



Autism
Association of **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

ANNUAL REPORT

2016



CONTENTS

Strategic Directions	4
President's Report	6
CEO's Report	8
Board Members	12
Services Overview	14
Therapy and Clinical Services	20
Employment Placement and Support Program	24
Community Living	26
Individual Support Program	28
Capacity Building	30
The Lion King Autism Friendly Performance	32
Celebrating Long Service Achievements	34

What is Autism?

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

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

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

*For ease of use, the term "Autism" will be used throughout this report to refer to Autism Spectrum Disorder.

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

OUR PURPOSE

To advance:

- the personal development
- equality of opportunity and
- community participation

of people with Autism and related disabilities

OUR VALUES

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

OUR VISION

What we work to achieve:

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

OUR CULTURE

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

GOAL 1



Enhance the lives of people with Autism

GOAL 2



Support families and carers

GOAL 3



Influence and promote best practice

GOAL 4



Increase organisational capacity and efficiency



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2015-16 has been an important year for the Autism Association as we transition to the NDIS. It has also been a very positive year as we reviewed our Strategic Directions to provide a platform to direct our focus in the years ahead. The work undertaken in this regard also re-affirms our values and makes more explicit our organisational culture and the leadership we wish to preserve at all levels of the organisation going into the future.

In recognising the new operational demands of the NDIS, special attention was paid this year in our strategic directions to developing organisational readiness for the changes that will take place. This work included additional training and new systems development to support service expansion. Significant work was also undertaken to prepare the organisation for the unprecedented pace of change that is taking place. To this end, we reviewed our organisational structure, and considered current and future infrastructure needs.

In addition to the work to prepare for our future operating environment, we continued with the expansion of existing services, including early intervention, school age services, support for adults, family support, community living and employment services. We opened a service hub in East Fremantle, providing local services to individuals and families; and expanded services in the Perth Hills/Midland area. In addition, we opened our first regional therapy centre in the South West in response to demand from families as well as continuing our regional outreach services.

We also continued to work with the disability sector in Western Australia and nationally to contribute to policy development and decision making. This year we also extended our partnership with the Government of East Java and continued to work with them as part of the Sister State relationship to develop services for children with Autism throughout East Java.

In the coming year, we will continue on our strategic path of service expansion. Very importantly, we will continue to strongly advocate for the needs of people with Autism and their families.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the Disability Services Commission and Department of Social Services 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 mission of the Autism Association.

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





CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

This has been a year of significant achievement, with growth in all service areas and major organisational work undertaken to prepare for transition to the NDIS. Despite this, it has not been a year without challenges as we endeavor to adapt all facets of our operations to an external NDIS environment that is itself in the process of evolving, changing and adapting. However, despite the many challenges, we kept our mission front and centre in our work to improve the lives of people with Autism and their families. We achieved this through service expansion, service development, advocacy, professional development services, and providing models of best practice in all of our service undertakings.

As we began the 12 months we were very conscious of how easy it would be to become preoccupied or overly focused on the “engine room” of change that all organisations are experiencing to create new organisational systems and processes to effectively interface with NDIS. This is not to downplay the enormity of the work that we have had to accomplish, and continue to undertake, to adapt to an external funding environment that is itself under construction. However, the focus that has carried us through the many challenges is the knowledge of the critical importance of getting this transformation right for a unique purpose. That is, to ensure we are best placed to meet the needs of a growing population of people with Autism; and to do so in a contemporary and best-practice way.

During the last 12 months, we further strengthened and expanded our work to achieve our strategic goals for people with Autism through the following:

- i. Significant expansion of services in all areas.
- ii. Strengthened financial and operational capacity in preparation for further growth.
- iii. Continued to work nationally and at a state level.
- iv. Strengthened international partnerships and linkages.
- v. Engaged extensively with research.
- vi. Promoted and facilitated best practice in service delivery through our professional development services, consultancies, maintaining and furthering networks, and delivering papers at national and international conferences.

In addition to these initiatives, we continued to deliver innovative services to meet the needs of individuals and families. We developed a range of new services for children and adults, and we extended our consultancies and training to professionals, employers and community organisations.

This year we also strengthened our partnership with East Java with its population of 40 million people and a growing population of children and adults with Autism. Our work has focused on supporting five regional governments to establish early intervention services, school inclusion services, parent support and outreach services.

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Significant work was undertaken this year to expand services through a range of innovative service development initiatives. We expanded our service hubs to East Fremantle as well as a regional therapy centre in Australind. This was in addition to adding a number of new programs to our centre in Midland. We also expanded the range of programs to children in school and after school in the NDIS Trial Sites, and we are participating in an NDIS initiative to support school leavers to undertake vocational and related activities.

We further expanded our community based therapy groups for children and adolescents this year, involving social inclusion and communication objectives. We also worked to establish a number of programs for adults focused on managing anxiety, emotional regulation, social skills and cyber safety. In addition, we further developed a range of resources for staff working with adults with complex communication needs.



Continuing the partnership between Western Australia and East Java.

This initiative specifically targets the development of skills to facilitate decision-making and improve quality of life for individuals with complex needs.

We also undertook the consolidation of our trans-disciplinary clinical team dedicated to meeting the needs of individuals in our shared living homes. This includes greater integration of planning with shared living staff and the joint establishment of individualised comprehensive augmentative communication plans, positive behavior support, as well as a range of home modifications and assistive aids and equipment.

RESEARCH

We continue to engage in and with a wide ranging research initiatives involved with improving the lives and skills of children and adults with Autism.

