

From: s 22
To: [Autism Policy](#); s 22
Cc: [National Autism Strategy Secretariat](#)
Subject: Advice on NAS implementation [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 21 May 2025 11:29:42 AM

Dear colleagues

We have been contacted by one of the State education departments asking about how they will be engaged on implementation of the NAS.

Are you able to provide any advice on approach to stakeholder engagement? I note the EOI for the Reference Group and working group are live.

Many thanks, s 22

s 22

Inclusive Schooling & Disability Strategy
Inclusion and Disability Branch
Australian Government Department of Education
s 22

From: [Autism Policy](#)
To: s 22
Cc: s 22
Subject: Canceled: Education and DSS - NAS First Action Plan [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Importance: High

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*** meeting to be rescheduled – apologies for any inconvenience caused***

Hi **s 22** and **s 22**

I am hoping to set time aside next week to talk about the First Action Plan under the National Autism Strategy.

Let me know if this day/time is not suitable and we can reschedule.

Happy to extend the invite to others in your team.

Thank you

s 22

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Join the meeting now <https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MDg0OGYjNGQtMjY5SOS00NTdiLTkxMWUtY2M3ZDZmNTBIYjRj%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Title%22%3a%2261e36dd1-1cae-4d61-aa0a-2b4eb88317a3%22%2c%22ObjectId%22%3a%223d4435b9-db3a-44bd-8aaa-bb458210016d%22%2c%22Id%22%3a%2261e36dd1-1cae-4d61-aa0a-2b4eb88317a3%22%2c%22ParentId%22%3a%223d4435b9-db3a-44bd-8aaa-bb458210016d%22%2c%22Type%22%3a%22GroupChat%22%7d%7d>

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For organizers: Meeting options <https://teams.microsoft.com/meetingOptions/?organizerId=3d4435b9-db3a-44bd-8aaa-bb458210016d&tenantId=61e36dd1-ca6e-4d61-aa0a-2b4eb88317a3&threadId=19_meeting_MDg0OGIyNGQtMjY5OS00NTdiLTkxMWUyY2M3ZDZmNTB1YjRj@thread.v2&messageId=0&language=en-US>

From: [Autism Policy](#)
To: [Autism Policy](#)
Subject: CM: Launch of the National Autism Strategy 2025-31 and First Action Plan 2025-26 [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Tuesday, 14 January 2025 6:07:37 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[National Autism Strategy 2025 - 2031 Stakeholder Toolkit - January 2025 for circulation.pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Morning,

The Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, will launch the [National Autism Strategy 2025–2031](#) and [First Action Plan 2025-26](#) today in Perth. The Strategy outlines a framework to create a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.

The Australian Government has developed the Strategy in partnership with the [National Autism Strategy Oversight Council](#), supported by Working Groups with the majority of members belonging to the Autistic community and bringing their diverse lived experiences to the table.

The Strategy is focussed on driving Actions and enabling change in areas of Australian Government responsibility across four key outcome areas:

- social inclusion
- economic inclusion
- diagnosis, services and supports
- health and mental health - the [National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People](#) (being developed by the Department of Health and Aged Care).

A **Stakeholder Toolkit** is attached to this email to support you to talk about the Strategy. Below are links to the Strategy, Action Plan and Supporting documents.

- [National Autism Strategy 2025-31](#)
- [National Autism Strategy – First Action Plan 2025-26](#)
- [National Autism Strategy and First Action Plan Summary – Auslan Translation](#)
- [National Autism Strategy and First Action Plan Summary – Easy Read Translation](#)
- [National Autism Strategy Snapshot](#)
- [National Autism Strategy Snapshot – First Nations, CALD/CARM, LGBTQIA+, Older Autistic people](#)
- [National Autism Strategy Snapshot – language translations](#)

Any questions please email AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au.

Kind regards

s 22

s 22

Foundational Supports and Early Childhood Reforms Branch



The Department of Social Services acknowledges the traditional owners of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.



Australian Government

National Autism Strategy 2025 - 2031

Stakeholder Toolkit



Help Shape the Change

www.dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy

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Introduction

On Tuesday, 14 January 2025, the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, launched the *National Autism Strategy 2025 – 2031* (the Strategy) and First Action Plan 2025-26.

The Strategy fulfils a 2022 Australian Government election commitment and outlines a framework to create a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.

The Australian Government has developed the Strategy in partnership with the [National Autism Strategy Oversight Council](#), supported by three Working Groups with the majority of members belonging to the Autistic community and bringing their diverse lived experiences to the table.

The Strategy is focussed on driving Actions and enabling change in areas of Australian Government responsibility across four key outcome areas:

- social inclusion
- economic inclusion
- diagnosis, services and supports
- health and mental health - the *National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People* (the Autism Health Roadmap).

Each outcome area covers a broad range of issues. The Strategy includes commitments for three of the four key outcome areas: social inclusion; economic inclusion; and diagnosis, services and supports. The Autism Health Roadmap will cover actions to improve health and mental health. Development of the Autism Health Roadmap is being led by the Department of Health and Aged Care through a separate but connected process to the Strategy.

Help spread the message

This Toolkit has been developed to support you to talk about the Strategy and First Action Plan.

For further information please contact AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au.

What's included

- About the Strategy – key talking points and messages
- News content
- Social media content (tile / suggested texts)

About the National Autism Strategy – Key Messages

Key Messages

- The Australian Government has released Australia's first *National Autism Strategy 2025 – 2031* (the Strategy) and First Action Plan 2025-26 that fulfils a 2022 Australian Government election commitment.
- The 7-year Strategy aims to build a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.
- The Strategy contains 22 practical commitments that will improve the everyday lives of Autistic people and their families in areas identified as important to them/us.
- The commitments cover key reform areas of social inclusion; economic inclusion; and diagnosis, services, and supports.
- Implementation will occur in a phased way so that the Autism and autistic community can be involved at every stage. The First Action plan provides details about how commitments will be implemented in the first phase.
- Over the life of the Strategy, the Government will continue to work with the Autism and autistic community, drawing on the other ideas we heard during the development of the Strategy, and the foundational work undertaken in the first phase, to shape ongoing reform and change.

Development of the Strategy

- The Australian Government has developed the Strategy in partnership with the [National Autism Strategy Oversight Council](#), supported by Working Groups with the majority of members belonging to the Autistic community and bringing their diverse lived experiences to the table.
- The Strategy will guide the Australian Government's work with the Autistic and autism community in driving change to create a more inclusive society based on the best available research and evidence.
- The Strategy adopts an intersectional, trauma-informed, strengths-based and neurodiversity-affirming approach that places the experiences of Autistic people at the heart of the Strategy and will carry through to implementation.
- The Strategy aligns with Australia's international human rights obligations, to promote and protect the rights of Autistic people.
- Commitments to support the health and mental health of Autistic people are being addressed through the [National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic people in Australia](#), led by the Department of Health and Aged Care.
- The Strategy is an Australian Government strategy and is intended to operate alongside state and territory autism strategies, where they exist.
- The Strategy will sit alongside *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* (ADS), which is focused on enabling the inclusion and participation of all people with disability in Australia.

Governance

- The Government has committed to establish co-governance with the Autistic and autism community over the life of the Strategy. This will ensure the diverse Autistic voices continue to be heard as we work together to improve systems, services and life outcomes.
- The reference group will:
 - Oversee monitoring and evaluation processes, including reporting on progress of implementation of the Strategy.
 - Coordinate and sequence the delivery of actions across the life of the Strategy.
 - Identify and prioritise key focus areas for this Action Plan and future actions.

How the First Action Plan will improve the lives of Autistic people

The First Action Plan covers the period 2025 to 2026. The First Action Plan outlines the practical steps the government is taking regarding the 22 commitments contained in the Strategy.

Immediate actions

The Government is committed to **immediate** improvements in the lives of Autistic people. The Action Plan contains several service-delivery focused actions to deliver on this commitment.

Improving social connections

A common theme raised by Autistic people was about creating more social connections and peer support networks, many participants said coming together with other Autistic people in safe spaces can be empowering and helpful.

Action: The Australian government will invest **\$19.9 million over 4 years** to deliver a peer support program that provides age appropriate and culturally sensitive support created to suit the needs of the Autistic and autism community.

Reducing stigma and changing attitudes around autism

A consistent theme across public engagement on the development of the Strategy highlighted the lack of understanding and awareness around autism. Many people said that autism is often an 'invisible' disability and there needs to be more understanding of how autism presents in different people.

Action: The Australian Government will **invest \$915,000 over 2 years** to develop new awareness and public educational initiatives to foster understanding, inclusion and respect for the Autistic and autism community.

Supporting the diagnosis of autism journey

Many people shared that the diagnosis process can be complex and overwhelming. Understanding what it may include, how the process works and what a diagnosis may mean for an individual were all raised as significant challenges.

Action: the Australian Government will invest up to **\$455,000 in 2025-26** to deliver resources designed to support Autistic people and their families with pre and post diagnosis information. This action will follow an extensive evaluation of existing information and resources to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Improving employment

A consistent theme raised in the Strategy was about challenges for Autistic adults to get and maintain meaningful employment. Many people commented that Autistic people are underemployed or aren't employed in jobs that utilise their full potential.

Action: the Australian Government will invest up to **\$915,000 over 2 years** to improve employment opportunities and support for Autistic people in the workplace.

Action: The Australian Government will work with Autistic people, families and carers, to build a better understanding of the needs of Autistic people and their carers who are not in the workforce, to inform future actions.

Knowledge translation

The Autistic community have reflected the importance of ensuring that policies, services and practices should be neuro-affirming and informed by contemporary evidence of what works.

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$12.2 million over 5 years** to establish a dedicated knowledge translation body to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world practices. This initiative will focus on translating credible autism-related research into practical, evidence-based tools and guidance for service providers, and policy makers.

Progressing the long-term vision of the Strategy with the Autistic and autism community

A guiding principle of the National Autism Strategy is 'In partnership - Nothing about us, without us'. As part of laying the groundwork for improvements in social and economic inclusion, diagnosis, services and supports and representation of Autistic people, a number of reviews and evaluations will be undertaken to scope what works, where there are gaps and best practice to inform change.

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$3.7 million over 2 years** to progress these reviews and evaluations in ways that directly involve the Autistic and autism community and autism sector.

Laying the foundations for future longer-term reform

The Autistic community identified future actions that it wanted the Government to implement as part of the delivery of the Strategy, for which the Government first needs to build a solid understanding of what exists, gaps, and where there is best practice to ensure future investment in actions are effective and impactful.

Improving services and supports so they are neurodiversity-affirming, inclusive and appropriate for the Autistic community

Action: The Government will work to identify how to improve Australian Government, and Australian Government-funded services, communication, and information in ways that are neurodiversity-affirming, inclusive and appropriate for the Autistic community.

Improving the safety and welfare of Autistic people

Action: The Government will evaluate, identify and scope effective frameworks, pathways and information resources to improve the safety and welfare of Autistic people.

Epidemiological study

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$2.8 million over 4 years** to conduct a comprehensive epidemiological study of autism in Australia to identify the true prevalence of autism in Australia.

Evidence and Evaluation Framework

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$858,000 over 2 years** to develop and implement an evidence and evaluation framework to lay the foundations for the Strategy based on reliable and up-to-date information about what works for Autistic people.

Governance framework

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$366,000 over 7 years** to establish a governance framework that ensures the Autistic and autism community have sustained involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, this Action Plan and future actions.

Leveraging and building on existing Government actions

Actions under the First Action Plan that build on and leverage existing government services and policies include:

- Promoting and facilitating the inclusion of all Autistic people and their families and carers in the delivery of government services and supporting better representation in key government advisory functions.
- Adapting existing resources to support Autistic people to engage with Government services and around best practice accessibility and inclusion.
- Ensuring Autistic people are considered in the implementation of actions under the Australian Government response to the Disability Royal Commission.
- Ensuring information and processes relating to grant opportunities can be communicated and designed in a way that are accessible to Autistic people, in consultation with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources and the Department of Finance.
- Evaluating existing pathways to address workplace bullying and discrimination experienced by the Autistic community.
- Building the capability of key workforces to support Autistic people.
- Ensuring the experiences of Autistic people from culturally and linguistically diverse and culturally and racially marginalised (CALD/CARM) communities are considered within the context of the Australian Government response to the Multicultural Framework Review.

About the development of the National Autism Strategy

Consultation and engagement

The Australian Government has undertaken a co-design process with the Autistic and autism community to develop the Strategy. This has included:

Phase 1 – Developing the National Autism Strategy (2023)

- The Australian Government reviewed information received to-date about the experiences and life journeys of Autistic people living in Australia. What resulted was a discussion paper titled, [‘What we have heard: moving towards development of a National Autism Strategy’](#).
- The Australian Government commissioned research from leading experts on the issues impacting marginalised cohorts, including First Nations Autistic people, Autistic women and girls, and Autistic people with intellectual disability.
- The Australian Government consulted widely across the country, with engagement activities/events held from **September to November 2023** on what people thought a national strategy should include. Over 2,030 contributions were made to the National Autism Strategy engagement process:
 - More than 1,300 people were involved in qualitative discussions.
 - Around 550 people made a submission by sending a written, audio or video file or by completing the guided questions online.
 - Over 180 people contributed ideas to the open, online Ideas Wall.
- The largest number of participations in open community events and Autistic Voices forums were Autistic people (around 880), followed by family members and informal carers (around 750). It should be noted that people do not fit into these cohorts exclusively—participants may be both an Autistic person and a family member/carer of Autistic people.
- A consultation report is available at [Developing the National Autism Strategy – Consultation reports | engage.dss.gov.au](#)

Phase 2 - Feedback on the Draft National Autism Strategy (2024)

- An online survey opened from **April to May 2024** to provide feedback on the [draft National Autism Strategy](#).
- 1,217 people provided a written submission or responded to the draft National Autism Strategy online survey.
- Over 100 people attended targeted focus groups with the following cohorts:
 - Autistic First Nations people
 - Autistic people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - Autistic people from the LGBTQIA+ community
 - Autistic women, girls and non-binary people
 - Autistic Children and Young people
 - families and carers (including those with very high support and dependency needs)
 - Autistic researchers and professionals.

- A focus group was also held with the Public Sector Neurodiversity Community of Practice.
- On 19 April 2024, the Department of Social Services hosted a webinar on the draft National Autism Strategy. Over 340 people attended the webinar.

Newsletter content

The Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, launched Australia's first [National Autism Strategy 2025–2031](#) and [National Autism Strategy First Action Plan 2025-26](#) on Tuesday, 14 January 2025. The Strategy outlines a framework to create a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.

The Australian Government has developed the Strategy in partnership with the [National Autism Strategy Oversight Council](#), supported by Working Groups with the majority of members belonging to the Autistic community and bringing their diverse lived experiences to the table.

The Strategy is focussed on driving Actions and enabling change in areas of Australian Government responsibility across four key outcome areas:

- social inclusion
- economic inclusion
- diagnosis, services and supports
- health and mental health - the [National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People](#) (being developed by the Department of Health and Aged Care).


The Strategy will sit alongside *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*, which is focused on enabling the inclusion and participation of all people with disability in Australia.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of the Strategy via the consultation processes throughout 2023 and early 2024.

Please visit the Department of Social Services website www.dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy to read the Strategy, including translations in Auslan, Easy Read, and language.

Social media content

We encourage you to share messaging on social media to support the release of the Strategy and First Action Plan.

