Approximately one in every 160 children in Australia is diagnosed with 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 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.

*For ease of use throughout this report, the term “Autism” will be used to refer to Autism Spectrum Disorder.
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
for the uniqueness of each person
Respect: in all that we undertake
Commitment: to fulfill dreams and aspirations
Excellence: to enthusiastically advocate for people
with Autism and their families
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
Dream: 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
This has been another year of significant work to support people with Autism and their families and we are delighted to report continuing service growth.

We again expanded our service footprint this year with the opening of two additional local service hubs. We also expanded our partnerships with community organisations to deliver early intervention services locally and to assist individuals of all ages to participate in their local community. The demand for therapy services for children and adults increased significantly this year, in addition to all other services. The included family support, community inclusion, skill development, community living, clinical services, positive behaviour support and individual employment support.

A very important part of our work this year was in assisting families and carers to understand and access the NDIS. We provided individual and systemic advocacy to support people with Autism of all ages. We supported teachers through our school consultancy service. We worked with families to support the transition of their son or daughter to community living. In addition, we worked with a range of businesses and industries to increase the employment opportunities for individuals with Autism.

We were also very pleased to continue this year our collaboration with Curtin University, the University of Western Australia and the National Autism Cooperative Research Centre to promote best practice services to people with Autism. We also continued to extend our work through involvements with the disability sector in Western Australia, as well as nationally and internationally. This included our work in East Java, Indonesia.

It was again a strong year for the Board as we responded to the challenges of the NDIS and considered our strategic path to build our services further. In the coming year, we will continue on the path of service expansion to meet the needs of people with Autism and their families.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge Disability Services, the Department of Social Services, the National Disability Insurance Agency, and other funding bodies for their support. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the Board who give freely of their time to advance the work of the Autism Association.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank all of our staff, led by the Chief Executive Officer, Joan McKenna Kerr, for the significant work undertaken this year and their dedication to the Autism Association’s mission on behalf of people with Autism and their families.

Dr Rob Storer
President and Chair of the Board
Chief Executive Officer’s Report

2017–18 has been a very positive year of service growth, innovation and preparing for the NDIS. We expanded services to all age groups and increased our service footprint; extended our service hubs; and widened the scope of support provided. We engaged with research and worked with the broader field of disability to advance positive change. In addition, we continued our work nationally and internationally.

We devoted a great deal of time this year to support individuals and families to understand and access the NDIS. We continued our work with universities, tertiary institutions and community organisations to promote best practice. We also played a leading role at a state and national level in advocating for the needs of people with Autism and their families.

We continued our work with a number of universities, as well as the National Autism Cooperative Research Centre, to advance knowledge in the field of Autism. We hosted several overseas delegations and sent staff to East Java as part of the Sister State undertaking between East Java and Western Australia. The work focused on supporting five regional governments to establish Autism services, professional development and parent support in East Java.

The new NDIS Bilateral Agreement transferring responsibility for disability services to the Commonwealth occurred in January 2018. As a consequence, we undertook work throughout the year to adapt and prepare the organisation for the full rollout of the NDIS in Western Australia. This included adapting organisational structures and systems to create readiness for NDS, as well as preparing staff for changes to their roles within an NDIS framework.

This year we presented ten papers at the 2017 APAC in Sydney:

• Beyond Words: A communication training package to support adults with ASD.
• Building awareness of Autism in remote communities through collaborative partnerships.
• Diagnostic considerations for older adults suspected of having ASD.
• Creating awareness: ASD and Me: Supporting peers to understand ASD.
• Teamwork makes the Dream work.
• Employment success for people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Services Delivered in 2017-18

• Autism Advisor Program and family support for newly diagnosed children.
• Multi-disciplinary early intervention services for newly diagnosed young children.
• School support and therapy services for children and adolescents.
• Positive Behaviour Support Program.
• Community Living Program, including individual supported living and shared living.
• Support programs tailored to individual needs including: skills development, independent living training, social skills, recreation and personal well-being.
• After school groups for children and adolescents.
• Multi-disciplinary early intervention services for adults.
• Individual Support Services Support Program, including job-search, on-the-job training and ongoing support.
• Professional development services for teachers, health professionals, community workers and others.
• Mental health 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

5,606
SERVICE USERS
supported this year

2,064
individuals accessed
Therapy and
Consultation
services.

