports:

- 1) a list of service providers who conduct autism assessments in his region; and
- 2) information on peer and social opportunities, so he can make some connections/ gain information online/face to face, if desired.

He replied, "Wow...Thank you so much! This is brilliant information and advice. Up to now I have spoken to a number of people each unsure of who how or when but your list is specific and I can follow up and take control again".

Context:

A mother sought advice about her child who was avoiding school due to bullying and lack of support in class. Mother was struggling with carer's burnout.

Outcomes:

We spoke to the Mother about carer's burnout and assisted with a referral to Care2Serve. We provided resources on rights, advocacy and supports. Mother reported that she was relieved to talk with someone who understood autism and could point her in the right direction. She said that she felt supported, heard, and really appreciative.

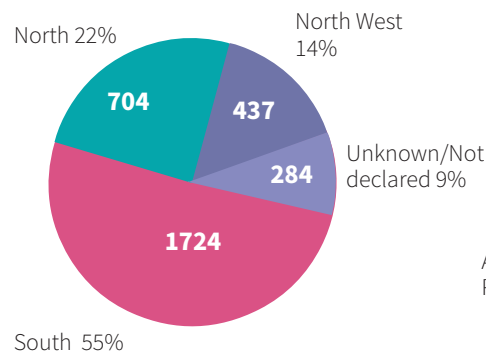
Autism Advice

Autism Tasmania’s Autism Advisory team guide people through:

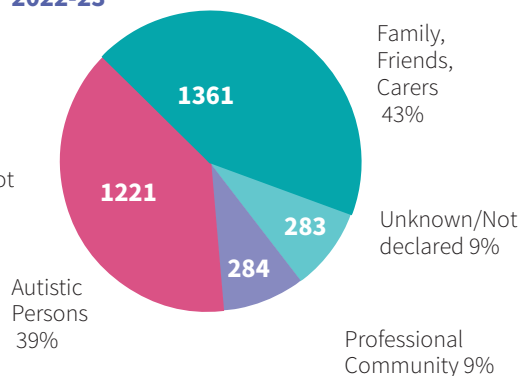
- Connection with local services, therapists, support and our mainstream and community networks.
- The process and experiences of Autism assessments.
- The NDIS application and processes.
- Access to national resources through our partner Amaze’s **Autism Connect** and our locally tailored resources.

In 2022-2023, our advisory team provided information and support to 1473 individuals or organisations. 41% of advisory requests are now received by our online self-referral form, with 32% by phone, 23% via email, 3% in person and 1% via social media. We delivered 3149 client contacts. (4% increase on previous year). 39% of these requests were from Autistic Individuals which is an increase of 84% from the previous year.

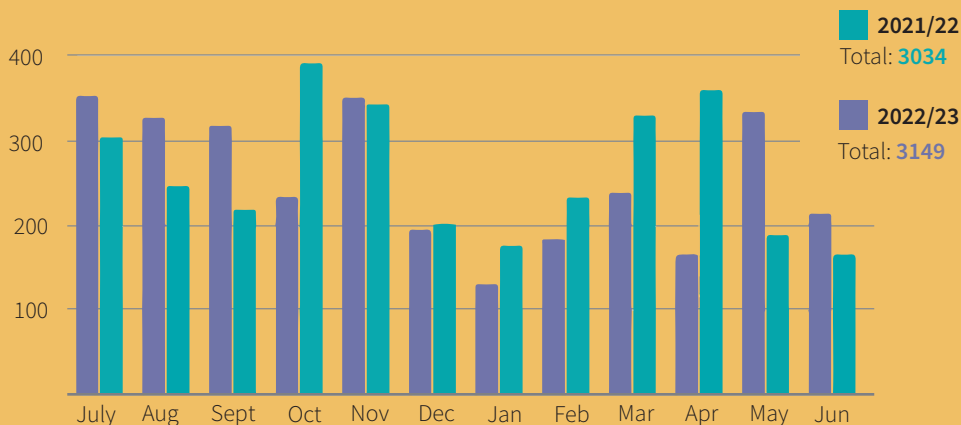
**Client Location
2022-23**



**Client Contacts by Category
2022-23**



Client Contacts



Context

After completing a course, a young adult participant wanted to take a break from studying and explore employment opportunities.

Outcomes

Our Support Coordinator requested funding for School Leaver Employment Services (SLES). NDIS approved this request and included funding for SLES in the participant's new plan. We linked the participant with an employment agency who stated that they have the knowledge and skills working with Autistic Individuals. The participant experienced many challenges with this agency. We were unable to resolve these challenges and worked to locate a new consultant, with the right skills. The participant is now completing work experience and reports that she is extremely happy at this workplace and hopes to secure a paid job there. The employment consultant visits the participants at work to ensure ongoing support.

