



Autism
Association of **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Annual Report 2012



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?

The term Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is used to describe a group of closely related disorders, which all belong to the same diagnostic category and share the same core symptoms. These disorders include Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified. Autism Spectrum Disorders are complex, life-long developmental disabilities which are neurobiological in origin. Approximately one in every 160 children in Australia is diagnosed with an ASD. For ease of use, the term 'Autism' will be used throughout this report to include all of these disorders.

President's Report

2011/12 has been a year of significant achievements including continued expansion of services to meet the needs of people with Autism and their families. Service growth, quality and innovation were all a feature of our ongoing services and are central to our continued success.

This was a year of two unique achievements for the Autism Association: the completion of our new Service Headquarters in Shenton Park and hosting the first international conference on Autism to be held in Western Australia - the Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2011.

Shenton Park Headquarters

Completion of the new facilities in Shenton Park represents a seminal point in the strategic development of the Autism Association that will benefit people with Autism. The new Headquarters house our state of the art Early Intervention Centre for newly diagnosed pre-school children; provide facilities for all our community based teams, clinical staff and service management; as well as providing capacity for future service expansion. The new facilities were also built with a range of other important services in mind. This includes training and consultancy services; family meeting areas; and video conferencing facilities for families and professionals in regional and remote parts of Western Australia.

On completion of this major project, we were delighted to have our new Headquarters and early intervention centre formally opened by the Premier of Western Australia, the Honourable Colin Barnett accompanied by the Minister for Mental Health and Disability Services Helen Morton. Families, staff and leaders from the disability field all shared in this special occasion. The new Service Headquarters is, however, much more than a building. It represents a physical and symbolic landmark of the importance of people with Autism as part of our community.

APAC 2011: A Global Impact

We were extremely pleased this year to host the first international conference on Autism to be held in Western Australia. The Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2011 (APAC 2011) featured internationally-renowned researchers and speakers who presented to over 1,300 delegates from 23 countries. APAC 2011 also launched the inaugural Asia Pacific Autism Awards presented by the Autism Association of Western Australia. The Awards recognised national, international and West Australian individuals whose work has made a significant impact on the lives of people with Autism and their families. All the elements for a truly outstanding conference came together for this event to "create and inspire the future" and we had excellent international feedback on what was a superb event for all involved.

During the year, the Board has closely monitored the changing policy and funding environment. We believe our strategic directions and our person centred approach to service design and delivery will stand the organisation in good stead in a changing landscape.

In Conclusion

The year was a very positive and exciting one for the Autism Association. We expanded services; we further developed relationships nationally and internationally; and we began a new cycle of planning to prepare us for a journey of change to our operating world. Most of all, this year was marked by establishing the infrastructure for further service development to people with Autism and their families.

Our continued growth would not be possible without the ongoing support of many individuals and organisations. In this regard, I would like to thank our State and Commonwealth funding bodies, the community for their generous support of many services to families and Lotterywest for their generous support of our new Service Headquarters and Early Intervention Centre.

I would like to thank the management team, staff and families for their support throughout the year. I would also like to acknowledge the CEO Joan McKenna Kerr and her Executive Team for the enormous body of work undertaken and accomplished this year.

We look forward in the coming year to continue our work on behalf of people with Autism and their families.

Dr Rob Storer

President and Chair of the Board





Board Members

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 Trevor Parry is a Developmental Paediatrician and Clinical Professor, University of Western Australia. He was responsible for the establishment of the State Child Development Centre some thirty five years ago and its Director until April 2004. He is a past Vice-President of the former Australian College of Paediatricians, an Emeritus Consultant at Princess Margaret Hospital, Chair of the Australasian Board of Family Partnership Training, a Member of the National Board of the National Investment for the Early Years and founder and Chair of its State Branch.

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.



Dr Judy Macdonald AM

Dr Judy Macdonald is a medical graduate of the University of Melbourne and has extensive knowledge and experience in the field of developmental disability. Her past professional career includes positions at Princess Margaret Hospital, Irabeena (a forerunner of the Disability Services Commission) and as Principal Child Health Consultant to the Health Department of Western Australia.

Dr Macdonald has previously served as President and as Vice President of the Autism Association of Western Australia. She was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2006 for service to medicine as a paediatrician and as an advocate in the field of child health, education, welfare and disability support services.



Mr Mark Altus

Mr Altus joined the Board of the Autism Association in January 2010. He also chairs the Curtin Business School Advisory Board (School of Economics & Finance) and is a member of the UWA Senate Strategic Resources Committee and the Board of the Lutheran Church of Australia's financing arm.

Mr Altus has held a number of positions within the Western Australian Department of Treasury and Finance, where he is currently Director of Revenue and Intergovernmental Relations. In 2003-04 he completed a secondment to the University of Western Australia 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 WA Department of Health. Professor Landau was Executive Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Western Australia for 9 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.

Mr Scott Bywaters

Mr Bywaters is a Business Advisor with his own management consultancy. He has a background in accounting and finance and has held senior positions with Australian multinational companies in the resources, energy and technology sectors.

Mr Bywaters is a Non-Executive Director of Ochre Technologies Pty Ltd and also serves on the Boards of Mount Hawthorn Primary School and Mount Hawthorn Education Support Centre. He is a Family Member of the Autism Association and is active in supporting community arts and health and contributing to Indigenous economic development.