Post Number	Text	Tile	Alt Text
Post 1	<p>The Australian Government has launched the <i>National Autism Strategy 2025 – 2031</i>.</p> <p>The Strategy aims to improve the everyday lives of all Autistic people and their families across Australia.</p> <p>To find out more and to download a copy, visit www.dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy</p>		<p>Tile 1: A purple graphic with text that reads: 'National Autism Strategy. Help shape the change. Visit dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy.'</p> <p>There is a hand drawn multi-coloured line that underlines the words 'National Autism Strategy'.</p> <p>Tile 2: A square graphic the Australian Government crest and 'National Autism Strategy'. The middle of the graphic has a large icon that is a circle with text that reads: 'Easy Read'. There is a tick above the words and a graphic of an open book. Text along the bottom of the graphic reads 'Visit dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy.'</p>

<p>Post 2</p>	<p>The Australian Government has launched the <i>National Autism Strategy 2025 – 2031</i></p> <p>It sets out a path to improve everyday lives of Autistic people, with a focus on four priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Inclusion • Economic Inclusion • Diagnosis, Supports and Services • Health and Mental Health <p>To find out more and to download a copy, visit www.dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy</p>	 <p>The graphic is a purple rectangle with the text 'National Autism Strategy' in white, followed by 'Help shape the change.' in a smaller font. Below this is a link: 'Visit dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy'. There is a decorative wavy line in orange, yellow, and teal below the text.</p>  <p>The graphic is a square with a teal border. Inside, it contains a quote in purple text: 'I want to live in a community that recognises and appreciates my son for who he is... We need change to be able to realise his potential so he too can contribute to our community and make it better.' Below the quote is the attribution: '- Istar, mother of autistic child and disability advocate'. There is a decorative wavy line in orange, yellow, and teal below the quote.</p>	<p>Tile 1: A purple graphic with text that reads: 'National Autism Strategy. Help shape the change. Visit dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy.'</p> <p>There is a hand drawn multi-coloured line that underlines the words 'National Autism Strategy'.</p> <p>Tile 2: A square graphic with text that reads: 'I want to live in a community that recognises and appreciates my son for who he is... we need change to be able to realise his potential so he too can contribute to our community and make it better. Istar, mother of autistic child and disability advocate.' The square has a colourful border.</p>
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From: s 22
 To: [Autism Policy](#)
 Cc: s 22
 Subject: CM: Suggested individuals/organisations for EOI
 Date: Thursday, 20 February 2025 5:40:00 PM

Hello colleagues

At the SES Band 1 discussion on the NAS, you asked for suggestions on who to target for the new Oversight Council EOI. Below is a list compiled by the Department of Education.

Happy to discuss, s 22

s 22

Inclusive Schooling & Disability Strategy
 Inclusion and Disability Branch
 Australian Government Department of Education

s 22

Name/organisation	Expertise/background
s 47F	Lived experience; academic research; practitioner
	Lived experience; academic research; practitioner
	Lived experience; academic research; practitioner
	Lived experience; academic research; practitioner
	Lived experience, advocacy
	Lived experience; academic research; practitioner
	Lived experience; advocacy
	Lived experience; academic research; practitioner
	Teaching; inclusive education; practitioner
	Lived experience; advocacy

Lived experience; academic research; practitioner

Subject: NAS Action Plan - Commitment 10 Action 1
Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Start: Thu 27/02/2025 2:00 PM
End: Thu 27/02/2025 2:30 PM

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Accepted

Organizer: s 22

Required Attendees

Optional Attendees:

Colleagues

Just setting up a time to touch base on the [NAS First Action Plan](#) **Commitment 10 Action 1** measure. It would be good to talk through our preferred management approaches and logistics.

Let me know if the proposed time doesn't suit. (At the moment it looks like an alternate option might be 12:00 Wednesday 26 February?)

Commitment 10 – Action 1:

Action: Examine the barriers that Autistic students experience across the higher education student lifecycle through:

- Improving and building the evidence base including optimising collection of student disability data in higher education.
- A stocktake of services, supports, resources and practice, including gaps to understand the support landscape for Autistic students in higher education.

Issue addressed: Support improved inclusion and outcomes for Autistic students through identification of best practice approaches.

Lead Government Departments: Department of Education and Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Proposed Agenda:

- Introductions
- Update on landscape and work under way
- Discussion of roles, governance, key considerations, sensitivities, next steps, timing, etc

We look forward to touching base. Let me know if there is anything else you would like to add to the agenda.

Warmest Regards

s 22

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Video ID: 133 106 749 7

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From: s 22
To: [Autism Policy](#); s 22
Cc: s 22
Subject: NAS launch [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Monday, 23 December 2024 3:53:57 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi all

A hearty congratulations on the imminent launch.

Grateful for a copy of the final NAS and first action plan as soon as they are able to shared to inform our briefing and stakeholder contacts.

Best, s 22

From: Autism Policy <AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 23 December 2024 2:09 PM
To: s 22
Subject: INVITATION | National Autism Strategy launch with the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP | RSVP due 8 January 2025 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

You don't often get email from autismpolicy@dss.gov.au. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello s 22

The Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, will be launching the National Autism Strategy (NAS) and First Action Plan in Perth at an event on Tuesday, 14 January 2025. The event will be an informal morning tea with members of the local Autistic and autism community, held between 9:00am – 10:30am (AWST). The event will be held at:

Location

Trinity on Hampden
230 Hampden Rd
Crawley WA

Date

9.00am – 10.30am
Tuesday 14 January 2025

You are invited to attend this event, along with the community members of the NAS Oversight Council.

Please note that while the community members of the Oversight Council are aware of the launch happening at this event, other invitees have not yet been advised of this, so you are asked to please not share with others the news regarding a launch.

If you are able to attend, further details including a “What to Expect Guide” will be provided early in the new year.

RSVP: Please RSVP confirmation of your attendance to AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au by Wednesday 8 January 2025.

We look forward to providing you final versions of the Strategy and Action Plan in the new year.

Kind Regards,

s 22

If using assistive software, the message ends here. Email signature below.

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Living and working on Ngunnawal Land

s 22

Foundational Supports and Early Childhood Reform Branch

Disability Reforms and Royal Commission

Department of Social Services

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[National Relay Service](#)

s 22

The Department of Social Services supports flexible working – I am emailing you at a time that suits me, but I don't expect you to reply outside your usual hours.

The Department of Social Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.



ALLY

From: [Autism Policy](#)
To: s 22
Cc: [Autism Policy](#)
Subject: National Autism Strategy and First Action Plan Embargoed to 5.30am AEDT, Tuesday, 14 January 2025 [SEC=PROTECTED][DKIM failed]
Date: Monday, 13 January 2025 4:23:27 PM
Attachments: [National Autism Strategy 2025 - 2031 Stakeholder Kit - Cmwth Oversight Council - January 2025 embargo.pdf](#)
[DSS NAS Strategy Final Education.pdf](#)
[DSS NAS Action Plan Final Education.pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

The Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, will launch the *National Autism Strategy 2025–2031* and *First Action Plan 2025-26* tomorrow in Perth. Please be advised that all information relating to the launch, including the date and time, is under strict embargo until 5.30am (AEDT) Tuesday 14 January 2025.

As a Commonwealth member of the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council please find attached to this email:

1. Embargoed copies of the Strategy and Action Plan.
 - Attached is an embargoed copy of the Strategy and Action Plan ahead of the launch tomorrow.
 - **Note: The Strategy and Action Plan is strictly embargoed until 5.30am AEDT, Tuesday, 14 January 2025. Do not share or distribute this information until after the embargo lifts.**
2. Oversight Council Stakeholder Toolkit – to support the release of the Strategy and Action Plan. **Note:** the Strategy and Action Plan will not be live on the DSS website until Tuesday 14 January 12.30pm AEDT.

Thank you again for all the hard work that went in to developing the Strategy and Action Plan. The team looks forward to continuing to work with you during what I am sure will be a very busy 2025.

Kind regards

s 22

If using assistive software, the message ends here. Email signature below.

Foundational Supports and Early Childhood Reform Branch

s 22

[National Relay Service](#)

The Department of Social Services supports flexible working – I am emailing you at a time that suits me, but I don't expect you to reply outside your usual hours.



Australian Government

National Autism Strategy 2025 - 2031

Stakeholder Kit

Oversight Council



Help Shape the Change

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Introduction

On Tuesday, 14 January 2025, the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, launched the *National Autism Strategy 2025 – 2031* (the Strategy) and First Action Plan 2025-26.

The Strategy fulfils a 2022 Australian Government election commitment and outlines a framework to create a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.

The Australian Government has developed the Strategy in partnership with the [National Autism Strategy Oversight Council](#), supported by three Working Groups with the majority of members belonging to the Autistic community and bringing their diverse lived experiences to the table.

The Strategy is focussed on driving Actions and enabling change in areas of Australian Government responsibility across four key outcome areas:

- social inclusion
- economic inclusion
- diagnosis, services and supports
- health and mental health - the *National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People* (the Autism Health Roadmap).

Each outcome area covers a broad range of issues. The Strategy includes commitments for three of the four key outcome areas: social inclusion; economic inclusion; and diagnosis, services and supports. The Autism Health Roadmap will cover actions to improve health and mental health. Development of the Autism Health Roadmap is being led by the Department of Health and Aged Care through a separate but connected process to the Strategy.

Help spread the message

This Toolkit has been developed to support former Oversight Council members to talk about the Strategy and First Action Plan.

For further information please contact AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au.

What's included

- About the Strategy – key talking points and messages
- News content
- Social media content (tile / suggested texts)

About the National Autism Strategy – Key Messages

Suggested top four messages

- This is the FIRST National Autism Strategy for Australia, a historic milestone.
- It was developed by and with Autistic people and their families.
- The Strategy makes practical commitments that will improve the everyday lives of Autistic people and their families in areas identified as important to them/us.
- The Government has committed to establish co-governance with the Autistic and Autism community over the life of the Strategy. This will ensure the diverse Autistic voices continue to be heard as we work together to improve systems, services and life outcomes.

Overarching Messages

- The Australian Government has released Australia's first *National Autism Strategy 2025 – 2031* (the Strategy) and First Action Plan 2025-26 that fulfils a 2022 Australian Government election commitment.
- The 7-year Strategy aims to build a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.
- The Strategy contains 22 practical commitments that will improve the everyday lives of Autistic people and their families in areas identified as important to them/us.
- The commitments cover key reform areas of social inclusion; economic inclusion; and diagnosis, services, and supports.
- Implementation will occur in a phased way so that the Autism and autistic community can be involved at every stage. The First Action plan provides details about how commitments will be implemented in the first phase.
- Over the life of the Strategy, the Government will continue to work with the Autism and autistic community, drawing on the other ideas we heard during the development of the Strategy, and the foundational work undertaken in the first phase, to shape ongoing reform and change.

Development of the Strategy

- The Australian Government has developed the Strategy in partnership with the [National Autism Strategy Oversight Council](#), supported by Working Groups with the majority of members belonging to the Autistic community and bringing their diverse lived experiences to the table.
- The Strategy will guide the Australian Government's work with the Autistic and autism community in driving change to create a more inclusive society based on the best available research and evidence.
- The Strategy adopts an intersectional, trauma-informed, strengths-based and neurodiversity-affirming approach that places the experiences of Autistic people at the heart of the Strategy and will carry through to implementation.
- The Strategy aligns with Australia's international human rights obligations, to promote and protect the rights of Autistic people.

- Commitments to support the health and mental health of Autistic people are being addressed through the [*National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic people in Australia*](#), led by the Department of Health and Aged Care.
- The Strategy is an Australian Government strategy and is intended to operate alongside state and territory autism strategies, where they exist.
- The Strategy will sit alongside *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* (ADS), which is focused on enabling the inclusion and participation of all people with disability in Australia.

Governance

- The Government has committed to establish co-governance with the Autistic and Autism community over the life of the Strategy. This will ensure the diverse Autistic voices continue to be heard as we work together to improve systems, services and life outcomes.
- The reference group will:
 - Oversee monitoring and evaluation processes, including reporting on progress of implementation of the Strategy.
 - Coordinate and sequence the delivery of actions across the life of the Strategy.
 - Identify and prioritise key focus areas for this Action Plan and future actions.

How the First Action Plan will improve the lives of Autistic people

The First Action Plan covers the period 2025 to 2026. The First Action Plan outlines the practical steps the government is taking regarding the 22 commitments contained in the Strategy.

Immediate actions

The Government is committed to **immediate** improvements in the lives of Autistic people. The Action Plan contains several service-delivery focused actions to deliver on this commitment.

Improving social connections

A common theme raised by Autistic people was about creating more social connections and peer support networks, many participants said coming together with other Autistic people in safe spaces can be empowering and helpful.

Action: The Australian government will invest **\$19.9 million over 4 years** to deliver a peer support program that provides age appropriate and culturally sensitive support created to suit the needs of the Autistic and autism community.

Reducing stigma and changing attitudes around autism

A consistent theme across public engagement on the development of the Strategy highlighted the lack of understanding and awareness around autism. Many people said that autism is often an 'invisible' disability and there needs to be more understanding of how autism presents in different people.

Action: The Australian Government will **invest \$915,000 over 2 years** to develop new awareness and public educational initiatives to foster understanding, inclusion and respect for the Autistic and autism community.

Supporting the diagnosis of autism journey

Many people shared that the diagnosis process can be complex and overwhelming. Understanding what it may include, how the process works and what a diagnosis may mean for an individual were all raised as significant challenges.

Action: the Australian Government will invest up to **\$455 000 in 2025-26** to deliver resources designed to support Autistic people and their families with pre and post diagnosis information. This action will follow an extensive evaluation of existing information and resources to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Improving employment

A consistent theme raised in the Strategy was about challenges for Autistic adults to get and maintain meaningful employment. Many people commented that Autistic people are underemployed or aren't employed in jobs that utilise their full potential.

Action: the Australian Government will invest up to **\$915,000 over 2 years** to improve employment opportunities and support for Autistic people in the workplace.

Action: The Australian Government will work with Autistic people, families and carers, to build a better understanding of the needs of Autistic people and their carers who are not in the workforce, to inform future actions.

Knowledge translation

The Autistic community have reflected the importance of ensuring that policies, services and practices should be neuro-affirming and informed by contemporary evidence of what works.

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$12.2 million over 5 years** to establish a dedicated knowledge translation body to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world practices. This initiative will focus on translating credible autism-related research into practical, evidence-based tools and guidance for service providers, and policy makers.

Progressing the long-term vision of the Strategy with the Autistic and autism community

A guiding principle of the National Autism Strategy is 'In partnership - Nothing about us, without us'. As part of laying the groundwork for improvements in social and economic inclusion, diagnosis, services and supports and representation of Autistic people, a number of reviews and evaluations will be undertaken to scope what works, where there are gaps and best practice to inform change.

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$3.7 million over 2 years** to progress these reviews and evaluations in ways that directly involve the Autistic and autism community and autism sector.

Laying the foundations for future longer-term reform

The Autistic community identified future actions that it wanted the Government to implement as part of the delivery of the Strategy, for which the Government first needs to build a solid understanding of what exists, gaps, and where there is best practice to ensure future investment in actions are effective and impactful.

Improving services and supports so they are neurodiversity-affirming, inclusive and appropriate for the Autistic community

Action: The Government will work to identify how to improve Australian Government, and Australian Government-funded services, communication, and information in ways that are neurodiversity-affirming, inclusive and appropriate for the Autistic community.

Improving the safety and welfare of Autistic people

Action: The Government will evaluate, identify and scope effective frameworks, pathways and information resources to improve the safety and welfare of Autistic people.

Epidemiological study

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$2.8 million over 4 years** to conduct a comprehensive epidemiological study of autism in Australia to identify the true prevalence of autism in Australia.

Evidence and Evaluation Framework

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$858,000 over 2 years** to develop and implement an evidence and evaluation framework to lay the foundations for the Strategy based on reliable and up-to-date information about what works for Autistic people.

Governance framework

Action: The Australian Government will invest up to **\$366,000 over 7 years** to establish a governance framework that ensures the Autistic and autism community have sustained involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, this Action Plan and future actions.

Leveraging and building on existing Government actions

Actions under the First Action Plan that build on and leverage existing government services and policies include:

- Promoting and facilitating the inclusion of all Autistic people and their families and carers in the delivery of government services and supporting better representation in key government advisory functions.
- Adapting existing resources to support Autistic people to engage with Government services and around best practice accessibility and inclusion.
- Ensuring Autistic people are considered in the implementation of actions under the Australian Government response to the Disability Royal Commission.
- Ensuring information and processes relating to grant opportunities can be communicated and designed in a way that are accessible to Autistic people, in consultation with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources and the Department of Finance.
- Evaluating existing pathways to address workplace bullying and discrimination experienced by the Autistic community.
- Building the capability of key workforces to support Autistic people.
- Ensuring the experiences of Autistic people from culturally and linguistically diverse and culturally and racially marginalised (CALD/CARM) communities are considered within the context of the Australian Government response to the Multicultural Framework Review.