Context

A 50-year-old Autistic male with their first plan required significant guidance.

Outcomes

Our successfully worked to connect and empower the participate to take greater choice and control of their NDIS plan and engage with allied health professionals to increase social and communication skills. Participant is now an active member of peer support network, engages others to open their minds to support and to engage more fully in the community, confidence and independence levels have increased to the point where this participant is unrecognisable from time of first engagement.

Context

Participant living in supported accommodation was not actively engaging with services. The main barriers were communication, understanding the NDIS plan, and limited access to support.

Outcomes

Our support coordinator connected with formal support team to explore options to implement this participants NDIS plan successfully. The participant stated their new goal of moving interstate and learning to drive. We facilitated the required approvals and supported the participant to reconnect with a driving skills therapist. Together they gathered evidence in preparation for a review meeting to incorporate service provider recommendations into the new plan and support the client meet their goals.

NDIS Support Coordination

Autism Tasmania specialises in NDIS Support Coordination for the Autistic Community. We provide support coordination for Autistic Participants who have this funded in their NDIS plan.

We provide support coordination exclusively to Autistic Participants and use our knowledge and understanding of autism to enable participants to find the right supports to achieve their goals.

Support coordination is an NDIS funded support that helps participants to make the best use of the supports funded in their plans. It is a capacity building support that helps participants to:

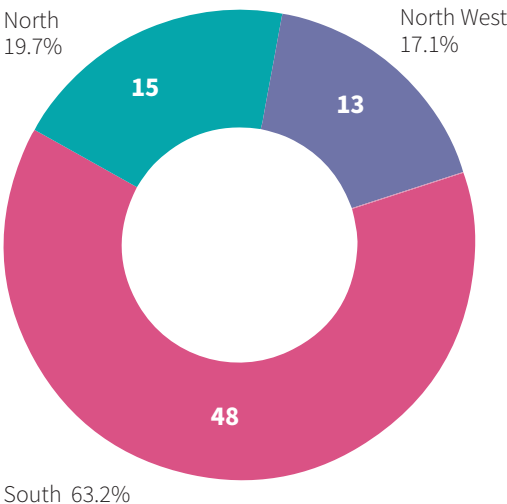
- Understand and use their NDIS plans to pursue their goals.
- Connect effectively with NDIS providers, community and mainstream supports and other government services.
- Build skills and confidence to coordinate their own supports.

We use our autism and NDIS experience and expertise to provide support coordination only for Autistic Participants who have support coordination funded in their plans.

We support 76 NDIS participants across the state (6% decrease).

We continue to develop our service and our Support Coordination team are located across each office.

Support Co-ordination Client by Location



2254 Billable Hours.
10% annual increase.

“Autism Tasmania provided me with masses of help in understanding the way NDIS works, and their knowledge of the rules and guidelines to assist with my constant queries was enormous. It was never any trouble for Autism Tasmania to answer my many calls and emails and clarify any concerns that arose.”

General Feedback

Our team is so grateful for this feedback. It makes a huge difference to know that our efforts have made a difference, because we understand that our clients often come to us when all other services and supports have let them down.

"Thank you so very much for your quick response and so much support, more than I could ever imagine. Thank you for giving us hope."

"Just wanted to thank you for taking the time to speak to us and to provide such a comprehensive response below. We will consider these options with interest. It can be a little overwhelming at times, so it is a real boost when someone who understands the challenges provides support."

"Thank you so much... The members and I really appreciated your presentation, and we had ongoing discussion through to the end of our meeting. I will absolutely reach out to you and your team in the future."

"Oh thank you so much! I was so lost but this is amazing thank you"

"I want to express my sincerest appreciation for all the information you provided. Your assistance means a lot to me, and all of the resources you shared are exactly what I needed. They are proving to be very helpful in my current situation. Thank you for your kindness in providing such valuable information."

"Thank you so much for all your help. These resources will be invaluable."

"Thank you SO MUCH. Gosh, I cannot tell you just how incredibly helpful this is."

Autistic Community Feedback

"Thank you so much for this session! Your information was up to date, thought provoking and neuroaffirming! You led the discussion with skill and demonstrated compassion and wisdom! Thank you so much!"

