



Autism
Association of **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Our Mission

To advance the personal development, equality of opportunity and community participation of people with Autism.

Our Vision

A fair and just society which values people with disabilities and accepts differences.

A society where people with Autism have opportunity to share in the riches of community life.

A society where people with Autism enjoy a quality of life which reflects community standards.

A society motivated by care, compassion and shared responsibility.

Our Values

Respect for the uniqueness of each individual with Autism.

Respect for the knowledge and expertise of families in relation to the family member with Autism.

The entitlement of each person with Autism to be included in a valued way in our community.

The right of individuals with Autism to have their needs met in a manner which enhances their dignity, worth and social image.

Entitlement of individuals with Autism to a quality of life which reflects community standards.

Fairness and support in all dealings with families and advocates.

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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.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This has been an exciting year with continued expansion of services, growth in all our therapy services, trans-disciplinary early intervention services, family support, school age services, community support for adults, as well as community living and employment support.

2014–15 has also been a particularly important year in relation to the Autism Association's participation in the NDIS Hills Trial Site and NDIS MyWay. A great deal of work has taken place to make the Association NDIS-ready in all respects. As part of the preparation, we established a new service centre in Midland and are preparing to open another in the south metropolitan corridor early in the new financial year.

In addition to expanding services and preparing for NDIS, we also continued our very significant work in developing community capacity to support people with Autism. We did this through our very comprehensive workshop and seminar program; as well as our many publications; professional development programs and hosting international Masterclasses. We also participated in many initiatives in the disability field more broadly through involvement in disability sector working groups, advisory bodies, boards and committees nationally and at a state level.

We were also very pleased this year to continue our collaboration with Curtin University on a number of research projects as well as work with the national Autism Research Council; and we will continue this work in the coming year.

We undertook some further work during the past twelve months to follow up our training of multi-disciplinary teams from East Java as part of the Sister State relationship between East Java and Western Australia. There are now five Autism Centres operating in East Java with key staff trained in Perth by the Autism Association of Western Australia. We were pleased to be part of this work and staff look forward to visiting East Java later this year to observe progress and to provide consultancy to the five regional teams.

It was again, a strong year for the Board as we considered and prepared for the significant change taking place in the disability sector. We hope that the policy framework guiding this change will build on what has worked well in the past for people with disabilities and their families. In this regard, it will be important to continue to learn from the trial sites and be prepared to make changes where they are needed.

Finally, our continuing work would not be possible without the support of our state and commonwealth funding bodies and the community. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the dedication of all our staff and the Board of the Autism Association; and their work on behalf of people with Autism and their families.

Dr. Rob Storer

President and Chair of the Board

SERVICES DELIVERED IN 2014–15

- **Autism Advisors and family support for newly diagnosed children.**
- **Multi-disciplinary early intervention services.**
- **School support service and therapy services for school aged children.**
- **Therapy and clinical services for adults with ASD.**
- **Community living supports in 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 training and development services.**
- **Statewide consultancy service.**
- **Family support.**



Hon. Helen Morton MLC, Minister for Disability Services and Joan McKenna Kerr, Chief Executive Officer of the Autism Association of Western Australia at the official opening of the new Midland Service Hub.

Dr Rob Storer Chairman

Dr 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 Departments 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) and of the University of Western Australia's (UWA) Senate Strategic Resources 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 secondment to UWA as its Executive Director of Finance and Resources.

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 is medical advisor to the Western Australian Department of Health. Professor Landau was 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 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 and is married with two children. 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 25 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 Bird Cameron. He has previously worked for the large accounting firms KPMG and Crowe Horwath. He has also worked as the CFO for a small listed company APA Financial Services.

Dr Monro has worked in a diverse selection of industries with a particular focus in mining, manufacturing, government, 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.

BOARD



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



This year has been a very good year with continuing growth in services and advancement in strategic initiatives.

Just as in 2013–14, the past year has again been dominated by the changes taking place as a result of NDIS and what it is likely to mean for the Autism Association and the disability sector more broadly. However, despite the many challenges and the seismic change taking place, we strengthened the work of the organisation through:

- i. Significant expansion of services.
- ii. Organisational infrastructure development.
- iii. Extending national and statewide linkages.
- iv. Increasing our engagement with research.
- v. Fostering innovation.
- vi. Expanding regional support services.

