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, the term “Autism” will be used throughout this report to refer to Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Approximately 1 in every 100 children in Australia is diagnosed with Autism.
Our Strategic Directions

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 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 to treat individuals and families as we ourselves would like to be treated
Commitment to treat individuals and families as we ourselves would like to be treated
Innovation in all that we undertake
Excellence to fulfill dreams and aspirations
Courage to passionately advocate for people with Autism and their families

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 to 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

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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 and inclusion in mainstream settings. Families can choose to have therapy in our specialist therapy centres, at home, of school or other community venue. 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 (NCIRC) 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. The 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 Age Service
The School Age Service provides a comprehensive service of individualised 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 Behavior Service
The Positive Behaviour Support service assists young people aged 6 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.

FOR ADULTS

Individual Support
There are a range of support services available to assist individuals to participate in the 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 assistance 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 engagements. Ultimately, we provide the support the person wants; at the time they want it; in ways that meets their 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 either in family and friends, or sharing a home with one other person, or with a small group that they are closely supported. There are also several other options that can be discussed with our Community Living team. Underpinning principle is to 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, maximise their 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.

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 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 present at Autism conferences nationally and internationally.
Raising a child or supporting an older person with Autism places a range of different demands on families.

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.

REGIONAL OUTREACH

Services are provided to regional families, community organisations, clinicians and other professionals through visits to regional areas by our specialist teams. 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.

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 consultancy provided online, on the phone, or in person. We disseminate a wide range of brochures and publications on topics such as Understanding Behaviour, Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder in Early Childhood Settings and many other publications offering practical strategies for children and adults with Autism.

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.
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.

2018–19 marked another solid year for the Autism Association. We delivered on our strategic priorities, including strengthening and expanding our service options for individuals and families, preparing to operate efficiently and effectively under the NDIS, and advancing our work through a range of best practice initiatives and collaborations with the local, national and international communities.

The demand for our services continued to grow, this included therapy and clinical services, early intervention services for newly diagnosed children, school age services, community support for adults, community living supports, employment supports and diagnostic services. In addition, we expanded our operations across Perth with the establishment of two additional service hubs and the successful registration to operate a specialist long day care program for young children. We also expanded our diagnostic clinic to meet the critical unmet need for adolescents and adults to obtain timely diagnosis.

We also continued our work with the disability sector in Western Australia, as well as nationally and internationally. We worked collaboratively with mainstream services and local communities to make a significant contribution to community development initiatives for people with Autism and to promote best practice. We furthered our work in East Java as part of the Sister State Initiative between the West Australian Government and East Java.

As we look to the future, we are committed to working vigorously to ensure people with Autism receive the support they need under the NDIS, that is, that they are not disadvantaged in the transition to the new Scheme.

Thanks

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. Also, the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust who has been supporting our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I would also like to make a special note of thanks to the Tetalon Trust for their invaluable support of a number of our programs and Lotterywest who continue to make us all possible.

In addition, I would like to extend my thanks to the Board for their dedicated support and commitment throughout the year. A very special thanks also to Professor Trevor Parry AM who retired from the Board after many successful years as a Board Member and as Vice Chairman since 2008. His work on behalf of children and people with disability make a significant contribution to the work of the Board.

Finally, I 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

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PRESIDENT’S REPORT

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The Board

Dr Rob Storer
CHAIRMAN
Dr Rob Storer is Consultant Anaesthetist and long-term member of the Autism Association. He has been involved in delivering the Board at a time of major strategic development, having been interested in the field of disability as an Autism Officer at the State Department of Health. He is also currently involved in leading the Board at a time of major strategic development, maintaining a keen interest in the field of disability. Dr Storer is also a member of a number of not for profit boards, including ten years as a board member of Lifeline WA.

Mr Geoff Kidd
VICE CHAIRMAN
Mr Kidd has been a former State Auditor General of Western Australia and was a member of the national executive of the Institute of Company Directors. He became a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia. Mr Kidd is also a member of the national executive of the Perth office and a business owner in the practice as an accountant and business advisor with over 40 years’ experience in professional accounting and professional business advisor to a wide range of clients.