Services Overview

The Autism Association of Western Australia is one of Australia's largest not-for-profit Autism specific service providers. We provide services to people with Autism and their families from early childhood through to adult life. Our highly skilled multi-disciplinary teams also provide consultancy and training services to the community, raising awareness and skills in the environments that impact on people with Autism.

For Children

Early Intervention

The Autism Association's Early Intervention Service is based on the most up to date evidenced based research in the field of Autism. Each child is assessed by our experienced multi-disciplinary team and their individual intervention plan is designed to maximise the child's development in all areas.

We work with families as partners in intervention with their child. This includes developing the child's program with parents and involving them in all processes concerning their son or daughter. All programs are documented, updated throughout the year and provided to families. Family support, networking opportunities, parent groups and parent training are all offered to families as part of our Early Intervention Service.

Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre

The Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC) provides specialist early learning programs within a long day care setting to children aged 0 to 6 years old. ASELCC is one of six federally funded specialist centres in Australia. Ongoing research on child and family outcomes for ASELCC participants is fostered through collaboration between the Autism Association and Curtin University.

Autism Advisor Program

The Autism Advisor Program is delivered by the Autism Association as part of the Australian Government's Helping Children with Autism Package. The service provides a range of support for families including information on accessing diagnosticians, eligibility for funding, early intervention providers, community support and resources.

School Aged Intervention

The School Aged Intervention Service provides a comprehensive intervention service to school aged children with Autism. This service is multi-disciplinary (teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists) and works with families and schools to maximise the educational and functional progress of the child.

Positive Behaviour Service

The Positive Behaviour Service is targeted at young people aged 6 to 25 with complex behavioural support needs who are living at home with their family. The team is multi-disciplinary and works closely with individuals and families to provide them with the support they need to achieve positive outcomes.

Respite

Respite out of the family home is provided on weekends and school holidays in four residential locations across the metropolitan area for children between the ages of 6 and 18 years. Respite is also available in the family home or in a range of community-based options through our Family Support service.

For Adults

AIM Employment

AIM Employment is the Autism Association's highly regarded specialist employment service: dedicated to finding and maintaining employment for people with Autism. Comprehensive support is provided to secure jobs that are matched to each individual's skills and preferences. On-the-job training is provided, with continuing support tailored to the individual and their employer.

Community Options

The Community Options Program assists individuals with Autism to engage with their communities through skills-based programs tailored to their interests and preferences. Participants are supported individually or in small groups, in activities which foster independence, social participation, lifelong learning and the development of natural support networks.

Community Living

The Autism Association supports adults with Autism to live in the community in shared or individual homes. Support in each of these accommodation environments is tailored to the individual's needs, goals and preferences. Every individual across our Community Living service is supported to enjoy life, participate in the community as well as maintain their health and wellbeing.

Transition, Intervention and Behaviour Support Programs

Our Family and Professional Services team provides clinical intervention in the areas of school to adulthood transition and positive behaviour supports. Evidence-based programs support adults with Autism to develop and maintain the skills required to live a good life. Friendship Clubs are also available to adults in these programs, supporting their social participation in a structured group setting.





For Families

Family Support

The Autism Association's Family Support service delivers support that is individualised, flexible and family centred to individuals with Autism and their families. Individuals are supported to remain in the family home, whilst their families are supported to take a break from their caring role. Our service Coordinators work collaboratively with families to develop a support plan that addresses their needs. Support may include skills training, community participation and in-home and out-of-home respite.

Parent Training and Workshops

Parent training is available through many of our services including early intervention, school aged intervention and behaviour support programs. The annual calendar of events is regularly updated and placed on our website.

Support Groups

Childhood and adulthood can place different demands on families. To respond to these needs, we facilitate a range of different support group options for families. This includes groups for newly diagnosed families, families of young children, school aged children and adults with Autism.

Information and Advice

The Autism Association provides broad information, fact sheets and publications addressing many of the issues facing individuals with Autism and their families today. Our quarterly "Autism News" magazine publishes current information on Autism, and service specific newsletters are regularly distributed to participating families. Telephone consultancies are provided to families by the Autism Advisor and Family and Professional Services teams.

Regional Services

The Autism Association provides services to regional families through telephone consultancy, visits and web enabled consultations. Families living outside of the metropolitan area can access our Autism Advisor or Family and Professional Services teams for information and advice through our 1800 free call number.

Teams from both our Autism Advisor Program and our Statewide Consultancy Service undertake outreach visits providing information, consultancy and workshops to families and parent groups. Web enabled consultations are delivered to families or small groups according to their needs. Topics range from information on funding and local services to specialised intervention strategies.

Community organisations and disability services providers from any part of Western Australia can also be referred to our Statewide Consultancy Service for specialised consultancy and further training. Opportunities exist for outreach visits, video conferencing and web enabled consultations to suit regional and remote communities.

For Communities

Training and Professional Development

Our multi-disciplinary teams provide professional development and training services to a range of audiences across the community including teachers, allied health professionals, service providers and employers. Professional development opportunities are advertised in an annual Calendar of Events posted on our website. We also host regular free seminars addressing "What is Autism" for community members.

Information and Consultancy

The Autism Association provides a broad range of information to the community including brochures, fact sheets and telephone consultancy. We offer in-depth publications on topics such as Autism in the classroom and practical strategies for supporting people with Autism.