We continued collaborative research with the national Autism Cooperative Research Centre (ACRC), Curtin University and a range of tertiary bodies and institutions. Research initiatives in which we are involved include the following:

- Pre and post assessments of young children attending Autism specific day care. Measures include child development, parent well-being and transition to school.
- Mentoring and enhancing social relationships for young adults.
- Factors that contribute to the school connectedness for adolescents with Autism in rural and remote Western Australia as well as urban communities.
- The development of a career pathway planning tool for students with Autism.

This year we also presented papers at international conferences including the following:

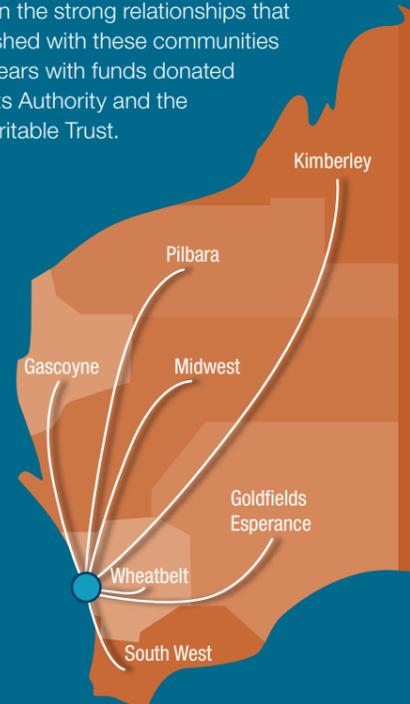
- The use of iPads and other tablets to enhance school and community participation.
- The role of an Autism Advisor in an NDIS world.
- Taking the stress out of the holiday season for families of children with Autism.
- Building the capacity of the childcare workforce to include children with Autism in mainstream childcare.
- Developing the capacity of adults to maximise independence and decision-making.

REGIONAL SERVICES

The Regional Outreach Team continued to have a strong presence across regional and remote Western Australia this year. The team visited 16 regional areas to support families and to develop local community capacity. This was undertaken through direct support, consultancy, training and workshops, and assisting families to develop supports locally.

In response to local demand, we opened our first regional therapy centre in Australind this year. In addition, we delivered Early Days workshops in the Lower South West. We also worked to assist in the early identification of children with Autism and to support families to access early intervention and other resources.

In collaboration with Disability Services Commission and Child Australia, our Regional Outreach Team spent a week travelling across the Pilbara to increase awareness and early identification of Autism in Aboriginal communities. This work builds on the strong relationships that have been established with these communities over the last few years with funds donated by the Pilbara Ports Authority and the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust.



YEAR HIGHLIGHTS



4,248 individuals service users were supported.



We support **67** homes in the community, 47 of which are shared homes with full-time staff support.



1,471 individuals were supported by Therapy & Clinical Services across different age groups.



6,344 consultancies were undertaken with families and other stakeholders.

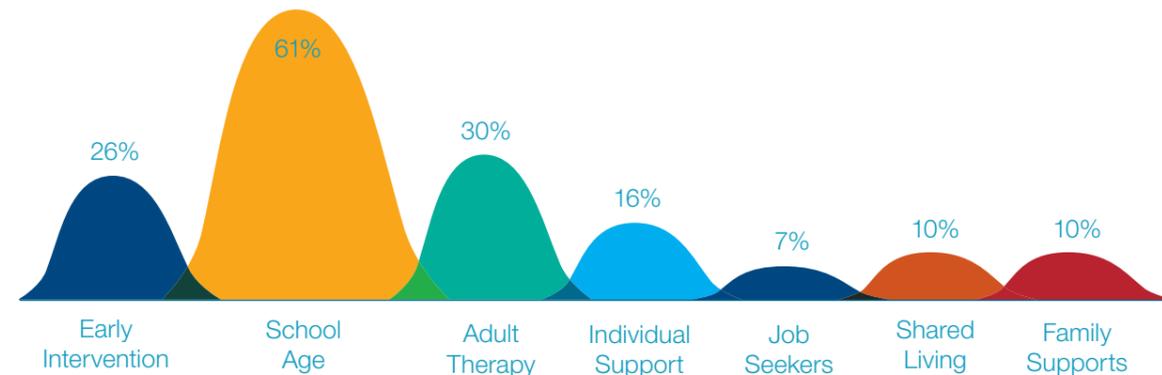


2,645 registrations were received for our professional development, including regional training.



531 newly diagnosed children were assisted to secure early intervention support.

SERVICE GROWTH



A new Autism Centre was opened in Fremantle and a new Therapy Centre was opened in Australind.



We established our Strategic Directions for the next 3 to 5 years.



We were awarded the 2015 Excellence in Early Childhood Intervention Award from ECIAWA.

COLLABORATION AND SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

We continued a myriad of collaboration and sector involvements this year. This included work undertaken with Commonwealth and State initiatives, NDIS, the West Australian Partnership Forum, Procurement Reform, the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorder and many more. We also continued our collaboration with the government of East Java as part of the Sister State relationship between Western Australia and East Java. This work involves the training of East Java clinicians, teachers and other professionals who work with children with Autism and their families.

We also continued to support sector development through a range of training initiatives within Western Australia for professionals and community based organisations. We also delivered seminars to employers and companies to create awareness and enhance job opportunities for job seekers with Autism.

A new graduate program for Allied Health professionals was also established this year as well as an internship program providing mentoring to assist in the pathway to professional registration. In addition, we furthered our work with staff involved in the inclusion of children with Autism in mainstream setting. This work was recognised by ECIAWA in the conferring of the **2015 Excellence in Early Childhood Intervention Award**.