Mr Mark Altus
CHAIRMAN of the Board of Directors of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Australia’s APRA-regulated Authorised Deposit-taking Institutions (ADIs). He is also an Independent Non-Executive Director of the Western Australian Department of Social Security and is a Director of the Australian Lutheran Church. He was a Director of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Australia’s APRA-regulated Authorised Deposit-taking Institutions (ADIs). He is also an Independent Non-Executive Director of the Western Australian Department of Social Security and is a Director of the Australian Lutheran Church.

Mrs Bobby Brownhill
VICE CHAIRMAN
Mrs Brownhill has been actively involved in the field of disability for over 20 years and is married with two children. She has been an active member of the Autism Association for more than 20 years and has supported the Association in public education, fundraising and other projects throughout the years.

Emeritus Professor Louis L. Landau AO
Professor Landau was a medical advisor to the Western Australian Department of Health. Professor Landau was Executive Dean of The University of Western Australia and was elected as President of Pediatrics at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children in Perth. He is the founding Chairman of the Institute of Company Directors (WA) Inc (a small charity). In 2014, he became a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

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2018–19 was a year of significant growth and expansion in all our service areas, from early intervention for newly diagnosed children through to school support programs and supports for adults including employment and community living. We also delved into our other strategic priorities, including advancing the organizational work to prepare for operation in the full NDIS. We also led best practice initiatives in supporting people with Autism through wide ranging involvements with local, national and international communities. In addition, we also undertook significant work to develop the skills and capacity of different sectors to include people with Autism.

During the last 12 months, we increased our service footprint and played a leading role in advocating for the needs of people with Autism both nationally and at a state level. We expanded our partnerships with community organizations to promote best practice and engaged with research to advance positive change. We also undertook a significant number of new projects to improve community participation and improve health outcomes for people with Autism. We continued our work internationally, in particular East Java, Indonesia as part of the Western Australia Sister State Agreement.

In addition we hosted several international delegations.

“...We led best practice initiatives in supporting people with Autism through wide ranging involvements with local, national and international communities.”
Therapy and Clinical Support Services

During this year 2,826 individuals from newly diagnosed children to adults were supported by our multi-disciplinary therapy and clinical services. We expanded our services to new program areas as well as establishing two additional service hubs, one in Gosnells and a second hub in Joondalup. There are now seven outreach service hubs in the Perth metropolitan areas.

The Diagnostic Clinics were also expanded to meet ongoing demand for timely diagnosis for children under the age of 6 years old. We are also in the process of establishing a new diagnostic clinic for adolescents and adults who missed out on diagnosis in their early childhood years. The work to support families to understand the diagnosis of Autism also continued throughout the last 12 months and we are planning further work in the coming year to respond to the unique needs of adolescents and adults going through the diagnostic process.

An additional important service for families of newly diagnosed children is our Autism Advisor Program. This service works with families to assist them following diagnosis, providing them with information on support pathways, educational resources, useful contacts, and linking them with important community services and networks.

This year the Autism Advisor Team supported 642 families and assisted 301 newly diagnosed children to secure early intervention funding. Families are also linked with the NDIS and a range of local mainstream and community services. We were also successful this year in registering a long Day Care program

established to develop skills and resources that will be transferred to community based Day Care Providers. This program is linked through Curtin University to a national research and has the added capacity to support the siblings of children with Autism and families/friends. An MOU was signed with Good Start Early Learning to deliver a series of six intensive training days for their teachers and educators to support the inclusion of children in Autism free Local Day Care. The training program consists of three intensive training days followed by six months of specialist consultation and support. We are now working with Good Start Early Learning to review how this program might be expanded nationally. We have also partnered with other mainstream Day Care providers across the State including Broome, Port Hedland, Tom Price and Karratha to deliver and evaluate this program.

The Diagnostic Clinics were also expanded to meet ongoing demand for timely diagnosis for children under the age of 6 years old in our multi-disciplinary early intervention service across 5 service hubs and through our regional initiatives. All intervention in our First Steps program is tailored to the unique needs of each child based on an 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.