Chief Executive Officer's Report



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

2011/12 was another significant year for the Autism Association. Services grew in all areas; we expanded support to regional areas; we hosted the first international Autism conference to be held in Western Australia; and we realised a long standing vision to build facilities to accommodate ongoing future service development to people with Autism and their families.

We were very pleased to have the Premier, the Honourable Colin Barnett open our new Service Headquarters and Early Intervention Centre; and to hear of his support for our work. We were also delighted to host the Prime Minister, the Honourable Julia Gillard; Federal Minister Jenny Macklin; State Minister Helen Morton; Federal Senator Jan McLucas, as well as other State and Federal Members of Parliament who all took part in events held by the Autism Association this year.

The new facilities at Shenton Park have become a great hub of activity for staff, families and the community as well as a landmark that expresses Autism being part of the community.

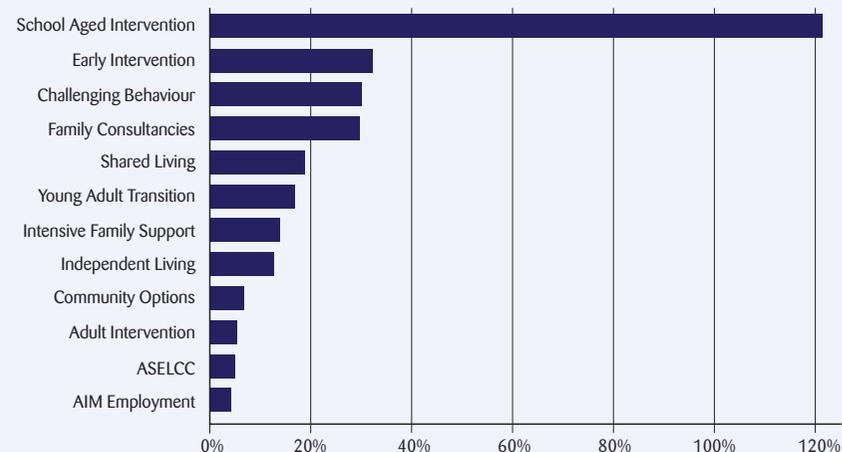
SERVICE GROWTH

This has been another significant year of delivering on our Strategic Plan of growth in services to meet the needs of people with Autism and their families. Services delivered by program area include the following:

- Autism Advisory Services
- Early Intervention Services
- School Aged Intervention Services
- Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre
- Family Support Services
- Residential Respite and Intensive Family Support Services
- Post School Options Programs
- Group Homes
- Individual Residential Options
- Community Living Program
- Employment Support Service
- Clinical Services
- Statewide Consultancy Service
- Professional Development and Training Services
- Regional Support Services

All services experienced growth and, in addition, some new services were established, including a Positive Behaviour Support Service, Community Living services and an After School Program. Major growth also took place in our School Aged Intervention Service, as can be seen from the graph. In addition, 15,390 consultancies were undertaken with families and other stakeholders, up from 11,876 last year, representing growth of 29%.

Percentage Growth in Services



2011/12 also marked another significant milestone with the opening of the new state of the art Early Intervention Centre for newly diagnosed pre-school children. There were 484 Early Intervention places accessed, an increase of 32% on last year.

AIM Employment Service, supporting jobseekers with Autism, achieved a 5 Star Rating from the Commonwealth Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). We are one of only three employment agencies in Western Australia to receive this rating based on externally evaluated criteria. Out of 610 employment sites nationally, 34 received a 5 Star Rating. This places the Autism Association Employment Service in the top 5% of employment services nationally. This service continues in high demand and four new employment partnerships were established to respond to this need.

We continued on a path this year of creating a greater diversity of options for individuals with Autism leaving the family home. A cluster of five individual accommodation units has been established in Gosnells through negotiation with the Department of Housing. The units opened at the end of June this year. In addition, five new community homes were established bringing the total number to thirty three homes. Land was also obtained in Ellenbrook to build housing for individuals with complex needs.

An additional 40 clinical places for adults with complex needs were made available this year, as was a new Positive Behaviour Support Service for individuals with challenging behaviour. We were also able to expand our Statewide Consultancy Service through successful tender. The establishment and expansion of these services are all crucial to providing people with Autism the support they require to overcome barriers to social participation and independence.

Regional Service Development

We expanded support to regional and remote parts of Western Australia this year through a suite of services including:

- Early Intervention Services
- Webinars
- Seminars and workshops delivered in local areas
- Skills coaching through web and video conferencing
- Connecting families through parent networks
- Partnership with Early Childhood Services
- Freecall telephone support and consultancy
- Individual consultancy service
- Autism Advisor Program



PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

This has been a year of important activity at a State and Federal level in relation to sector development and reform and we are delighted that the Autism Association is part of this work. In this regard, I am very pleased to have our continuing participation on the West Australian Partnership Forum, a small group of Directors General from the Government Sector and CEOs from the Community and Disability Sectors, working to improve services for all West Australians. I was also very pleased to have been appointed to the Commonwealth NDIS Advisory Group, advising COAG Council of Ministers on design elements and implementation of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. We are also very much looking forward to the NDIS Reference Group for Western Australia being established in July of the coming financial year, and to the very important role it will play in this federal agenda.

