The Autism Association of Western Australia was established in 1967 by a small group of parents who simply sought a better life for their children, and who wished to have a say in how that would be achieved. The Autism Association is now one of the largest lifespan organisations in Australia specialising in the support of people with Autism and their families.

From its humble beginnings, the Autism Association has grown to be the leading service provider for people with Autism in Western Australia and is the only specialist organisation providing a full range of services for children and adults in Australia. The Association is also involved in the field of Autism nationally and internationally.

With approximately 800 multidisciplinary staff, the focus of our services is to work with each child to maximise their potential, and to work with each adult to achieve a good life. We are very much conscious of the legacy of the early founders, that parent-support and empowerment is critical to the success of the Autism Association.

We would especially like to thank you for your patronage, support and encouragement, and for your ongoing commitment to the Autism Association. We would like to thank our many community supporters, government departments and Lotterywest for the important role they have played in our journey and the contribution they have made to our success.

We would especially like to thank people with Autism and their families for their partnership in making the Autism Association of Western Australia the successful organisation it is today.
Our Strategic Directions

Our Purpose

To advance:
- the personal development
- equality of opportunity and
- community participation
  of people with Autism and related disabilities

Our Values

Passion
- to make the greatest difference
Respect
- for the uniqueness of each person
Commitment
- to treat individuals and families as we ourselves would like to be treated
Excellence
- in all that we undertake
Innovation
- to fulfill dreams and aspirations
Courage
- to strenuously advocate for people with Autism and their families

Our Vision

What we work to achieve:
- All children with Autism have a great start in life
- All children with Autism receive the education they need
- All adults with Autism receive the support they need to lead an ordinary life
- A community where people with Autism are understood, accepted and celebrated

Our Culture

Belief
- in great possibilities for every child and adult with Autism
Driven
- to assist each individual to achieve
Respect
- for individuals, families and advocates
Learn
- from people with Autism and their families
Dream
- WE DREAM BIG for each individual

Goal 1
Enhance the lives of people with Autism

Goal 2
Support families and carers

Goal 3
Influence and promote best practice

Goal 4
Increase organisational capacity and efficiency
2016-17 has been another year of growth and consolidation as we prepare for full transition to the NDIS. We are happy to report that we achieved growth in all our services, including family support, school age services, community support for adults, therapy services, community living and employment support services.

In the last twelve months, we undertook a wide range of initiatives to increase services and to expand our service footprint with the opening of a number of local service hubs. Services delivered this year throughout the State include early intervention for newly diagnosed children; school age support programs; therapy and clinical services; community support for children and adults; family support; community living; after school programs; and transition to work programs.

We continued our work this year to prepare for the full rollout of NDIS in Western Australia from 1 July 2017. This included further organisational capacity development to support service expansion. We also identified and prioritised initiatives to new and existing portfolios where we are planning to develop and expand services.

This has been a very positive year with the review of our Strategic Directions and planning for new operational developments to give carriage to our strategic goals. We were also very pleased this year to continue our collaboration with Curtin University on a number of research projects as well as work with the national Autism Cooperative Research Centre and the University of Western Australia.

What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts on child development in a number of key areas, including communication, social interaction and repetitive patterns of behaviour. Autism is also frequently associated with sensory sensitivities and sensory processing difficulties.

While Autism Spectrum Disorder is a complex lifelong developmental disability, with appropriate intervention children and adults with Autism can make significant progress and live fulfilling lives. Consequently, it is imperative that individuals with Autism have access to specialist services that understand their needs and are experienced in developing their skills and strengths.

Approximately one in every 160 to one in every 100 children in Australia is diagnosed with the condition. “For ease of use, the term ‘Autism’ will be used throughout this report to refer to Autism Spectrum Disorder.”
Chief Executive Officer’s Report

This has been a year of significant service growth and continuing work to prepare for the full roll out of NDIS in Western Australia.

The lingering uncertainty regarding the governance model for NDIS in Western Australia has presented many challenges. However, despite this, we have pushed forward with our strategic directions and established new service hubs in north and south metropolitan areas.

We expanded services to all age groups, engaged in outreach and consultation to remote and regional areas of the State; increased our service footprint by engaging with research conducted systems and individual advocacy; worked with the broader field of disability to advance change; provided input to State and Federal policy; and provided models of best practice for the advancement of knowledge in the broader field of disability to advance positive change; provided systemic and individual advocacy; worked with the broader field of disability to advance change; and consulted with the newly developed Teachers’ Autism Toolbox.