IN CONCLUSION

This has been a strong and significant year at an important juncture in service development and service expansion for people with Autism. It has also been a year in which we undertook and accomplished a great deal in preparing our organisation for change in an NDIS environment.

Growth was achieved in all service areas and we deepened the foundations for further growth and expansion of services.

We also furthered our relationships nationally and internationally this year. We hosted several overseas delegations and sent staff to East Java as part of the Sister State undertaking between East Java and Western Australia.

In addition to service expansion, we worked unceasingly throughout the year to create the conditions for ongoing service development. In this regard, we undertook significant work to prepare for the eventual full rollout of NDIS from 2017 onwards. While the last 12 months has been a time of rapid change, and this will continue for some time, we are dedicated in pushing ahead to ensure that children and adults with Autism can avail of opportunities to have their needs met under the NDIS.

Despite the enormity of the change taking place, we continued to expand services, we delivered on innovation, we extended our work to promote best practice, we increased organisational capacity, we undertook further expansion of services in regional Western Australia and worked to promote best practice through our involvement in research.

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

In particular, I would like to acknowledge the work and support of the Board chaired by Dr Rob Storer and their enormous contribution to the Autism Association. I would also like to thank all our staff for their outstanding dedication and commitment throughout the year. Finally, I would like to thank people with Autism themselves for the way they continue to teach us and to continually inspire us to greater heights.

Joan McKenna Kerr

Chief Executive Officer

SERVICES DELIVERED IN 2015-16

- Autism Advisor Program and family support for newly diagnosed children.
- Trans-disciplinary early intervention services.
- School support service and therapy services for school aged children.
- Therapy and clinical services for adults.
- Community living supports in shared and individual homes.
- Individual support programs tailored to individual need, including Post School Options.
- Employment placement and support program.
- Professional training and development services.
- Statewide consultancy service.
- Family support.

BOARD



Dr Rob Storer

Chairman

Dr Rob Storer is a Consultant Anaesthetist and long-term member of the Autism Association. He has been actively involved in leading the Board at a time of major strategic development, maintaining a keen interest in the field of disability as well as Autism. Dr Storer is also a Committee member of the Western Australian branch of the Australian Society of Anaesthetists and of the Anaesthetic Department of both St John of God Subiaco and Murdoch.

Professor Trevor Parry AM Cit. WA | Vice Chairman

Professor Parry is a Developmental Paediatrician and Clinical Professor at the University of Western Australia. He was responsible for the establishment of the State Child Development Centre in the mid 1970s and its Director until 2004. He is a past Vice President of the former Australian College of Paediatricians, and Emeritus Consultant at Princess Margaret Hospital.

He has been much involved in medical education and public education in Australia and developing countries with particular reference to parenting and child development. He is the inaugural recipient

of the Children and Young People's Lifetime Achievement Award at the Western Australian Citizen of the Year 2010 awards and was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2012. Professor Parry was appointed an Ambassador for Children by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2012.

Mr Mark Altus

Mr Altus joined the Board of the Autism Association in January 2010. He is also a member of the Board of the Lutheran Church of Australia's national financing arm (chairing the Board's Audit and Risk Committee). In 2014 he became a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Mr Altus previously chaired the Curtin Business School Advisory Board for the School of Economics and Finance, and held a number of positions within the Western Australian Department of Treasury, including as Director of Revenue and Intergovernmental Relations. In 2003–04 he completed a six month secondment to the University of Western Australia as Executive Director Finance and Resources (equivalent to Chief Financial Officer), and continued as a member of the University's Senate 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 Autistic Services on the Victorian State Council for Autism. On returning to Perth in late 1999, Mrs Brownhill resumed her involvement with the worldwide Special Olympics movement and was a Director of Special Olympics Western Australia up until 2004. Mrs Brownhill is a Family Member of the Autism Association of Western Australia.

Emeritus Professor

Louis I. Landau AO

Professor Landau was medical advisor to the Western Australian Department of Health, and previously Executive Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at The University of Western Australia for nine years and was Professor of Paediatrics at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children in Perth. He is the founding Chairman of the Board of the Institute for Child Health Research, and has served on committees of the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Drug Evaluation Committee, the Australian Medical Council, and the National Asthma Campaign. Professor Landau was awarded Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 1996 for his contribution to paediatrics and research in respiratory medicine.

Mrs Vicki Rank

Mrs Rank is a senior international training specialist in industrial software. She has been a Family Member of the Autism Association for over 21 years. Mrs Rank has been an active member of the Autism Association for more than two decades and has supported the Association in public education, fundraising and other projects throughout the years.

Mr Dallas Presser

Mr Presser graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree (Banking and Commercial Law) from Curtin University in 1995 following which he joined the Department of Treasury and Finance. He currently holds the position of Specialist Compliance Officer with the Office of State Revenue within the Department of Treasury and Finance. Mr Presser is active within his local community and is a Family Member of the Autism Association of Western Australia.

Dr Duncan Monro

Dr Monro has over 26 years' experience as a chartered accountant and business advisor in Australia and internationally. He is currently a Principal in the Corporate Finance division of RSM. He has previously worked for the large accounting firms KPMG and Crowe Horwath. He has also worked as the CFO for a small listed software development company.

