

West Australian CEO Recognised with International Award for work in field of Autism



Joan McKenna Kerr, CEO of the Autism Association of Western Australia, one of the largest specialist organisations in Australia, supporting people with Autism and their families, has been awarded the prestigious **Asia Pacific Autism Award** for her lifetime of service to people with Autism and their families. Joan is also National President and Chair of NDS.

The award presented today at the Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2017 (APAC 17) in Sydney is in recognition of the enormous contribution over 27 years that Ms McKenna Kerr has made to the field of Autism and to the lives of people with Autism and their families.

In presenting the Award, Mr. Adrian Ford of ASPECT referred to the significant work she had accomplished in Western Australia; and to her work nationally and internationally.

In receiving the award Ms McKenna Kerr commented;

"I am honoured to receive this award today and truly touched by this recognition from a field I hold dear "

"It has been my great privilege to work with many great colleagues in the field of Autism. Together we have debunked misguided myths; increased our understanding of how to support people with Autism; challenged perceptions of what was thought possible; and learnt from the greatest teachers of all: people with Autism."

"No one achieves alone, so I would particularly like to acknowledge the wonderful staff of the Autism Association of Western Australia who dedicate themselves every day to improving the lives of people with Autism and their families".

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ABOUT JOAN MCKENNA KERR

Joan McKenna Kerr is the Chief Executive Officer of the Autism Association of Western Australia, a large provider of specialist services to people with Autism from early childhood through to adulthood. She is the President and Chair of NDS, the national Peak Body for disability services in Australia. She is Past-President and current Vice-President of the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorder. She is also a former member of the NDIS Independent Advisory Council.

During her time as Chief Executive Officer, she has taken the Autism Association of WA from a small organisation with no resources and little funding, to one of the 4 largest State funded disability organisations in Western Australia providing services to over 4,000 people with Autism

In her tenure as Chief Executive Officer she embarked on a plan of vigorous growth in service development to people with Autism and their families; commencing at a time when there were virtually no specialist services for people with Autism in Western Australia. The work undertaken has resulted in the:

- Establishment of a multi-disciplinary early intervention services for newly diagnosed children;
- Development of education support services for school age children;
- Training services for clinicians, teachers and allied health professionals;
- Establishment of a highly successful model of Residential Services specifically tailored to the needs of adults with ASD;
- Development of Post School Options services for school leavers;
- Establishment of an Intensive Family Support Service to assist families in crisis;
- Clinical support services for adults with complex needs and/or challenging behaviour;
- Establishment of a highly successful employment support service to place individuals with Autism in employment.

Ms. McKenna Kerr is a former member of the Commonwealth Expert Advisory Group advising COAG Select Council of Ministers on the NDIS. She also Co-Chaired the Eligibility and Assessment Working Group for NDIS.

Ms McKenna-Kerr has served on numerous State and Commonwealth Working Parties on disability services. She has been involved nationally throughout her career in major initiatives involving disability sector development and reform to benefit people with disability.

In addition to her work in Australia, Ms McKenna Kerr has worked for the last four years as part of a Sister-State initiative with East Java, Indonesia. This involves the training of local multi-disciplinary teams in 5 regional government areas of East Java to provide services to people with Autism and their families.

Ms. McKenna Kerr has a Moderatorship in Sociology from Trinity College, Dublin and is a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors

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ABOUT THE AUTISM ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Inc)

The Autism Association of Western Australia is the largest specialist lifespan organisation providing services to people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in Australia. Services are best practice and based on leading international peer-reviewed research in the field of Autism. The Autism Association has well established links both nationally and internationally.

Services include:

- Autism Advisors and family support for newly diagnosed children.
- Multi-disciplinary Early Intervention Services
- School Support Service and Therapy Services for school age children
- Therapy and Clinical services for adults with ASD
- Community Living Support: Shared and Individual Homes
- Short Breaks for Children (Respite Service)
- Individual Support Programs tailored to individual-need, including Post School Options
- Employment Placement and Support Program
- Professional Development and Training Services
- State-wide Consultancy Service.
- Family Support

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