We expanded services to all age groups; engaged in outreach and consultation to remote and regional areas of the State; increased our service footprint; engaged with research; and consultancy to regional and remote areas of the State.

Significant work undertaken this year to expand services. We developed a range of small to medium sized service hubs in new locations throughout Perth metropolitan areas. The largest hub so far is in Mandurah and Fremantle with plans to open a second service hub in the Mandurah area in the next financial year. We also purchased land in the northern metropolitan corridor to further develop services and facilitate outreach to people with Autism and their families.

In addition to these initiatives, we commenced delivering local early intervention service and after-school therapy to children in the northern corridor to further develop services and facilitate outreach to people with Autism and their families.

We were also very pleased this year to establish a multi-disciplinary diagnostic clinic in partnership with the University of Western Australia and in collaboration with a group of paediatricians. There is strong demand for this service and we look forward to expanding this work in the coming 12 months.

This year we further expanded a wide range of resources to assist teachers to support students with Autism. These include easy to access video-based resources, support tools and the newly developed Teachers’ Autism Toolbox.

We completed further work on our Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) program for individuals who require assisted communication. We also expanded our community-based therapy groups for children, adolescents and adults. In addition, we partnered with Curtin University to commence work to enhance the NORTAKT social skills program with teenagers with Autism developed by Professor Sean Biddle from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden.

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Services Delivered in 2016-17

- Autism Advisor Program and family support for newly diagnosed children.
- Early intervention and multi-disciplinary services for young children.
- School support and therapy services for children and adolescents.
- Multi-disciplinary therapy services and behavior support for all ages.
- Community living supports including shared living homes and individual homes.
- Individual Programs tailored to individual need including skills development, independent living training, social skills, recreation and personal well-being.
- After school groups for children.
- Tertiary education support and volunteering support for adults.
- Employment Program, including job search, pre-vocational, on-the-job-training and ongoing support.
- Professional training and development services for teachers, health professionals, community workers and others.
- Statewide consultancy service.
- Flexible family support tailored to each family’s needs including in-home and out-of-home support, short breaks, and holiday breaks.
- Shared Management Services and/or assistance with managing funding to support self-directed services.
- Coordination of supports.

Year Highlights

- 4,669 client services were provided during the year.
- 1,438 individuals received therapy based services.
- 7,674 consultations were undertaken with families and other stakeholders.
- 2,430 registrations were received for our professional development and training, seminars and workshops.
- 548 newly diagnosed children were assisted immediately following their diagnosis.
- 1,438 individuals received therapy based services.
- 183 community health nurses attended the Early Indicators for Autism workshops.
- 1,000 teachers received school based professional development services.
- 4,000 posters and information booklets were distributed to primary schools in Western Australia to promote World Autism Day.
- 78 homes were supported of which 40 are shared living homes with full-time 24 hour care staff support and 38 independent living homes with visiting support.
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- Wings for Autism
- This program was established in collaboration with Perth Airport to familiarise and prepare children with Autism for travelling on a plane.
- Medical Students Internship
- A 2-year internship program for medical students from the University of Western Australia was established.
- Sports Coaches Training Program
- This training program was developed to facilitate greater inclusion of children with Autism in sport.
- Diagnostic Clinic
- A multi-disciplinary diagnostic clinic was established.
- Regional Services

We continued our strong partnership with the Pilbara community and Yinhawangka Charitable Trust this year to support families. The focus was on increasing understanding of Autism and supporting the early identification of Autism in Aboriginal communities. We also provided families with support to access early intervention funding and, in addition, we delivered culturally sensitive Early Days workshops to families of newly diagnosed children. We continued to support the development of local organisations by providing information and workshops to support capacity development. This included understanding the diagnosis pathways and early intervention funding pathways.

Work was also undertaken with the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie to support adults with Autism gain and retain employment.
Collaboration and Sector Development

We continued to engage in a wide range of sector collaboration this year. This included Commonwealth and State initiatives, NDIS, the West Australian Partnership Forum, Procurement Reform, the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorder, Education Support Forum, accessibility and inclusion projects, the Autism Academy for Software Quality Assurance Advisory Board, the Autism Alliance and many more.

We also continued our collaboration with the government of East Java as part of the Sister State relationship between Western Australia and East Java. This work involves the training of clinicians, teachers and other professionals in East Java who work with children with Autism and their families.