Dr Monro has worked in a diverse selection of industries with a particular focus in mining industry, manufacturing, government, not-for-profit, property, transport, retail and primary producer sectors. His experience covers a wide range of areas including business valuations, due diligence, business planning, financial mentoring and advisory services for Indigenous entities and general financial consulting.

SERVICES OVERVIEW

The Autism Association is one of Australia's largest not-for-profit Autism specific service providers. Established in 1967, our focus is on excellence in service provision, meeting the needs of individuals with Autism and related disabilities, supporting families and the community through information, advice and regional outreach. Services are person-centred and based on leading international peer-reviewed research in the field of Autism.

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

FOR CHILDREN

Early Intervention

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

Autism Specific Early Learning Centre

Our Autism Specific Early Learning and Care 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 others, we continue to undertake research on individual and family outcomes, as well as best practice in early learning settings.

Autism Advisor Program

The Autism Advisor Program is delivered as 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.

School Aged Service

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

Positive Behaviour Service

The Positive Behaviour Service supports young people aged 6 to 25 years 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 a number of homes throughout the metropolitan area, or at the child's own home, or through a range of community based programs. Children are supported by caring and experienced staff who are trained specifically in meeting the needs of children with Autism. The focus of the service is to provide a fun time with lots of choice for each child to do the things they like.





FOR ADULTS

Individual Support

There are a range of support services 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 what types of assistance works 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.

AIM Employment

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

Community Living

This service provides support to adults moving from their family home and into a home of their own. Options include support to live independently with support, or live independently close to family and friends, or sharing a home with one other person or a small group that is comprehensively supported. There are also other options that we can discuss with the individual or family. 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 their skills, maximise their independence and participate in the community. Our team of occupational therapists, speech pathologists and psychologists works closely with each person and their family to achieve outcomes that are important to them.

FOR FAMILIES

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

Understanding the Autism Diagnosis

Comprehensive advice and consultancy is available for families to assist them through the diagnostic process.

Seminars, Workshops and Training

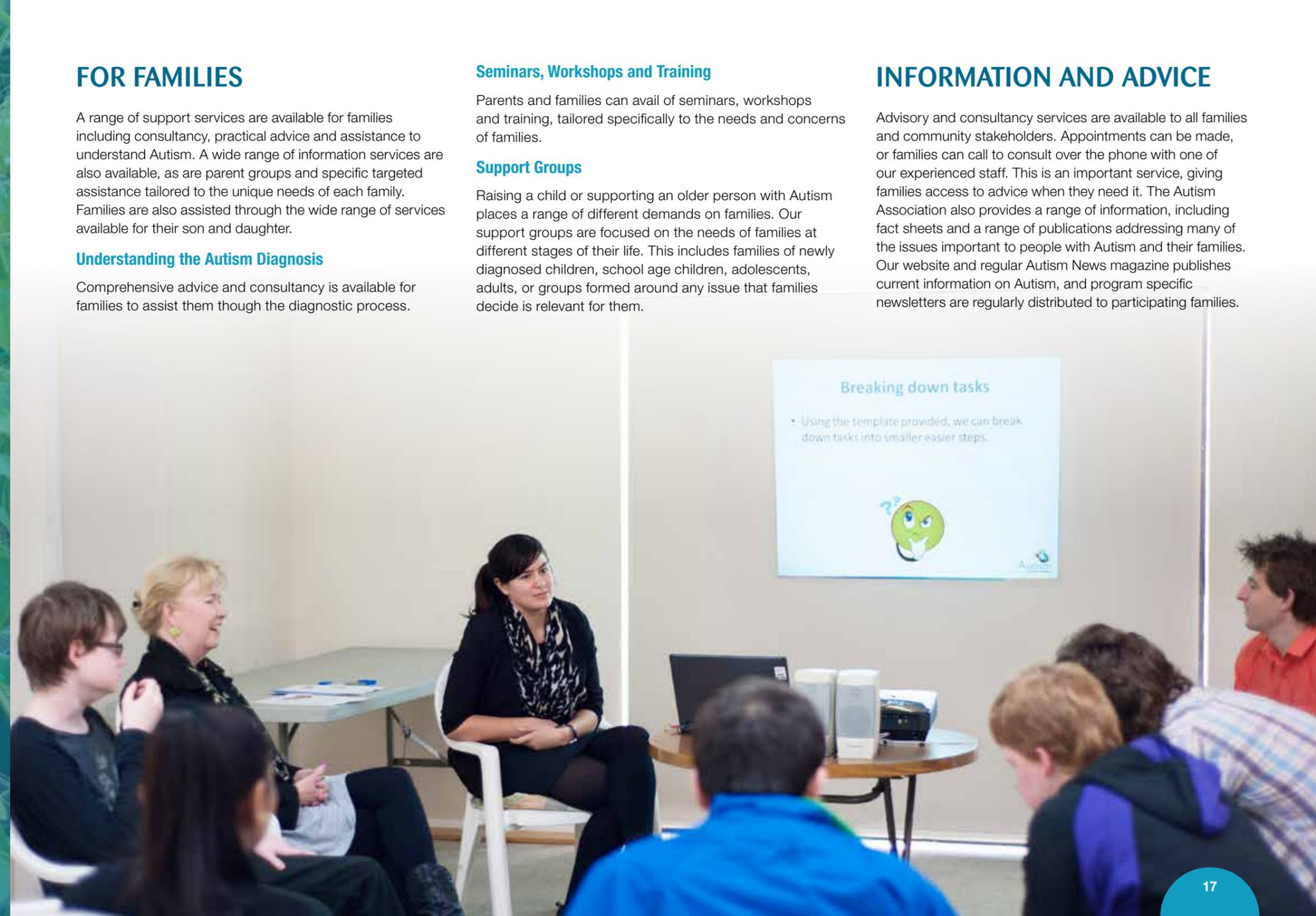
Parents and families can avail of seminars, workshops and training, tailored specifically to the needs and concerns of families.