709
young children received
multi-disciplinary early
intervention services.

6,908
consultancies were undertaken with families and other stakeholders.

425
newly diagnosed children were assisted immediately following their diagnosis.

346
people with Autism were assisted in employment.

79
Community Living homes.

2,214
POLICE OFFICERS
were trained in strategies to support people with Autism during challenging situations.

950
Teachers received formal
Professional Development
services.

15,000
SUBSCRIBERS
to our e-newsletters.

55,606
SERVICE USERS
supported this year

2
SERVICE HUBS
ESTABLISHED: Joondalup and Midland.

30
Awards received by our Early Intervention Team in the 2017 ECEI Awards.

2
Portugal attended
outreach agencies and SENNAR.

2,214
POLICE OFFICERS
were trained in strategies to support people with Autism during challenging situations.

950
Teachers received formal
Professional Development
services.

15,000
SUBSCRIBERS
to our e-newsletters.

PARTNERSHIP with Princess
Margaret Hospital and the
University of Western Australia
established to develop resources
to support children with Autism, a hospital environment using co-design with families.

AWARDS
received by our Early
Intervention Team in the
2017 ECEI Awards.

2
NEW
SERVICE HUBS
ESTABLISHED: Joondalup and Midland.

950
Teachers received formal
Professional Development
services.

15,000
SUBSCRIBERS
to our e-newsletters.

98
Community Living homes.

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**Regional Services**

In 2017–18 we continued to have a strong presence across regional Western Australia. The Autism Advisor Team visited regional areas to promote early identification of Autism and support families to access early intervention services. In addition to meeting families of newly diagnosed children, the Autism Advisor team delivered Early Days workshops to families and supported local service providers and government agencies.

This year we also launched an intensive therapy-based holiday program for children and families living in regional Western Australia. This much needed program for regional families provides direct therapy supports in an intensive program delivered in one of our early intervention centres in Perth, accompanied by the child's family.

The program is customised for each child so that it can be followed through with implementation in the child’s home/community/educational setting.

**Service Development**

Growth was achieved in all service areas and we continued to expand early intervention programs in local communities. We opened a centre in the City of Joondalup in addition to opening a second Midland centre to accommodate expanding demand for services. We also expanded partnerships with Parent and Child Centres to provide early intervention services in Winkle and Gwelup.

This partnership is fostering early identification of Autism as well as providing timely access to intervention and support for young children and their families.

We continued to expand our Social Skills Group Program for school aged children and launched several new programs targeting skill development in a range of areas. We also successfully implemented a trial of the KONTAKT Social Skills Training Program developed by Professor Sven Bölte of the Centre for Neurodevelopmental Disorders at Karolinska Institute in Sweden. This is a program aimed at improving the social and communication skills in teenagers with Autism. We also worked with schools across the metropolitan area to deliver group programs to students with Autism, in addition to the educational consultation services we provide statewide.

We were also very pleased this year to extend our multidisciplinary diagnostic clinic in partnership with the University of Western Australia. This not only provides a much-needed service to families but also supports the training of new clinicians. This is an important initiative in promoting best practice standards.

We increased our community supports to adults with Autism, including trialling new models of community living support. In addition, we undertook a number of initiatives to increase the social and economic participation of adults. This included the establishment of a Business Advisory Council with representatives from the West Australian business community. In addition, we were pleased to partner with a number of recruitment agencies to promote employment of job seekers with Autism.

**Research**

We continued to engage in a wide range of research initiatives involved with improving the lives of children and adults with Autism. In collaboration with a number of tertiary institutions across Australia, including Curtin University, the University of Western Australia and the National Autism CRC, we are engaged in the following research:

- Language development in children with ASD who are considered to be minimally verbal. The aim is to develop a set of national guidelines for best practice in supporting children with severe communication difficulties.
- Comparing models of service delivery between long daycare and centre-based early intervention.
- The National Child and Family Outcomes Strategy (CFOS) Project evaluating the progress achieved by children attending the Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC). Measure includes child development, parent wellbeing and transition to school.
- Exploring relevant subtypes within the national sample of children attending ASELCC centres and exploring how subtypes can be used to tailor interventions based on the characteristics and needs of the child.
- The Autism Association is co-leading a project with Curtin University and St Giles in Tasmania to identify successful strategies used by parents and teachers to support children to transition from daycare to school.
- Ongoing work with the Autism Specific Comprehensive Health Assessment (CHAP) tool.
- Collaboration with Curtin University, the Autism Science Foundation in the United States and the Centre for Neurodevelopmental Disorders at Karolinska Institute in Sweden to examine issues related to the employment of people with Autism.