We completed our First Steps for Autism Early Intervention Manual this year. This resource provides comprehensive and detailed information, including the evidence-based framework that supports the clinical model for early intervention. It also includes details of our strength-based assessment and program tools for the planning approach in developing an individual intervention plan and its implementation.

We incorporated our School Aged Services this year. Over 1,360 children and adolescents aged between 6 and 18 years were supported with a range of individual and group therapies, 18 month planning, skills development, communication, social skills development, and support. We are now talking with universities to a national research and development of the program.

The Koder Club

The Koder Club is an exciting project that is delivering a range of services for teenagers. It is a computer coding environment. This was made possible with a generous grant from Telstra which greatly appreciated by our young participants who are using computers to develop their skills.

The KONTAKT Social Communication Program

The KONTAKT Social Communication Program is a national research and development of the program. It was launched in 2019 and is being supported by our local community and community organisations.

The KONTAKT Social Communication Program: We continued our collaboration with Curtin University to deliver and evaluate this 14-week intensive for teenagers. It is exciting to report that preliminary results indicate students participating in the program are making significant improvements in their social communication skills.

The Our TASTE Program

The Our TASTE Program (The Autism Specific Team of Everything to do with Eating) leads a team of speech pathologists to undertake the assessment and intervention for individuals with complex medical/ eating challenges and any co-occurring medical conditions.

The Our TASTE Program is a suite of 15 videos that are used to assist families. Our TASTE Program (The Autism Specific Team of Everything to do with Eating) leads a team of speech pathologists to undertake the assessment and intervention for individuals with complex medical/ eating challenges and any co-occurring medical conditions.
We also expanded our Employment Program to support school leavers with the transition to employment. This includes partnering with schools and families to provide information on employment pathways and support options for school leavers. We also developed a 10 week Employment Preparation Program to assist job seekers to further develop their employment and pre-employment skills, including offering interviews, communication and social skills for the workplace.

Employment Internships: Support to expand opportunities for individuals with Autism to complete internships in businesses continued this year. We supported 23 interns in BHP, Woodside and Bankwest, with some gaining permanent employment with these companies. We were also very excited to partner with both large and small businesses to develop training and other resources to assist the business community to increase capacity to employ job seekers with Autism.

Matthew’s story

Matthew (far right) secured his first paid job in June 2018 with support from the Autism Association’s Employment Program. His contract was to complete a backlog of electronic archiving with Pitcher Partners. Matthew fitted into the team very quickly and enjoyed the benefits of working in such an inclusive company where he was fully included in corporate events, parties and Friday sundowners. He even celebrated his 21st birthday with the company.

Nearly a year on, Matthew’s great work at Pitcher Partners is still remembered and celebrated with 14 of his previous co-workers completing “A Walk for Autism” in the 8-day Walking for Autism Fundraising Challenge.

“By taking on the Walk for Autism, we are helping to break down barriers that keep people excluded and provide the best opportunities for people on the Autism Spectrum to engage, participate and thrive in the world around them.”

HR Manager, Pitcher Partners

Our Employment Support Program is the only Autism specific employment service in Australia, supporting job seekers to find and maintain employment. Our staff work with individuals to ensure work-readiness and to identify and match jobs with their strengths, abilities, skills, interests and aspirations. This year we supported 437 individuals to pursue employment in a range of industries and sectors, including government, mining, office administration, hospitality, information technology, banking, real estate, warehousing, law firms, light industry, wholesale pharmacy, universities and many more.

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The report specifically gave examples of positive development for clients that included capacity building, as well as relationship and community participation within a contemporary safeguarding framework.

There was a special focus this year on supporting individuals to transition to the NDIS. Our multi-disciplinary team worked together with each individual and their families to ensure that they continue to receive the supports they need to lead a happy, enjoyable life and are included in the community.
Short Breaks for Children and Adolescents

Short Breaks provides a really important support for families and children under 18 years. This can be provided in a number of ways, including support provided in the family’s own home or at one of our Short Breaks homes in the metropolitan area.

We expanded our Short Breaks service this year to meet continued demand and we re-opened our Thornlie home following a range of modifications. Short Breaks provide a familiar and homely environment 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.