"Really useful and adaptive, thank you! Particularly enjoyed normalising of neurodivergent culture"

"It was incredibly helpful and I'm feeling much more positive about the future now"

"Very helpful at a daunting time"

"This is really very helpful and confidence building"

"Well done! Presented information in a calming and inclusive way"

Professional Development Feedback

"I have 15 years experience in providing disability services and I thought I knew all about autism. When I attended the Autism Capacity Building Program I found out that I knew very little. This Program developed my knowledge and skills significantly"

Learning and Development

In 2022/23 we continued to focus on building our program to support two separate audiences - the Autistic Community and the General and Professional Community.

Autistic Community (AC)

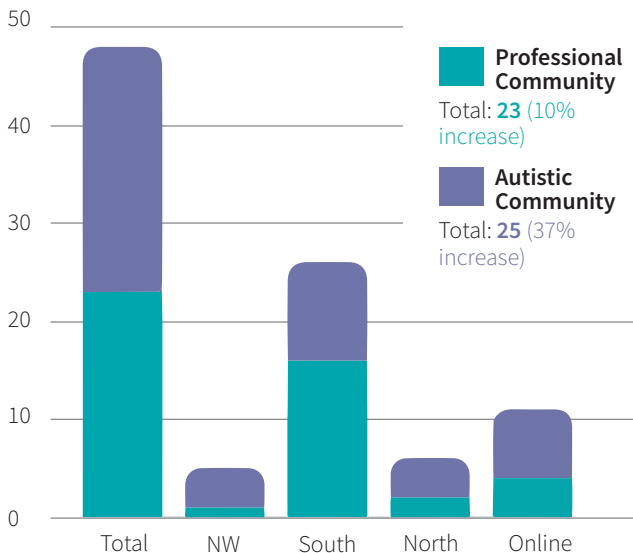
This year, we launched Our “*Understanding Autism - Autism 101*” workshop as part of our “*Be Open to Autism*” campaign. Mainstream services, Businesses/organisations/ community groups are increasingly recognising their need for autism knowledge, understanding. Autism Tasmania is poised in readiness to champion quality autism training from our Professional Learning & Development Program to ALL community members.

Professional Development (PD)

The “*Autism Capability Building Program*” was officially launched in June 2023 and is a 2 year partnership between Nexus and Autism Tasmania. The program embeds autism knowledge and, skills through our 7 part 21 hours program of specialist autism-specific training practice lead development and tool development. It has been incredibly exciting to deliver this program and expand to all disability service providers.

This year we conducted Autism Tasmania Parent and Carer Workshops and transitioned away from the National Early Days Workshop Program due to its closure. With the launch of the *National Assistance Card - Autism Trial* and our *Be Open to Autism Campaign*, L&D AC provided workshops on how to access and use the NAC which is our first step in tailoring workshops for our adult Autistic Community.

Workshops & Events by Location



We delivered 48 workshops to 340 participants.

340 clients (30% decrease from previous year)
70 people attended our Autistic Community program (67% decrease due to grant end)
270 people attended our Professional Development program (11% decrease due to investment in program development)

Context

Autism Tasmania launched our Be Open To Autism Campaign and during April - Autism month we announced our 'Drop In' events statewide. Our Drop In events are an opportunity for our Autism Community members to attend and gain connection, support and share information. Autism Tasmania collaborated with Neighbourhood Houses to connect with our community in their local area in hopes to establish local peer networks and be accessible to offer support statewide.

Outcomes

26 Drop in sessions were held this financial year in collaboration with 22 Neighbourhood Houses. During our drop in sessions we connected with 140 community members and we are continuing to work with members who would like to facilitate peer groups within the Neighbourhood House or our office settings. Our Drop In sessions are also being requested to be repeated twice annually by service providers and Neighbourhood houses. Scheduling future Drop In sessions are underway.

Context

Hobart Airport Tasmania, Virgin Australia, Swissport and Autism Tasmania have come together to offer a quarterly program of airport familiarisation tours. Each session has capacity for three children, under the age of 16, to visit Hobart Airport with a parent or carer to participate in a tour - including check in, security screening, and boarding and disembarking an aircraft.

Outcomes

We have received very positive feedback from the Autistic Community about this project such as "Just wanted to say thank you so much for the airport and boarding experience today. Our son have a fantastic time and loved meeting the crew and the pilot." 6 Tours have taken place so far with 9 grateful participants and a wait list ready to deploy.

Context

Parents visited our Hobart office on behalf of their adult daughter who had been struggling with adopting a positive autistic identity, rejecting her autism diagnosis, and engaging in high-risk or antisocial behaviours. The parents said they had never reached out for help together before and had just been "getting on with it" for so long.