In addition, we strengthen our relationship with a number of other South East Asian countries. During the year, we hosted a study trip from Singapore led by the Singaporean Parliamentary Secretary together with officers from the Ministry of Social and Family Development in Singapore. We also hosted a number of delegations from Thailand, Vietnam and Laos involving practitioners, academics and policy makers working in the disability sector.

We continued to support sector development through a range of training initiatives within Western Australia for professionals and community-based organisations. We received 2,430 registrations for our professional development seminars and workshops. This was in addition to working with 850 staff from 20 organisations, including medical, professional services, educational, local government and commercial sectors to assist them to support and include people with Autism.

In Conclusion

The last 12 months has been a time of rapid change in preparation for transition to the NDIS.

Despite the volatility in our external operating environment, we expanded services; we delivered on innovation; we extended our work to promote best practice; we increased organisational capacity; and worked to promote best practice through our involvement in research.

In concluding this report, I will take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the contribution of many stakeholders, including the State Government through the Disability Services, the Department of Housing, the Department of Education and the Department of Sport and Recreation. I would also like to thank a number of Commonwealth agencies, in particular the Department of Social Services, National Disability Insurance Agency, and the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training.

A special note of thanks also to the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust who have been supporting our work in the Pilbara.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Board chaired by Dr Rob Storer and their enormous contribution to the Autism Association.

I would also like to thank all of our staff for their outstanding dedication and commitment throughout the year.

Finally, I would like to thank people with Autism who continue to teach and inspire us to greater heights.

Joan McKenna Kerr
Chief Executive Officer
The Autism Association has partnered with Perth Airport to establish the Wings for Autism program. This is an exciting program to support families prepare for airport travel with their son or daughter with Autism. The program involves staff from the Autism Association and Perth Airport supporting individuals to practice and experience ‘checking in’, going through customs and security, and boarding a plane in a safe environment. In addition, our Therapy and Clinical Services team developed a series of ‘social stories’ to help prepare and support individuals with Autism with different stages of the experience.

We also developed a training program for airport staff to increase their awareness about Autism and provide strategies for them to respond to the needs of individuals with Autism and their families. This proved to be a highly successful program that enhances access to travel for people with Autism.

The initiative started as a project to create a positive experience for families at our airport. The project involved increasing Autism awareness in our airport and educates staff about Autism. We also had a number of children and their family being supported to experience the different airport processes involved in air travel. The pilot project was a huge success.

"...it’s going to open up opportunities for Lily. She is going to now become confident, and feel that this is something that she can achieve in her life. In the future she might be able to go on holidays and it will just make such a difference to our lives and more importantly to Lily’s life."

—Parent of Lily, participants of the Wings for Autism initiative
Dr Rob Storer
Chairman
Dr Rob Storer is a Consultant Anaesthetist and long term member of the Autism Association. He has been actively involved in the leading the Board at a time of major strategic development, managing a sudden increase in the field of disability as well as Autism.

Dr Tony Quay
A Committee member of the Western Australian branch of the Australian Society of Anaesthetists and of the Anaesthetic Department of both St John of God Subiaco and Murdoch.

Professor Trevor Parry
AM QL WA | Vice Chairman
Professor Parry is a Medical Practitioner and Clinical Professor at the University of Western Australia. He has been responsible for the establishment of the State Child Development Centre in the mid-1970s and is its Director until 2004. He is a past Vice President of the former Australian College of Paediatrics, and Emeritus Consultant at Princess Margaret Hospital. He has been involved in medical education and public education in Australia and developing countries with particular reference to parenting and child development, including as Director of the Children and Young People’s Lifeline at Transport Officer at the Western Australian Citizen of the Year 2010 awards ceremony in November 2010.

Mrs Bobby Brownhill
Mrs Brownhill has been actively involved in the field of disability over many years. Prior to returning to Western Australia from Melbourne where she and her family lived, Mrs Brownhill represented Western Australia, Australia (AM) in 2012. Professor Parry was appointed an Ambassador for Children by the Australian Department of Education and Public Education in 2012.

Mr Mark Altus
Mr Altus joined the Board of the Autism Association in January 2003, he was a member of the Board of the Lutheran Church of Australia’s National Board of the Board for the School of Economics and Finance, and held a number of positions within the Western Australian Business School. He is a former President of the Institute of Company Directors. In 2014 he became a member of the University’s Senate Strategic Resources Committee (chairing the Board’s Audit and Risk Committee). In 2015 he became a member of the University’s Senate Strategic Resources Committee (chairing the Board’s Audit and Risk Committee). In 2015 he became a member of the University’s Senate Strategic Resources Committee (chairing the Board’s Audit and Risk Committee).