We also extended options to provide overnight supports to young adults to experience a short break independent of their family. This initiative will also support families where extended support is needed for family reasons.
Individual Options

The Individual Options Program continued to provide supports to individuals and families tailored to their individual wants and preferences. The individual with Autism (often supported by their family) is in the driving seat and shaping their support options that best meet their needs. This year we supported over 300 individuals to explore their options in achieving the things they would like to do or achieve. This includes a wide range of community involvement, networks, skills development, pre-vocational goals, independence, and exploring opportunities for further education or work readiness.

Responding to individuals’ desire to develop friendships, we are working to create compatible friendship groups of two or three people who share similar interests. A key component is to develop the scaffolding that will support these young people to be successful and to maintain contact with each other outside of the supported program.

Independence is different for every individual. For some, it is going out and about without the support of a parent. For others it is learning to do things for themselves, using public transport, preparing a meal, joining a community group, developing a hobby or learning to be work-ready. For some, it is about preparing for the big leap of living in a home of their own. Whatever the aspiration, our team is there to support and assist.

Shared Management is another component of our programs that supports the person with Autism and their family to have as much choice and control in their service as they wish. It provides families and individuals with the tools and knowledge to shape and drive the support they receive. 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.

Taylor loves to sing and dance and has a talent for animated performance. Taylor also enjoys being around children. This year we supported Taylor to use her talents in a Community Child Care to read story books and sing to the children. Taylor now volunteers once a week and the children enjoy “Story and Sing Time with Taylor”. She uses key word signs while singing and is excellent at encouraging children to join in and dance. The children are always very interested and share Taylor’s enthusiasm and unique style. Taylor dedicates time during the week to researching and planning for her Community Child Care session which is the highlight of her week. Taylor has become a valued member of the Community Child Care Team.

Taylor’s story

Taylor spends time during the week researching and planning for her Community Child Care session which is the highlight of her week. Taylor has become a valued member of the Community Child Care Team.
In addition, a range of new parent workshops were introduced this year including:

- Positive Behaviour Support
- Creating successful mealtimes for children with Autism
- Building resilience in school aged children
- Preparing for school year transitions

We expanded the peer-led Parent Support Groups this year. An additional two groups were established to provide local support for families of children with Autism aged up to 15 years old. Each group is run by a parent of a child with Autism. These groups remain popular and beneficial in building local community connections and development of new friendships.

We also established a Dad’s Group with funding support from Ngala in response to the popular trial held earlier in the year. Dads and their children regularly attend the Saturday morning session. Planning is underway to establish a second Dad’s group south of the river.

“This is exactly what was needed, a safe space for Dads (and their kids) to come along and hang out for a couple of hours and bond over this journey that we are on.”

“Being a Dad to twins is the most rewarding and most challenging job in the world. I knew that as a team my wife and I would be just fine, after all there are two of them and two of us, how hard could it be?

We had a difficult time telling our friends and family about the diagnosis. We knew that we had a lot of love but not necessarily the understanding. With this in mind I am sure there are people close to who is still struggling with the diagnosis but everyone has their own way of dealing with it. My way of dealing with it is simply that these are the cards I was dealt. LET’S PLAY!

On the surface the boys present well (although I am still not sure what Autism LOOKS like). On the surface we are a family, can seem like every other family. The truth is we have had to withdraw from many friends and family social events because it’s just too hard. I find myself having conversations with people without looking them in the eye because I have to watch my kids to make sure they don’t run away. Is the perception that I am a helicopter Dad? Sure! Is it necessary? Absolutely!

My family and friends are very empathetic when it comes to Autism which means a lot obviously, but there is still a big void in that I need to talk to someone who is living the 24/7 life with Autism that I am living.”

Support for Parents and Families

“A dad is not just the number one male in a child’s life, he is the number one support system. If we can support the Dads, we can support the children and the whole family.”

Dad’s Only MyTime Group

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My family and friends are very empathetic when it comes to Autism which means a lot obviously, but there is still a big void in that I need to talk to someone who is living the 24/7 life with Autism that I am living. I need to know what’s normal and what’s not. I need to know that I am not alone in this journey.