For the fifth successive year, we received a grant from the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust. This year we used the grant to develop a range of resources to raise Autism awareness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, culminating in the early awareness program for young children and the provision of direct support to young people and their families.
We continued to engage in a wide range of sector collaboration this year. This included Commonwealth and State initiatives, NDIS, the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorder, the Autism Alliance and many more. A range of community development programs were undertaken to support the inclusion and participation of people with Autism. Training was delivered to over 50 sports coaches, mentors and volunteers and provided resources and practical strategies to support people with Autism in sport. We developed resources for schools aimed at enhancing understanding of Autism and providing peers with strategies to support their co-students with Autism.

In addition to the many events underway, we are supporting a number of community organisations to plan for events at Perth Zoo and at the Spare Parts Puppet Theatre. We are also providing input into the development of autism-friendly playgrounds in local communities. Work is also underway with Princess Margaret Hospital and the University of Western Australia to develop resources for families and professionals to support children and adolescents with Autism in a hospital environment.

We strengthened our relationship with East Java this year through our work in developing local Autism services in 5 regions of East Java including, Surabaya, Sidoargo, Gresik, Blitar and Malang. The support of graduates from the Autism Association’s Intern Program continued, as did workshops for teachers to promote the acceptance and inclusion of children with Autism in school and community settings.

We also hosted an intensive training program for a delegate from Jakarta to learn about supports for adults with Autism, particularly those endeavouring to find and maintain employment. This involved a strengths based approach to overcoming barriers.

In addition to this wide range of community collaborations, we also commenced work with the WA Police to deliver Autism awareness training to 30 Police Officers from the Mental Health Division. This training included strategies for Police Officers to support people with Autism during challenging situations. The program will continue in the coming year to expand the training for frontline Police Officers across the State. Online training modules are being developed.

**In Conclusion**

The last 12 months has been a very positive year. We worked steadfastly to expand our services and prepare for the full rollout of the NDIS in Western Australia. We maintained and extended our service linkages nationally and internationally. We led best practice initiatives at a State and national levels and played a leading role in advocating for the needs of people with Autism and their families. In addition, we undertaken a wide range of community development initiatives aimed at supporting people with Autism.

In concluding this report, I would like to acknowledge and thank the contribution of many stakeholders, including the State Government through Disability Services Department of Communities. I would also like to thank a number of Commonwealth agencies, in particular the Department of Social Services and the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training. A special note of thanks also to the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust who has been supporting our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I would also like to acknowledge the dedicated work of the Board chaired by Dr Rob Stone. In addition, I would like to thank all 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
Autism Association of Western Australia
Dr Rob Storey
Chairman
Dr Rob Storey is a Consultant Anaesthetist and long-term member of the Autism Association. He has been actively involved in leading the Board at a time of major strategic development, maintaining a lower interest in the field of developmental disability as Autism. Dr Storey is also a Committee member of the Western Australian branch of the Australian Society of Anaesthetists and of the Department of Pathology of St John of God Subiaco and Murdoch.

Professor Trevor Parry
AM CB WA Vice Chairman
Professor Parry is a Developmental Paediatrician and Chief Professor at the University of Western Australia. He was President and then Chair of the State Child Development Centre in the mid-1970s and President and Chair of the Western Australian Department of Health from 1999 to 2004. A past Vice-President of the former Australian College of Radiologists, and Executive Consultant at Princess Margaret Hospital. He has been much involved in medical education and public education in Australia and developing countries with particular relevance to parenting and child development. He is the inaugural recipient of the Children and Young People’s Lifetime Achievement Award in Western Australia up until 2004. Mrs Brownhill has been actively involved with the worldwide Special Olympics movement and with two children. Mrs Rank has been an active member of the Autism Association for more than 21 years and is married to a software designer. Mrs Brownhill represented Mansfield where she and her family lived, Mrs Rank is a senior international training specialist in industrial respiratory medicine.