About the development of the National Autism Strategy

Consultation and engagement

The Australian Government has undertaken a co-design process with the Autistic and autism community to develop the Strategy. This has included:

Phase 1 – Developing the National Autism Strategy (2023)

- The Australian Government reviewed information received to-date about the experiences and life journeys of Autistic people living in Australia. What resulted was a discussion paper titled, [‘What we have heard: moving towards development of a National Autism Strategy’](#).
- The Australian Government commissioned research from leading experts on the issues impacting marginalised cohorts, including First Nations Autistic people, Autistic women and girls, and Autistic people with intellectual disability.
- The Australian Government consulted widely across the country, with engagement activities/events held from **September to November 2023** on what people thought a national strategy should include. Over 2,030 contributions were made to the National Autism Strategy engagement process:
 - More than 1,300 people were involved in qualitative discussions.
 - Around 550 people made a submission by sending a written, audio or video file or by completing the guided questions online.
 - Over 180 people contributed ideas to the open, online Ideas Wall.
- The largest number of participations in open community events and Autistic Voices forums were Autistic people (around 880), followed by family members and informal carers (around 750). It should be noted that people do not fit into these cohorts exclusively—participants may be both an Autistic person and a family member/carer of Autistic people.
- A consultation report is available at [Developing the National Autism Strategy – Consultation reports | engage.dss.gov.au](#)

Phase 2 - Feedback on the Draft National Autism Strategy (2024)

- An online survey opened from **April to May 2024** to provide feedback on the [draft National Autism Strategy](#).
- 1,217 people provided a written submission or responded to the draft National Autism Strategy online survey.
- Over 100 people attended targeted focus groups with the following cohorts:
 - Autistic First Nations people
 - Autistic people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - Autistic people from the LGBTQIA+ community
 - Autistic women, girls and non-binary people
 - Autistic Children and Young people
 - families and carers (including those with very high support and dependency needs)
 - Autistic researchers and professionals.

- A focus group was also held with the Public Sector Neurodiversity Community of Practice.
- On 19 April 2024, the Department of Social Services hosted a webinar on the draft National Autism Strategy. Over 340 people attended the webinar.

Newsletter content

[**Note:** a copy of the Strategy and First Action Plan will not appear on the [Department of Social Services website](#) until after the launch event].

The Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, launched Australia's first [National Autism Strategy 2025–2031](#) and [National Autism Strategy First Action Plan 2025-26](#) on Tuesday, 14 January 2025. The Strategy outlines a framework to create a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.

The Australian Government has developed the Strategy in partnership with the [National Autism Strategy Oversight Council](#), supported by Working Groups with the majority of members belonging to the Autistic community and bringing their diverse lived experiences to the table.

The Strategy is focussed on driving Actions and enabling change in areas of Australian Government responsibility across four key outcome areas:

- social inclusion
- economic inclusion
- diagnosis, services and supports
- health and mental health - the [National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People](#) (being developed by the Department of Health and Aged Care).


The Strategy will sit alongside *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*, which is focused on enabling the inclusion and participation of all people with disability in Australia.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of the Strategy via the consultation processes throughout 2023 and early 2024.

Please visit the Department of Social Services website www.dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy to read the Strategy, including translations in Auslan, Easy Read, and language.

Social media content

We encourage you to share messaging on social media to support the release of the Strategy and First Action Plan.

Post Number	Text	Tile	Alt Text
Post 1	<p>The Australian Government has launched the <i>National Autism Strategy 2025 – 2031</i>.</p> <p>The Strategy aims to improve the everyday lives of all Autistic people and their families across Australia.</p> <p>To find out more and to download a copy, visit www.dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy</p>		<p>Tile 1: A purple graphic with text that reads: 'National Autism Strategy. Help shape the change. Visit dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy.'</p> <p>There is a hand drawn multi-coloured line that underlines the words 'National Autism Strategy'.</p> <p>Tile 2: A square graphic the Australian Government crest and 'National Autism Strategy'. The middle of the graphic has a large icon that is a circle with text that reads: 'Easy Read'. There is a tick above the words and a graphic of an open book. Text along the bottom of the graphic reads 'Visit dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy.'</p>

<p>Post 2</p>	<p>The Australian Government has launched the <i>National Autism Strategy 2025 – 2031</i></p> <p>It sets out a path to improve everyday lives of Autistic people, with a focus on four priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Inclusion • Economic Inclusion • Diagnosis, Supports and Services • Health and Mental Health <p>To find out more and to download a copy, visit www.dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy</p>	 <p>The graphic is a purple rectangle with the text 'National Autism Strategy' in white, followed by 'Help shape the change.' in a smaller font. Below this is a link: 'Visit dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy'. There is a decorative wavy line in orange, yellow, and teal below the text.</p>  <p>The graphic is a square with a teal border. Inside, it contains a quote: 'I want to live in a community that recognises and appreciates my son for who he is... We need change to be able to realise his potential so he too can contribute to our community and make it better.' followed by '- Istar, mother of autistic child and disability advocate'.</p>	<p>Tile 1: A purple graphic with text that reads: 'National Autism Strategy. Help shape the change. Visit dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy.'</p> <p>There is a hand drawn multi-coloured line that underlines the words 'National Autism Strategy'.</p> <p>Tile 2: A square graphic with text that reads: 'I want to live in a community that recognises and appreciates my son for who he is... we need change to be able to realise his potential so he too can contribute to our community and make it better. Istar, mother of autistic child and disability advocate.' The square has a colourful border.</p>
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National Autism Strategy

2025–2031



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Government acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connections to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Acknowledgement of Autistic people and their families and carers and the autism community

The Australian Government acknowledges Autistic people, their families, carers and support networks, representative organisations and the Autistic and autism community who have worked tirelessly and campaigned long and hard for the establishment of this National Autism Strategy. The Australian Government also acknowledges the substantial time and commitment of members of the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council, supported by Working Groups, who led in the co-design of this Strategy and its First Action Plan.

Glossary

Key terms are defined in the Glossary. It is recommended you familiarise yourself with the Glossary at page 41 when reading this Strategy.

Content warning

Please be aware that this Strategy contains information that may be distressing to some readers. It includes information about the experiences of Autistic people and some of the barriers they face. If you need support, there are free services available to help you.

Beyond Blue Support Service

- Telephone 1300 224 636, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Email for free, short-term counselling, advice and referral services.
- Website: [Beyond Blue Support Service](#).

Lifeline Crisis Support

- This confidential service provides support when you are feeling overwhelmed, having difficulty coping or thinking about suicide.
- Speak to a crisis support worker by telephone on 13 11 14, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Website: [Lifeline Crisis Support](#).

1800RESPECT – National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service

- For support if you are affected by sexual assault or domestic and family violence or abuse.
- Telephone 1800 737 732, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Website: [1800RESPECT](https://www.1800respect.org.au).

13 YARN

- Support from First Nations crisis counsellors is available at 13YARN (13 92 76) or by visiting: [13 YARN](https://www.13yarn.org.au). Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Autism Connect

- A free, national autism helpline, providing independent and expert information about autism over the phone, email and webchat. It supports Autistic people, their families and carers and support network, health professionals, researchers, teachers, employers and the broader community.
- Available from 8am to 7pm, Monday to Friday. Telephone 1300 308 699.
- Website: [Autism Connect](https://www.autismconnect.org.au).

headspace

- A free online and telephone support and counselling service for young people between ages 12–25 every day from 9am–1am AEDT.
- Call 1800 650 890.
- Chat online through webchat to speak to a clinician.
- Send an email or a response within 2 days.
- More information, including how to create a headspace account, can be accessed at: [Connect with a mental health clinician 1-on-1 | headspace](https://www.headspace.org.au/1-on-1).

Qlife

- An anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral service for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.
- Call: 1800 184 527.
- Website: [Qlife](https://www.qlife.org.au).

Minister's Foreword

For the more than 290,000 Autistic people living in Australia, there are significant barriers to living a fulfilling life compared to a neurotypical person.

Too many Autistic people face obstacles to receive good education, obtain a fulfilling job, or receive the healthcare they need, caused by a lack of understanding of autism in Australian society, or ineffective supports for Autistic people to help them achieve their goals.

Autistic people experience some of the poorest outcomes of any cohort across a range of life domains, including 2–3 times greater risks of premature mortality than the general population.

The Australian Government is committed to breaking down barriers and enabling the full participation of Autistic people living in Australia.

As the Minister for Social Services, I am both proud and honoured to present Australia's first National Autism Strategy (the Strategy) – a landmark commitment to building a society that values, respects and appreciates all Autistic people.

The journey of Autistic people and the autism community in Australia has been one of resilience, advocacy and transformation. Autistic people in Australia, their families and carers have worked tirelessly to share their life experiences to, challenge misconceptions, breakdown barriers, advocate for equity and to improve life outcomes for other Autistic people, and their families and carers.

This journey has not been without its challenges, yet the strength and determination of Autistic people and the autism community has significantly contributed to a more inclusive and neurodiversity-affirming society over time.

Autistic people living in Australia have led the way in creating this Strategy, alongside their families, carers and communities and it is a significant step towards empowering all Autistic people to live their best lives and reach their full potential. The Strategy was co-designed with the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council and this collaborative effort, supported by extensive public consultation with Autistic people and the autism community and sector, shaped the vision, goal, guiding principles and commitments articulated in this Strategy. This partnership and shared purpose will continue throughout the implementation of the Strategy and its action plans, with the voice and diverse perspectives of Autistic people and their advocates and supporters guiding the Strategy over its life.

The Strategy's commitments are built on three pillars: social inclusion; economic inclusion; and diagnosis, services and supports. These three pillars reflect our commitment to contribute to a society where all Autistic people in Australia are included in all aspects of life, with equitable access to opportunities, and appropriate and neurodiversity-affirming supports that recognise their needs, strengths and aspirations. A fourth pillar, incorporating commitments and actions to improve the health and mental health of Autistic people, will be covered by the National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People – being led by the Minister for Health and Aged Care.

This Strategy emphasises the important role that each and every one of us has to play to bring about positive and lasting change, through contributing to inclusive workplaces and societies, building robust services and supports and increasing our understanding and appreciation of autism and Autistic people.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this Strategy. This Strategy is for every Autistic person in Australia, no matter their stage of life. Together we will continue to contribute to a future that embraces, celebrates and supports the Autistic community, values each individual's strengths, and respects and embraces the views and contributions of all Autistic people in Australia and their families and carers.



Amanda Rishworth

The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for Social Service

How the National Autism Strategy was developed

The National Autism Strategy (the Strategy) has been developed through a comprehensive co-design process, oversighted by the Minister for Social Services, led by the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council, supported by its Working Groups, and drawing on the lived experience and insights of Autistic people and their families, carers, advocates, researchers and other stakeholders across Australia.

From September to November 2023, we engaged with Autistic people and the autism community across Australia. More than 2,000 people attended events or sent us written feedback about what a Strategy should focus on. This informed a first draft of the Strategy, which was published on 2 April 2024 for 8 weeks to provide the opportunity for community feedback on the draft. More than 1,300 people provided feedback. The National Autism Strategy Oversight Council then considered this feedback to refine the draft Strategy and develop a draft of the First Action Plan (the Action Plan).

The Strategy and Action Plan were then considered and agreed by Government and released in January 2025. [The Action Plan](#) should be read in conjunction with the Strategy.

Further information about this process is at **Appendix A**.



What should a National Autism Strategy achieve?

The Autistic and autism community want to see an ambitious national strategy for Australia. A Strategy that sees Autistic people have the same level of access as other people in the community and that *'levels the playing field for Autistic people and their families.'*

People said the Strategy needs to be underpinned by action and must be upheld, with *'measures that mean something to Autistic people'* and where there is accountability and *'consequences for failures to uphold the Strategy.'*

Five consistent themes emerged about what a national autism strategy should achieve:



Inclusion: systemic, societal and attitudinal change across all four outcome areas of the Strategy.



Acceptance: a better understanding of autism across the whole community to create a more autism-informed Australia, and a sense of belonging for all Autistic people.



Recognising Autistic strengths and ensuring Autistic people have a strong voice, including those who are non-speaking or minimally-speaking: strengths based- and neurodiversity-affirming practices are the standard.



Recognition of individual diversity and capacity: acknowledgement that every Autistic person has their own experiences and aspirations and can participate freely and equally in all areas of life.



Better quality of life and improved living standards: systems and supports are in place to provide for basic needs, to ensure access to health and mental health services to stay well, and equal opportunities for Autistic people to: participate in society; access housing; access justice services; and thrive in education and employment.

Statement on Language

The Strategy acknowledges language is an important factor in identity. Every Autistic person is an individual with unique qualities, strengths, attributes, and support needs.

The Strategy recognises the Autistic and autism community includes people with diverse viewpoints and identities and people use different words to talk about autism. Some people in the Autistic and autism community like to use 'Autistic person' (identity-first language), some like to use 'person with autism' (person-first language), and some are fine with using either. Some Autistic people identify as having a disability, while others do not.

The Strategy respects the right of all individuals with lived experience of autism to choose the language that represents the way they identify. As supported by feedback received through the national consultation process to develop the Strategy, the Australian Government is using identity-first language in the Strategy.

The Strategy supports all Autistic people regardless of whether they are diagnosed, their specific diagnosis or how they identify. Terms such as 'high functioning', 'low functioning', 'profound', 'severe' and 'mild' autism may be used by some people to describe the challenges and barriers experienced by Autistic people and their families and carers. The Strategy does not use these terms and instead uses the term **'all'** Autistic people. This recognises that every Autistic person has different strengths and faces different challenges and barriers, and these other terms can misrepresent the difficulties some Autistic people may experience and the capabilities of others.

Statement on Autism

There is not one universally accepted definition of autism that captures everyone's experience.

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference. Autistic people share common traits that present differently in each Autistic person. As with all people, every Autistic person is unique, and has their own individual diversity, capacity, experiences and aspirations.

This Strategy recognises attitudes, practices and structures in a neurotypical world can create barriers that impact on Autistic people being able to participate fully and equally in the community.

Their experiences of daily life are dynamic based on the systemic, environmental, and interpersonal barriers that each individual experience at the time.

Some Autistic people can live fully independent lives, with adjustments to their environment or routines. Others need a varying intensity of supports with day-to-day activities. Some may have low support needs most of the time but have high support needs at certain times or in certain situations. Some need very high levels of ongoing support with everyday activities or support with decision making.

Autistic people process information and communicate in a range of ways, particularly those with complex communication needs, and those who are non-speaking or minimally-speaking. To communicate some Autistic people use Augmentative and Alternative Communication with assistive devices or technology. Others may use gestures, manual signs, or interpreters and translators. Some Autistic people may use different communication methods at different times, as their support needs change or depending on their energy, stress or life circumstances.

Societal attitudes and individual preferences can result in some Autistic people camouflaging autistic traits or adapting responses to support interactions in social situations. This can take significant effort and for some, can impact mental health or a sense of self-identity.

This Strategy recognises that supports need to be individualised and consider the whole person, and that support needs may change, including during key life transitions and in certain situations or environments. The Strategy also recognises that all Autistic people should have choice over the communication device(s) and method(s) they use to suit their preferences and needs.

Autism is distinct. However, many Autistic people are multiply neurodivergent and have co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and/or health conditions, many of which overlap in diagnostic criteria and can also impact on experiences of daily life. Many of these common co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities, and health conditions have been listed at **Appendix B**.

With ongoing efforts to break down systemic barriers to participation and inclusion, and with the right supports in place, all Autistic people should be able to live the life they choose.

Intersectionality

“Intersectionality is just a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves, and they create obstacles that are not often understood within conventional ways of thinking.”

Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989

The way people experience the world is shaped by how their individual circumstances and characteristics interact with attitudes, systems and structures in society. People’s experiences differ according to factors such as their gender, sexuality, race, culture, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, socio-economic status, geographical location, and body shape/size. This interaction results in individual people experiencing differing levels of outcomes or discrimination.

Taking an intersectional approach to this Strategy recognises, and seeks to address, the structural barriers and hidden biases that have a negative impact on the life experiences of individual Autistic people who face multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage and discrimination. This Strategy will drive greater respect for, and acceptance of, the Autistic and autism community in its full diversity.

This approach recognises there is very little research and other evidence available relating to the life experiences, needs or views of certain cohorts of Autistic people, including:

- First Nations people
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people, including those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM) people
- infants and toddlers
- children and young people
- women, girls, and gender-diverse people
- older people
- people who have co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and medical health conditions
- people who identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community
- people in regional, rural, and remote areas
- people who use alternative or augmentative communication or are non-speaking or minimally speaking
- people with very high support needs
- people receiving supported independent living supports
- people living in segregated accommodation, group homes and institutions
- people with experience of trauma and violence
- people in child protection and justice systems.