In addition to these initiatives, major work was completed this year to enhance the Association's capacity to further expand services for children and adults. This included a review of services to ensure we maintain our flexibility and responsiveness in an environment of rapid change. As a result, we amalgamated a number therapy and clinical portfolios within a single management framework. This not only facilitated increased flexibility in meeting individual need, it also allowed us to develop new specialist senior positions in Occupational Therapy, Psychology, Speech Pathology and Augmentative Communication to spearhead new services for people with Autism and their families. We also consolidated a number of our corporate portfolios to support new infrastructure development to underpin the continued expansion of services.

YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

The following are some of the year's highlights:

- There were 3,459 service users supported.
- We provided 7,648 consultancies to families and other stakeholders.
- We received 1,723 registrations for professional development seminars and workshops.
- We assisted 537 newly diagnosed children through the Autism Advisor Program.
- A new Autism Centre was opened in the East Metropolitan region.
- Early intervention places grew by 28%.
- School age services increased by 36%.
- Three new homes were established, increasing the total to 64 shared homes.
- There was a 32% increase in the number of individuals assisted in employment.
- Individual support programs grew by 21%.
- There was a 10% growth in the number of people supported to live independently.
- More than 954,000 individuals accessed our Apps for Autism website.
- We hosted two international Masterclasses in Autism.

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

This has been another significant year for innovative service development and promoting best practice in supporting children and adults with Autism.

We undertook significant work to prepare the organisation for the change underway in the disability sector. We consolidated teams to enhance knowledge-transfer and created new specialist positions to respond to individual need. We established a new transition program for children leaving early intervention and transitioning to school. Intensive training programs for childcare educators were established to enhance the participation and inclusion of children with Autism in day care. A number of evidence-based practical resources for parents, teachers and professionals were developed. We also participated in the development of the Crownability Disability Program to assist job seekers with Autism to gain employment.

RESEARCH

We continued our work with the National Autism Cooperative Research Council (CRC), Curtin University and others to participate in research with direct relevance to the support and inclusion of children and adults with Autism. This includes the following research initiatives:

- Clinical characteristics of early intervention in predicting treatment outcomes for children with Autism.
- Workforce participation of people with Autism.
- Effective supports for children with Autism in day care (collaborative study with programs in Queensland, South Australian and Tasmania).
- Social participation of school leavers including health and wellbeing measures.
- School connectedness for adolescents with Autism.
- Mentoring and enhancing social relationships for young adults.
- Career pathway for young adults.

COLLABORATION AND SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Sector development work this year contributes to NDIS, Commonwealth and State; the West Australian Partnership Forum; the Procurement Reform Working Party; the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorder; and many more sector involvements at a senior management level. We also continued our collaboration with the government of East Java this year as part of the Sister State relationship with Western Australia. We continued to train clinicians and other professionals delivering programs for children and families in East Java.



Number of individuals and families accessed our services



Number of consultancies provided to families and other stakeholders



Number of families supported through the Autism Advisor program



Increase in the number of children supported in Early Intervention



Increase in School Age Services



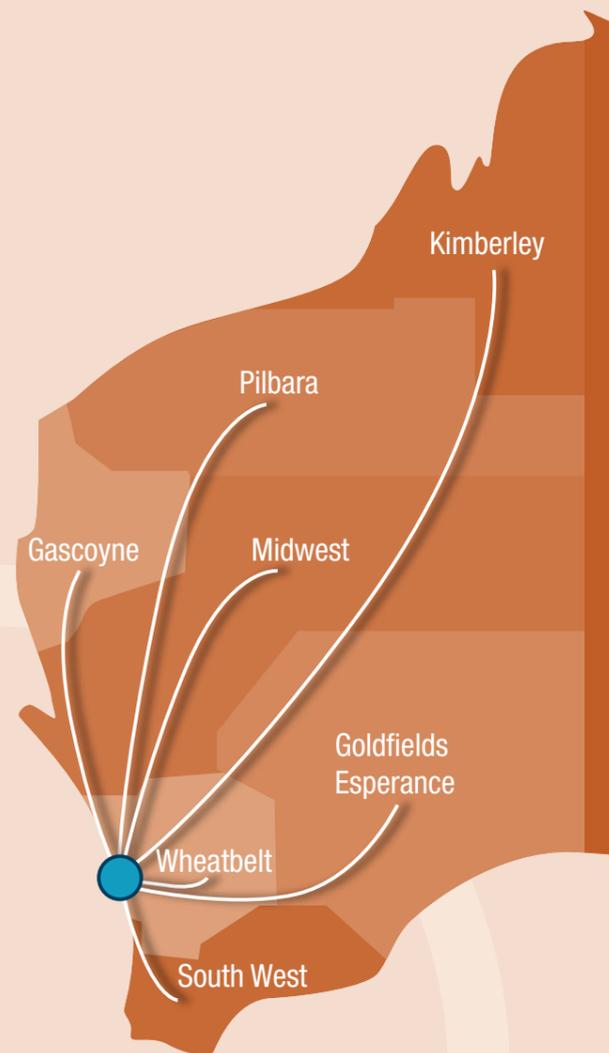
Increase in the number of adults supported in our Individual Support Program