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



REGIONAL OUTREACH

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

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

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

FOR COMMUNITIES

Professional Training and Development

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

Information and Consultancy

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



The 2016 Masterclass with Michelle Garcia Winner opened my eyes to where my son is at and where I can help him most. I feel very excited and empowered! I now really understand how excellent the therapy Rohan is receiving! All educators need to do this Masterclass!! Actually we all need it!

—Parent

THERAPY AND CLINICAL SERVICES

In 2015–2016 there was continued service expansion in Therapy and Clinical Services across a range of specialist programs for children and adults. The largest expansion was in school age services.

Our teams have worked unrelentingly throughout the year to respond to the substantial increase in demand. We worked collaboratively with families in NDIS Trial Site areas to support them and their child. The roll out of NDIS has also led to new opportunities for families to secure essential specialist supports and therapy to meet their needs.

We opened our East Fremantle service hub to support the expansion of services in the South Metropolitan region. We expanded services in Midland and we commenced a range of services on Saturday. Through all of these initiatives we have been able to increase and expand services to children and adults and, in addition, provide a greater level of parent and teacher training, workshops and support groups.



AUTISM ADVISOR PROGRAM AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The Autism Advisor Program provides a gateway for receiving information, support and funding for early intervention services for young children. Following diagnosis, or during the diagnostic process, families and carers can contact one of our Autism Advisor for information and support.

The Autism Advisor team also played a key role this year in supporting families to understand and navigate the NDIS, and building their capacity to prepare for their NDIS planning meeting. This year, our Autism Advisor team provided 6,344 consultancies to families and supported 531 newly diagnosed children to secure early intervention support.

“ My Advisor was amazing and had so much patience explaining everything. We had no idea about the funding, where it came from, how to get it, or how it was to be used. She explained everything so that we could understand exactly what steps needed to be taken from that point on. After the stress of the diagnosis it was nice to deal with someone so knowledgeable, friendly and efficient.

— Mother of newly diagnosed toddler

EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

In 2015–16, 349 children received specialist early intervention services. All intervention is tailored to the unique needs of each child and their family. A range of service options are available so that we can work with the child in an environment that best suit the family, for example in specialist centre, at home, school and/or community.

2015 Excellence in Early Childhood Intervention Award from Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) *In recognition of the work we have undertaken in early intervention, the Autism Association was awarded the 2015 Excellence in Early Childhood Intervention Award from Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA).*

This year, we developed a new program to support the increasing number of children under the age of 2 years being diagnosed. Led by our Speech Pathologists, it provides parents with comprehensive support to use a wide range of ordinary activities to facilitate opportunities for communication and other skill development at home.

In the last 12 months, funding for early intervention was extended to 8 years of age. This provided us with opportunities to build on early intervention gains to support transition into the early school years. This new initiative enabled our therapists to work with each child to embed goals for further skill development into the school environment, thus, maximizing child participation and inclusion. In addition, we commenced a range of weekend and after school group activities to provide opportunities for children to continue developing their social and communication skills in a fun environment.

Late in 2015 we extended our Early Intervention service into the Upper South West of Western Australia and opened a centre in Australind. Our early intervention program is delivered from a purpose built therapy centre located onsite at Kingston Primary School. The model of service has been developed in partnership with the school and together we are developing a template for partnership involving early intervention and transition to school.

AUTISM SPECIFIC EARLY LEARNING AND CARE CENTRE

The Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC) is one of six specialist centres in Australia established under the Commonwealth's Helping Children with Autism Package. At ASELCC, a highly skilled trans-disciplinary team of professionals work to provide an Autism specific early learning program within a long day care setting for children under six years. The curriculum incorporates the Early Years Learning Framework as part of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

This year 58 children attended ASELCC and participated in a range of structured, individualised fun programs to facilitate social and functional skills development.

Recognition of Contribution to field of Disability by Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) *In 2015 our specialist team was formally recognised by ECIA for its ongoing contribution to the field of disability in enhancing local childcares to facilitate inclusion and participation of children with Autism.*

We continued our collaborative research partnership with Curtin University this year to assess outcomes for the young children involved in the program. The work is linked to a national research program to identify child and family outcomes through their participation in ASELCC. We are very pleased that the research continues to demonstrate statistically significant improvement in child development and parent wellbeing. The methodology has been developed by Curtin and the data from the program is independently evaluated by them. The study includes measures of cognition, communication and social participation. A number of research papers have been published this year with a number of further journal articles to come.

This year, we participated in a new Autism CRC research initiative that evaluates transition to school for children who have been attending the program. One of the outcomes being sought from this research is to develop guidelines to support positive transition to primary school.





SCHOOL AGED SERVICES

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

Families have a range of parent workshops available to assist them in their day-to-day parenting and advocacy for their son or daughter. Intensive transition programs are also provided to support families at key transition points, including primary school to high school and transition to employment and other post school options opportunities.

In 2015–16, 742 children and adolescents were supported including 166 children who required short term therapy while waiting for further comprehensive clinical supports.