Policies and support services often fail to adequately support Autistic people who are members of these intersectional groups. This Strategy aims to address this representation issue by:

- Establishing a governance framework that is representative of the diversity within the Autistic and autism community.
- Adopting an inclusive process for consultations.
- Designing the implementation of actions with Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks to address the structural barriers they experience
- Providing ways for Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks to communicate with the Australian Government in a way that suits them.



Priority Cohorts

It is acknowledged that all Autistic people face a range of barriers to full participation in the community, including barriers to accessing education, healthcare, employment, justice, exercising their rights and participating in public life. This Strategy acknowledges that certain groups of Autistic people can face additional barriers, challenges or compounding disadvantage associated with the intersection between their Autistic identity and other aspects of their identity or life stage. Some people will identify within multiple priority cohorts. Services and supports should take account of these intersectional factors.

The National Autism Strategy Oversight Council identified the following priority cohorts as experiencing greater barriers and compounding disadvantage. This view was reflected in feedback gathered through the extensive national consultation process to inform development of the Strategy.

First Nations peoples

First Nations Autistic people, their kin and carers can face compounding marginalisation and harm, including racism and a lack of culturally safe approaches to engagement and decision making and services and supports. This can lead to under diagnosis, delayed diagnosis and lack of access to supports and services that meet their needs. Consistent with the Australian Government's commitments to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the implementation of commitments in this Strategy will seek to embed the four priority reforms. This includes stronger partnerships to support shared decision making, shared access to data that informs shared decision making and action supporting efforts to build the community-controlled sector, and transforming government organisations so they are accountable, culturally safe and responsive to the needs, goals and cultures of First Nations Autistic people.



Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) people

Autistic people from CALD communities may encounter additional barriers in their daily lives. Communication and language differences, including differing cultural understandings of autism, can impact interactions with healthcare providers and other services that are not culturally responsive, potentially leading to misdiagnosis, delayed treatment or a lack of supports. Experiences of racism or racialisation can result in harm and further marginalisation, sometimes referred to as CARM.

Women and girls and gender diverse people



Autistic women, girls and gender diverse people can face substantial disadvantages due to misconceptions that autism primarily affects males and children, resulting in under-diagnosis and inadequate support tailored to their needs. Historical biases in research and service provision mean that many Autistic women, girls and gender diverse people are misdiagnosed or have their symptoms dismissed, leading to delayed diagnosis.

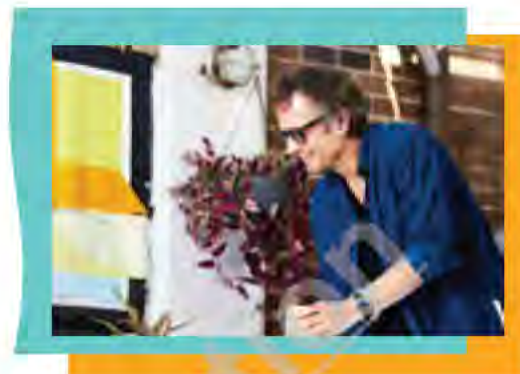
Although autism is becoming increasingly recognised in girls, many Autistic women and gender diverse people only discover their neurodivergence later in life, often after it is identified in their children or young family members. Additionally, Autistic mothers often encounter significant barriers and discrimination when seeking support, including facing judgement and assumptions about their ability to parent, which can severely impact their ability to access appropriate care and supports for themselves and their children.

LGBTQIA+ people

Autistic people are much more likely to identify as LGBTQIA+ than non-Autistic people.¹ Autistic people who identify as LGBTQIA+ can face increased discrimination when accessing services and supports and employment opportunities, as well as cultural stigmas, violence, abuse and exploitation because of their sexual/gender identities.

Older people

Many older people who were not diagnosed Autistic as children or earlier in life are misdiagnosed or have their symptoms dismissed, leading to delayed or no formal diagnosis, a lack of access to supports, age discrimination when searching for work, social isolation and marginalisation. Communication difficulties and sensory sensitivities can become more pronounced with age. This can impact on community and social connection, leading to increased risk of isolation, loneliness, neglect or exploitation. The combination of these factors can have detrimental effects on their mental health and well-being.



Children and young people

Feedback received through the consultation process indicated that Autistic children and young people can experience disproportionate rates of bullying, harassment, discrimination and educational exclusion. This can impact on social connection, health and wellbeing, and experiences and outcomes later in life.

People with very high support needs

Autistic people with very high support needs often experience autism as a disability, with significant challenges in communication, social interaction, sensory processing and/or behaviour regulation. They more often have co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and/or health conditions. As they are more reliant on others for informal and formal daily living support, Autistic people with very high support needs are at higher risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. They may also experience greater isolation from the community and/or marginalisation, including as a result of incorrect assumptions being made about their capability and preferences.

Families and carers are often a crucial support network for Autistic people with very high support needs, offering social and emotional support, assisting with daily activities and enabling access to supports, services and the community. Families and carers can themselves face challenges in navigating complex systems, such as healthcare and social services, and in overcoming barriers to advocating for, and securing, appropriate resources, accommodations and services that meet the unique needs of their loved one, as well as their own needs as a caregiver.

People with disability aged under 65 with substantially reduced functional capacity that means they are likely to need support for their whole life can access supports through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Eligibility for the NDIS is determined in accordance with the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (Cth) and is based on the impact of impairments, not on the type of disability or diagnosis. Autistic people aged under 65 with substantially reduced functional capacity that is, or is likely to be, life long, will continue to be supported through the NDIS. The Australian Government is committed to continuous improvements of the services and supports available to Autistic people with very high support needs and their families and carers, including through the NDIS. Where relevant, these will be informed by actions undertaken as part of this Strategy.



About Autism

More than **290,000** Australians have a diagnosis of autism.² However, the number of Autistic people living in Australia is likely to be substantially higher. This can be for different reasons. For example, historical approaches to diagnosis, cost or wait times to receive a diagnosis, or people may feel that diagnosis is not the right path for them.



'Even after getting a formal diagnosis, people often question whether I'm really Autistic or how much it actually impacts my life.'

– **Autistic person, 35, Brisbane**

Employment

Autistic people are almost **6 times more likely** to be **unemployed** than people without a disability.³



'I have experience of being unemployed and underemployed. I have two bachelor degrees, yet, worked in a supermarket on the checkouts for 15.5 years.'

– **Autistic person, 51, Perth**

Education

At least **3.8%** of Australian school aged children are Autistic, and autism is a lifelong condition.⁴

68.9% of Autistic 5–20 year olds attending school or an education institution experienced **difficulty at their place of learning**.⁵

Only **5.2%** of Autistic people had a bachelor degree or higher, compared with **19.7%** of people with a disability and **35.3%** of people without a disability.⁶

Safety, health and wellbeing

Autistic adults experience more **barriers to healthcare** than non-Autistic people.⁷

Autistic people are **2.5 times** more likely to experience depression than the general population.⁸



'It's hard to ask for help (with mental health), when half of the times you have, have been really negative.'

–Autistic person, Canberra

Compared to the general population, Autistic adults experience higher rates of physical and sexual violence and are more likely to be subject to cyclical or repeated instances of violence.⁹ They are experiencing **social exclusion** at higher rates than the general population.¹⁰

Autistic people are experiencing **discrimination** and are at higher risk of **homelessness** than the general population.¹¹

Autistic people are overrepresented in the **criminal justice system** and are likely to experience significant barriers in **accessing justice services**.¹²



What is the National Autism Strategy

This Strategy is a framework for improving the life outcomes for all Autistic people in the years ahead. It includes a vision, goal and guiding principles which will inform all action taken as part of this Strategy.

This Strategy is focussed on driving action and enabling change in areas of Australian Government responsibility across four key outcome areas:

- social inclusion
- economic inclusion
- diagnosis, services and supports
- health and mental health – the National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People (the Autism Health Roadmap).

Each outcome area covers a broad range of issue. This Strategy includes commitments for three of the four key outcome areas: social inclusion; economic inclusion; and diagnosis, services and supports. The Autism Health Roadmap will cover actions to improve health and mental health. Development of the Autism Health Roadmap is being led by the Department of Health and Aged Care through a separate but connected process to the Strategy.

Specific actions to achieve the commitments will be detailed in Action Plans. The [Action Plan](#) includes specific actions to achieve the Strategy's commitments and covers the period 2025–2026. The development of future actions will be informed by the work and findings of the Action Plan.

Future actions will also be co-designed with Autistic people and their families and carers, researchers, policy makers and the broader Autistic and autism community. These stakeholders will also be involved in implementation, monitoring and reporting on the Strategy.

Australian, state, territory, and local governments are each responsible for supporting Autistic people in areas where they have the main responsibility for funding or delivering programs and services. **See Appendix C** for roles and responsibilities of governments.

The Australian Government provided states and territories with information on the issues raised during consultations for this Strategy that relate to responsibilities of states and territories, or local governments. This is detailed in the consultation report for the Strategy and is available on the [Department of Social Services website](#).

Areas of shared responsibility will be referred to Disability Reform Ministers to consider shared approaches, where relevant: [Disability Reform Ministerial Council | Department of Social Services, Australian Government](#).

National Autism Strategy Foundations

The following references provide the foundation for the Strategy's Guiding Principles and form the basis for the Strategy.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)¹³

The UN CRPD came into force in 2008 and charges signatory countries, including Australia, with the responsibility to ensure people with disability enjoy their inherent right to life on an equal basis with others (Article 10 refers).

This Strategy's person-centred, rights-based approach aligns with the UN CRPD's guiding principles:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons.
- Non-discrimination.
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society.
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity.
- Accessibility.
- Equality between men and women and all genders.
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

Human Rights model of disability

The UN CRPD applies a human rights model of disability, recognising disability is a natural aspect of human diversity and humanity.

The human rights model recognises:

- Disability is a natural part of human diversity that must be respected and supported in all its forms.
- People with disability should enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.
- Impairment must not be used as an excuse to deny or restrict people's rights.

This Strategy adopts this model of disability to understand the experiences of Autistic people. This Strategy aims to address attitudinal, behavioural and structural barriers, and create change in society which enables Autistic people to experience more independence, inclusion and control

Strengths-based and neurodiversity-affirming approach

Rather than looking for ways to help Autistic people “fit in” in a neurotypical world, this Strategy takes a neurodiversity-affirming approach, valuing and respecting all neurotypes. It seeks to promote safety, understanding, acceptance and appreciation of neurodiversity. The need for change sits with society as a whole.



Vision Statement

The National Autism Strategy's vision is for a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life, in line with international human rights.

Goal

The goal of the Strategy is to improve the quality of life for all Autistic people in a way that is meaningful to them.

Guiding Principles

In line with Australia's commitments under the UN CRPD and the other six international human rights treaties to which Australia is a party, the Strategy will play an important role in protecting, promoting and realising the human rights of Autistic people.

The Guiding Principles set out how the Strategy foundations will be put into practice. The Strategy foundations include the human rights model of disability, strengths-based and neurodiversity-affirming approaches, and intersectionality.

In partnership – Nothing about us, without us

Implementation of this Strategy will be co-led and governed, with actions that are designed with Autistic people, and their families and carers and support networks. Representatives in co-governance will reflect the diversity within the Autistic and autism community and will prioritise the views and needs of priority cohorts identified in this Strategy.

Accessible based on Universal Design

The implementation of this Strategy will be accessible and based on Universal Design principles.

Self Determination and Autonomy

Actions implemented through this Strategy will foster the freedom and ability of Autistic people to make their own individual decisions about all aspects of their life.

Aligned and Accountable Outcomes

Actions implemented through this Strategy will be aligned with other key government strategies. This Strategy will be measurable, trauma-informed, accountable and evidence-based, underpinned by the three pillars of 'evidence-based practice': research, clinical expertise, and client preferences/lived experience involvement.

Acceptance and Inclusivity

This Strategy recognises that every Autistic person has unique strengths, abilities and attributes. This Strategy will seek to promote community understanding, acceptance and appreciation of all Autistic people for who they are. The Strategy and the Action Plan will take practical steps to educate the community about autism and promote acceptance of all Autistic people to achieve genuine inclusion and equity, so that all Autistic people are respected and valued equally within the community.

Safety and Rights

This Strategy will uphold the rights of all Autistic people and seek to reduce all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and vilification towards Autistic people. This includes ensuring that a culturally safe and trauma-informed approach is adopted in this Strategy's implementation.

Neurodiversity-Affirming, Individualised and Holistic

This Strategy promotes a neurodiversity-affirming, individualised and holistic person, family and community-centred approach. It recognises that there are different aspects of a person's identity that can overlap and shape their diverse needs, abilities and experiences. This includes factors such as: age, where they live, socio-economic status, income, education, culture and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, support needs, life experiences, communication needs and the extent of a person's support networks.

This Strategy acknowledges the importance of accounting for these diverse, and overlapping, and intersecting identities, needs, abilities and experiences across the whole of life in this Strategy's development, delivery and evaluation.



Outcomes and Commitments

The Australian Government is committed to improving life outcomes for all Autistic Australians of all ages, genders and cultural backgrounds. To deliver on this intent, this Strategy covers key reform areas including improving social connections, and improved access to services, healthcare, education and employment. The Strategy, in conjunction with the Autism Health Roadmap, will provide an ongoing focus for the Australian Government's efforts.

This Strategy's four key outcome areas are:

- social inclusion
- economic inclusion
- diagnosis, services and supports
- health and mental health – the Autism Health Roadmap, being led through a separate but connected process by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

The four outcome areas represent the key areas where Autistic people face systemic barriers and where improvements are needed to enhance overall wellbeing. They target the most fundamental factors that contribute to the quality of life for Autistic people living in Australia.

The grouping allows for an approach that addresses the interconnected aspects of Autistic people's lives. Social inclusion and economic inclusion tackle external barriers Autistic people face in society and the workforce, while outcome areas of diagnosis, services and supports, and health and mental health seek to address inequalities and the systemic needs for accessible and tailored support.

Improved outcomes in these areas will ensure that the Autistic and autism community can thrive and have the choice to access the same opportunities as everyone else.

These outcome areas were included in a discussion paper released for public comment in 2023. The discussion paper was informed by information gathered through other relevant consultation processes, inquiries and reviews. Feedback from this consultation process supported these outcome areas and informed development of a draft Strategy.

The Department of Social Services worked with the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council on a draft Strategy, which was released for public comment in 2024. Feedback received through both consultation processes indicated these key outcome areas, and the broader range of issues and potential actions related to the outcome areas, are important to the community.

The Autism Health Roadmap encompasses the health and mental health aspects of the broader Strategy and will seek to address the breadth of issues faced by Autistic people in the Australian healthcare system. It will outline actions to improve the physical and mental health of Australia's growing Autistic population.

The Strategy's outcome areas are underpinned by 22 commitments.

All areas and commitments have been developed following the Strategy's comprehensive co-design and consultation process drawing on the lived experience of Autistic people and their families and carers, advocates, researchers and other stakeholders and informed by the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council and Working Groups.

The commitments will be delivered over the life of the Strategy through the combination of actions in the first Action Plan and future actions.





Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in our society. Social inclusion allows the equal opportunity for people to learn, work, connect and collaborate with others, and have a voice, including those who are non-speaking or minimally-speaking. When people are equally included, they can participate.

Full participation in social, recreational, sporting, religious and cultural life is central to Autistic people living an accessible and connected life within their communities. This requires accessibility to be an integral part of the design of services and systems. It requires going beyond just physical accessibility. Providing easily accessible information about community services, events and facilities, and providing low sensory spaces, supports the inclusion of Autistic people in their communities.

Why it is important

Everyone should have the opportunity to participate in all aspects of life and society, free from all forms of discrimination. Without social inclusion, people are more likely to experience poor mental health, isolation, discrimination, abuse and violence. Social inclusion, and feeling connected, respected and valued in society is important for an individual's health, safety and wellbeing.

How it applies to Autistic people

Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks experience disproportionately high rates of social isolation, discrimination, abuse and violence. Factors contributing to low rates of social inclusion include the intersection with poor employment rates, a lack of community understanding of autism, limited opportunities to participate in the community and build social connections, unaccommodating built environments, issues with access to transport, and low levels of independent living.