Outcomes:

We followed up after the first meeting with delivery of Autistic-led, neuroaffirming resources written by Autistic people, fact sheets about Autistic girls and women, information about masking and burnout, family practitioners who are specialised in group therapy sessions for families where one or more member is neurodivergent, positive behaviour support practitioners. The mother and father called back to say thank you for the advisor's approach and ongoing efforts to check in.

Peer and Social Networks

Autism Tasmania is working to expand the range of Peer & Social opportunities available state wide for our community members as our community continues to express a high need for this connection and support.

The areas we have been targeting include Peer Support the Autistic Way (PSAW), Community Led Groups, Events and Online platforms.

This year our program has focused on redeveloping our induction and supports for peer facilitators to ensure every facilitator has individualised supports to suit their preferences. We now tailor the facilitator role to their needs and ensure they feel confident in leading a group and to shape the group to suit its members. Building solid foundations for our program helps ensure that the peer groups offered can be maintained and supported to ensure long term success of the groups. We are now confidently in the process of recruiting peer facilitators to expand our peer & social opportunities.

To ensure that our Autistic and Autism communities can easily enquire and discover what peer and social connections are available to them we have introduced a 'Connect - Peer Networks' button on our website which is a multi function online form that allows users to request to join a peer group, express interest in becoming a facilitator or provide feedback. Since its installation in April we have had over 70 contacts and this is yet to be promoted.

Peer and Social Network by Location

North

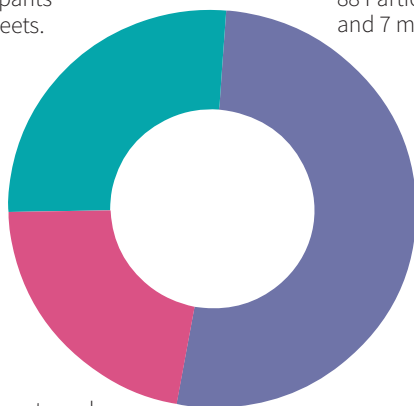
45 Participants
and 10 meets.

North West

88 Participants
and 7 meets.

South

37 Participants
and 7 meets.



"I was diagnosed as an adult. Knowing that i can meet my peers each month to learn about Autism is an enormous relief"



NDIS Review: From problems to solutions

September 2023



AUSTRALIAN
Autism Alliance

Enduring solutions
for a neurodivergent population
Paper I

1 September 2023

A Complete and Joined up Ecosystem of Support

Submission to the NDIS Review



AUSTRALIAN
Autism Alliance

and

lived experience focus group



We welcome the opportunity to discuss and elaborate further. Please contact:
AW Shim | ndisandrewshim@gmail.com

Representing Members

Our advocacy ensures that the voice of the Autistic Community is heard and improvements are made. We work to shape the programs and policies at local, state, and national levels. This includes submissions to influence the range of reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

NATIONAL

National Autism Strategy

In October 2022, the government committed and funded the development of Australia's first strategy. We worked to ensure Tasmanians were appointed to the national committees and working groups and readied for consultation

NDIS Review

In October 2022, the government announced a major review of design, operations and sustainability of this vital 10 year old program. We collaborated with our national partners the NDS, AABA and the AAA to ensure the include Tasmanian perspectives in all submissions. National Guideline for supporting the learning, participation, and well being of Autistic children and their families in Australia.

LOCAL

Autism Tasmania provided expert advice about autism inclusion strategies at:

- Hobart City Council
- Hobart Airport Access Committee
- Launceston City Council
- UTAS SPEERMENT Group

STATE

State Minister for Disability

The State Minister for Disability, The Hon. Jo Palmer, has been active in supporting the work of Autism Tasmania wherever possible and in opening our new Hobart Office in October 2022.

Disability Inclusion Bill

The decision to replace the previous Disability Services legislation with a new Disability Inclusion Bill is welcomed by our community. We are active in informing this new state framework.

Autism in Tasmania - State of the State Report

With the National Autism Strategy being developed in 2024, together with major changes that will impact Autistic Tasmanians, there has never been a more important time for cooperative actions. We developed our State of the State report to inform the many reforms.




Our Digital Library

Filter Titles

Topic ▼

Audience ▼


Search ... 🔍



Women and Girls with Autism Spectrum Disorder – Understanding Life Experiences from Early Childhood to Old Age

Girls Life Skills


[Read More](#)



What Every Autistic Girl Wishes Her Parents Knew

Parents
Understanding Autism

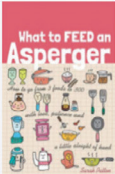
[Read More](#)



What Is It Like to Be Me?