Mrs Vicki Rank
Mrs Rank is a senior international business executive with a particular focus in mining, manufacturing, construction, gas, oil, property, government, not-for-profit, professional service and primary producer sectors. His experience covers a wide range of industries with a particular focus in mining, manufacturing, construction, gas, oil, property, government, not-for-profit, professional service and primary producer sectors. His experience covers a wide range of industries and is a unique combination of international business, law (BCL), and business and finance. His experience includes executive roles in mining, manufacturing, construction, gas, oil, property, government, not-for-profit, professional service and primary producer sectors. His experience includes executive roles in mining, manufacturing, construction, gas, oil, property, government, not-for-profit, professional service and primary producer sectors. His experience includes executive roles in mining, manufacturing, construction, gas, oil, property, government, not-for-profit, professional service and primary producer sectors.

Mr Dallas Presser
Mr Presser graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree (specializing in Commercial Law) from Curtin University in 1995 following which he joined the Australian Department of Treasury and Finance. He has previously worked for the large accounting firms KPMG and Crowe Horwath. He has also worked as the CEO of a small listed software development company.

Dr Duncan Mareo
Dr Mareo has over 27 years’ experience as a chartered accountant and business advisor in Australia and internationally. He previously worked for the State Revenue within the Department of Treasury and Finance. He currently holds the position of Specialist Compliance Officer with the Office of State Revenue within the Department of Treasury and Finance. Mr Presser is a member of the Western Australian community and is a family member of the Autism Association of Western Australia.
For Children

Early Intervention
Our Early Intervention Service is based on contemporary evidence-based research in the field of Autism. Children are assessed by our experienced multi-disciplinary team to identify their developmental and functional needs. We partner with each family to develop individual intervention plans to maximise child development. Families can choose to have therapy in our specialist therapy centres or in the home, school and/or community environments. In addition, we provide family support, parent groups and parent training as part of our Early Intervention Service.

Autism Specific Early Learning Centre
Our Autism Specific Early Learning Centre is one of six nationally that is linked to a national research program. Our highly skilled team works with each child and their family to assess and develop a program that addresses their individual needs. Through collaboration with the national Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Autism, Curtin University and the University of Western Australia, we continue to undertake research on individual and family outcomes, as well as best practice in early learning settings.

Autism Advisor Program
Our Autism Advisor Program is part of the Australian Government’s Helping Children with Autism Package. This service provides a range of supports to families during and following diagnosis. This includes guiding families through the pathway for Commonwealth early intervention funding and link them to local support services.

School Aged Service
The School Aged Service provides a comprehensive range of intervention, therapy and support to school-aged children. Our team of teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists work together to respond to the needs of each individual child and their family. Our service is child and family-centred and works collaboratively with schools and other community services to maximise the educational and functional progress of each child.

Positive Behaviour Service
The Positive Behaviour Service supports young people aged 6 years and over with complex needs who are living at home with their family. The team is multi-disciplinary and works closely with individuals and families to support them to achieve positive outcomes.

Short Breaks
Short breaks are provided in a range of ways, either at a number of homes throughout the metropolitan area, the child’s own home, or through a range of community-based programs. Children are supported by caring and experienced staff who are trained specifically in meeting the needs of children with Autism. The focus of the service is to provide a fun time with lots of choice for each child to do the things they like.

The Autism Association is one of Australia’s largest not-for-profit Autism specific service providers. Established in 1967, our focus is on excellence in providing services and support to people with Autism and their families. Services are person-centred and based on leading international peer-reviewed research in the field of Autism.

The Autism Association has well established links both nationally and Internationally. We host internships and training programs for national and international participants, and regularly presents at Autism conferences nationally and internationally.
For Adults

Individual Support
There are a range of support services to assist individuals to participate in their community and/or be supported at home, in ways that they or their family choose.

We work closely with each person to identify the types of support that work best for them. It can include developing a range of new skills, personal independence goals, support in further education, volunteering or pre-employment assistance. In addition, it may include support in community activities or engagement with others. Ultimately, we provide the support the person wants and in the ways that best meets their needs.

AIM Employment
AIM Employment is a highly regarded specialist employment service focusing on securing and maintaining employment for people with Autism. Comprehensive support is provided to find jobs that are matched to each person’s skills and preferences. Each person is provided with on-the-job training and continuing support tailored to their individual needs.