Social Inclusion Commitments

1. Increase understanding, acceptance and appreciation of, and change attitudes towards, all Autistic people across all of society, through:
 - a. Greater public education including building a better understanding of the diversity of autism within workplaces and service systems, with a focus on health, education and the federal justice system.
 - b. Increasing representation of the diversity of Autistic people in the Australian Public Service, media, sports and the arts.
 - c. Increasing accessible and sensory-friendly public, broadcast and online spaces.
 - d. Increasing the capacity and capability of advocates and advocacy organisations to challenge and reduce stigma of autism and education of Autistic people and their families and carers about their rights.
2. Increase opportunities for social connections and peer support that reflect individual preferences.
3. Improve Australian Government service delivery, communication, and information to meet the needs of all Autistic people.
4. Ensure consideration of the needs of all Autistic people in the upcoming review of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and next statutory reviews of the associated disability standards.
5. Improve the safety and welfare of all Autistic people through the reduction of all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, bullying and vilification across all four Strategy outcome areas.

Delivering on these commitments will contribute to achieving the following impacts, highlighted as a high priority by the Autistic and autism community through consultation processes:

- The rights of Autistic people being upheld.
- Reduced harm experienced by Autistic people.
- Increased Autism awareness and acceptance in the general community.
- Increased inclusion of Autistic people within the community.
- Improved access to responsive supports, services and information.



Economic Inclusion

An inclusive economy ensures all parts of society, especially poor or socially disadvantaged groups, have full, fair, and equitable access to market opportunities as employees, leaders, consumers, entrepreneurs, and community members.

Employment and financial security are central to improving outcomes for Autistic people, including providing jobs and career opportunities, and having adequate income for people to meet their needs.

Employment supports Autistic people to have more control over their lives, be financially independent and have a better standard of living. Increasing employment opportunities for Autistic people includes encouraging business ownership and development, self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Additionally, evidence shows preparing young people for employment can have long-term benefits for their employment prospects and careers. Opportunities for education, training or work experience form important pathways to economic inclusion.

Adequate income provides increased financial security, economic independence and an appropriate standard of living, giving people more choice and control over their lives, and enabling their participation in community life. The income support system provides an important safety net for people with disability who are unable to work or cannot find employment.

Why it is important

Everyone should be able to access safe, secure and equitable education and employment opportunities. Economic inclusion has many benefits, including having an adequate income and stable employment, contributing to a person's wellbeing and financial security, as well as contributing to society and the economy overall. Educational settings and workplaces can also benefit from having people with a diversity of views, skills and experiences. Income support is an important support to help people with disability to gain employment and contribute to their economic independence.

The 2024 Australian Public Service Employee Census captured data on neurodivergence. Results showed 8.8% of respondents considered themselves to be neurodivergent, and a further 9.3% indicated they were not sure.¹⁴

The Australian Bureau of Statistics *Autism in Australia* (2022) data indicates that Autistic adults experience poorer outcomes in terms of employment with approximately 50% of Autistic people of working age participating in the workforce, compared to around 60% of people with disability of working age, and around 85% of people without disability of working age¹⁵. These statistics emphasise the need to address existing barriers faced by the Autistic and autism community in employment and economic settings.

How it applies to Autistic people

School education outcomes for Autistic people are poorer than those of the general population. Feedback received through the consultation process indicated that many people have reported experiences of discrimination and bullying in schools, and that school environments can pose multiple challenges for Autistic students. The unique learning styles of Autistic students can create barriers to accessing the curriculum, and some students may need a high level of support to participate in education. There were also numerous reports of school's failures to make adjustments and provide appropriate supports for Autistic students. Supporting Autistic students to transition from school to further education and employment is critical.

Stakeholders have reported poor employment outcomes for Autistic people in Australia as well as identifying underemployment as a significant issue. Autistic people often work below their potential and capacity, resulting in needing more support from families, carers and other support networks, and government funded services and social security. Barriers to employment range from low education attainment and limited work experience, social and communication difficulties, sensory issues, and anxiety with accessing public transport to get to work. Unsuitable recruitment practices, a lack of appropriate workplace supports, and discrimination and bullying also contribute to poor employment outcomes for Autistic people.

Economic Inclusion Commitments

6. Increase meaningful employment opportunities (including business ownership, self-employment, and entrepreneurship and social enterprises) for Autistic people.
7. Support employers to hire and retain Autistic employees through improving the accessibility of recruitment processes and workplace environments that are safe and inclusive for all Autistic people.
8. Improve the supports and services available to Autistic people to ensure they have choice and control over their education and careers.
9. Increase the diverse representation of Autistic people in management, senior executive and board positions promoting Autistic people as visible role models.
10. Improve inclusive practices, accommodations, awareness of communication needs and the quality and accessibility of advocacy resources for Autistic students, and their families, carers and support networks.

Delivering on these commitments will contribute to achieving the following impacts, highlighted as a high priority by the Autistic and autism community through consultation processes:

- Improved education opportunities and outcomes for Autistic people, and greater autism awareness and responsiveness within the education sector.
- Improved employment opportunities and outcomes for Autistic people, and greater autism awareness and responsiveness of employers, workplaces and in employment services.





Diagnosis, Services and Supports

Autism is diagnosed by health professionals who review an individual's characteristics such as social communication, behaviours and focused interests. Some people who do not have a formal diagnosis also self-identify as Autistic.

Primary healthcare providers, for example General Practitioners, are often the first point of contact for beginning the process by referring an individual to a health professional with experience in assessing neurodevelopmental differences and disabilities.

Once referred for an assessment, individuals, their families and carers and support networks should expect a timely and comprehensive assessment and referral to support services based on the individual's needs.

Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks can experience difficulties at all stages of the identification, assessment, and diagnosis process. Particularly the time it can take to receive a diagnosis, and the associated cost. It can also be hard to find, access and navigate appropriate supports and services once a person has an autism diagnosis.

Personal and community supports, including both specialist supports and mainstream services available to the general public, are fundamental to improving overall outcomes for Autistic people.

Why is it important

Access to neurodiversity-affirming early developmental monitoring, screening, and timely and comprehensive autism identification assessment and diagnosis, means an individual will be better able to access supports and services that meet their individual needs, improving long-term outcomes.

How it applies to Autistic people

The average age of diagnosis in children in Australia is about 3–4 years of age¹⁶, with the most frequent age for diagnosis being 5.9 years.¹⁷ This is despite research showing that identification is possible in infancy (from 0 to 12-months of age), and diagnosis is possible as early as 18–24 months of age.¹⁸ Early identification and diagnosis leads to better education, social and economic outcomes for Autistic people. It also leads to better mental health in adulthood, and less feelings of stigma and shame about being Autistic.

Early diagnosis of autism is considered best practice, increasing access to early support. Yet many children are diagnosed after 3 years. Earlier diagnosis is important and is likely to promote more positive outcomes at school age due to increased opportunity for early support.¹⁹

Diagnosis is likely to occur later for girls, women, and gender diverse people, those with less overt or ‘internalised’ presentations, those living in regional, rural and remote areas, and those who have co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and medical health conditions with overlapping diagnostic criteria. Without timely identification and diagnosis, individuals may not be able to access appropriate supports.

Multiple stakeholders, including Autistic women, Autistic gender diverse people, First Nations Autistic people and Autistic people from CALD/CARM communities, reported significant delays in obtaining an autism diagnosis, with the optimal waiting period of 3 months, and the median wait time for an assessment in the public system being 16 weeks, with some stakeholders advising the wait period could be significantly longer²⁰. Other barriers include: the complexity involved in providing an autism diagnosis; the reliance on the expertise of the professionals involved; inconsistent approaches to diagnosis; availability of diagnostic services; the cost of diagnostic services; and awareness and understanding of autism.

Support for Autistic people can be provided through an often complex mix of disability supports funded by the NDIS (see Text Box on page 14), non-NDIS funded mainstream and community services and supports, as well as informal supports provided by families, carers and support networks.

There are high levels of unmet demand, and service gaps and inadequacies. The cost of services is also a concern for many, as well as the lack of information and support when navigating systems and services. The lack of service integration across sectors, and poor understanding of autism in both community and professional settings, and workforce shortages, were also commonly identified barriers.

Diagnosis, Services and Supports Commitments

Diagnosis

11. Consider the use, accuracy, feasibility and acceptability of current identification screening and diagnostic tools. Work with relevant professional bodies to develop a set of standardised co-designed training/professional development and resource materials to support professionals involved in the identification and diagnosis of autism to improve the experience, and quality of this process for Autistic people (including intersectional cohorts) and their families and carers.
12. Develop best practice resources to support Autistic people and their families, carers and support networks through the identification, assessment and diagnosis process.
13. Explore ways to make autism diagnosis and assessment processes more affordable.
14. Consider early screening and developmental monitoring to promote early identification and diagnosis of autism and improved access to health and other professionals.

Services and Supports

15. Improve access to quality, timely, neurodiversity-affirming and equitable supports and services for Autistic people, including for people living in rural, regional and remote areas.
16. Encourage greater representation of people with lived experience in delivering supports and services to Autistic people.
17. Develop a set of best practice training and resource materials for people providing supports and services to Autistic people.
18. Assess the availability and suitability of current decision-making tools aimed at empowering Autistic people to make informed decisions about all areas of their life and consider ways to improve access to high quality decision-making tools.
19. Work with states and territories to improve the experience of Autistic people accessing supports through the NDIS, disability supports outside the NDIS and mainstream services.

Actions delivered under these commitments will take into account: the differences in presentation by different cohorts (for example: girls, women and gender diverse people); intersectionality; and the need for tools, supports and services to be tailored for different cohorts and to be neurodiversity-affirming. The development and delivery of actions will seek to be co-designed or involve Autistic community/academics as appropriate.

Delivering on these commitments will contribute to achieving the following impacts, highlighted as a high priority by the Autistic and autism community through consultation processes:

- Improved awareness of, and access to, respectful assessment and diagnosis, including early diagnosis.
- Improved information and support to navigate the assessment and diagnosis process.
- Increased quality, timely, neurodiversity-affirming and equitable access to services and supports.



Health and Mental Health

Outcomes and actions to improve the health and mental health of Autistic people are being developed through the Autism Health Roadmap which is being led by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

The Autism Health Roadmap aims to address the breadth of issues faced by Autistic people in the healthcare system with actions to improve health and mental health outcomes for the growing population of Autistic people in Australia.

This includes proposing actions which, if implemented, will lead to improvements to general and autism specialised healthcare services and build the capacity of the people who work in health and mental health services to better support Autistic people, and their families and carers.

The draft Autism Health Roadmap is focussed on six key areas of health and mental health, referred to as focus areas. Focus areas include:

- Improving support for Autistic people, their families and carers, in health and mental health services.
- Improving the quality, safety and availability of autism-affirming health and mental health care across the lifespan.
- Building better connections between health, mental health, and other service sectors, including the NDIS.
- Improving autism education and training for health and disability professionals.
- Strengthening research and data on health and mental health of Autistic people and their families and carers.
- Arrangements for oversight, monitoring, and implementation of the Autism Health Roadmap.

More information about the Autism Health Roadmap can be found at www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-roadmap-to-improve-the-health-and-mental-health-of-autistic-people.

Implementation – driving change and better outcomes

Overview

To support the achievement of commitments under the Strategy, Action Plans will set out how the Government intends to effect change over the life of the Strategy. The Action Plan released with the Strategy covers the period 2025 to 2026. The development of future actions will be informed by a combination of engagement and co-design with the Autistic and autism community, and by the work and findings of the Action Plan.

The Action Plan has been informed by the work of the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council and Working Groups, the national consultations undertaken during the development of this Strategy, and a range of reports commissioned by the Australian Government.

During the period of the Action Plan, ongoing governance arrangements will be established and an Evidence Framework comprising a Theory of Change, an Outcomes Framework, and Evidence Evaluation and Reporting Framework will be developed with the Autistic and autism community. The primary focus of actions within the Action Plan will be on reviewing and examining a number of issues to help inform more significant and longer-term action.

Enabling Commitments

Successful implementation of the Strategy and actions under the Action Plan, and development as well as implementation of future actions requires effective governance, reporting and evaluation, with supporting research.

Governance

20. Develop a governance framework to support:

- a. strong accountability mechanisms
- b. continuing co-leadership through a representative advisory group to oversee implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan and development of subsequent actions, and active involvement of a diverse range of Autistic people, as well as families and carers, and professionals within the autism sector
- c. whole-of-government, cross-sectoral and coordinated approaches to implementation.

Research

21. Ensure Australian Government funded autism research conducted in Australia is underpinned by the Strategy's Guiding Principles and is used to inform policy and service delivery with a focus on priority cohorts.

Evidence, Evaluation and Reporting

22. Develop a National Autism Strategy Evidence, Evaluation and Reporting Framework (including Outcomes and Process Frameworks), using Theory of Change and Program Logic models. Including a Participatory Evidence Framework involving Autistic people and their families and carers in the design, methods, and modes of analysis, and transparent reporting mechanisms, co-produced with the Autistic and autism community.



Governance

The development of this Strategy was supported by governance arrangements and the implementation of this Strategy will also be supported by governance that ensures continued deep engagement, trust and accountability over the delivery of commitments and achievement of intended outcomes. The Strategy's governance arrangements will consult with the Autism Health Roadmap's governance arrangements as appropriate.

A governance framework will be developed as part of implementation planning. Key features will include:

- The Minister for Social Services having oversight in relation to the implementation of the Strategy.
- Co-leadership through a representative group of Autistic people and their families and carers, researchers and professionals, and representatives from relevant Australian Government departments.
- Continuing collaboration across the Australian Government.
- Ongoing monitoring and public reporting about implementation of the Strategy.
- In any areas of joint responsibility between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, the Strategy will guide the Australian Government's engagement with jurisdictions.

The governance framework will be enhanced to include:

- A truly whole-of-government approach, recognising coordinated effort is required across all areas of government and sectors including health, education, disability, and employment.
- Ongoing ways to listen to and include Autistic people and their families and carers, support network and communities.
- An evaluation of the Strategy involving Autistic people and their families and carers.
- Accountability and governance structures will be outlined in the Action Plans, allowing the structure to best respond to the specific priorities/actions identified.

Why is it important

The governance framework will set out a visible and robust accountability structure to drive implementation and decision-making under the Strategy.

How it applies to Autistic People

The governance framework will identify and prioritise areas of focus, drive change across these areas, and report on progress made to improve the lives of Autistic people.

Research

The National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) has been established under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 (ADS). The NDRP will facilitate collaborative and inclusive disability research, providing a stronger evidence foundation for policy and service delivery.

There are also a number of organisations and research bodies already working hard to build our understanding of the lived experience of Autistic people and identify the types of supports that deliver the best outcomes for Autistic people of all ages.

Evidence, Evaluation and Reporting Framework

Effective development and implementation of autism strategies, policies, programs and service delivery in Australia have been impacted by several existing data gaps and inconsistencies, such as:

- Current estimates of prevalence varying greatly.
- Disparity in autism diagnosis rates between genders and across age groups, which suggests potential underdiagnosis in certain cohorts.
- Limited data on longer term educational and employment outcomes.
- Limited data on the impacts of intersectional factors on the experiences and outcomes for individuals.

A robust Evidence, Evaluation and Reporting Framework (Evidence Framework) that includes more comprehensive data collection, research and evaluation will be integral to the development, implementation and impact of the Strategy. It will advance the vision of the Strategy by measuring what matters to Autistic people and driving the use of data and evidence to inform effective, practical change. The core components of the Strategy's Evidence Framework include: a Theory of Change (underpinned by related logic chains); an outcomes framework; and a monitoring and evaluation framework. These can form the single comprehensive Strategy Evidence Framework or exist as separate interrelated pieces.

Core component	Contribution to Strategy Evidence Framework
Theory of Change and logic chains	Sets out the evidence, assumptions and theories about the investments, initiatives and mechanisms that will drive the Strategy to achieve good outcomes.
Outcomes Framework	Specifies the progressive indicators and outcome measures to enable assessment of the progress and impact of the Strategy.
Evaluation Framework	Assesses what, why, how and for whom the Strategy is making a difference. What has been implemented? How is it working? Why? Under what conditions? For which people? What difference has been produced?

A Theory of Change explains the conditions and underpinned by an evidence-base, why certain activities or actions will lead to a particular outcome.

This is a way to make sure there is a solid rationale, based on the best research and evidence, and have confidence the Strategy can achieve the outcomes wanted from the actions proposed in the Action Plan, and any subsequent actions, under this Strategy.