Increase in the number of adults supported to find a job



Shared living and individual living

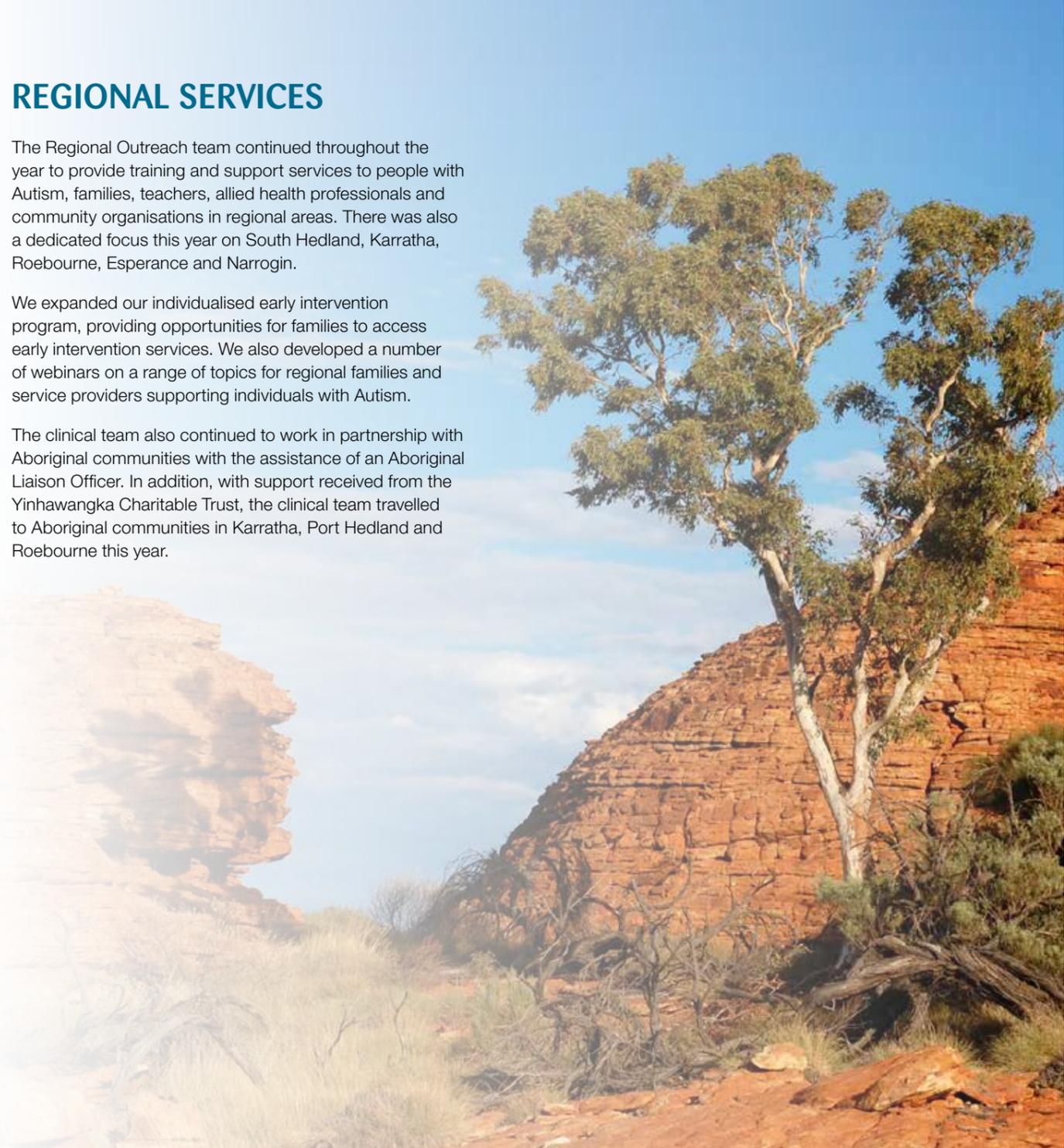


REGIONAL SERVICES

The Regional Outreach team continued throughout the year to provide training and support services to people with Autism, families, teachers, allied health professionals and community organisations in regional areas. There was also a dedicated focus this year on South Hedland, Karratha, Roebourne, Esperance and Narrogin.