The School Age team also developed new group programs for children and adolescent with the aim of fostering skill development and building confidence in a relaxed or fun way. Groups included:

- **My Space:** A program providing support for girls going through puberty.
- **Friendzone:** A program designed to help children aged 6 to 8 years old develop skills in taking turns, social problem solving, initiating play, participating in a group and developing awareness of emotions.
- **iCommunicate:** This is a fun activity-based group suitable for users of communication devices.

THERAPY AND CLINICAL SERVICES FOR ADULTS

Therapy and Clinical Services works with adults to assist them to maximise their skills, build independence, increase social participation, facilitate social inclusion, and improve their quality of life.

This year, 247 adults and their family were supported from our multi-disciplinary team to assist them in identifying their personal goals and the strategies to achieve them. This included 19 adults who required short term supports while waiting further comprehensive clinical service.

This year, we also commenced a project to develop resources for staff working with adults with complex communication needs. The resource will facilitate the development of skills to support decision-making and create opportunities for greater autonomy and improved quality of life.

In addition, we streamlined our approach to supporting individuals in Shared Living to provide a more comprehensive service. The trans-disciplinary clinical team was expanded with a unique focus on the individual needs of people sharing a home with others. Together with Shared Living staff, clinicians are working as part of an integrated team to develop and embed augmentative communication plans, comprehensive positive behavior support plans, and advice on home modifications and other assistive aids and equipment. The Therapy and Clinical team has also developed an intensive assessment and response plan for a range of eating and swallowing difficulties. Included in this program is training for families and staff supporting each person.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Program provides individuals between the ages of 6 and 26 years with intensive support to develop skills that will help them improve their quality of life. Using a comprehensive approach to functional assessment, the PBS team works collaboratively with each individual and their families. The broad goals are to develop a range of strategies to assist individuals to develop positive relationships, participate in the community and exercise choice in the things that matter to them.



EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT PROGRAM

AIM Employment is the only Autism specific employment service in Australia, supporting job seekers to find and maintain employment. We work with individuals to identify and match jobs to their strengths, skills, preferences and aspirations. We assist individuals in many industries and sectors, including universities, office administration, information technology, banking, real estate, warehousing, wholesale pharmacy, hospitality and factories.

We provide all our job seekers with a high level of on-the-job support. From the moment we place a job seeker in employment, our Employment Consultant provides support to enable a smooth transition into the workplace. This includes on-the-job training, co-worker training, workplace aides, and ongoing skill development as needed.

In the last 12 months 270 individuals were assisted to become job ready, to find work or were supported to continue their employment. Over the year, the AIM Employment team continued to achieve higher than the national average job placement and outcome performance ratings for their clients. This was supported by another outstanding independent quality assurance report, acknowledging the team's commitment to achieving sustainable employment outcomes for job seekers.

We commenced a new Job Club in August 2015 where job seekers are assisted to identify their strengths and interests, supporting them to develop short and long term career plans.

Job seekers are supported to develop practical vocational skills such as practice conversational skills and social interaction, developing application letters and resume writing, and learning about emotional regulation at work.

This year AIM Employment is participating in an NDIS initiative to support school leavers to undertake employment related activities, including job search, work experience and paid work. This provides an exciting opportunity for school leavers to develop the skills necessary to be job ready and gain valuable and positive work experiences.

We have a number of ongoing partnerships that continued to strengthen this year. This includes Crown Perth, Australia Post and Curtin University, and all three are expanding their employment opportunities for job seekers with Autism. AIM Employment also supported Curtin University to establish the Autism Academy for Software Quality Assurance (AASQA), providing advisory support, training and coaching in the placement of interns with Autism in software testing jobs.



AUSTRALIA POST

Last year Australia Post employed two people with Autism through a combination of work experience, training, and identifying the individuals' skills and matching these skills to particular jobs. With the support of the AIM Employment team, these young people have become part of our processing team working in various parts of the organisation.

These employees fit in extremely well once given the opportunity and are an integral part of the Australia Post team.

COMMUNITY LIVING

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

SHARED LIVING

Some people require a high level of support and this can be provided by sharing a home with another person or by living with a small group of other people. The Shared Living team work closely with the person and their family to individualise their support to the person's needs and preferences.

We now support 67 homes in the community, 47 of which are shared homes with full-time staff and 20 of which are homes for individuals living independently with visiting support by staff. We continue to receive very positive independent evaluations, and this year we again underwent independent evaluation and received an excellent report that made reference to the very positive relationship each person has with staff who support them.

This year we expanded the role of our trans-disciplinary clinical team to provide comprehensive wrap-around support that includes a comprehensive augmentative communication program, advice and prescription on home modification and other assistive aids and equipment, mobility assessments, comprehensive behavior support plans, and specialist consultation with physicians.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

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

SHORT BREAKS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

A really important support for families and children under 18 years is our Short Breaks program to provide a fun weekend, or other period, away from home. Work is currently underway to expand services, and some preparatory work has commenced on this initiative in the last 12 months.



JOHN TAKES CONTROL

John lives in a Shared Living home. One day John decided that something was missing in his life. He decided he needed to take action. So, with support, he arranged for his Mum and his key support staff to get together to discuss his future. At the meeting, John was very clear that he wished to work and wanted help to get a job. John also said that he would love to have a pet dog and to build new friendships and relationships.

With the help of the team around him, John now has a new puppy named Pippa. John loves taking care of her and it didn't take long before Pippa became part of the family.

The next exciting thing is that John attended an interview at Fiona Stanley Hospital for a volunteer position. John did well at the interview and he will start volunteering in July. John is hoping that by volunteering, he will have new friends; and eventually get a job.