There has been a range of very important collaborations during the year, including the major work with Lotterywest to facilitate expansion of services through the building of the Shenton Park facilities. There has also been significant collaboration with the Disability Services Commission to achieve our joint aims of meeting the needs of people with disabilities and their families. In addition, there has been very important work with FaHCSIA, particularly through the Helping Children with Autism Package, as well as DEEWR.

In our Community Options Programs we worked with local councils, churches, NGOs, TAFE and the broad community sector to increase opportunities and participation of people with Autism. These collaborative networks are essential in achieving good outcomes in every area of our work.

ASIA PACIFIC REGION

In September this year, the Autism Association hosted the first international conference on Autism to be held in Western Australia. Over 1,300 people attended from 23 countries and we were particularly delighted with the relationships forged, especially with our nearest neighbour, Indonesia. A delegation of officials from East Java subsequently visited the Autism Association to discuss services for children with Autism. We look forward to developing this relationship further and extending ties with both Government and Non-Government organisations in the region.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

A number of very important initiatives were undertaken this year.

Work with Curtin University to measure child and family outcomes for our Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre continued during the last 12 months. Data for the first report has been collected with early indicators of very good results on all measures.

Work was also completed in conjunction with the Department of Health on an approach to working with individuals with dual diagnoses. The paper jointly developed provides an important framework for future collaboration in this area.

Postgraduate accredited Hanen Workshops were delivered at the Autism Association this year. Through partnership with Hanen, 57 external Speech Pathologists were trained in the Hanen Method in a series of 3-day workshops.

In collaboration with Sydney University, a 3-day intensive workshop on sensory processing was organised for Occupational Therapists and Allied Health Professionals working in the field of health, disability and education. Also, four new seminars were researched and developed targeting the needs of teachers, family members and the disability sector.

We also commenced work on a project to review alternative models of care for individuals with Autism moving from the family home. The final report will become a resource framework for future strategic work in the development of Community Living options for people with Autism.

A new position was created in the organisation to facilitate the implementation of self-directed services across all programs in the Autism Association. This work took place in partnership with families piloting new initiatives using feedback and workshops to review service design. We are very much looking forward to expanding this work in the coming year.

NEW LOGO AND WEBSITE

After a long process of consultation with families, staff and the community, we decided to change our longstanding logo of the puzzle piece. We wanted our new logo to depict a message of partnership with the person with Autism and their families; of hopefulness; of strength; of leadership; of continuity of services and connections through Western Australia and the world. Essentially, our aim is to communicate to every new family walking through our front door the strengths of the child with Autism to realise their potential; also the strengths of the older person with Autism to maximise their independence and to achieve a good life. All of our feedback indicates that families and others are very happy with the new logo and what it represents.

IN CONCLUSION

In concluding this report, there are many stakeholders that should be acknowledged and thanked. I would like to thank our funding bodies, the Disability Services Commission; the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; and the Australian Government Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Targeted and National Priority Programmes (NGCS).

I would like to extend a special word of thanks to Lotterywest for all of their support through many projects, especially their role in our most recent and major infrastructure project in Shenton Park.

It is important to acknowledge the important and significant work of the Autism Association Board led by our President and Chairman, Dr Rob Storer. I would particularly like to thank all our staff for their enormous dedication and commitment to work on behalf of people with Autism and their families.

Finally, I would like to express our thanks to the many members of the community whose support continues to play a vital role in supporting our services through their donations and other good works.