The Theory of Change responds to key problems identified by Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks, and the organisations who work with them. It explains how and why Strategy initiatives and actions should lead to improved life outcomes for Autistic people and their families and carers.

It reflects the evidence, research and findings about the nature of the problems, issues and concerns experienced by Autistic people and their families and carers, and outlines what will be effective in creating positive change.

Importantly the Strategy's Theory of Change is also informed by the broader evidence relating to the effective implementation of policy and systems change initiatives.

The Theory of Change is underpinned by a series of Outcomes logic chains which trace the link between major actions under the Strategy, and the related outputs and the outcomes these are expected to create over the short, medium, and longer term.

Together these components identify the outcomes being sought, the indicators and measures of success, why, what, how and when actions, investments and initiatives related to the Strategy are assessed and reported on. Underpinned by strong governance and effective leadership, these components also ensure there is strong transparency and accountability for outcomes across the life of the Strategy.

Objectives of the Evidence Framework

Major objectives of the Evidence Framework are to:

1. **Provide national leadership** to develop strategic, robust data and evidence that continuously informs policies and practices that are inclusive and responsive to Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks.
2. **Address significant data gaps** that exist in relation to the needs, experiences and outcomes of Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks.
3. **Build capacity to measure relevant experiences and outcomes for Autistic people** of different ages and circumstances, including intersectional groups identified in the Strategy.
4. **Understand how place impacts on outcomes and experiences of Autistic people** living in different locations and parts of Australia.
5. **Support the development of evidence informed approaches to policy and practices** by establishing indicators, outcome measures and data sets for the life of the Strategy.

6. **Provide for national independent monitoring and reporting** on identified outcomes in the Strategy.
7. **Drive co-produced research that builds capability and understanding of the experience of Autistic people** in relation to the Strategy's key themes.
8. **Inform the effective, efficient and thoughtful application of funding** and resources to advance the vision, purpose and priorities of the Strategy, and continuous quality improvement over the life of the Strategy.

Evaluation and Reporting

An Evaluation Plan will be developed as part of the Action Plan. It will outline how we will measure the impact of actions under the Strategy on achieving the Strategy's goal of improving life outcomes for all Autistic people.

The Evaluation Good Practice Guide Checklist developed under ADS will underpin the approach to evaluation activities.²¹

Evaluation activities will be both quantitative (for example: measuring changes in the labour force participation rate for Autistic people) and qualitative (for example: documenting the positive changes experienced by individual Autistic people and their families and carers). Consistent with the commitment to accountability, evaluation reports will be publicly available.



Acronyms

AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ADS	Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031
Autism CRC	Autism CRC is an independent national source of evidence for best practice in relation to autism across the lifespan and the spectrum.
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CARM	Culturally and Racially Marginalised
Committee	Senate Select Committee on Autism
(Cth)	Commonwealth
DDA	<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i>
DRC	Royal Commission into Violence Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2023)
DSM-5 TR	DSM-5 American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition
DSS	Department of Social Services
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual. The + stands for all other identities not encompassed in the short acronym.
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency – the agency responsible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDRP	National Disability Research Partnership
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
Oversight Council	National Autism Strategy Oversight Council
UN	United Nations
UN CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Glossary

Ableism	Ableism refers to attitudes and behaviours that label people with disability as different, less than or inferior to people without disability, incapable of exercising choice and control and a burden on society. Ableism, like other forms of discrimination, can manifest both personally and structurally.
Accessible	Environments, facilities, services, products and information that people are able to use and interact with in a way that suits their needs.
Assistive devices and technologies	Devices and technologies designed, made, or adapted to assist people with disability to participate in activities more independently.
Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)	This includes all the ways a person can communicate without using spoken language, including use of gestures, sign language, pictures, technology or a combination of these that reflect the preferences of the person. Access to AAC provides language input and output that allows people to participate and express their views.
Autistic and autism community	Refers to the collective community of Autistic people, their families and carers, friends and support networks, advocacy groups, researchers, and other people in their lives.
Autism	Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference. Autistic people experience differences in the way they process information and interact with their environment compared to non-Autistic people. This means the way that Autistic people communicate, connect with others, and engage with aspects of day-to-day life are different to those of non-Autistic people.
Autism Health Roadmap	The National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People
Autistic burnout	Autistic burnout results from chronic life stress and a mismatch of expectations and abilities without adequate supports. It is characterised by pervasive, long-term (typically 3 or more months) exhaustion, loss of function, and reduced tolerance to stimulus.

<p>Autistic people with very high support needs</p>	<p>Also known as profound autism, severe autism, severe and profound autism, profound needs, profound and multiple learning disabilities, high support needs, very significant supports, high dependency needs and requiring intensive support may have the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptive functioning requiring 24-hour access to an adult who can care for them if concerns arise, being unable to be left completely alone in a residence, and not being able to take care of basic daily adaptive needs. Significant person-to-person care and support with daily living skills and personal care. Complex communication needs/language impairment which include being non-verbal, minimally verbal or unreliable speakers with complex representations. Constant or significant monitoring due to safety concerns such as self-injurious behaviours, pica, and absconding. This includes as adults Life-long/permanent. Adaptive behaviour score.
<p>Autonomy</p>	<p>A person's right and freedom to make decisions, control their life and exercise choice.</p>
<p>Best Practice</p>	<p>In the context of the National Autism Strategy, best practice is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths-based, trauma-informed and neurodiversity-affirming. • Embracing safety, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and respect for diversity. • Co-leadership between government and the Autistic and autism community. • Informed and guided by lived experience, expertise and insights. • Evidence-based decision making (see definition of evidence based). • Data-driven, outcomes focussed, with robust monitoring and evaluation. • Culturally safe. • Includes people with diverse support needs, including those with very high support needs, and their families and carers.

Camouflaging	<p>An overarching term with 3 categories:</p> <p>Compensation – Strategies used to actively compensate for difficulties in social situations. Examples include: copying body language and facial expressions and learning social cues from movies and books.</p> <p>Masking – Strategies used to hide Autistic characteristics or portray a non-Autistic persona. Examples include: adjusting face and body to appear confident and/or relaxed and forcing eye contact.</p> <p>Assimilation – Strategies used to try to fit in with others in social situations. Examples include: putting on an act and avoiding or forcing interactions with others</p>
Carer	<p>Someone who provides supports to a person with disability on an unpaid basis, often a family member. These family members can include young people and carers. Some legislation refers to ‘carers’ and some people with disability prefer the term over ‘support person’.</p>
Co-delivery	<p>The process of collaborating with stakeholders and end-users to apply and maintain aspects of the completed project, products, services, systems, policies, laws and research.</p>
Co-design	<p>A design process where stakeholders are equal partners and take leadership roles in the design of products, services, systems, policies, laws and research.</p>
Co-led/ Co-leadership	<p>Stakeholders equally share power and influence over decisions, rather than one being a single leader.</p>
Co-occurring conditions	<p>The occurrence of more than one neurotype, disability, or medical health condition at the same time.</p>
Complex communication needs	<p>Complex communication needs is a broad term, which describes people with difficulties understanding speech, using speech or with little or no speech. It includes people who are able to speak but may have difficulty with comprehension or expressing their wants and needs; those who require extra time to process what is said and to respond; and those who are not able to speak but can express themselves through augmentative and alternative communication.</p>

Co-production	An extension of 'co-design', where stakeholders are involved in the development and design, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of products, services, systems, policies, laws and research.
Culturally safe	An outcome that respects, supports and empowers the cultural rights, identity, values, beliefs and expectations of a particular culture while providing quality services that meet their need
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)	This broad term describes communities with diverse languages, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, traditions, societal structures and religions. This include people with a different heritage or linguistic background than dominant Australian culture and language, people with dual heritage, and people who are migrants and refugees. Some members of the Deaf community and Auslan users also identify as members of a cultural minority.
Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM)	This term refers to people who face marginalisation due to their race. The term 'culturally' is added because these people may also face discrimination due to their culture or background
Developmental monitoring	A process whereby children's development is routinely observed across time by health and/or education professionals to identify if any developmental differences are present.
Disability Representative Organisation (DRO)	A peak organisation providing systemic advocacy and representation for people with disability.
Evidence-based	<p>The definition of evidence-based is comprised of three pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research evidence (science). 2. Clinical expertise (trauma-informed, culturally responsive, LGBTQIA+ inclusive). 3. Clients' values and preferences. <p>These pillars should be underpinned by lived experience and none of the pillars are to be valued higher than the other, they must all work together to be considered evidence based.</p>
First Nations person or people	First Nations or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the first peoples of Australia. They are not one group but comprise hundreds of groups that have their own distinct set of languages, histories and cultural traditions.

Human rights model of disability	Disability is a natural part of human diversity that must be respected and supported in all its forms. People with disability should enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others, including: respect for their inherent dignity; freedom from all forms of violence and abuse; and to participate fully in the community.
Informal supports	The social support networks that provide protection for people with disability by increasing connections, relationships and visibility in the wider community.
Intersectionality	Intersectionality refers to ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation based on attributes such as: age; disability; ethnicity; gender identity; race; religion; and sexual orientation. Intersectionality recognises that the causes of disadvantage or discrimination do not exist independently, but intersect and overlap, resulting in compounding impacts.
Lived experience	First-hand involvement or direct experiences and choices of a given person, and the knowledge they gain from it, as opposed to the knowledge a given person gains from second-hand or mediated source.
Lived experience of parent/unpaid carer	First-hand involvement or direct experiences gained from unpaid care of an Autistic person, as opposed to the knowledge a person gains from second-hand or mediated source.
Medical model of disability	A deficit approach that views impairment or disability as an individual inadequacy that must be fixed or remediated.
Meltdown	Externalised response to an overwhelming situation. A meltdown is not a tantrum or something that can be controlled.
Multiply Neurodivergent	People who have two or more neurodivergent neurotypes, for example: autism and ADHD.
Multiculturalism	Australia's vibrant, modern multicultural society is a national strength. Multiculturalism is a central characteristic of a shared Australian identity, alongside Australia's First Nations traditions and its British institutions. Our national identity continues to grow from pre-settlement to today and into the future.

Neurodiversity-affirming practice	Neurodiversity-affirming practice is a strengths and rights-based approach to brain differences that can take many forms depending on each person's needs and context. It promotes safety through accepting and valuing differing ways of thinking, learning, communicating and experiencing the world. Rather than trying to 'fix' or change neurodivergent people to fit into a narrow idea of what is considered 'normal' or 'better', neurodiversity-affirming practice aims to provide supports, services, accommodations and adjustments that are person-centred and affirm neurodivergent identity and individual needs.
Neurodivergent and Neurodiverse	<p>Neurodivergent – A person or people whose neurodevelopment falls outside of (or diverges from) the range usually considered "typical".</p> <p>Neurodiverse – A collective term for groups including mixed neurodevelopment, for example this may be a group of Autistic and non-Autistic people or neurodivergent and neurotypical people.</p>
Neurodiversity	A term used to describe the natural variation and development in human neuro cognition and within communities. Although all people process the world differently, some differences are grouped and named. The neurodiversity of a community arises from the presence of both neurodivergent and neurotypical people.
Neurotype	A type of brain, in terms of how a person interprets and responds.
Neurotypical	A label for people who are not neurodivergent.
Outcome Evaluation Framework	A systematic way to assess the extent to which a program has achieved its intended results.

Pathological Demand Avoidance	<p>Pathological Demand Avoidance, or Persistent Drive for Autonomy (PDA), is considered a profile or subtype of autism. It is characterised by an extreme need for control and autonomy driven by high levels of anxiety or an automatic nervous system threat response, which results in demand avoidance, emotional regulation difficulties and a heightened reaction to stress.</p> <p>Although PDA is not captured within the current DSM5-TR, the PDA Society United Kingdom have developed guidelines to identify a PDA profile.²²</p> <p>PDA is considered significantly impactful.</p>
Participatory Evaluation Framework	A framework that involves the stakeholders of a program or policy in the evaluation process.
Participatory Evidence Framework	A framework for conducting research and generating knowledge centred on the belief that those who are most impacted by research should be involved in framing the questions, the design, methods, and the modes of analysis of such research projects.
Process Evaluation Framework	Assesses whether the program is being implemented as originally intended, what services are being delivered, who is receiving those services, and perceptions of the program among stakeholders.
Program Logic Model	A visual representation that describes how an initiative is intended to work by linking activities with outputs and short, medium and longer-term outcomes.
Reasonable accommodation	Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines reasonable accommodation as ‘necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms’.
Racialisation	This is a process by which groups of people come to be seen by others as belonging to a distinct racial group and are treated differently or negatively impacted because of this.

Reasonable adjustment	<i>The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) s 4(1) defines an adjustment to be made by a person as a reasonable adjustment 'unless making the adjustment would impose an unjustifiable hardship on the person'.</i>
Restrictive practice	Any action, approach or intervention that has the effect of limiting the rights or freedom of movement of a person. Restrictive practices include physical restraints, chemical restraints, mechanical restraints, environmental restraints and seclusion.
Screening	Assessing individuals to identify the presence or absence of disabilities, conditions and/or other differences.
Sensory differences	Acute awareness of light, sound, texture touch, taste and/or smell, commonly experienced by Autistic people.
Shutdown	An internalised response to an overwhelming situation.
Social model of disability	The social model of disability recognises attitudes, practices and structures can be disabling and act as barriers preventing people from fulfilling their potential and exercising their rights as equal members of the community. The social model seeks to change society in order to accommodate people with disability. It does not seek to change people with disability to accommodate society. It supports the view that people with disability have the right to be fully participating on an equal basis with others.
Stimming	Behaviour that many Autistic people engage in to calm, comfort, soothe and regulate themselves. Stimming behaviours can also provide enjoyment to Autistic people.
Support network	These networks refer to the informal relationships people have with family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and other members of their community, that help them achieve their personal goals
Theory of change	A method that explains how a given intervention, or set of interventions, are expected to lead to a specific development change, drawing on a causal analysis based on available evidence. It serves as a roadmap, illuminating the causal relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Trauma	The lasting adverse impacts that may arise when a person has lived through an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced as physically or psychologically harmful or life threatening.
Trauma-informed	Frameworks and strategies to ensure that the practices, policies and culture of an organisation and its staff understand, recognise and respond to the effects of trauma and minimise as far as possible, the risk that people may be re-traumatised.
Triggers	Every Autistic person is different, but sensory differences, changes in routine, anxiety, and communication differences are common triggers that may result in certain behaviours.
Universal Design	Universal design is the design of buildings, products or environments to make them accessible to most people, regardless of age, disability, background or any other factors.
Whole-of-government framework	Joint activities performed by a range of departments and/or agencies in order to provide a common solution to particular issues.

Appendices

Appendix A – How the National Autism Strategy was developed

Appendix B – Co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and medical health conditions

Appendix C – Roles and responsibilities of governments

Appendix D – Connection with other Australian Government action

Appendix A – How the National Autism Strategy was developed

On 27 November 2019, the Senate established a Select Committee on Autism (the Committee) to inquire into and report on the services, support, and life outcomes for Autistic people. The Committee delivered its final report on 25 March 2022.

A key recommendation of the Committee's report is to develop a person and family-centred national autism strategy. The Committee recommends the Strategy should address the whole-of-life needs for Autistic people and align with other national strategies and be informed by the recommendations of the Committee's inquiry, and the findings of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

The Australian Government committed funding in the October 2022–23 and May 2023–24 Federal Budgets towards the development of the Strategy and the Autism Health Roadmap.

Development of the Strategy was led by the Department of Social Services, reporting to the Minister for Social Services. Development of the Autism Health Roadmap is being led through a separate, but connected process, by the Department of Health and Aged Care, reporting to the Minister for Health and Aged Care.

Autistic people, their families and carers and support networks, advocates, researchers and other stakeholders were asked what needs to be done through a Strategy to help improve outcomes for Autistic people living in Australia across all stages of life.