Mr Mark Altus
Mr Altus joined the Board of the Autism Association in January 2016. He is also a member of the Board of the Lutheran Church of Australia’s national financing arm, chairing the Board of Audit and Risk Committee, and chair the Lutheran home Foundations (since 2010). In 2014, he became a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Mr Altus previously chaired the Curtin Business School’s Advisory Board (2003-2013) and the Western Australian Department of Treasury, including as Director of Revenue and Intergovernmental Relations. In 2003-04 he completed a six month secondment to University of Western Australia as Executive Director of Finance and Resources (equivalent to Chief Financial Officer), and continued as member of the University’s Strategic Resources Committee until December 2015.

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 Mansfield by the National Asthma Campaign. In 2014, she became a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Mr Altus previously chaired the Curtin Business School’s Advisory Board (2003-2013) and the Western Australian Department of Treasury, including as Director of Revenue and Intergovernmental Relations. In 2003-04 she completed a six month secondment to University of Western Australia as Executive Director of Finance and Resources (equivalent to Chief Financial Officer), and continued as member of the University’s Strategic Resources Committee until December 2015.

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Mrs Vicki Rank
Mrs Rank is a senior international training specialist in industrial education, fundraising and other projects throughout the year. Emeritus Professor Louis I. Landau AO
Emeritus Professor Louis I. Landau AO has served on committees of professional and government organisations. In 2014, he became a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Mr Altus previously chaired the Curtin Business School’s Advisory Board (2003-2013) and the Western Australian Department of Treasury, including as Director of Revenue and Intergovernmental Relations. In 2003-04 he completed a six month secondment to University of Western Australia as Executive Director of Finance and Resources (equivalent to Chief Financial Officer), and continued as member of the University’s Strategic Resources Committee until December 2015.
Services Overview

The Autism Association is one of Australia’s largest not-for-profit Autism specific service providers in Australia. Established in 1967, our focus is on excellence in providing services 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, and regularly presents at Autism conferences nationally and internationally.

For Children

Early Intervention Service
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 and inclusion in mainstream settings. Families can choose to have therapy in our specialist therapy rooms, at homes, at school or other community venues. 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 centres nationally 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 access to the NDIS.

School Aged Service
The School Aged Service provides a comprehensive range of interventions, 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 social progress of each child.

Positive Behaviour Service
The Positive Behaviour Service supports young people aged six years and over with complex needs who are living at home with their family. The team is multidisciplinary 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 one of our homes in the metropolitan area; or at the child’s own home; or through our community support 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 time with lots of choice for each child to do the things they enjoy.
For Adults

Individual Support

There are a range of support services to assist individuals to participate in the community and be supported at home, in ways that they or their family choose. We work closely with each person to identify the types of assistance that work best for them. It can include developing a range of new skills, increasing independence, goal support in further education, volunteering or pre-employment assistance. In addition, they may include support in community activities or employment opportunities, and provide the support they envision at the time they want it, in ways that 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 help people find paid work that is matched to each person’s skills and preferences. Each person is provided with on-the-job training and ongoing 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; or sharing a home with one or two other people, or with a small group that is committed to their community. There are also several other options that can be discussed with the Community Living team. The 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 new skills, maintain independence and participate in the community. Our team of occupational therapists, speech pathologists and psychologists work 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 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 life. 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. 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 e-newsletter publishes current information on Autism.
For Communities

Professional Training and Development

Our multi-disciplinary teams provide professional training services to a range of professionals and other groups including teachers, allied health, service providers, employers and the broader community. We regularly host leading international training and professional 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 online, telephone, or in person. We disseminate a wide range of information 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.

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. Families are assisted to find out about the supports and services that are available to them in their local community.
First Steps Early Intervention

In 2017–18, we delivered early intervention services to over 777 children between the ages of 0 and 6 years old. All intervention in our First Steps program is tailored to the unique needs of each child based on individual assessment and in consultation with their family. First Steps is delivered in a range of environments including a multi-disciplinary centre, at home or in school.