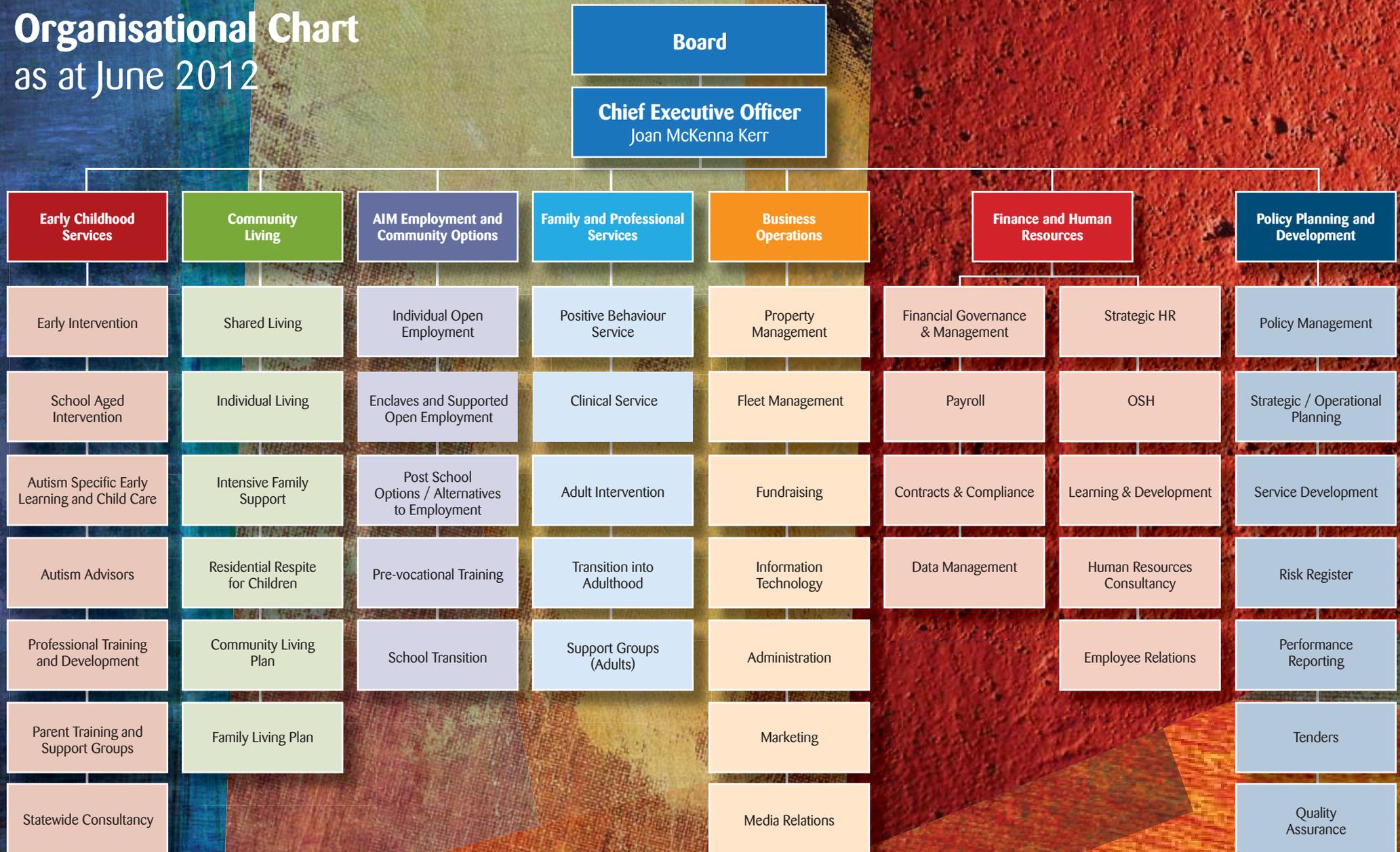
It has been a very successful year but there is much yet to be done in closing the gap in unmet need. We look forward to the coming year to further our work in this regard.

Joan McKenna Kerr
Chief Executive Officer



Organisational Chart

as at June 2012



Event Highlights

Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2011

Internationally renowned researchers and speakers presented to over 1,300 delegates at the Asia Pacific Autism Conference (APAC), hosted by the Autism Association at Burswood Convention Centre in September 2011. This was the first international Autism conference to be held in Western Australia and it was an outstanding success.

APAC 2011 connected people from 23 countries and from a wide range of backgrounds and professions. For the first time, Western Australian families had the opportunity to attend an international Autism conference at home.

The program featured seven international Plenary and eighteen Keynote Symposia speakers, as well as multiple concurrent sessions across four broad conference streams. Local research and practice was also very well represented in all aspects of the independently reviewed program. The quality of presentations at APAC 2011 sparked extensive media interest in Autism research. Television, radio, newspaper and online coverage reached international audiences.

All the elements for a truly outstanding conference came together on the 8th to the 10th of September 2011. APAC 2011 placed Western Australia firmly on the global stage in “creating and inspiring the future” for people with Autism.



Asia Pacific Autism Conference



World Autism Day and Autism Awareness Month 2012

World Autism Day and Autism Awareness Month 2012

The 5th annual United Nations World Autism Day was held on the 2nd of April 2012. Families and Association staff celebrated the lives of people with Autism at a sun-downer picnic in Stirling Gardens whilst the Perth Bell Tower, Council House and Trafalgar Bridge participated in the global initiative to “Light it Up Blue”, acclaiming Autism. We promoted community awareness of Autism with a comprehensive television, radio and City of Perth banner campaign.

A “Light it Up Blue” lunch was held at our new Service Headquarters for families and children from Early Intervention along with Senator Jan McLucas, the Australian Government’s Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers. During April, we also hosted both the Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform on their visit to our Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre.



New Service Headquarters and Early Intervention Centre

Our new Service Headquarters and Early Intervention Centre were officially opened by the Premier of Western Australia, the Honourable Colin Barnett with the Minister for Mental Health and Disability Services Helen Morton on the 5th of April 2012 before an audience of families, staff and leaders from the disability sector.

Our new Service Headquarters and Early Intervention Centre are purpose built, with state of the art facilities which reflect the standard of support that people with Autism and their families should expect. The new Early Intervention Centre provides the capacity to work with over 400 pre-school children each year. The facilities were also built to provide a range of learning and development opportunities for both families and professionals, with dedicated training and consultation spaces. Our new Regional Connect facilities help us to overcome the tyranny of distance through video and web conferencing for direct consultancy and training.



Disability Support Worker Awards 2012

In 2012, two of our staff were recognised by their peers in the disability services sector for their outstanding achievement and contribution in furthering the quality of life and inclusion of people with disability in Western Australia. Nicole Naeslund, Coordinator for Community Living, won the Emerging Leader Award and Haziel Schulbergs, Early Intervention Training and Development Consultant, was one of three finalists for the Community Support Award.

Disability Support Worker Awards 2012



Early Childhood Services

The last 12 months has been a significant year of expansion across the portfolio of childhood services. This includes a range of services provided to children diagnosed with Autism and their families in a variety of community and educational settings.