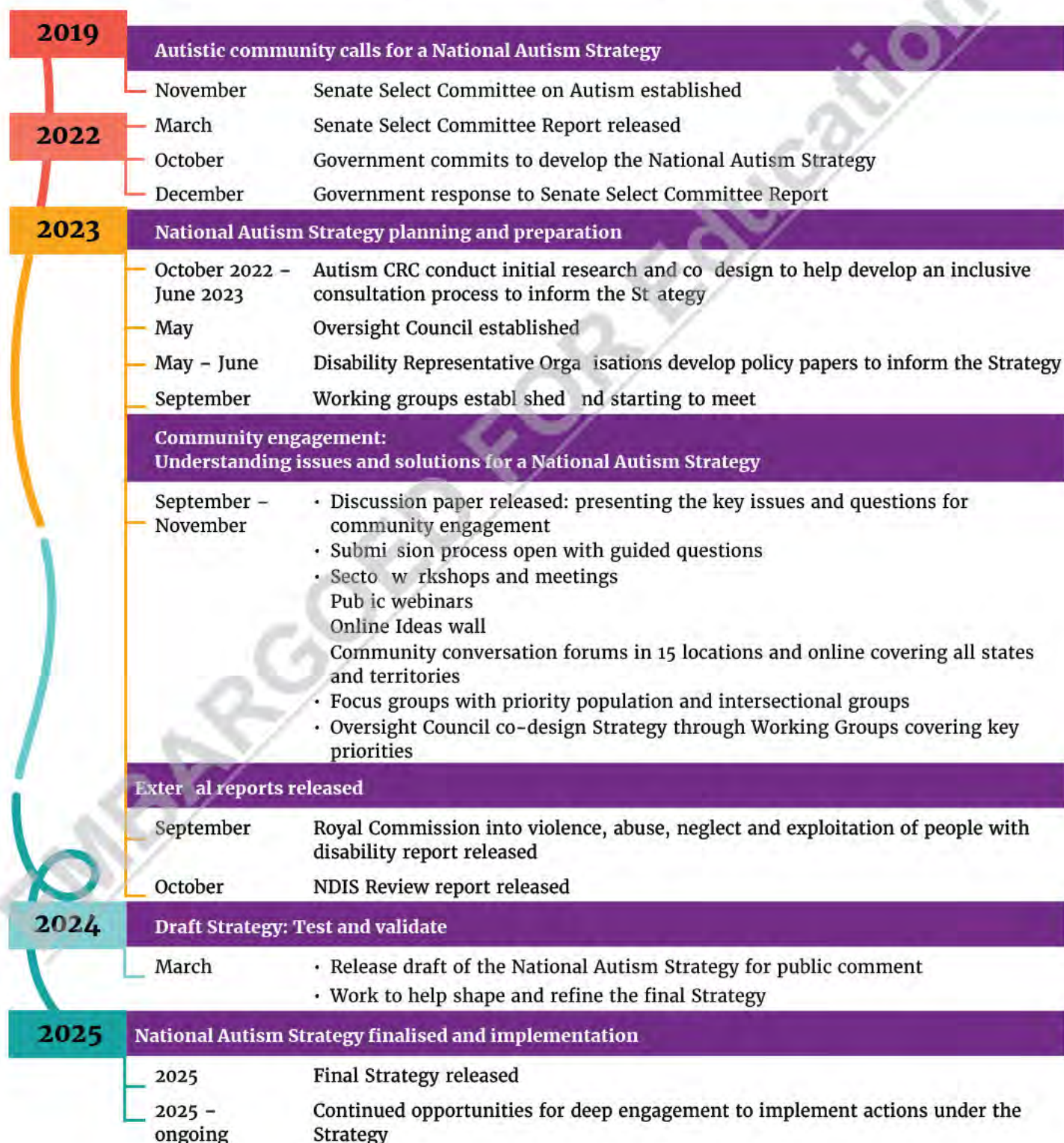
A multi-method engagement process was led by engagement specialists, The Social Deck, between 4 September 2023 and 21 August 2024. Community engagement was designed with consideration of the Autism CRC co-design and community insights report.²³ This approach aimed to support as many people as possible to contribute in a variety of ways and to choose the methods that best suited them. This included the opportunity to contribute no matter where they lived in Australia.

There were 3,467 participations with people and organisations from all states and territories. Autistic people were the largest contributor to these consultations, followed by families.

The engagement process recognised that there is very little research and evidence available relating to the life experiences, needs and views of Autistic First Nations people. To ensure the views of Autistic First Nations people were captured in development of the Strategy, additional culturally appropriate First Nations engagements were held online and in-community by First Nations engagement specialists.

Community and stakeholder engagement to develop the Strategy

The below graphic demonstrates the journey so far to develop the National Autism Strategy.



Key themes emerging from the consultation process

The consultation covered vast areas of discussion, with important issues and ideas raised across all stages of a person's life.

Rights, autonomy and safety

- Ensuring equal opportunities is a right that needs to be supported by legislation and systems, and anti-discrimination protections should be better enforced.
- Promoting and supporting self-advocacy and supported decision making to uphold the rights and dignity of Autistic people, including families and carers.
- Recognising and nurturing leadership of Autistic individuals.
- Ensuring clear accountability and strong governance in implementing and monitoring the Strategy.
- Person-centred, individualised, intersectional and culturally responsive, particularly when it comes to supporting the rights, autonomy and diversity of the Autistic and autism community.

Understanding autism

- Improving community understanding and acceptance of autism.
- Implementing national awareness and public education campaigns.
- Understanding autism training for consumer-facing services.
- Supporting advocacy to challenge and reduce the stigma often faced by Autistic individuals.
- Educating people about autism from a young age.
- Ensuring positive representation in media, and in sports and the arts.
- Understanding Autistic people with a Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) profile.

Social inclusion

- Sensory friendly public, physical and online spaces.
- Supporting social connections and peer support.
- Improving access to legal support and a more inclusive justice system.
- Improving and adapting communication and information.
- Having access to accessible transport.
- Neurodiversity-affirming spaces and support systems.

Education and learning

- Autism training for teachers and schools.
- Improving and creating pathways and transitions from schooling to further education and work.
- More supports for Autistic students.
- Inclusive higher education.
- Inclusive educational practices.

Employment and income support

- Employment support and training for Autistic people.
- Autism-friendly workplaces.
- Adequacy of income support.
- Removing hiring biases.

Diagnosis, services and supports

- Ensuring affordable, accessible and safe services.
- Providing safe and inclusive diagnosis.
- Supporting families and carers.
- Addressing issues with NDIS access and use.
- Ensuring affordable and timely diagnosis.
- Improving diagnostic tools and processes.
- Ensuring continuity of support services.
- Providing respite services for caregivers.

Health and mental health

- Providing autism-friendly health and mental healthcare.
- Training for health and mental healthcare professionals.
- Caring for people with co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities, mental health conditions and medical health conditions.
- Addressing high rates of mental illness and suicide.
- Ensuring adequate support for people with a PDA profile.

Research

- Improving the research and evidence base around the experiences and needs of Autistic people and their families and carers.
- Governance, accountability, monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensuring commitments and actions are designed with Autistic people and are funded and embedded.
- Ensuring appropriate Autistic co-led, co-design and co-production implementation to ensure clear accountability.
- Provide mechanisms for continual feedback to ensure the Strategy is flexible and adapts to changes in community needs and expectations.
- Evaluation and reporting processes to be co-led by Autistic people and options available to align actions based on ongoing feedback and evaluation.

Communication

- Put the views and experiences of Autistic people at the centre of the Strategy's implementation.
- Provide regular updates on the implementation and evaluation of the Strategy, using accessible and easy to understand communication.

Appendix B – Common co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and health conditions

Common co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and health conditions include, but are not limited to:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Intellectual Developmental Disorder (Intellectual Disability)
- Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Epilepsy
- Sensory processing differences
- Rejection sensitivity dysphoria
- Alexithymia
- Sleep disorders
- Learning differences such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia
- Speech and language delays, differences and disorders
- Global Developmental Delay
- Developmental Coordination Disorder (also known as Dyspraxia)
- Tic Disorders (such as Tourette's Disorder)
- Chronic migraine
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Eating disorders, such as avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID), Anorexia Nervosa, and Bulimia
- Fragile X Syndrome
- Rett's Syndrome
- Down Syndrome
- Deafness
- Blindness
- Metabolic conditions
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Complex trauma
- Prolonged and complicated grief
- Medical conditions, such as Crohn's disease, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, Mast Cell Activation Syndrome, and Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome.

Just like in any other community, there is great diversity within the Autistic and autism community. People may or may not identify with their diagnosis, as Autistic, neurodivergent or as having or not having a disability.

How and when an Autistic person shares information about their identity is a personal decision that can change over time. This may be influenced by factors such as the extent of the functional challenges they experience and the environment they are in.

Appendix C – Roles and Responsibilities of Governments

This Strategy is focused on actions related to the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government.

Listing key government roles and responsibilities helps everyone understand which level of government is responsible for the systems that may be used by people with disability.

The lists of government roles and responsibilities that is included in this Appendix is from ADS and shows where one level of government holds primary responsibility for the delivery of a system. There is also a list showing systems where responsibilities are shared to an extent that primary responsibility for delivery cannot be assigned to one level of government.

More detailed information about roles and responsibilities, as well as some of the key systems outside of government, can be accessed through ADS Hub²⁴. This information includes:

- Points of contact for people to identify and contact the agency responsible for delivering the service they want to access or to handle a specific issue they are experiencing.
- Legislation and agreements outlining the funding, regulation and operational responsibility for those services and systems.
- The NDIS Applied Principles and Tables of Support setting out responsibilities between the NDIS and other service systems.

People who do not have access to the internet can contact the National Disability Information Gateway telephone helpline on 1800 643 787.

The list of government roles and responsibilities is high-level and does not include every support, service or system. The lists do not include all systems provided by governments.

Government Roles and Responsibilities

Services the Australian Government delivers

NDIS* (administration)

- Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC)
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- Employment services
- Income support payments
- Federal justice system
- Australian Federal Police
- Child Care Subsidy

- Medicare Benefits Schedule
- General practitioners
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- Aged Care system
- My Aged Care
- Veterans' Care system
- Universities
- Hearing Services Program
- Commonwealth Ombudsman
- Australian Human Rights Commission

Services state and territory governments deliver

Public, social and community housing

- Public hospitals
- Community health services
- Home and Community Care programs for under 65s
- Public transport services
- Public primary and secondary schools
- TAFE/Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- Kindergartens and pre-schools
- Jurisdictional court systems and correctional centres
- State and territory Police
- Guardianship, Public trustees and Ombudsman
- Child protection
- Community visitors programs for disability **
- Domestic and family violence services
- Major sporting facilities
- State and territory human rights/anti-discrimination bodies

Services local governments deliver***

Urban planning/design of the built environment:

- Accessible buildings
- Local development planning
- Local roads, bikeways and footpaths
- Local parks and recreational facilities
- Local sports grounds
- Public toilets
- Playgrounds
- Council run childcare and aged care centres
- Municipal services
- Parking regulation
- Public libraries and community halls

Services with shared delivery across levels of government

- NDIS* (funding and shared governance)
- Mental health supports and services
- Disability advocacy services – individual and systemic
- Concessions for government services
- Community infrastructure
- Arts and cultural funding and support
- Public museums, galleries and performance facilities

Note: This listing of roles and responsibilities is not comprehensive and some responsibilities may change over time.

* The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a nationally based scheme jointly governed and funded by the Australian, state and territory governments. Delivery of the NDIS is the responsibility of the National Disability Insurance Agency, a Commonwealth Corporate Entity.

** Not all states have community visitors programs for disability (for example: Tasmania and Western Australia).

*** Local governments are established by state and territory governments (except the Australian Capital Territory) to deliver a range of municipal services and infrastructure, which is determined by each state and territory government. Listed examples of key responsibilities of most local governments are not representative of the responsibilities of all local governments.

The Australian, state and territory, and local governments make and uphold laws, rules and regulations, and agreements that play a role in supporting people with disability and upholding their rights. Examples include:

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) and the Standards made under this Act.
- Agreements between the Australian Government and state and territory governments under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations.
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (Cth) and Rules.
- The Disability Services and Inclusion Act 2023 and Rules.
- State and territory disability services Acts and disability inclusion Act .
- State and territory regulatory schemes governing assistance animals
- State regulations on planning, development and management of state-based infrastructure and resources.
- Local government planning and regulation.

There are also a range of international instruments that establish normative standards and principles for the treatment of people with disability. Australia is a party to the seven-core international human rights treaties:

- UN CRPD,
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women,
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Australian Government also supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons as a non-legally binding document.

Appendix D – Connection to other Australian Government Action

This Strategy considers and aligns with other relevant Australian, state and territory government strategies, and inquiries and reviews.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–31²⁵

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–31 (ADS) is Australia's national disability policy framework. It drives action at all levels of government to improve the lives of people with disability. ADS's vision is for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community.

The National Autism Strategy will sit alongside ADS and aims to make ADS vision a reality for Autistic people.

Senate Select Committee on Autism²⁶ – Government Response

On 27 November 2019, the Senate established a Select Committee on Autism (the Committee) to inquire into and report on the services, support, and life outcomes for Autistic people. The Committee delivered its final report on 25 March 2022.²⁷

After considering 168 written submissions and holding nine public hearings, the Committee found the drivers of poor outcomes for Autistic people are complex and interrelated.

Some of the drivers include:

- Poor understanding of autism within the community and among service providers results in negative experiences of existing services and supports, social and economic exclusion and discrimination.
- A critical shortage of professionals with autism-specific knowledge means there are fewer choices in services, with many having long wait lists.
- Delay in early identification and family and education support services causes children and young people to miss out on vital early support that would improve their longer-term life outcomes.
- The complex and poorly integrated service environment creates an undue burden for Autistic people and their families and carers seeking support, particularly for those experiencing intersectional disadvantage or vulnerability.
- Services are not designed to meet the needs of Autistic people, which means that Autistic people are expected to accept services which do not account for their specific needs, including sensory and communication challenges.
- Generic disability strategies have proven ineffective at improving life outcomes for Autistic people.

Concerns raised with the Committee about current approaches to supports for Autistic people included:

- They are often too generic and do not effectively address the specific needs of Autistic people, leading to poorer outcomes compared to those with other disabilities.
- References to autism are often in relation to children only and do not recognise the experience of autism across the life span.
- Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks can be overwhelmed by the fragmented service system delivered through different levels of government.

Additionally, people may or may not identify with their diagnosis, as Autistic or neurodivergent, or as having a disability.

Meaningful systemic changes would have an enormous impact, with instances of good practice demonstrating how this can be achieved.

Inadequate or inappropriate support can have a devastating impact on the lives of Autistic people and their families. Too often, access to adequate support appears to be a matter of chance; relying heavily on the knowledge and skills of individual teachers, support workers, and healthcare professionals who have adjusted their practice to accommodate the needs of Autistic students, clients and patients.

The Committee recommended the development of a person and family-centred Strategy, that addresses whole-of-life needs for all Autistic people, and include targeted actions to support vulnerable cohorts, co-designed with Autistic people and the autism community, which aims to:

- Build understanding of autism within key professions and across the wider community.
- Improve access to early diagnosis and intervention.
- Improve service integration and coordination.
- Improve education, employment and health services.
- Support parents and carers.
- Includes a national autism research agenda.

The Committee also advised that accountability will be critical to delivering genuine change or otherwise stating that without such strong accountability measures, the Strategy risks becoming another aspirational yet ineffective plan for change.

Therefore, the Committee recommends the Strategy adopt a range of accountability measures, including:

- clear and measurable actions, targets, and milestones
- an implementation plan with clearly defined responsibilities
- ongoing monitoring and reporting requirements
- built-in timelines for review and renewal of the Strategy.

Early Years Strategy²⁸

The Australian Government has recognised how critical the early years are for children's development and positive outcomes over their lifetime, and on 7 May 2024 launched the Early Years Strategy to create a more integrated approach to the early years and better support children's education, wellbeing and development. The Early Years Strategy outlines a 10-year framework to shape how the Australian Government prioritises young children's wellbeing, and signposts areas for future government action.

It sets out a path to achieve the Early Years Strategy's vision and outcomes, with a focus on four priority areas:

- value the early years
- empower parents, caregivers and families
- support and work with communities
- strengthen accountability and coordination.

The Early Years Strategy will be implemented through 3 action plans over 10 years, with the first action plan released in late 2024. The action plans will provide practical steps developed in the context of the vision and priorities and with an eye to what needs to be achieved to deliver good outcomes for children in Australia.

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with a Disability²⁹

In September 2023 the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with a Disability (the Royal Commission) made 222 recommendations on how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society that supports the independence of people with disability and their right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The Australian Government Response, released on 31 July 2024, includes responses to the 172 recommendations within the Australian Government's primary or shared responsibility. It does not include responses to the 50 recommendations within state and territory governments' primary responsibility.