Community Living
This service provides support to adults moving from their family home and into a home of their own. Options include support to live independently close to family and friends; sharing a home with one other person; or with a small group that is comprehensively supported. There are also several other options we can discuss. This underlying principle is that we work with each person to have their individual needs and preferences met.

Therapy and Clinical Support Program
This is a multi-disciplinary service assisting adults to develop their skills, maximize their independence and participate in the community. Our team of occupational therapists, speech pathologists and psychologists works closely with each person and their family to achieve outcomes that are important to them.

For Families

A range of support services are available for families, including consultancy services and practical assistance to understand Autism. A wide range of information services are available, as are parent groups and specific targeted assistance tailored to the unique needs of each family. Families are also assisted through the wide range of services available for their son and daughter.

Understanding the Autism Diagnosis
Comprehensive advice and consultancy is available to families to assist them through the diagnostic process.

Seminars, Workshops and Training
Parents and families can avail of seminars, workshops and training, tailored specifically to the needs and concerns of families.

Support Groups
Raising a child or supporting an older person with Autism places a range of different demands on families. Our support groups are focused on the needs of families at different stages of their lives. This includes families of newly diagnosed children, school age children, adolescents, adults, or groups formed around any issue that families decide is relevant for them.

Information and Advice
Advisory and consultancy services are available to all families and community stakeholders. Appointments can be made, or families can call to consult over the phone with one of our experienced staff. This is an important service, giving families access to advice when they need it. The Autism Association also provides a range of Information, including fact sheets and a range of publications addressing many of the issues important to people with Autism and their families. Our website and regular Autism News e-newsletter publishes current information on Autism, and program specific newsletters are regularly distributed to participating families.
For Communities

Professional Training and Development
Our multi-disciplinary teams provide professional training and development services to a range of professionals and other groups including teachers, allied health professionals, service providers, employers and the broader community. We regularly host leading international training and development for researchers and practitioners in the field of Autism through our Masterclass series.

Information and Consultancy
The Autism Association provides a broad range of information to the community including brochures and fact sheets, as well as general and specialised consultancy provided online, on the phone, or in person. We disseminate a wide range of brochures and publications on topics such as Understanding Behaviour, Autism Spectrum Disorder in Early Childhood Settings, and many other publications offering practical strategies for children and adults with Autism.

Regional Outreach
Services are provided to regional families, community organisations, clinicians and other professionals through visits to regional areas by our specialist team. We also provide telephone and web-enabled consultancy. Families living outside the metropolitan area can access our multi-disciplinary teams for information and advice through our 1800 free call number. In addition, community organisations and disability service providers can be referred to our Statewide Consultancy Service for specialised consultancy and training.

The Regional Support Team is comprised of experienced professionals from across our advisory and intervention services. The team travels throughout the year to regional centres in Western Australia, delivering a wide range of workshops to families, service providers, clinicians, teachers and other stakeholders.

Tailored services are also provided to children and families who are Aboriginal Australians or Torres Strait Islanders. Early Days workshops can be provided to families in the family home or at another location preferred by the family, and all family members who care for the child are welcome to take part. Families are also assisted to find out about the supports and services that are available to them in their local community.

“...It stretched my brain to observe and think differently about myself, my clients and families. It just made me excited to be working with my children, teens and adults again.”
—Professional who attended our last Masterclass

Regional Outreach
In 2016-17, Therapy and Clinical Services supported over 1,400 individuals with Autism across all age groups. In addition to our specialist centres at Shenton Park, Midland and Fremantle, we commenced delivering early intervention services locally for children in the Cities of Joondalup, Gosnells and Armadale. The School Aged Service team also worked collaboratively with schools to deliver part-time on-site support in addition to our existing consultancy service.

We were also very pleased this year to establish a multi-disciplinary diagnostic clinic in partnership with the University of Western Australia and a group of West Australian paediatricians.

Autism Advisor Program

The Autism Advisor Program provides a gateway for receiving information, support and funding for early intervention services for newly diagnosed young children. The Autism Advisor team provided 7,674 consultancies to families and supported 548 newly diagnosed children to secure early intervention support this year.

Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre

The Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC) is one of six specialised centres in Australia established under the Commonwealth Helping Children with Autism Package. ASELCC is a research-based program designed to incorporate an Autism specific curriculum within a day care setting.