Autism Advisor Program

The Autism Advisor Program is the Western Australian gateway to the Early Intervention Helping Children with Autism Package, an initiative of the Australian Government. The Autism Advisor team support families during and following diagnosis. Assistance is provided to navigate services, access funding and link families with community and other resources.

The Autism Advisor Program provided 4,186 consultancies to families this year. The team received 446 new child referrals, with 397 families assisted to access funding for early intervention. This includes 40 families living in regional and remote locations across Western Australia.

There were monthly outreach visits to regional locations throughout Western Australia. In addition to individual meetings with families, Early Days workshops were delivered and professional learning opportunities provided to local professionals. Webinars were also available to regional and remote families, canvassing topics such as maximising learning and development opportunities; promoting language development; using visual aids; and strategies to assist with the practical needs of families.

The Autism Advisors also expanded their information service to families and professionals. Commencing August 2011, eight parent coffee groups were also facilitated, presenting topics of interest to parents of school aged children in a relaxed setting.

Early Intervention

2011/12 saw continued growth in funding from the State Government, supporting 331 families to access our Early Intervention Service.

This year we transitioned two of our centres into the newly built state of the art facilities in Shenton Park. The long planned new centre provides the capacity for our multi-disciplinary team to work intensively with over 400 pre-school children each year. The new centre also enables a range of onsite and distance training opportunities for families and professionals.



The Early Intervention team continued to offer accredited postgraduate Hanen Workshops in 2011/12, with 57 speech pathologists participating. We also extended the Hanen approach to families accessing Early Intervention. These workshops, “More Than Words” and “TalkAbility” were delivered by our staff and are specifically designed for parents of children with Autism up to 7 years old.

We maintained our regular parent training schedule in 2011/12 with fortnightly training sessions for parents on issues that impact on child development and family resilience. The Early Intervention team also provided regular webinars on intervention strategies to 32 parents in regional and remote parts of Western Australia.

Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre

The Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC) is one of six specialist centres established nationally under the Commonwealth Helping Children with Autism Package. ASELCC provides targeted early learning programs and support within a long day care setting to children with Autism under the age of 6 years.

In 2011/12, 67 families accessed ASELCC for their children. This provided them with significant opportunities so often taken for granted by families without the experience of disability, including the opportunity to work or study, or engage with their communities.

ASELCC’s research partnership with Curtin University continued in 2011/12. Measurements of outcomes against the child’s baseline are taken at commencement and following 12 months in the program. Early results for children and their families indicated significant improvement in the areas of communication, motor skills and adaptive behaviours. Families are also surveyed for measures of competency, anxiety, stress and satisfaction with their child’s program.

School Aged Intervention

Families accessing our School Aged Intervention Service work closely with staff in the development of their child’s program. Each family has an individual Case Manager who is a member of the trans-disciplinary team including teachers, speech pathologists, psychologists and occupational therapists.

The trans-disciplinary team provided services to 128 school aged children and their families in 2011/12, through funding from the Disability Services Commission.

In addition to the individual program supported by a dedicated Case Manager, parents access monthly support groups and regular training workshops. The clinical and educational team also deliver training to teachers and education assistants as part of the Association’s broader commitment to enhancing environments that impact on children with Autism.



OLIVER

"When Oliver first came to Early Intervention, he was non verbal, but after a year he was using PECS and around 100 spoken words. Now in his third year he is such a different child. He wants to communicate and talk with everyone, his interactions are more rewarding, and he shows kindness and empathy for other people."

Oliver's Mum

Parent Support and Training

Parent support and training is at the core of all our childhood services and programs, making a positive contribution to each family's confidence and skills in supporting their child's development. Within each service we facilitate parent peer support as well as delivering workshops and training across a range of topics.

In 2011/12 we also provided on average three Early Days workshops per month to families of young children with Autism, including on average two workshops per term to families in regional and remote parts of Western Australia.

We continued to host the My Time parent support group this year, a group where parents attend with their children and are supported by staff. During the year there were many guest speakers on topics requested by families. New friendships and support networks were fostered and valuable experience shared.

Conclusion

There was significant expansion across our Early Childhood Services in 2011/12, including the move into our new purpose built Early Intervention Centre. We expanded our support for families in regional and remote areas and provided greater training opportunities for both parents and professionals.

We look forward to the coming year and our continuing partnership with families.

Tasha Alach

Executive Manager Early Childhood Services

AIM Employment and Community Options

In 2011/12, our Employment and Community Options programs assisted 259 adults with Autism to engage with their communities through employment, formal study, pre-vocational volunteering and skills based activities. Both the AIM Employment and Community Options teams maintained a strong focus on person centred practice, cross program collaboration to meet individual needs and maximising positive outcomes for every participant based on their individual goals.

AIM Employment

AIM Employment, a service provided by the Autism Association, is dedicated to finding and maintaining employment for people with Autism. Using a person centred approach, AIM Employment works consistently to ensure that each person is placed and trained in a job that is matched to their skills, preferences and aspirations.

Our employment service model encompasses a range of work settings, from mainstream commercial environments to supported group employment partnerships. The success of the AIM Employment approach is reflected in our consistently high job placement and retention rates.