I had an opportunity to attend several sessions of the MyTime group in Joondalup (held on Monday mornings) and I quickly realised I was the only guy there, I enjoyed listening to the topics being covered as

“Father of twin boys.”

“Autism Association of Western Australia - Annual Report 2019”
Regional Services

This year we continued support of regional children and their families in their local communities. Support was provided by the Autism Advisor team to all children living in regional/remote Western Australia. We also worked with Local Area Coordinators, the NDIS, the Early Years Consultancy Team, and mainstream local service providers to ensure children and their families received the support they need. We also visited regional areas to deliver workshops and consultancy to families and organisations on support strategies, linkages, resources and other information.

We also continued our Intensive Regional Program to support families in a week-long early intervention program with their child. The program is delivered during school holidays and includes the development of an individual program plan for the child based on an assessment with our multi-disciplinary team. Families receive coaching and support to implement the plan across the child’s home, school and community. In addition to the child-focused approach, families are supported to establish strong connections with other regional families so they can build natural supports and networks. This year we had families from 15 regional towns in Western Australia and Northern Territory come to Perth to access this intensive program.

We also developed a Regional Early Intervention Consulting Program for children and families living in regional and remote Western Australia. The program is delivered via video conferencing, and opportunities are provided for individual coaching in areas that are identified by families as priority.

Collaboration with Primary Health Care

This year we received funding to partner with the WA Health Sector to develop training packages and resources to increase Autism awareness within the health sector. This initiative is aimed at improving health care and health outcomes of individuals with Autism. We are excited with the high level of engagement from hospitals, doctors, dentists and other health professionals from across the State, including the Perth metropolitan area and regional Western Australia. As part of this initiative, we delivered training sessions to hospital doctors and nurses, private and public dentists, GPs and other health professionals.

We also commenced a new initiative to broaden the knowledge and management of mental health issues for people with Autism, and to respond to the unmet needs of individuals with ASD to access mental health services. We are working with psychiatrists and mental health practitioners to create awareness about Autism. We are also delivering training to assist them in responding to the needs of people with Autism who are presenting with complex difficulties. In the coming months, we are developing a training program together with training materials and resources. This will be launched in the coming year.
Community Development and Inclusion

We worked with the Department of Education Parent and Child Centres this year to further the inclusion of children with Autism. We also partnered with community organisations to create Autism friendly environments. We held sensory events at Perth Zoo, Aquarium of WA (AQWA), Latitude Indoor Arena and the popular Sensory Santa at several shopping centres across Perth. We worked with community providers and supported them with strategies that create a positive experience for children and adults with Autism.

In addition, we consolidated our relationship with Perth Airport and continued with our Wings for Autism Program to make it easier for people with Autism and their families to travel. The Wings for Autism Program is an airport familiarisation program to prepare people with Autism and their families for air travel. The program also includes Autism training for airport staff to assist them to support children and adults with Autism go through the processes at the Terminals.

We also partnered with the Apple team in Perth to increase participation of teenagers and adolescents with Autism. Our staff delivered Autism awareness training to the Apple team and facilitated two pilot sessions involving individuals with Autism in the Apple Coding Community Program. During these sessions, we provided coaching and mentoring to the Apple team and gave them support strategies to facilitate ongoing inclusive programs and activities.

Through a successful ILC grant tender, we are excited to commence a project to improve the access and participation of individuals with Autism in cricket across Western Australia. We are partnering with the Wembley Districts Cricket Club to develop a range of training modules, videos and resources to facilitate an inclusive cricket community within the club. Lessons learnt and insights gained from this project will be extended to the WA Cricket Association and promote successful strategies to facilitate the inclusion and participation of children and adults with Autism.