This year we continued our collaborative research partnership with Curtin University to assess outcomes for the young children involved in the program. The aim is to identify unique success factors in achieving child outcomes. We are also undertaking a collaborative research project with the University of New South Wales to identify factors that influence a positive transition from our ASELCC to school.

First Steps Early Intervention

In 2016-17, we delivered early intervention services to 603 pre-school children. All intervention is tailored to the unique needs of each child based on assessment and in consultation with their family. A range of service pathways are available, including centre-based, home-based and school-based support.

This year, we expanded our program to deliver additional localised services for newly diagnosed children as well as school age children. Services were delivered from nine centres across the metropolitan area including the City of Joondalup, the City of Gosnells and the City of Armadale.

A new program for newly diagnosed toddlers as young as 18 months was also developed this year to assist parents and siblings to use every day experiences to support child development.
Therapy and Clinical Services for Adults

This year 260 adults and their families were supported by our multi-disciplinary team of therapists and clinicians. Work focused on maximising skills, building independence, increasing social participation and improving quality of life. We also completed the development of an 8-module training program to assist others working with adults who have complex communication needs.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Program

The PBS program continued to take referrals this year for individuals experiencing significant difficulties. The team works with the person and their family to develop strategies to reduce stressors, assisting the person to participate in the community, develop positive relationships and exercise control in the things that matter to them.

Alternate and Augmentative Communication

In the last 12 months the Therapy and Clinical Team responded to the increasing demand for high tech Alternate and Augmentative Communication (AAC) supports, including assessment and training in the use of communication devices.

This year we established a high tech AAC Trial Program to support individuals who have been on a waiting list for AAC supports. Individuals are able to trial a number of different AAC devices to determine the suitability of the devices to meet their communication needs. There is positive feedback from the approach and we look to expand the program in the future.

School Aged Services

The School Aged Service provides comprehensive therapy and support services to children and adolescents aged between 6 and 18 years of age. The team is multi-disciplinary and focuses on maximising the participation and inclusion of children at school and in the community, as well as providing support to families.

This year 720 children and adolescents were provided with a range of individual supports, including transition planning, skill development, communication, protective behaviours and social skill development.

This year we launched a comprehensive guide to facilitate adolescents with Autism in their transition from primary school to high school. The project is also continuing in the months ahead to develop resources to support adolescents to prepare and plan for life after school, including employment, further education and participating in community life.

We expanded our therapy based groups this year, delivering over 70 group programs across the year. A number of new group programs were developed and implemented during the year, including:

- **Secret Agent Society:** A program for adolescents that assist them to recognise emotions in themselves and others.
- **Kids Club:** A fun group program to support children to develop social interaction and play based skills.
- **Detective Club:** A fun social skills group designed to develop social observation skills in different contexts.

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Employment Placement & Support Program

AIM Employment is the only Autism specific employment service in Australia, supporting job seekers to find and maintain employment. AIM Employment Consultants work with individuals to identify and match jobs with their strengths, abilities, skills, interests and aspirations.

We assist individuals to work in many industries and sectors, including universities, office administration, hospitality, information technology, banking, real estate, warehousing, pharmaceutical, light industry and many more. From the time we place a job seeker in employment, our Employment Consultant works to facilitate a smooth transition into the workplace, including job training, workplace modification and peer training as required.

In 2016-17, 300 individuals were assisted to pursue employment. This year we successfully launched the 20 Jobs in 20 Days campaign to raise the profile of Autism in employment and to create employment opportunities for job seekers with Autism. The campaign began with an article in the Business News Magazine highlighting the benefits of employing people with Autism and successful employment partnerships between the employer, individuals with Autism and the Autism Association.

Over the year, the campaign was followed up with a number of presentations to increase Autism awareness in workplaces. We hosted a business breakfast to provide opportunities for employers to meet with other employers who are employing people with Autism and to gain from their experience.

A Benchmark for Others

AIM Employment received another outstanding Independent Quality Assurance report this year. It described the program as a “benchmark for quality services in the disability employment sector.”

Printers Know the Value of Employing People with Autism

The partnership between the Printing Industries and AIM Employment is proving to be of great benefit to both the industry and for people with Autism. The Printing Industries Association of Australia (PIAA) is encouraging printers across Australia to employ people with Autism. Ten printers in Western Australia have already engaged with the Autism Association and hired workers.

“Given the right job, people with Autism are fantastic contributors” says Andrew Macaulay, Chief Executive Officer, PIAA. Andrew believes that employing a worker with Autism can have resounding positive effect on business efficiency.