We expanded our individualised early intervention program, providing opportunities for families to access early intervention services. We also developed a number of webinars on a range of topics for regional families and service providers supporting individuals with Autism.

The clinical team also continued to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities with the assistance of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer. In addition, with support received from the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust, the clinical team travelled to Aboriginal communities in Karratha, Port Hedland and Roebourne this year.



IN CONCLUSION

We worked vigorously throughout the year to create platforms for ongoing service development and expansion. Amid the enormous change taking place, we continued to expand services, fostered innovation, promoted best practice, increased organisational capacity, expanded regional support services and extended staff training and development.

I expect the work of the coming year to be no less demanding, if not more so. The NDIS and the implementation of the next trial site in Cockburn and Kwinana will be a significant focus, as will all opportunities to extend the reach and scope of services to people with Autism and their families.

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; the Department of Education; and Lotterywest. I would also like to thank a number of Commonwealth agencies with whom we worked including: the National Disability Insurance Agency; the Commonwealth Department of Social Services; the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training.

I would also like to acknowledge the work and leadership of the Board chaired by Dr Rob Storer. Finally, I would like to thank all of our staff for their outstanding dedication and commitment to supporting and empowering people with Autism and their families.

Joan McKenna Kerr

Chief Executive Officer

“It is never too late to expand the mind of a person on the autism spectrum.”

—Temple Grandin



SERVICES OVERVIEW

The Autism Association of Western Australia is the largest specialist lifespan organisation in Australia providing services to people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. 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 international participants and regularly presents at Autism conferences nationally and internationally.

FOR CHILDREN

Early Intervention

The 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 needs. We partner with each family to design individual intervention plans to maximise child development. In addition, we provide family support, parent groups and parent training as part of our Early Intervention Service.

Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre

Our Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre provides a specialist early learning curriculum within a long day care setting. 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 Autism CRC (Cooperative Research Council), 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 support to families during and following diagnosis. This includes guiding families through the pathway for Commonwealth early intervention funding and providing information on a range of services such as early intervention providers, diagnosticians, community support and resources.

School Aged Intervention

The School Aged Intervention 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

Out-of-home short holiday breaks are provided on weekends and school holidays in four homely locations across the metropolitan area for children between the ages of 6 and 18 years. We also provide support in the family's own home and in a range of community settings nominated by the family.



FOR ADULTS

Individual Support Services

This program assists individuals to participate in the community and/or be supported at home, in ways that they choose. We work closely with each person to identify the support that best suits them. It can include independent living support, lifelong learning initiatives, or enjoyable activities to support social participation. Ultimately, we will provide the support that the person wants; at the time they want it; in ways that meet 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, or sharing a home with one other person or a small group. We work with each individual and their family to identify their preferences.

Therapy/Clinical Support Programs

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 family to achieve outcomes that are important to them.



SERVICES OVERVIEW

Continued...

FOR FAMILIES

Individually Tailored Support for Children

This program assists families to support their child in ways that meet the child's needs. Support and skill development can be undertaken anywhere, including the family home. It can involve the development of self-help skills for the child, recreation, participation in groups, community inclusion, communication skills, and short breaks for the family. Each family is involved in developing a plan to ensure that we provide the support that is most relevant to the child and family.

Family Based Support for Adults

Family Based Support provides individuals living in the family home with the opportunity to be supported in ways that best meet their preferences and needs. A wide range of supports can include enjoyable community participation, lifelong learning initiatives, developing greater independence, support at home, and short breaks away.

Parent Training and Workshops

Parent training is provided through many of our services including early intervention, school aged intervention and behaviour support programs. Training can be delivered as part of a group, one-on-one in the family home or through webinars and video-conferencing.

Support Groups

Raising a child or supporting an older person with Autism places a range of different demands on families. Our support groups are tailored to the needs of families. For example, families of newly diagnosed children, school age, adolescent, adult, or grouping 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 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 webinars, as well as 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. Community organisations and disability service providers can also 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.

FOR COMMUNITIES

Professional Training and Development

Our multi-disciplinary teams provide professional training and development services to a range of professional 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 online, on the phone or in person. We developed in-depth publications on topics such as Autism in the Classroom and practical strategies for supporting people with Autism.