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We celebrated World Autism Awareness Day this year by launching our Autism Heroes website. This is a resource for primary schools to increase awareness of Autism and promote an inclusive school community. We also engaged with the Perth business community and launched a strategy to broaden the diversity in the workplace and promote the employment of people with Autism.
International Collaboration
We continued our collaboration with the Autism community in East Java, Indonesia this year as part of a Sister State initiative between Western Australia and East Java. Staff travelled to Surabaya to deliver an intensive week long Masterclass to 30 leaders from 5 regional governments in East Java. The Masterclass included strategies to support children and adults with Autism; operational strategies to support service delivery in the community; working with stakeholders to effect positive change; school inclusion; Positive Behaviour Support; and working with families. The Masterclass also offered insight from the other parts of Indonesia, including West Java, Jakarta and Denpasar.

In addition to the Masterclass, staff delivered a teacher and parent conference in collaboration with Airlanga University in Surabaya, East Java. The conference was well attended by 250 practitioners. Delegates to the conference were given the opportunity to learn about programs and resources to support children and adults with Autism. We also translated a range of teaching and information resources into Bahasa Indonesia for distribution across East Java.

Since the beginning of its initiative in 2011, there has been a significant transformation in Autism knowledge in the professional community in East Java. The 30 alumni who were trained by the Autism Association have now provided workshops to over 2,600 teachers across East Java in addition to providing ongoing consultancy.

We continued our collaboration with the Autism Association of Western Australia – Annual Report 2019 in Singapore and include the following:

Research
This year 12 abstracts were accepted for presentation by senior staff at the 2019 Asia Pacific Autism Conference (APAC19) in Singapore and include the following:

- First Steps for Autism – A Manualised Group Curriculum for Young Children.
- Creating Awareness: ASD and MAutism Support People to Understand ASD.
- A Specialist Training and Development Program and its Evaluation.
- The Pattern of Adaptive Behaviors among Older Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Creating a Good Life for the Person with Autism.
- Minimising Situations of Risk or Violence for Individuals with Autism in Encounters with the Criminal Justice System.
- Employment Success for Adults with Autism.
- Employment Success for People with Autism. In addition, we participated in research this year that sought to better understand the impact and public perceptions of the Australian Supported Wage System (SWS). The research was conducted by Dr Rosemary Lysaght of Queen’s University, Canada and Honorary Associate Professor with the Centre for Disability Research and Policy at the University of Sydney.
- Employment Success for People with Autism.
- Employment Success for People with Autism. We also hosted two delegates from the University of Pretoria who were sponsored by Curtin University to spend time with our Employment Program, to learn about job placement for people with Autism. In addition, our therapists delivered the program over 16 sessions while Curtin University assessed participants on a range of standardised measures at three different times. Improvements were found in social skills and measures of quality of life. We are extending this research project to evaluate the effectiveness of this manualised social skills program for primary school aged children. We would like to thank the Perron Foundation for funding this research project.
- The Social Adventure Program – A Social Skills Program for Children in the Early School Years.
- A Social Skills Social Skills Group Training Program and its Evaluations.
- The Social Adventure Program – A Social Skills Program for Children in the Early School Years.
- A Framework for Supporting Adults with Autism to Successfully Transition to Their Own Home.
- Creating Awareness: ASD and MAutism Support People to Understand ASD.
- A Specialist Training and Development Program and its Evaluation.
- The Pattern of Adaptive Behaviors among Older Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Creating a Good Life for the Person with Autism.
- Minimising Situations of Risk or Violence for Individuals with Autism in Encounters with the Criminal Justice System.
- Employment Success for Adults with Autism.
- Employment Success for People with Autism.
In Conclusion

The last 12 months is marked by robust service expansion and preparing the organisation for change under the NDIS. We grew services in local communities and extended our linkages nationally and internationally. We worked with universities, tertiary institutions and community organisations. We played a leading role at every level in advocating for the needs of people with Autism and their families.

In the coming year, further work will be required to prepare the organisation for the changes vital to operate fully under the NDIS. However, our clear focus will remain on the needs of people with Autism and their families.

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. Also, the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust who has been supporting our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I would also like to make a special note of thanks to the Telethon Trust for their invaluable support of a number of our programs, and Lotterywest who continue to make so much possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the dedicated work of the Board chaired by Dr Rob Storer and 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 of understanding.

Joan McKenna Kerr
Chief Executive Officer
Autism Association of Western Australia