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Celebrating Long Service Achievements

A number of workers we support received their 10 and 5 Years Long Service Awards at their place of employment this year. We are very pleased to say we have great working relationships with employers, and the young people pictured below are a testament to this.

Con, Victor, Toni, Simon, Palino

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Lots to Celebrate!

Sal recently celebrated his birthday in his new home, where he is enjoying the peace and tranquility on a lovely large block, which is very much to his liking.

Sal was one of the first people to be supported in a Shared Living home nearly 20 years ago. He and his family already had long standing, strong relationships with the Autism Association from his early childhood years.

People who live independently in the community are supported in ways that best work for them. A plan is developed with each person to identify the life they would like to lead and how they want us to assist them to achieve it. This can include managing a household budget, shopping, meal preparation, cooking, community participation, maintaining and making new relationships, extending community links and social interests, as well as personal health and fitness. The level of assistance is tailored to the needs of each person and can range from full 24-hour support each day to lesser support each week for people who are more independent.

This year we supported the separation and transition of services into the NDIS. Significant work was undertaken to ensure that necessary supports continue to be available to meet the person’s needs following transition to NDIS.

We now support 78 homes in the community, 40 of which are shared homes with full-time staff providing 24-hour support, and 38 independent living homes with visiting support by staff.

Short Breaks for Children and Adolescents

A really important support for families and children under 18 years is our Short Breaks program that provides a fun weekend, or other period, away from home. Short breaks are provided in a number of homes throughout the metropolitan area. Children are grouped together based on their age and interests, and where possible, with the same three or four children each time. This provides an additional opportunity to form friendships and share interests. We plan to increase the number of short breaks in the coming year.

Community Living

Community Living offers a range of options to assist people to move into a home of their own. This can also include living independently with existing staff support, or with visits, or in three other people. The focus is on building a lifestyle the person will enjoy, while maintaining strong family relationships. The diverse nature of the supports available ensures that individuals and families can choose options that best meet their needs. This can include full-time support to part-time support, or drop-in support, depending on the person’s needs and wishes.

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Individual Options

The Individual Options program offers a range of supports for individuals to be assisted in ways that best meet their needs and preferences. We work with each person to explore the things they want to achieve, or would like to do, and we provide them with the support they need to do so.

This can involve assistance at home, in the community, in further education or in pre-vocational opportunities. It may also include assistance to develop a range of independence skills including work readiness. This year we provided flexible assistance to 250 individuals and their families.

Family Based Supports for Children

In our Family Support program, families decide what they need and how they would like to be supported. We work with each family to identify what they would like to achieve for their child and develop a plan accordingly. Some wish to have support in their home, while others may wish to have support in the community and/or at school. We also encourage families to be involved in the recruitment of the people who will provide them with support. Demand for this service remained very high this year.

Shared Management and NDIS Support Coordination

Shared Management is a service aimed at giving families maximum control of their services. Shared Management is essentially the agreed sharing of service management responsibilities between families/individuals and the Autism Association. This can range from assistance with the selection of staff to the complete management of the support services, including employment of staff, direction of staff, and all aspects of budget management by the family to meet the needs and preferences of the person with Autism. Shared Management enables individuals and families to maximize their choice and control over the supports and services they receive.

This year we continued to expand our NDIS Support Coordination to assist over 100 individuals and families to implement the goals in their NDIS plan. Our Support Coordinators work with each individual and family to assist them to achieve their goals by using their budgets creatively and resourcefully. Individuals and families have been supported to access and choose mainstream, community, informal and disability-specific services, and are supported to understand the NDIS processes. More importantly, our Support Coordinators work with each person to build their capacity to self-direct and manage their supports and participate in the community.

Growing more than veggies

Recently Phillip was supported to move into his new house, and although he loves his new house there was very limited garden space. Knowing how much Phillip liked to be surrounded by his garden, his Support Worker and Coordinator immediately went about finding a nearby community garden for Phillip to join. A plot was secured at the local community garden and Phillip now enjoys sitting and working in the garden on a regular basis. Since then, enjoying watching his vegetables grow, Phillip also enjoys being around the chickens living in the chicken pen. It is also a great opportunity to meet up with familiar people in the community. In the photo Phillip is picking one of his favourite things: picking his produce before taking it home to cook it!
Regional and Aboriginal Communities

The Autism Advisor team continued to have a strong presence across regional and remote Western Australia. The team visited eight areas across regional Western Australia to develop local community capacity through training and development workshops, and to link families into diagnostic and funding pathways.