In 2011/12, AIM Employment assisted 183 individuals to become job ready, find work or continue in their employment. AIM Employment achieved a 78% employment placement rate. Four new employment partnerships were developed, providing jobs for small groups of individuals in commercial competitive employment. Our job placement rate exceeded the national average for all types of disability employment services, as it has done in previous years.

AIM Employment achieved a 5 Star Rating from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) in May 2012. This is a significant award and the 5 Star Rating has secured our status as a funded disability employment service provider for a further 5 years from March 2013.

Community Options

Community Options encompasses both Post School Options and Alternatives to Employment Programs. It assists individuals to engage with their communities through skills based activities tailored to their interests and preferences. We work with individuals and their families to identify their goals and plan pathways for achieving them. The Community Options Program fosters social participation, independence, lifelong learning and community support networks.

In 2011/12 we supported 114 participants in the Community Options program. During the year we extended support to evenings and weekends. We were also able to implement transition to work programs with very pleasing results.

Beginning in November 2011, a cohort of young people with Autism and their families participated in a pilot to implement self-directed supports in the Community Options Program. This pilot has trialled strategies for self-directed supports and services, and delivered training to staff, strengthening our person centred approach to service design and delivery. We look forward in the coming year to continue building on the learning achieved through this pilot project.

Our partnerships with local organisations and the community are critical to the success of each individual's program and the achievement of their goals. During 2011/12, arrangements were made with 15 new community facilities or organisations. Through these links, participants were supported in a range of endeavours including:

- Team and recreational sports
- Fishing and sailing
- Creative arts
- Music and dancing
- Vocational education and training
- Volunteering at libraries, community gardens and animal rescue organisations

We recognise that there are times when the facilities available in the wider community do not meet all the individual's needs. Our highly successful "Art for Autism" fundraiser resulted in the fit out of a Club House where we can cater for individuals' interests in a social setting.



"Training delivered through the Self-Directed Supports Pilot is strengthening the person centred practices of our Coordinators and support staff."

**Russell Thomas, Executive Manager
AIM Employment & Community Options**

MATT

"Matt celebrated 12 months at his job at McKinley Plowman & Associates in March 2012. His employer Murray (also pictured) said they were extremely happy with Matt's dedication and skill. The AIM Employment team is proud to be supporting Matt, and all our clients, to achieve successful employment outcomes."

Mac, Program Support Manager, AIM Employment



ALEX

"Alex was keen to work with animals, so we approached Native Animal Rescue in Malaga on his behalf. With support from Community Options, Alex is learning skills in caring for all types of wildlife. Alex is loving his work there - so much so that he's now keen for more hours!"

Chris, Coordinator for Community Options



Conclusion

In 2011/12 we focused on building upon services in both AIM Employment and Community Options Programs to ensure continuing high standards in responding to individual needs.

In the year ahead, AIM Employment is expecting a substantial increase in job seekers and we will place a special focus on transition from school to work or further study. The Community Options team will continue to strengthen their person centred approach to service design and delivery. Participants in our programs can expect an expansion of supported opportunities and increased enjoyment of living and learning in community activities and social groups.

Russell Thomas

Executive Manager AIM Employment and Community Options



KARINA

"Karina and Community Options staff share a laugh at the Club House."

Community Living

Community Living is made up of a number of services to individuals and families.

This includes:

- Shared Living (small group homes)
- Independent Living (individuals supported to live independently)
- Community Support and Intensive Family Support
- Respite Options: In-home and out-of-home respite

In 2011/12, we established five new shared living homes and five new independent living units and increased the number of individuals supported across services by 8%.

Shared Living

The total number of shared living homes increased to 33 during the year with the addition of 5 new homes. The support provided to each person is very much tailored to their individual needs and preferences. Every individual is supported to enjoy life, increase their community participation, maintain links with families and friends, as well as maintain their health and wellbeing.

In 2011/12, we also established five independent living units to provide individuals with a more independent lifestyle. With this new initiative, we are able to better tailor our support to the requirements and preferences of each person.

Independent Living

Our team provides support to people with Autism to develop and maintain independent living arrangements. In 2011/12 we supported 18 individuals to live independently in their own homes in the community, including 4 individuals supported through Community Living Plans.

Family Support

Through the Family Support Program, support is provided in a highly flexible manner based on the needs of each individual family. The way we provide support is based on what families require to assist them in their caring role. This can include support at any time of the day, evening, weekends, school holidays or during special events for the family. It often includes in-home support; accompanying the families on outings; support for the person while parents take a break; and working to develop community based skills with the child or adult with Autism.

Children's Respite

In addition to respite provided in the family home, we also provide Residential Respite services for children up to the age of 18 years. Short breaks are provided in comfortable community based homes for three children, similar to a family arrangement. In the same way that any child might have sleepovers with relatives or friends, we aim to make these respite breaks a similar experience for the young child or adolescent. Accordingly, the breaks are fun packed with all of the activities preferred by the group. This will include trips to the beach, parks, barbecues, favourite recreation or quiet time.

This is a very important service for families who prefer to receive out-of-home support and, in particular, it is often the preference of families who have more than one child with Autism.

Conclusion

2011/12 was an important year of growth and strengthening our partnership with families. This work will continue in the coming year and, through successful collaboration with the Department of Housing, plans are already in place to construct new homes to respond to the needs of individuals and families.