THERAPY AND CLINICAL SERVICES

During 2014–15 there was significant growth in Therapy and Clinical Services across a range of specialist programs for children and adults.

With a focus on the needs of individuals and families, we brought together all of these specialist programs into a single portfolio giving families one point of contact for therapy support, including: services for newly diagnosed children; early intervention; school age intervention and support; specialist programs for adults; and professional training and education programs for professionals who work with people with Autism.

Significant work was also completed to establish a clinical supervision program for psychologists and other therapists to provide a clear pathway for career development within the field of Autism. In addition several new senior positions were established in speech pathology, occupational therapy, psychology and early childhood education.



Significant growth has taken place in all therapy and clinical services, with the largest expansion in school age services. We opened our Midland service hub in early 2015 for the East Metropolitan region and we are planning a new centre in the South Metropolitan region early next year.

AUTISM ADVISOR PROGRAM & INFORMATION SERVICES

The Autism Advisory Program provides support and advice to families of newly diagnosed children of early intervention age across Western Australia. Support is provided prior to, during, and following diagnosis. Advisors assist families to understand and navigate the diagnostic process, explore services, access funding and link them with services in their community. This year, our Autism Advisor team provided 7,648 consultancies to families and linked 537 new families of newly diagnosed children with funding. Autism Advisors also played a key role in supporting families to transition into the NDIS, providing information, resources and training and assisting them to prepare for their NDIS planning meeting.

The Autism Advisor team also continue to have a strong presence across regional Western Australia, delivering workshops to families and assisting local communities to enhance opportunities for individuals with Autism. Work also continued with local Aboriginal networks in Karratha, Port Hedland and Roebourne to support the development of awareness, early identification and intervention for children with Autism in Aboriginal communities.

EARLY INTERVENTION

This year 458 children from Perth metropolitan and regional Western Australia received comprehensive early intervention services. Our trans-disciplinary team continues to deliver best practice early intervention that is integrated across therapy disciplines to meet the individual needs of each child and their family.

In January this year we opened a new early intervention centre in Midland to respond to children and families living in the East Metropolitan region. During its first six months, over 60 newly diagnosed children from the local areas of Swan, Kalamunda and Mundaring received services from this centre.

EARLY INTERVENTION TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

This year, we also commenced a transition program for children leaving early intervention and starting school. A suite of workshops was developed with a special focus on skilling and empowering families in preparing their child for school.

Additional school and home visits were undertaken by our therapists in the last twelve months to embed intervention and support goals within the school environment in order to maximise the child's participation and inclusion.

The Early Intervention service is also collating data on the transition for children with Autism into Year 1 as part of the national research program aimed at enhancing outcomes for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder across mainstream and education support settings.



AUTISM SPECIFIC EARLY LEARNING AND CARE CENTRE

The Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC) is one of six specialist centres nationally established under the Commonwealth Helping Children with Autism Package. ASELCC provides targeted early learning programs and support within a long day care setting for children with Autism under six years.

This year 65 children attended ASELCC and participated in a range of structured and unstructured fun and developmental activities throughout the day.

A Family Participation program was also introduced this year where mums, dads and grandparents joined group sessions with their children. The program supports family members to develop practical skills that can be integrated across home and community settings to support their child.

During 2014–15 we linked with Child Australia to enhance the participation and inclusion of children with Autism into mainstream childcare. Through this partnership our ASELCC team developed and delivered a range of training workshops to over 100 early childhood educators from 22 childcare centres across metropolitan and regional Western Australia.

Evaluations from these workshops will be used to develop guidelines to support best practice for integrating children with Autism in mainstream early learning and care centres. This is a very exciting development for families.

We also continued our research partnership with Curtin University this year to measure the effectiveness of our approach to early intervention on child and family outcomes. A total of 170 families have now participated in this national research project.

SCHOOL AGED INTERVENTION SERVICES

The School Aged Intervention Service is a comprehensive service supporting children to maximise their skills and participation at school. Individually tailored, support to each child is provided at school, at home or in the community depending upon which goals and strategies are most relevant to the child's individual needs.

Support was provided by our trans-disciplinary team to a total of 430 children together with their families and teachers this year.