In addition, we have expanded our partnership with Ngala to provide early intervention services in Waikiki as well as Gosnells. The partnership is fostering early identification and facilitating timely access to early intervention services for children.

This year we developed a comprehensive video for families to support their understanding of the range of early intervention support options available to them. The video was developed in collaboration with the children, families and staff. We also hosted a morning tea for grandparents of our First Steps children to acknowledge the role they play in supporting their grandchildren. This initiative allows grandparents to understand the important role they can play in their grandchild’s development and to promote support and networking with other grandparents.

The Early Intervention team received two awards at the 2017 ECIA Awards for:
• Advancing practice in the field of early childhood intervention; and
• Excellence in the provision of services in the My Time Parent Groups.

In addition, the team was also nominated for Outstanding Family Centred Practice and Culturally Responsive Practice.

Autism Advisor Program

The Autism Advisor Program provides a gateway for receiving information and support to families of children with Autism. This year the Autism Advisors team provided 6,908 consultancies to families and supported 425 newly diagnosed children to secure early intervention funding. Families are also linked with NDIS and a range of local mainstream and community services.

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. In addition to delivering early childhood learning services within a long daycare setting, ASELCC is also a research based program designed to measure child and parent outcomes from the Autism specific program and curriculum that incorporates the Early Years Learning Framework. This year marks the 8th consecutive and final year of the National Child and Family Outcomes Strategy Project designed to evaluate the progress achieved by children attending ASELCC. In partnership with Curtin University, this project brings together rich data from a significant number of children attending ASELCC centres across the country. Findings from this research project will be reported and published in a number of academic journals.

This year, the Autism Association commenced a project to understand the factors that facilitate successful transition from daycare to school. The Autism Association is co-leading this project with Curtin University and St Giles in Tasmania to collect pre- and post-transition perspectives from parents and teachers about what they perceive to be successful strategies to support children transitioning from daycare to school.

Therapy & Clinical Services

In 2017–18, we continued to expand services with therapy support provided to over 2,000 individuals and families across all age groups.

In response to the continuing demand for services, we opened a second centre in Midland and an early intervention centre in Joondalup. We also expanded our multi-disciplinary diagnostic clinic this year. Through this initiative, we established a partnership with the University of Western Australia Graduate Certificate in Autism Diagnosis. This program not only provides a greatly needed service to families but also provides opportunities to student clinicians to complete practical work placements at the clinic.
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. Therapy and other supports are provided at school, at home or other community venues to maximise skill development and inclusion.

In 2017-18, over 951 children and adolescents were provided with a range of individual therapy supports including transition planning, skill development, communication, protective behaviours and social skill development.

This year, we also successfully introduced the KONTAKT Social Skills Training Program to Western Australia. KONTAKT is a program aimed at improving social communication skills in teenagers with Autism. The program was developed by Professor Sven Bölte and is underpinned by research.

Over 140 teenagers participated in the trial. In addition, we developed and launched a number of new therapy-based group programs for school children this year, including:

- **The Social Adventurer Program**: This is a skills and play-based group that promotes the development of self-awareness, communication, social development and friendship skills. Since its launch in January 2018, over 300 children have participated in this program.
- **Discovery Kitchen Skills Group Program**: A social skills group program for teenagers that utilises cooking and food preparation to create opportunities for social skills development, co-operative interaction with peers, emotional-regulation skills, and learning about safety and hygiene in the kitchen.

Therapy and Clinical Services for Adults

This year over 318 adults and their families were supported to maximise skills, build independence and increase community and social participation. Our multi-disciplinary therapy team continued to work with individuals to identify their needs, develop skills, promote mainstream inclusion and improve quality of life.

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 families 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.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication

This year our team of Senior Speech Therapists commenced on a project to develop a new communication resource specifically for adults with Autism. Think Beyond Words will be a communication resource designed to highlight key areas for building communication skills. The resource is an addition to the successful Beyond Words training module to assist others working with adults who have complex communication needs.
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.

This year, AIM Employment was successful in securing a further 5-year contract with the Department of Social Services to continue to provide specialised supports to job seekers with Autism. AIM Employment remains the only Autism Specialist Disability Employment Service provider in Australia.