Children Parents Teenagers
Understanding Autism

[Read More](#)



What to FEED an Asperger (Recipe Book)

Children Dietary Parents
Teenagers

[Read More](#)

Topic	Audience
Topic	Audience
Adult Diagnosis	Adult Diagnosis
All children	Adults
Anxiety	All children
Autobiography	Children
Behaviour	Educators
Cognitive Behaviour	Girls
Coping Strategies	Parents
Dietary	Parents/Carers Educators
Education	Professionals
Employment	Siblings
Executive Function	Teen Girls
History of Autism	Teenager
Indigenous Storybook	Teenagers
Life Skills	Teens
Memoir	
Mental Health	
NDIS	
Parents/Carers Educators	
Play Skills	

Member Library

“I don’t come into the city areas very often and prefer books to online. The online library is easy and I can select books to be delivered to me so I can learn and help my child more” - Library Member

Our free member library is a comprehensive autism specific reading and viewing collection available for loan. Our state wide online library system has streamlined access to quality resources for members to order online for delivery to their home, or collect in-person from one of our three offices. We have 522 publications available for loan.

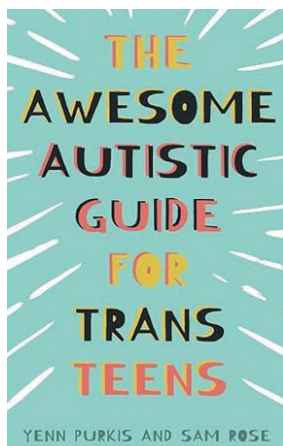
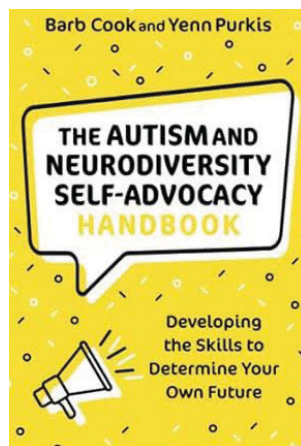
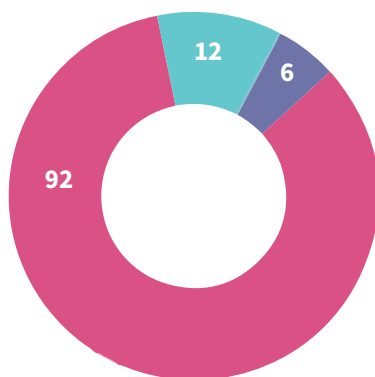
In 2022/23 we processed 180 book loans to 51 members, which is a 131% increase from the previous financial year.

Some of our new publications include;

- The Autism and Neurodiversity Self-Advocacy Handbook by Barb Cook and Yenn Purkis
- The Awesome Autistic Guide for Trans Teens by Yenn Purkis and Sam Rose
- Some Brains by Nelly Thomas,
- Ten steps to Nanette by Hannah Gadsby
- She Doesn't Seem Autistic by Esther Ottaway

Member Loans by Location

■ North ■ South ■ Northwest



Affirming Neurodiversity

Autism Tasmania works to be the exemplar organisation and to lead Tasmanians toward uniform, universal adoption of neurodiversity affirming conduct.

Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.

By adopting the principles of neurodiversity affirming (neuroaffirming) we will increase acceptance and inclusion of all people while embracing neurological differences.

The 11 core principles are:

Intersectionality

Respecting Autonomy

Validating Differences

Presuming Competence

Reframing Expectations

Promoting Self-Advocacy

Rejecting Neuronormativity

Prioritising Lived Experience

Nurturing Positive Self-Identity

Adapting Systems and Environments

Honouring All Forms of Communication

Position Statement

Terminology Policy

The language used to describe autism is important. Many different preferences are evident and expressed by Autistic Tasmanians 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).

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).

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 regard to their autism (for example: Autistic, person on the autism spectrum, person with autism, person with ASD, person with Asperger's/Asperger's Syndrome).

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>

Autism Tasmania – September 2021

Working with and for the Tasmanian Autism Community

www.autismtas.org.au autism@autismtas.org.au



ABN: 90 215 494 454

Statewide Contacts

autism@autismtas.org.au

(03) 6722 5000

www.autismtas.org.au

Hobart office

Level 2, 168 Collins St
Hobart, TAS 7000

Launceston office

39 Tamar Street
Launceston, TAS 7250

Burnie office

9 King Street
Burnie, TAS 7320