A range of other programs were also delivered this year to school age children including:

- Therapy specific groups were provided by senior occupational therapists and speech pathologists to address specific skill areas related to school inclusion and participation.
- 'Let's Eat' publication was launched during Autism Awareness Week to assist parents and teachers overcome some of the self-imposed restricted food options often seen in children with Autism. More than 2,000 copies have been distributed nationally.
- A Holiday Resource Pack was developed to assist families in preparing for the long school holiday break. The pack includes activity ideas for home and in the community including Autism-friendly places to take children in Perth. A range of graded activities is also included in the pack to provide parents with a means of choosing the most suitable activities for their child.





THERAPY AND CLINICAL SERVICES FOR ADULTS

Therapy and Clinical Services for adults is aimed at supporting adults to maximise their skills, facilitate greater social inclusion, and improve their quality of life. A plan is jointly developed with the person and/or their family with work undertaken in an environment of their choice, for example at home, in the community, further education, etc.

Also, this year we conducted a pilot program for augmentative communication specifically tailored to individuals in shared living. The pilot has led to the development of specialist training modules and a suite of resources for staff supporting individuals in shared living.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Positive Behaviour Support Program provides an intensive support program for individuals between the ages of 6 and 26 years. Using a comprehensive approach to functional assessment, we work collaboratively with each family to develop a range of strategies to develop skills and achieve a better life for everyone involved. Work is undertaken by our team to develop the person's skills, develop supportive routines, introduce augmentative communication strategies where needed, and environmental modification where required.



EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT PROGRAM

AIM Employment is the only Autism specific employment service in Australia, supporting job seekers to source and maintain employment in the open labour market. We work with individuals to identify and match jobs to their strengths, skills, preferences and aspirations and provide on-the-job supports tailored to each individual's needs and circumstances.

In 2014–15, 258 individuals were assisted to become job ready, find work or continue in their employment. The AIM Employment team continues to achieve higher targets than the national average for job placement. In addition, another outstanding independent quality assurance report was achieved this year, acknowledging the team's very high quality services to job seekers.

Our partnership with Crown Burswood was further strengthened in 2014–15, expanding the employment opportunities for our job seekers. Our relationship with Curtin University also grew, increasing the opportunities for job placements in various departments at the university. A new initiative was launched where Curtin University is referring their students with Autism for assistance to access work experience opportunities. In addition, the AIM Employment team is supporting Curtin University with their Mentoring Program, providing support and advice to students with ASD and staff at the university when required.

Promoting the employability of individuals with Autism and the service provided by AIM Employment had been a big focus in 2014–15. We launched the *30 Jobs in 30 Days* campaign with the aim of attracting potential employers to increase employment opportunities for individuals with Autism. Radio and newspaper advertising were used to successfully raise awareness of people with Autism in employment and the advantages for employers. A video promoting successful employment through the AIM program was also launched. It features employers giving account of their experiences and the support they receive from the AIM Employment team.



TIM'S STORY

Tim Parkin has worked in the School of Occupational Therapy and Social Work at Curtin University since November 2011. During this time Tim has worked as a Research Assistant alongside other researchers from the Curtin Autism Research Group (CARG) and has proved to be an asset to the team working on numerous data entry and complex data analysis tasks.

In a number of research papers Tim has been named co-author for his contribution to the research. Over this past year Tim has been paired up very well with tasks that suit his analytical thinking skills which has broadened his research development. Both staff at Curtin and his Coordinator at AIM Employment are very proud of Tim's achievements.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTS

The Association's Individual Support Program offers a range of options for individuals to be supported in ways that best meet their needs and preferences. We work with each person and/or their family to explore what they would like to achieve and the ways in which they would like to achieve it. Some of the supports provided include pathways to employment through a range of strategies including voluntary positions to develop work-readiness skills. Other supports include development of independence skills, social skills and a range of daily living skills including transport training.

FAMILY BASED SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN

There are wide parameters to the individual supports available for children. This can include in-home and out-of-home support; short holiday breaks; and a wide range of options for community involvements. Supports can also include staff living in the child's home while parents or guardians are away. This is particularly popular with families of young children who are receiving individual support.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY INCLUSION INITIATIVE

Late this year, we commenced a national project with the National Disability Services to increase community inclusion for people with disability and their families. Following a competitive process the Autism Association is one of 11 organisations selected across Australia to lead projects to explore co-designing models and strategies for inclusion.

This exciting project will work with individuals and families to identify what community inclusion means for them and through a person-centred planning process identify their community inclusion goals. A range of strategies will be trialled to support individuals and families to develop their capacity to co-design and increase control and choice in the way supports are provided.