In the next 12 months, we will also continue with our active participation in a sector wide research project to evaluate alternative models of accommodation support. This will provide valuable insights for guiding our service design into the future.

We look forward to continuing our work with families with a particular emphasis on strengthening our person centred practices to meet our commitment to self-directed services.

Jean Taylor

Executive Manager Community Living



SAM

"With perseverance and encouragement Sam's confidence out in the community without his family has grown and led to wonderful new experiences for him - at the beach, horse-riding and sharing that wonderful smile with everyone he meets."

Diane - Coordinator for Community Living



GRANT

"Grant wanted to live independently "like any other bloke". We supported Grant to move into his own place, and helped him to develop his skills in areas like budgeting, household shopping and getting along with his neighbours. 18 months on and Grant lives "like any other bloke" every day."

Nicole - Coordinator for Community Living



Stock Photo

Family and Professional Services

2011/12 has been a year of considerable expansion for Family and Professional Services with 261 individuals and families supported throughout the year.

The Family and Professional Services team is comprised of dedicated and experienced professionals with backgrounds in Clinical Psychology, Speech Pathology, Social Work and Human Services. The service provides a range of interventions to individuals and families who require support from a trans-disciplinary team. We take a holistic approach to support and work towards assisting the person with Autism to develop and maintain their skills and competencies to achieve a good life. Through our involvement with the person and family, we also work to increase the person's opportunities for independence and participation by facilitating links with their community.

Our capacity to provide services in 2011/12 grew significantly with an additional 75 funded places and a new Positive Behaviour Service for young people with complex and challenging needs under the age of 25 years.

Intervention and Support Programs

A variety of services are provided to adults with Autism whose difficulties are impacting on their wellbeing or life opportunities. In 2011/12 we worked with each person to overcome particular barriers to participation in the home or in the community. The approach we use is strengths-based, working to build on the skills of the person with Autism, and the knowledge and experience of their family.

In addition, for many people with Autism the transition from school to adult life can be daunting. For this group, there is a dedicated Transition Program designed for individuals who have left school in the previous two years. Each individual referred to the program is assigned to a case manager who works closely with them and their family to identify difficulties and strategies to overcome them. The program supported 40 young people with Autism in the transition from school to adult life last year, helping to make their experience of life after school a positive one.

In 2011/12 we were successful in establishing a new Positive Behaviour Service for people with Autism between the ages of 6 and 25 with challenging behaviour. The Positive Behaviour team works from within a framework that views challenging behaviour as the functional outcome of a mismatch between the skills and capacity of the person and the demands of an environment that can be overwhelming. The clinical team work with each individual and their families to maximise the person's resilience, to reduce environmental stressors, to teach coping strategies and to assist those close to the person to understand the nature of challenging behaviour and how it is best prevented.

Friendship Club for Adults With Autism

Our Friendship Club continues to flourish, providing a relaxed environment for adults with Autism to learn more about each other and themselves. Held every month, Friendship Club supports 15 to 25 adult participants at a time to gather together and practise their communication and social skills. Many friendships have developed as a result of the confidence that comes from getting to know other people over time in a structured setting.

"I remembered to leave my name and phone number on a voicemail message for my Case Manager. I was proud to tell her that I had learned something important."

Owen, Friendship Club member, after attending a session on how to leave appropriate voicemail messages.



Blake

"Three years ago Blake was a very misunderstood boy. He did not attend mainstream schools for many of his younger years because of his high anxiety levels. With support and services from the Autism Association, Blake's life has had a dramatic change. He now attends an agricultural school, as animals and farms are his passion. He enjoys more opportunities, like sailing on the Leeuwin in 2011, and has made friends. The world now sees more of Blake's beautiful smile."

Blake's Mum

Statewide Consultancy Service

This year our team continued to provide tertiary level consultancy services to families, clinicians and the agencies supporting children and adults with Autism across the state. We provided consultancies and education sessions on evidence-based practices for behaviour support, communication and skill development.

Web Support Group for Regional Areas

The Family and Professional Services team hosts a regular web support group for families in regional areas. The group is coordinated by our Senior Speech Pathologist and families choose the topics that will be of interest to them. Guest speakers are also invited to attend so that participants can learn about local services.

Conclusion

2011/12 was an exciting year for Family and Professional Services. It was a privilege to be invited into the lives of people with Autism and their families, to learn from each other and to share knowledge and resources about best practice approaches to supporting people with Autism. We look forward to new opportunities and a continuing expansion in our services.

Michele Thomas

Executive Manager Family and Professional Services

Thank you to our many regular donors as well as those that donated for the first time in 2011/12.

We would also like to pay a special tribute to those who gave their time to fundraise with activities for the Autism Association this year, including Daniel Schmid for his Munda Biddi Mountain Bike Challenge; Don Randall for his Walk for Autism, George Bouzidis for his help with the Autism Awareness Month campaign and Helen Norton for her generous donation and proceeds at the Art for Autism Auction.



Helen Norton introduces her artwork at the Art for Autism Auction, one of the many fundraising efforts by community members this year.

A young boy with dark hair is shown from the chest up, smiling broadly with his eyes closed and his tongue sticking out. He is surrounded by a spray of water droplets, suggesting he is playing in a water fountain or pool. The entire image has a blue color cast.

Our Mission

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



Autism

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