In 2017–18, 346 individuals were assisted to pursue employment in many industries and sectors, including universities, office administration, hospitality, information technology, banking, real estate, warehousing, wholesale pharmacy, law firms, 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 January this year we established the Business Advisory Council to increase the participation of individuals with Autism in the workplace. The Business Advisory Council consists of representatives from the business community who can offer a range of ideas, knowledge and experiences that can be used to assist job seekers find employment.

An exciting partnership was established this year with one of Western Australia’s leading legal recruitment agencies to promote employment of job seekers with Autism within the Western Australian legal profession. The partnership will include regular features on AIM Employment in their newsletters and presentations at Law Society events. This will provide great opportunities to market and promote the abilities of people with Autism in the workplace.

This year AIM Employment was also successful in gaining a contract to be a National Panel of Assessors for the Department of Social Services. As a National Panel of Assessors, our team will provide independent evaluations of job seekers’ ongoing support requirements for job seekers supported by the Disability Employment Services program.
Community Living

Community Living offers a range of options to assist people to move into a home of their own. This can include living with one or two other people with the support of full-time staff. Another option is living semi-independently with our visiting staff providing support for a period each day or throughout the week, depending upon need. The focus is on building an enjoyable lifestyle with the person, building their skills, extending their community connections and maintaining strong family relationships. The diverse nature of the supports available ensures that individuals and families can choose options that best meet their needs. For some individuals, support may include assistance to transition from living in a shared home to living independently. We now support 79 homes in the community, 46 of which are shared homes with full-time staff providing 24-hour support, and 33 independent living homes with visiting support by staff.

Becoming Independent

This year, we supported Taylor to transition to more independent living after being supported in one of our Shared Living homes for 7 years. Together with his family, we supported Taylor to make the decision to live independently with a few hours of support per day. He made the move during the first week in July and is loving his new home.

"Thank you everyone for being so supportive to Taylor in his move to independent living. I know it means a lot to him and to me too. After nearly eight years you have been more than a parent could ask for. Your support and love for Taylor has been without a doubt the most influential thing in his life - helping him grow and learn so he can take the next step to independent living. I always felt you had Taylor's well-being in mind. You always went a step further to show unconditional love just as a natural family would. What a great gift.”

— Jen Hackney, Taylor’s mum

Short Breaks for Children and Adolescents

Everyone needs a break at times and people with Autism and their families are no exception. Short breaks are provided to people with Autism and their families in a number of ways by our passionate team of support staff. Support to have a break is provided in the family home or at one of our short breaks homes in the metropolitan area. Children and adults alike need time to recharge, building independence and sharing time with others in a safe, encouraging environment. Support for families and children under 16 years has increased this year with 76 children receiving support to access regular breaks away.

Our short-break homes are familiar and homely with lots of room to play inside and outside, and a private space for each child in their own bedroom. Not a lot of time is spent at home however, as the short breaks are packed with lots of fun things to do based on the children’s likes and preferences. One of the unique features of our short-breaks is the effort we make to maximise the compatibility of the small group of children (3-6) so that they can enjoy similar interests together. In the coming year, we plan even more flexibility for families, while keeping our focus on the children having consistency and friendships.

Long term friends at Willetton

Every year some children and adolescents we have supported move on to other things. This year, we farewelled friends Connor and Callum who have, along with Adam shared a number of years of regular weekend stays at our Willetton home. They have enjoyed many years together, and have shared lots of common interests and fun times.

When Callum recently turned 18 and moved on to other things, Connor also felt it was time to make his next move and finish at Willetton. The boys enjoyed their last stay together, sharing lots of laughs and saying goodbyes to their support staff who have known the boys for many years. By the end of the weekend, it was very clear that Callum and Connor will continue with the special friendship they made at Willetton.

Although it was sad to see the boys leave Willetton, we are so pleased that we have been part of their journey together as friends. It is a very positive and exciting time for them both and we wish Callum, Connor and their families all the best on their new adventures.
Individual Options

The Individual Options program provides the support individuals need to have a good life. We work with each person to explore the things they would like to do and we provide them with the support they need to make it happen. For an adult, this can involve assistance at home, in the community, in further education or in pre-vocational opportunities. We are also working with young adolescents to strengthen their independence skills, including work readiness.

This year we provided ongoing support to almost 300 individuals and their families.