John is so pleased that he took control and initiated changes in his life.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTS

The Individual Support program offers a range of options for individuals to be assisted in ways that best meet their needs and preferences. We work with each person to explore the things they want to achieve or would like to do, and the support they need to do so. Support is provided flexibly in whatever environment is required. This can involve assistance at home or in the community. It may also include assistance to develop a range of independence skills including work readiness. This year we provided flexible assistance to 226 individuals and their families.

We continue to establish successful partnerships with a number of local businesses, community organisations and government authorities to provide opportunities for young people to participate in a wide range of community activities. This also provides openings for young people to gain work experiences and volunteering opportunities in the community.

During the year, we also completed the national Community Inclusion Project commissioned by the National Disability Insurance Agency to explore co-design service models to increase community inclusion. The Autism Association was one of 11 organisations across Australia to lead the 12-month project. The project delivered great outcomes for the participating individuals and their families. These young people expanded their lives in the community and the perception of what others thought possible. The Autism Association provided a unique perspective in this pilot project. This is largely due to the fact that our service has always been community based, while many of the other participating organisations from other states were only at the point of transitioning from centre based to community based programs.

The project is being evaluated by Southern Cross University with the learnings from this work included in a co-design framework being developed by the National Disability Insurance Agency.

FAMILY BASED SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN

In our family support program, families decide what they need and how they would like it delivered, that is, they do not have to pick from a prescribed menu of options. We work with each family to identify what they would like to achieve for their child and develop a plan accordingly. Some families choose to have support at home, while others wish to have support in the community or both. We also encourage families to be involved in the recruitment of the people who will provide them with their support.



SHARED MANAGEMENT

Launched in 2013, our Shared Management service is now being used by a growing number of individuals and families. Shared Management is the agreed sharing of service management responsibilities between families and the Autism Association. This can extend from assistance with the selection of staff to the complete management of the support services, including employment of staff, direction of staff, and all aspects of budget management by the family. It empowers individuals and families to manage the services and supports they receive, providing more choice, flexibility and control.

This year the Shared Management service has commenced working with NDIS participants in two capacities. Firstly as Plan Management support, assisting NDIS self-managed participants to manage and budget their allocated plan items as they choose. This gives them more flexibility and control over their funding. Secondly, through Support Connection and Coordination, we are assisting individuals with complex circumstances to explore a range of supports in the community to best benefit their lives and achieve their individual goals.

CAPACITY BUILDING

STATEWIDE CONSULTANCY

The Statewide Consultancy Service is a capacity-building program. It provides tertiary level consultancy to families, clinicians, schools, community organisations and support agencies who are involved with children and adults with Autism living throughout Western Australia.

Staff travelled extensively to regional and metropolitan locations this year, consulting, mentoring and delivering training to families, clinicians, teachers and support staff from a wide range of specialist and community organisations. Over 463 staff from disability and other community-based organisations across Western Australia participated in our sector workshops this year to enhance their understanding of Autism and to develop their capacity to provide support to individuals and families. This included a team of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Speech Pathologists providing tertiary level consultancy, and training clinicians and professionals who support people with complex communication needs.

FAMILY SUPPORT AND TRAINING

Building parent capacity and empowerment is a fundamental component of all services. This year we continued to deliver *Early Days* workshops designed to provide information and practical resources for parents of children with Autism who are in the 'early days' of their journey through the diagnostic process, and for those recently diagnosed with Autism.

This year we secured additional resources to deliver *Early Days* workshops in local childcare centres in the WA NDIS Lower South West trial site. We delivered a total of 54 of these workshops to parents throughout the year.

We continued to support families throughout the year with the transition from early intervention into school. To this end we provided a transition workshop called *Life After Early Intervention*. The aim of this workshop is to provide parents with information about support and resources available for their child when they enter the education system. It also prepares parents to understand the school environment and, to this end, they are provided with a resource kit with fact sheets and tip sheets on a range of related topics.

In addition, we also established *Just4Sibs* support group this year aimed at supporting siblings aged between 7 and 15 to understand Autism and what it means for their brother or sister. The workshop also works to help foster relationships between siblings and their sister or brother with Autism. This has been a great success and will provide a template for future work in this area.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2014–15, we significantly increased our seminars and workshops to develop the capacity of the disability, health and community sectors to support people with Autism and their families and create a welcoming community. A summary of these professional training and development initiatives include:

- We received **2,415** registrations for our seminars and workshops.
- We established a new graduate program within our Early Intervention service for students graduating from Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy. These positions are providing intensive hands-on training to graduates to prepare them for transition to full-time clinical roles.
- We continued to support clinical placements for a range of allied health and medical students.
- We held another successful international Masterclass.
- We developed a school-based professional development program for teachers and allied health staff working with students with Autism. This professional development program consists of workshops on understanding Autism, the impact of Autism on learning and participation, and workshops on evidence-based strategies to support students with Autism.
- We have collaborated with Child Australia and provided training to over 200 childcare professionals in the Perth metropolitan areas. We will continue to build on this relationship to facilitate the participation and inclusion of children with Autism into mainstream day care.