SHARED MANAGEMENT

Shared Management is a service that works with individuals or families to transfer as much of the management of their service to them as they wish. This can extend from assistance with selection of staff right through to complete management of the service including employment of staff, direction of staff, and all aspects of budget management.

The service grew this year, providing more individuals and families with the flexibility to have greater control over the management of their individual service. We expect to see this option growing for a number of individuals and families depending upon their needs and circumstances.

SHORT BREAKS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

A really important support for families and children under 18 years is the Short Break program to provide a fun weekend, or other period, away from home. This provides children and young people with a mini holiday doing the things they like doing. We hope to expand this service in the coming year through NDIS and NDIS MyWay.



ADAM'S STORY

Adam has a strong interest in books and learning. One of his goals was to gain some work skills through volunteering.

Adam's Coordinator worked with him to find voluntary work in a great central bookshop.

Adam's work include maintaining the stock of books on the shelves, sorting and stacking books and assisting customers.

With the right support and great staff at the bookshop, Adam learned the job in record time.

Adam now attends TAFE and is now an active jobseeker with AIM Employment seeking paid employment.

COMMUNITY LIVING

Community Living offers a range of options to assist people to live in ways that suit them with the supports they need. The level of assistance is tailored to the support requirements of each person and can range from full-time support with 24 hours each day to a number of hours each week for those whose needs are not as great.

SHARED LIVING

Shared Living is part of Community Living and provides support to individuals who require full time support and wish to share a home with another person or to live in a small group of two or three people. However, whether or not the individual lives with others, each person's support is tailored to their particular needs and preferences.

We now support 64 homes in the community, 45 of which are shared homes with full-time staff support; and 19 of which are homes for individuals living independently with visiting support by staff. This year we opened three new homes in Madeley, Success and Cloverdale where individuals are supported to share a home with a small group of two or three people.

An exciting new project also commenced this year to support individuals with complex communication needs using high and low-tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices. Through our therapy team, support options are being trialled and we believe the findings will give direction to how we might implement this initiative more broadly.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

For individuals who opt to live independently, we provide support in ways that the person wants. Typical support options include learning new skills, making friends, assistance with household duties, household budgeting, shopping, meal preparation, personal health and fitness, and a wide range of support for community involvement.



FOSTERING FRIENDSHIPS

Making and maintaining friendships is often very difficult for people who have Autism. Through the encouragement and nurturing of Coordinators, two of the young men who are supported in Shared Living have been able to form a friendship based on their shared interests of cricket and footy!

Mark and Phillip generally catch up each week and have been to a footy game, been out for dinners, been bowling and danced the night away at the local disco.

They look forward to the time they spend together and can't wait until the cricket season starts so they can head off to the WACA to watch their beloved game.

CAPACITY BUILDING

STATEWIDE CONSULTANCY

The Statewide Consultancy Service is a capacity-building program providing tertiary level consultancy statewide to families, clinicians, schools, community organisations and support agencies who are involved with children and adults with Autism.

This year staff travelled extensively to regional and metropolitan locations, consulting, training and mentoring families, clinicians, teachers and support staff from a wide range of specialist and community organisations.

PARENT AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND TRAINING

Building parent capacity and empowerment is a fundamental component of all services. This year we expanded the range of supports to parents and launched a host of new initiatives in addition to the existing suite of training and development opportunities provided throughout the year.

Two mini conferences were established for families across the year. Sessions with a range of topics of interest were developed, providing opportunities for families to choose sessions based on the particular needs of their child.

A number of pilot programs were conducted with an immediate benefit to the families participating. One of these was an intensive mealtime management program for children with very restricted diets. The program was delivered by senior occupational therapists working with families to identify and develop strategies to manage complex mealtime difficulties. From this work, a new publication is being planned to assist a broad range of families across Western Australia. This resource will be ready for distribution in the coming year.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2014–15, we conducted a range of initiatives to develop the capacity of the disability, health and community sectors to support people with Autism and their families. This included work undertaken with Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse families. A summary of these initiatives is as follows:

- We received 1,723 registrations for skill development seminars and workshops.
- We held two Masterclasses with leading international presenters.
- Post graduate Hanen workshops were delivered to speech pathologists and were made available statewide.
- Certified Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) workshops were held for families and professionals.
- We delivered 58 Early Days workshops to parents and families of newly diagnosed children or those awaiting completion of assessment across metropolitan and regional Western Australia.
- We continued to take clinical student placements from Curtin University.
- More than 50 organisations received targeted clinical training on a range of Autism related topics.
- We expanded the Autism Apps website with 50 additional apps reviewed this year. Across the year over 954,000 people accessed this website, providing them with robust and clear information on how to choose apps related to individual needs amongst a minefield of tablet devices and apps.