More than a Men’s Shed for Mathew

Our support worker Tom noticed Mathew was interested in making things and together they decided to look around for a suitable Men’s Shed in Mathew’s local area. Mathew started attending the local Men’s Shed and fitted right in to the very welcoming group of men. Mathew has the option to join in with large group projects or work on his own projects, and this suits him well. Mathew loves his time at the Men’s Shed, using quality tools, forming new and lasting friendships.

Helping to build a large dust extraction system over the course of many months has been a highlight for Mathew and he has recently turned his attention to crafting his own table, including drawing up the plans, considering different designs and finally making this piece of furniture. Mathew’s increased confidence with tools as well as building his social confidence with the great Men’s Shed enthusiasts has meant he is now more confident to try other group activities. Mathew says “the Men’s Shed is a great place to learn new skills and meet new people.”

For Children

For young children, support is wide ranging and is tailored to each family’s need. This can include support at home or assisting the child to be part of ordinary community activities with their peers such as sport, joining clubs, developing recreational interests and much more. Also, our support links in with any therapy the child is receiving so that this can be captured in the child’s everyday activities.

In our Individual Options Program for Children, we work with each family to identify what they would like to achieve for their child and develop a plan accordingly. We also encourage families to be involved in the recruitment of the staff who will support their child in the program.

Shared Management

Shared Management is a suite of services to support families and individuals with the capacity and tools to exercise as much control as they desire with their support service. This program provides a continuum of options from self-direction of services through to the employment and management of staff.

This initiative has been very successful and creates great personal bonds between the individual and their support staff, as well as maximizing flexibility in the delivery of services.
Regional and Aboriginal Communities

The Autism Advisor team continues to have a strong presence across regional Western Australia. The purpose of this program is to promote early identification of Autism and support families to access early intervention and other services. Regional visits include meeting with families of newly diagnosed children, delivering Early Days workshops to families, liaison and networking with local agencies, including Disability Services, WA Country Health Services and other community service providers. The team also delivers a range of workshops to the local community tailored to their needs.

The program has also been a platform for a number of initiatives, including the development of culturally appropriate resources. These resources are easy to read English resources. These resources outline the early signs of Autism in young children, providing information about obtaining a diagnosis and ways of accessing supports.

For the Autism Advisor, a new program has been introduced in response to critical service gaps for specialised Autism therapy and supports in regional WA. The program is based on our First Steps early intervention program and consists of direct therapy supports in one of our early intervention centres in Perth. Specialists assess each child and develop an individual program to be implemented in the child’s home, as well as community and educational settings. The children and their families are accompanied by their parents, and parent training sessions are provided throughout the implementation of the child’s program.

We continue to conduct workshops in various locations across Western Australia. This year we had a strong presence in the Armadale, Gosnells area, we developed culturally appropriate and easy to read English resources. These resources outline the early signs of Autism in young children, providing information about obtaining a diagnosis and ways of accessing supports.

Statewide Consultancy and Capacity Building for NDIS

The Statewide Consultancy Service works to increase the capacity of other professionals and organisations who are providing support to individuals with Autism. This year 6,908 consultancies were delivered and over 2,174 participants attended our workshops and seminars.

We established an Information, Advice and Consultancy Service line for people with disabilities and their families to understand the NDIS. This includes information on how to apply for NDIS funding and support prior to their planning meeting with an NDIS Planner. Support is also provided to assist families to understand the plan once it has been developed. The service is funded by the Department of Communities Disability Services under the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant.

We delivered 15 NDIS Readiness Workshops for individuals, families and carers and provided over 200 consultancies. In addition, we developed a range of Fact Sheets for participants, including any Eligible for NDIS? Accessing the NDIS and 10 Things You Need to Know About the NDIS.

In 2017-18, we provided a number of specialist consultancies to a number of community organisations in planning for their community projects. The Therapy and Clinical Services team has been providing input to the Town of Fremantle on the design of a new inclusive playground in Kings Square in Fremantle. Consultation included advice on sensory needs, area layout, equipment to support gross motor development, as well as issues related to the inclusion of children with Autism.

We also expanded the range of topics available for our parent workshops including:

- Steps to Literacy: Support the Learning of Reading, Writing and Spelling.
- I am Social.
- Practical Strategies for Anxiety (for Primary School and High School).
- I Have Something to Say: Alternative and Augmentative Communication.