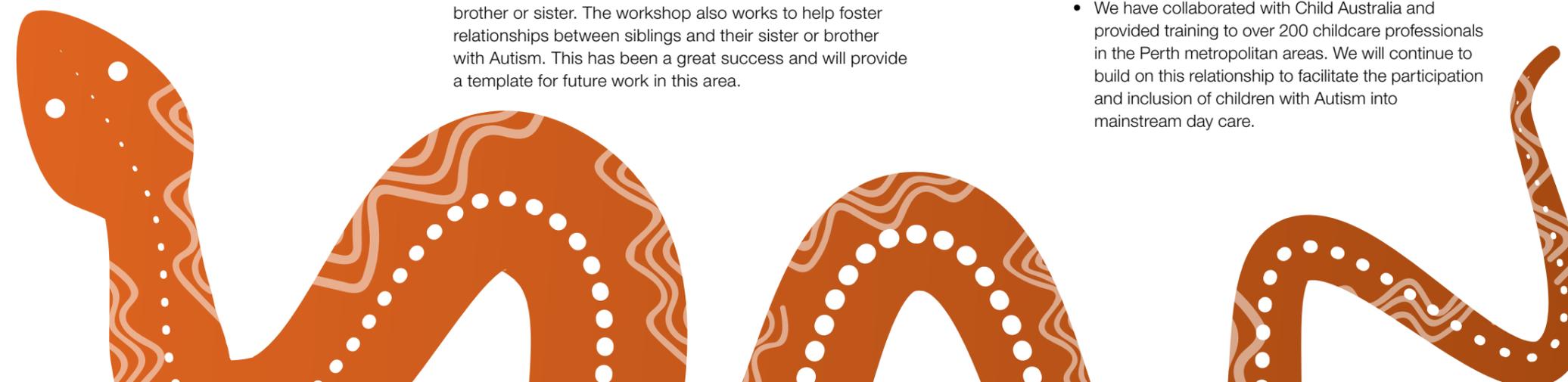
- We provided Autism training to several employers this year focusing on understanding Autism in the workplace and how to establish the necessary supports to achieve a positive employment outcome.
- We became a recognised trainer for Positive Partnerships in Western Australia.
- We continue to generate much interest globally from our Autism Apps website, assisting families and others with choosing Apps. There were 16,064 visitors from over 54 countries to the Autism Apps website this year.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

The Autism Regional Outreach team continued to have a strong presence across regional and remote Western Australia. The team travelled to 16 regional areas this year, delivering workshops to families and supporting local communities to develop opportunities and support participation and inclusion for individuals with Autism.

This year the team, in collaboration with Disability Services Commission, Child Australia, Department of Social Services and the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust, extended their work in the Pilbara to increase awareness and early identification of Autism in Aboriginal communities. The team delivered 12 workshops and consulted with 89 families. This work builds on the strong relationship that has been established with these communities over the last number of years.

This initiative has been made possible through the exceptional generosity and hospitality of the communities involved.



THE LION KING AUTISM FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE

The Autism Association successfully partnered with Disney Australia to facilitate a special Autism friendly Lion King show at Crown Theatre Perth. Staff across the organisation volunteered to coordinate and support the running of the event, as well as provided Autism training to event organisers and actors.

In addition, the Therapy and Clinical Services team also developed a 'social story' to help prepare and support individuals with Autism to attend the show. Over 1,000 individuals and their families attend on the day and were supported by 70 of our staff who volunteered to assist families.

Right: Martin arriving at the Autism friendly performance of The Lion King with his support worker Darren.



"I didn't feel the need to apologise to those next to me if my daughter laughed too loud, went to the toilet every 15 minutes or squirmed in her seat because we were all in the same situation. There were a few kids near us who were loud and all I could do was rejoice in the fact they were enjoying the show and not having to put up with disapproving glares from ignorant people. Your staff were so friendly and accommodating and did a wonderful job." — Natalie

CELEBRATING LONG SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

In March this year we recognised our long serving staff for their commitment and dedication to the Autism Association. 52 staff received their awards in a celebration held at our Shenton Park Head Office. We also expressed our gratitude to Richard Powell for 18 years of valuable assistance volunteering for the Association.

A special tribute was made in memory of Frank Tropellone who would have been celebrating his 10 years' long service award this year.

10 YEARS' LONG SERVICE

Ruth Woods (Community Living)

Adam Tropellone (Community Living)

Graeme Reid (Community Living)

Chris Tebbutt (Community Living)

Sarah Connellan (Employment and Community Options).

5 YEARS' LONG SERVICE

Community Living

Mark Hyde, Rikenkumar Vaishnani, Wayne Lewis, Robert Carmichael, Jenny West, Nicole Naeslund, Rita Rene, Josephine Sims, Geraldine Harrup, Fiona Dall, Faye Glover, Paula Giddens, Megan Rouse, Raewyn Purkiss, Rolph Kerenyi, Thomas Millar, Damien Doherty, Fiona Old, Christian Wearne, Kimi Tukerangi, Iain Youngson, Gregory Ryan, Adele Thomas, Cheney Conder, Carolyn Morgan, Rebecca Durrant, Jacinta Hanrahan.

Employment and Community Options

Gina Glendining, Deepti Sharma, Lee Mahanga, Kush Fernando, Leslie Doyle, Joanne Mallett, Miranda Platten, Christine Murphy, Barbara Trussell.

Therapy and Clinical Services

Rebekah Saw, Erin Akerstrom, Helen McClean, George Knowles, Ashleigh Taylor, Stacey Cole, Sarita Slater.

Business Operations

Gina De Jonge.

Finance

Sheena Bater, Marnie Lester.

Human Resources and OSH

Sheena Bater, Marnie Lester, Michelle Hunter.





Free call 1800 636 427
T (08) 9489 8900
F (08) 9489 8999
E autismwa@autism.org.au

Locked Bag 2 SUBIACO WA 6904
215 Stubbs Terrace Shenton Park 6008
www.autism.org.au