REGIONAL OUTREACH

The Regional Outreach Team continued to have a strong presence across regional Western Australia this year, providing support to individuals and families and delivering training to their support networks including teachers, allied health and other professionals. An important aim of this regional service is to build local professional capacity to provide supports and services to individuals with Autism and their families.

This year more families are travelling from Karratha, Tom Price and Wickiepin to attend the Early Intervention Centre in Shenton Park. Adjustments to the early intervention program were made to accommodate and minimise the impact of distance.

ABORIGINAL FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

This year we strengthened our partnership with Aboriginal communities to promote Autism awareness and to assist in the early identification of children with Autism and facilitate access to intervention.

In collaboration with the Yinhawangka Charitable Trust, our team travelled to Karratha, Port Hedland and Roebourne this year.

A partnership has also been created with Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, and Mawankarra Aboriginal Medical Centre, both in the Pilbara. This initiative has been made exceptional by the generosity of the communities that hosted our staff.



THANK YOU

CELEBRATING LONG SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

In March this year we recognised our long serving staff for their commitment and dedication. Thirty one staff received their awards in a celebration held at our Shenton Park office. Business Operations Executive Manager Paul Baird and Human Resources and OSH Executive Manager Gareth Spence received their 5-year service awards at a separate presentation with the Board of the Autism Association.

10 Years' Long Service

Recipients celebrating 10 years of service were:

Therapy and Clinical Services – Dr Lauren Taylor

Community Living – Kenneth Russell, Vicki Bannister, Colin Ellie, June Ellie, and Darren Harwood.

5 Years' Long Service

Recipients celebrating five years of service were:

Therapy and Clinical Services – Themia Litas, Gerdami Van Der Watt, Jeanine Vella, Kerry Grogan, Leanne Crawford, and Su Ann Lim.

Employment and Community Options – Wendy Pritchard, Pauleigh Rutherford, Begas Dowling, and Thomas Dauven.

Community Living – Amy Burton, Stuart Rappaport, Sky Rebbettes-Gordy, Michael Ashe, Tania Finch, Stephen Clark, Mark Popat, Susan Davidson, Helen Mather, Paul Heneghan, Michelle Hickey, Ellie Walker, Bernadette Wickham, and Shelley Manderson.

Business Operations – Frances Nicholls



Dr Lauren Taylor



Kenneth Russell



Vicki Bannister



Darren Harwood



Colin and June Ellie



RECOGNISING OUR LEADERS

There was lots of celebration at the 2015 Annual Disability Support Worker Awards in March this year, organised annually by NDS WA in partnership with Disability Services Commission. Attended by Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AO, Governor of Western Australia and The Honorable Helen Morton MLC, Minister for Disability Services, the Disability Support Awards recognise people in the disability sector providing supports of the highest standards to increase the quality of life and inclusion of people with disability in Western Australia. These people demonstrated passion and commitment to supporting people with disability, and go beyond ordinary standards of service that have a profound impact on the lives of the people they support.

We were proud to nominate eight staff and congratulations go to our nominees: Pat Irvin, Holly Bridges, Ben McKrystal, Andres Novoa, Jordan Richardson, Dilwinder Brar (finalist), Steve Clark (finalist) and Sunimal Hettige (finalist).

Steve Clark and Sunimal Hettige were both finalists in different award categories.

Steve was finalist in the 'Excellence in Advocacy and Rights Promotion' and Sunimal was finalist in the 'Improving Participation' categories.

Both Steve and Sunimal were nominated by the family of one of the young men they have been supporting for several years. The family were thrilled they reached the final three and sincerely expressed their gratitude to the two men for the care they give to their son and in turn, for the peace of mind that they now have, knowing that he has people in his everyday life who care about him.

Dilwinder Brar was one of three finalists in the category of Emerging Leader. Dil was nominated because of his commitment in providing high standards of support to individuals with Autism, their families and support staff. Dil is also recognised for his leadership skills and providing excellent mentorship and encouragement to support staff and other coordinators.

Pictured above from left to right: Finalists Steve Clark with Anton Serdzeff attending a Cirque Du Soleil performance, Sunimal Hettige with Anton Serdzeff and Dilwinder Brar receiving his certificate at the Disability Support Worker Awards night.





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