Family Support and Training

We provided a wide range of workshops and seminars throughout the year to assist others in the support of children and adults with Autism. We also continued to deliver Early Days workshops for parents of children who are seeking assistance with diagnosis or immediate following diagnosis.

We expanded our My Time Parent Support Groups to six locations in the Perth Metropolitan area including Forrest, Ingoldwold, Jandroll, East Fremantle, Girrawwa and Beeliar. The five new groups are for families of children with Autism. The attendance at all these support groups has grown significantly over the last 12 month, with 130 families now registered.

In addition, we expanded the range of topics available for our parent workshops including:

- Steps to Literacy: Support the Learning of Reading, Writing and Spelling.
- I am Social.
- Practical Strategies for Anxiety (for Primary School and High School).
- I Have Something to Say: Alternative and Augmentative Communication.

In addition, the siblings program has continued to expand with additional programs in progress. We have a better understanding of Autism and interacting with their autistic sibling or brother.
Professional Training and Development

In 2017–18, we continued to expand our seminars and workshops to assist the disability, health, education and community sectors to support people with Autism and to create a welcoming community. A summary of these initiatives include:

- 2,214 registrations were received for our workshops and seminars.
- We continued to visit schools throughout the Perth metropolitan area to deliver onsite professional development days to over 950 teachers.
- We delivered 22 Early Indicators of Autism workshops during the year to Community Health Nurses and Child Care Educators to facilitate the early identification of Autism and strategies to support people with Autism during challenging situations.
- We continued our relationship with our training alumni from East Java. This year we travelled to East Java and facilitated workshops for teachers in mainstream schools in the region to promote the acceptance, understanding and inclusion of children with Autism in school and community settings.
- We hosted an intensive 2-day international Masterclass with Dr Peter Vermeulen. Over 200 people attended this workshop and gained practical insights on theory and practice.
- A delegate from Jakarta spent a week with the Autism Association to learn about the supports we provide for adults with Autism, particularly those related to employment.
- We continue to deliver a range of Autism Awareness training to businesses and government agencies. The aim is to promote employment of people with Autism and to build the capacity of co-workers to support them in the workplace.

Community Development

In addition to 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:

- We delivered training to 30 Police Officers. The training focused on building capacity of Police Officers to respond to situations involving people with Autism. This included understanding the characteristics of Autism and strategies to support people with Autism during challenging situations.
- There is continued high demand for our Wings for Autism Program with over 200 families waiting to participate. This program supports individuals with Autism who might otherwise be reluctant to travel. In addition, work is underway to develop a comprehensive guide to support individuals and families through each stage of their travels.
- We completed our work to develop and deliver a training module and resource package to facilitate the inclusion of people with Autism in sport. Over 50 coaches, mentors and volunteers participated in the training, and we distributed the resources to sporting organisations in the Perth metropolitan areas.
- This year we established a partnership with Princess Margaret Hospital and the University of Western Australia to develop resources for families and professionals to build their capacities to support children and adolescents with ASD in a hospital environment. These resources will be co-designed by families and medical professionals.
- Following the successful placement and support of one of our jobseekers in one of BHP’s remote operations, our employment program is now contributing to the development of BHP’s disability inclusion program for employees with disability.
- In another partnership, we commenced planning with Perth Zoo to have an all ages Autism friendly event in late 2018. In addition to this event, we are supporting Perth Zoo to develop resources that can be used to engage and support people with ASD navigate the zoo environment.
- The Therapy and Clinical Services team has been in consultation with the Town of Fremantle to provide input into the design of a new inclusive playground in Kings Square in Fremantle. Consideration around sensory needs, layout and equipment to support gross motor development has been provided to aid the inclusion of children with Autism.
- We are working with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre to provide specialist consultation and development planning for their upcoming sensory friendly shows. The Therapy and Clinical Services team are providing advice and consultation regarding sensory considerations and autism specific strategies to facilitate engagement.
- The Therapy and Clinical Services team have provided input into the design of an autism friendly event for individuals with Autism and their families this year.
- The Therapy and Clinical Services team continued their community engagement and advocacy work in relation to autism awareness and acceptance.