This year, the team attended the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association Forum and provided information to Aboriginal health workers on early signs of Autism, the diagnostic pathway, the Autism Advisor program and early intervention funding.

In collaboration with the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust, we continued to work with local Indigenous agencies in the Pilbara region this year, delivering workshops and networking sessions to support the people in the Pilbara community. We also provided culturally sensitive Early Days workshops for families to support the people in the Pilbara community. This year we expanded our sibling groups to brothers and sisters of children at Early Intervention. Siblings were invited to participate in our First Steps therapy program. Here they learn strategies to support their brother or sister to develop skills in communication and socialisation. This has been very successful with parents, welcoming the opportunity to create positive learning experiences for the whole family.

We were also invited by the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie to present a series of workshops on What is Autism, Positive Behavior Support and Autism in Employment for community members, family members and service providers living in Kalgoorlie.

Statewide Consultancy, Information and Advice

The Statewide Consultancy Service works to increase the capacity of other professionals and organisations who are providing support to individuals with Autism. It provides consultancy to professionals, families, clinicians, schools, support agencies and community organisations.

Staff travelled extensively in regional, remote and metropolitan locations this year, consulting, mentoring and delivering training to a wide range of stakeholders including special education and community organisations. This year 320 consultations were delivered and 820 participants attended our Statewide training.

This year we received a grant from the Disability Services to deliver information and advice about the NDIS in Western Australia. This funded under the Information, Linkages and Advice Program (ILC) program of the NDIS. The Information and Advice Program will support individuals and families to understand the NDIS, its processes and support them to develop information and Advice Services that are supported to understand and experience airport strategies to create an inclusive sporting environment for all participants.

Family Support and Training

Building individual and parent capacity is a fundamental component of all Autism Advisor services. This year we continued to deliver Early Days workshops designed to provide information and practical resources for parents of children with Autism who are in the early days of their journey through the diagnostic process or immediately following diagnosis.

Our Autism Advisors also delivered a range of information sessions throughout the year to Child and Parent Centres and Early Intervention services. The information provided assisted families to understand Autism, the diagnostic pathways, early intervention service and the NDIS planning process.

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In 2016-17, we continued to expand our seminars and workshops to assist the disability, health and community sectors to support people with Autism and their families, and to create a welcoming community. A summary of these professional training and development initiatives include:

- 2,430 registrations for our seminars and workshops.
- School-based professional development days were delivered on-site to over 1,000 teachers across the metropolitan areas.
- We provided the Early Indicators for Autism workshop to 183 community health nurses and childcare educators aimed at promoting early identification of Autism and access to supports and services.
- We established a 2-year internship program for Aboriginal students from the University of Western Australia.
- We continued to provide work experience placements for TAFE students undertaking studies in the community and disability support sectors.
- We delivered a range of Autism Awareness presentations for employers employing people with Autism. The annual Fleet presentation to 150 drivers, the capacities of employers and co-workers to support individuals with Autism in the workplace.
- We continued the development of an e-module training program for staff working in the disability sector. The training program will equip staff with the skills to assist adults to develop their communication skills. The program include a training manual, online learning modules, video clips and other resources.
- We welcomed the Autism Apps website to include new resources and recommendations on a wide range of Autism-related Apps. The enhancements also include an easy to use navigation tool that will allow people with Autism and their families to identify which App is most suitable for their needs.

Professional Training and Development

In addition to the professional training and development activities, we delivered a number of initiatives to develop the capacity of the Western Australian community to support and welcome people with Autism. A summary of these initiatives are outlined below:

- Autism awareness in schools: This year, we distributed posters, information booklets and links to resources to over 4,000 primary schools in Western Australia to promote World Autism Day and increase awareness among teachers, students and parents.
- Teachers’ Autism Toolbox: We developed a website to assist teachers with facilitating inclusive learning environments through the participation of students on the Autism spectrum in the classroom and as the school environment.
- Wings for Autism: In collaboration with Perth Airport and Virgin Airlines, we established the Wings for Autism Program, where individuals and their families are supported to understand and experience airport strategies to create an inclusive sporting environment for all participants.
- Community Development

The team continued to deliver a number of initiatives to develop the capacity of the Western Australian community to support and welcome people with Autism. A summary of these initiatives are outlined below:

- We continued to provide work experience placements for TAFE students undertaking studies in the community and disability support sectors.
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WE DREAM BIG
for each individual