This Strategy has considered how the Royal Commission's recommendations and the Australian Government response are relevant to Autistic people. The commitments under this Strategy align with the Royal Commission's vision for an inclusive Australia, where individuals live free from harm, where their rights are protected, and where individuals live with dignity, equality and respect and can fulfil their potential.

Government Response to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Review³⁰

On 7 December 2023, the Australian Government released the final report of the Independent Review into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The Independent Review panel received almost 4,000 submissions – including from people with disability, NDIS participants, their families and carers, as well as the providers and workers who support them.

The report makes 26 recommendations and 139 supporting actions that aim to restore trust, confidence and pride in the NDIS. The Government's response to the NDIS Review will be released by the end of 2024.

Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031³¹

Children and young people in Australia have the right to grow up safe, connected and supported in their family, community and culture. They have the right to grow up in an environment that enables them to reach their full potential.

Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021 – 2031 (Safe and Supported) recognises that all Australians need to work together to keep children and young people safe and achieve the best outcomes for those who are vulnerable and/or experiencing disadvantage.

Safe and Supported's shared goal is to make significant and sustained progress in reducing the rate of child abuse and neglect and its impacts across generations.

Safe and Supported will be implemented through two sets of action plans. These outline the actions and activities needed to improve outcomes for children and young people at-risk

Safe and Supported will improve outcomes through actions in 4 Focus Areas:

- A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.
- Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.
- Improving information sharing, data development and analysis.
- Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability.

National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032³²

On 17 October 2022, the Australian, state and territory governments released the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 (National Plan).

The National Plan is the overarching national policy framework that will guide actions towards ending violence against women and children over the 10 years.

It highlights how all parts of society, including governments, businesses and workplaces, media, schools and educational institutions, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, communities and all individuals, must work together to achieve the shared vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation.

The National Plan outlines what needs to happen to achieve the vision of ending violence in one generation, across four domains:

1. **Prevention** – working to change the underlying social drivers of violence by addressing the attitudes and systems that drive violence against women and children to stop it before it starts.
2. **Early intervention** – identifying and supporting individuals who are at high risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence and prevent it from reoccurring.
3. **Response** – providing services and support to address existing violence and support victim-survivors experiencing violence, such as crisis support and police intervention, and a trauma-informed justice system that will hold people who use violence to account.
4. **Recovery and healing** – helping to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation and supporting victim-survivors to be safe and healthy to be able to recover from trauma and the physical, mental, emotional, and economic impacts of violence.

Other key documents including associated frameworks include:

- The First Action Plan 2023–2027
- The First Action Plan 2023–2027 Activities Addendum
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Action Plan 2023–2025
- Outcomes Framework 2023–2032
- Theory of Change 2022–2032

Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality³³

The Australian Government is committed to creating a better, gender equal Australia for everyone. Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality outlines where the Government will focus its efforts over the next decade to achieve its vision – an Australia where people are safe, treated with respect, have choices, and have access to resources and equal outcomes no matter their gender. The Strategy is underpinned by Australia's longstanding international commitments to human rights and gender equality and sets out a path to make progress towards this vision over the next 10 years, with a focus on five priority areas. The Strategy was released on 7 March 2024.

Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – National Redress Scheme³⁴

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse listened to thousands of people about the abuse they experienced as children. The National Redress Scheme has been created in response to the recommendations from the Royal Commission. The National Redress Scheme provides support to people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse. The Scheme:

- acknowledges that many children were sexually abused in Australian institutions
- holds institutions accountable for this abuse
- helps people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse gain access to counselling, a direct personal response, and a Redress Payment

The Scheme started on 1 July 2018 and will run for 10 years

National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030³⁵

The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse is a nationally coordinated, 10-year strategic framework to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse in all settings, including within families, online and within organisations. It seeks to reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia. The National Strategy was a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and responds to approximately 100 other Royal Commission recommendations to address child sexual abuse in all settings.

The Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS, Inquiry into the Capability and Culture of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)³⁶

In November 2023 the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS released its final report into the capability and culture of the NDIA. In the report, the Committee focuses on the operational processes and procedures of the NDIA, staff employment and workforce matters, and the impact of the NDIA's capability and culture on NDIS applicants and participants. The Committee sought to make the NDIS more accessible for participants, and their families and carers. The report makes 27 recommendations directed at improving the participant experience with the NDIA so that it can provide participants with the support necessary to make and communicate decisions that affect their lives.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry: Assessment and support services for people with ADHD³⁷

In November 2023, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee released a report with 15 recommendations for addressing barriers people with ADHD experience when accessing assessment, diagnosis and support services. The report notes ADHD often co-exists with forms of neurodivergence, including autism.

The Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–2025³⁸

The Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020–2025 aims to increase the employment of people with disability across the Australian Public Service to 7% by 2025. The strategy recommends a number of actions across two focus areas: attract, recruit and retain more people with disability; and accessible and inclusive workplace cultures and environments, and include actions specifically for the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), departments and agencies, and the Senior Executive Service. The strategy also supports ADS.

Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Job and Opportunities (The Employment White Paper)³⁹

On 25 September 2023, the Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities (The Employment White Paper) was published. The Employment White Paper lays the foundation for current and future Government policies that will shape the labour market over the years to come. A key focus of the Employment White Paper is to improve economic inclusion and participation in employment for people with barriers to work, including people with disability.

The Employment White Paper includes current and future Government actions to improve economic participation for people with barriers to work.

The Employment White Paper and the strategy both focus on improving employment outcomes and economic participation for people with barriers to employment.

National Carer Strategy 2024–2034⁴⁰

On 10 December 2024, the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, released the National Carer Strategy 2024–2034. The Strategy delivers a national agenda to support Australia's unpaid carers. The National Carer Strategy is a framework for co-designing, developing and delivering a suite of actions to holistically improve the lives of carers. The Strategy was designed and created with carers to guide how Government can improve support for carers now, and into the future. To ensure the vision of the Strategy is realised, the Australian Government will seek to work with state and territory governments who share responsibility for the delivery of services carers rely on.

Multicultural Framework Review⁴¹

The Review examines the state of Australia's multicultural society, and recommends changes to laws, policies and institutional settings that build on the strengths of multiculturalism and enable it to respond to contemporary challenges.

A Panel of three eminent Australians – Dr Bulent Hass Dellal AO, Ms Nyadol Nyuon OAM and Ms Christine Castley – conducted the Review. The Panel was supported by a Reference Group that included people with lived experience in or supporting multicultural communities, along with key non-government stakeholders.

The Panel made 29 recommendations, noting the particular importance of data, research and evaluation to underpin future work.

This is among the most substantial reviews of Australian multiculturalism ever conducted. Its comprehensive consultation processes and thoughtful deliberations create the opportunity to strengthen government and community efforts into the future. The Government commits to the Framework's principles and will be guided by them, as we build on our commitment to ensure Australia's multicultural settings are fit-for-purpose to harness the talents of all Australians.

Australian Universities Accord⁴²

The Australian Universities Accord was an independent review of the Australian higher education system, conducted by the Australian Universities Accord Panel. On 25 February 2024, the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, released the Australian Universities Accord Final Report (the final report). The final report contains 47 recommendations, setting out a blueprint for higher education reform for the next decade and beyond.

The findings of the final report include that every Australian should have the opportunity to experience the life transforming benefits of tertiary education. This is vital for Australia's future. Only by expanding access to tertiary education to currently under-represented groups – including people from low socio-economic status backgrounds, First Nations people, people with disability and regional, rural and remote students – can the nation meet its projected skills needs. Access to tertiary education must include high quality teaching and learning targeted to students with lower educational attainment alongside access to income support where necessary, affordable student housing and the ability to find reasonable work and placement opportunities.

2024 Aviation White Paper⁴³

The Aviation White Paper sets out the Australian Government's vision for Australia's aviation sector towards 2050 to ensure it remains safe, competitive, productive and sustainable.

The White Paper and the development of its 56 policy initiatives was informed by extensive [consultation](#) on the [Aviation Green Paper](#) with the aviation industry, state and territory governments, and the Australian community. These 56 policy initiatives cover 10 key areas, this includes improving the experience of people with disability in air travel.

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Notes

EMBARGOED FOR Education





National Autism Strategy

2025–2031

EMBARGOED FOR Education

For more information about the National Autism Strategy,
go to dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy

National Autism Strategy 2025–2031

First Action Plan 2025–2026



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National Autism Strategy Vision Statement

The National Autism Strategy's vision is for a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life, in line with international human rights.

National Autism Strategy Goal

The goal of the Strategy is to improve the quality of life for all Autistic people in a way that is meaningful to them.



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Connection to the National Autism Strategy

Connection to the National Autism Strategy

Under the National Autism Strategy 2025–2031 (the Strategy), the Australian Government has developed this First Action Plan (the Action Plan), to lay the foundations for achieving the commitments outlined in the Strategy.

This Action Plan should be read in conjunction with the [Strategy](#). Please refer to the Strategy for the following information, which applies to and guides all activities delivered through this Action Plan:

- Acknowledgement of Country
- Acknowledgement of Autistic people and their families and carers
- Support services' contact information
- Statement on Language
- Statement on Autism
- Intersectionality
- Priority cohorts
- Strategy foundations
- Strategy's Guiding Principles
- How the Strategy was developed
- Information on co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and medical health conditions
- Roles and responsibilities of Governments
- Connection with other Australian Government action, and
- Glossary.

Key terms for this Action Plan are defined in the Glossary at the end of this document. It is recommended you familiarise yourself with this Glossary when reading this Action Plan.

Content warning

This Action Plan contains information that may be distressing to some readers. It includes information about the experiences of Autistic people and some of the barriers they face. If you need support, there are free services available to help you.

Beyond Blue Support Service

- Telephone 1300 224 636, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Website: [Beyond Blue Support Service](#).

Lifeline Crisis Support – confidential service providing support when you are feeling overwhelmed, having difficulty coping or thinking about suicide

- Speak to a crisis support worker by telephone on 13 11 14, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Website: [Lifeline Crisis Support](#).

1800RESPECT – National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service

- Telephone 1800 737 732, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, chat online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Website: [1800RESPECT](#).

13 YARN – support from First Nations crisis counsellors

- Support from First Nations crisis counsellors is available at 13YARN (13 92 76) or by visiting: [13 YARN](#). Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Autism Connect – free national autism helpline providing independent and expert information about autism

- Available from 8am to 7pm, Monday to Friday. Telephone 1300 308 699.
- Website: [Autism Connect](#).

headspace – free online and telephone support and counselling to young people (ages 12–25)

- Call 1800 650 890 or chat online through webchat to speak to a clinician.
- Website: [Connect with a mental health clinician 1-on-1 | headspace](#).

Qlife – free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral service

- Call: 1800 184 527.
- Website: [Qlife](#).

Introduction

What is the First Action Plan?

In January 2025, the Australian Government released the National Autism Strategy and this First Action Plan (the Action Plan).

The Strategy is the first of its kind for Australia and sets out a long-term vision to improve the life outcomes of all Autistic people. It details 22 high level commitments to drive inclusion, better supports and greater representation of Autistic people in Australia across the outcomes of a social and economic inclusion; diagnosis, services and supports; governance; research; and evidence and evaluation (see **Appendix A** for the Strategy's commitments).

The Strategy provides a framework for improving the life outcomes for all Autistic people in Australia in the years ahead. The Strategy is for all Autistic people of all ages, living in Australia, as well as their families and carers and the communities that support them.

The actions detailed under this Action Plan respond to the 22 high-level commitments in the Strategy, delivering in the areas in which Autistic people and their families and carers have told the Government changes needed. Some actions involve new, more immediate steps that will make a positive impact on the lives of Autistic people, their families and carers. This includes actions focused on reducing stigma and changing attitudes around autism and improving:

- social connections
- neurodiversity-affirming and inclusive services and supports
- safety and welfare
- employment and education outcomes
- and diagnosis.

Other actions will scope or assess where there is good practice, where there are areas for improvement and seek to identify what response is needed, laying the foundations for future actions to build on, informed by sound evidence and the diverse views of Autistic people and the autism community gathered through implementation of this Action Plan.

The Action Plan also connects actions with existing work underway across Government. Actions from the First Plan will provide a stronger evidence base to inform longer term actions in subsequent Action Plans.

The Strategy will be delivered over 7 years from 2025 to 2031 and this Action Plan will cover the period 2025 and 2026.

Implementation of the Strategy, and all actions under the Strategy, will be supported by co-governance, reporting, evaluation and supporting research. This Action Plan covers these activities, which will run over the life of the Strategy to ensure everything we do is shaped by the Autistic and autism community and informed by contemporary evidence.

The Strategy and this Action Plan are complemented by work to develop the *National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic people in Australia* (the Autism Health Roadmap), led by the Department of Health and Aged Care, reporting to the Minister for Health and Aged Care.

The Autism Health Roadmap is being developed in parallel to the Strategy and this Action Plan to support a more detailed and specific focus on the health and mental health of Autistic people and their families and carers. The Autism Health Roadmap will also include specific actions and outcomes in these areas.

The Strategy and this Action Plan are focused on actions related to the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government. Australian, state, territory, and local governments are each responsible for supporting Autistic people in areas where they have main responsibility for funding or delivering programs and services. Areas of shared responsibility will be referred to the [Disability Reform Ministerial Council](#), which includes Commonwealth and state and territory disability ministers, to consider shared approaches, where relevant.

First Action Plan on a Page



Vision & Goal

This First Action Plan is underpinned by the National Autism Strategy's Vision and Goal:

Vision: The National Autism Strategy's vision is for a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life, in line with international human rights.

Goal: The National Autism Strategy's goal is to improve the quality of life for all Autistic people in a way that is meaningful to them.



Guiding Principles

This First Action Plan is underpinned by the National Autism Strategy's Guiding Principles:

- In partnership – Nothing about us without us.
- Accessible and based on Universal Design.
- Self-determination and autonomy.
- Aligned and accountable outcomes.
- Acceptance and inclusivity.
- Safety and rights.
- Neurodiversity affirming, individualised and holistic.



Key Outcome Areas

The National Autism Strategy and First Action Plan centre on:

- **Social inclusion** – Focussed on improving social connections, reducing stigma and changing attitudes around autism, and improving the safety and welfare of all Autistic people.
- **Economic inclusion** – Focussed on improving employment opportunities and support for all Autistic people in the workplace and supporting inclusive education.
- **Diagnosis, Services and Supports** – Focussed on services and supports that are neurodiversity-affirming inclusive and appropriate for the Autistic community, and identifying and diagnosing autism.
- **Enabling actions** – Focussed on governance; ongoing consultation and co-design; research; and evidence, evaluation and reporting.



Outcomes

Delivering on the actions will contribute to achieving the following outcomes, highlighted as a high priority by the Autistic and autism community through consultation processes:

- **Social inclusion:** The rights of Autistic people are being upheld; reduced harm experienced by Autistic people; increased autism awareness, inclusion and acceptance in the general community; and improved access to responsive supports, services and information.
- **Economic inclusion:** Improved education opportunities and outcomes for Autistic people, and greater autism awareness and responsiveness within the education sector; improved employment opportunities and outcomes for Autistic people; and greater autism awareness and responsiveness of employers, workplaces and in employment services.
- **Diagnosis, services and supports:** Improved awareness of, and access to, respectful assessment and diagnosis, including identification and early diagnosis; improved information and support to navigate the assessment and diagnosis process; and increased quality, timely, neurodiversity-affirming and equitable access to services and supports.

How the First Action Plan will improve the lives of Autistic People

Immediate actions

The Government is committed to immediate improvements in the lives of Autistic people. The Action Plan contains a number of service-delivery focused actions to deliver on this commitment.

Improving social connections

A common theme raised by Autistic people in national consultations to design the Strategy was the need to do more to facilitate social connections and peer support networks. Many participants said coming together with other Autistic people in safe and inclusive spaces can be empowering and reassuring and help in sharing useful information and advice.

The Australian Government recognises that the Autistic and autism community has long called for more inclusive and accessible peer support options, particularly for underrepresented groups.

Under this Action Plan the Australian Government will invest up to **\$19.9 million over 4 years** to deliver a peer support program that provides age-appropriate and culturally sensitive support tailored to the diverse needs of the Autistic and autism community. The program will harness the power of lived experience to offer understanding and tailored advice and support that formal systems sometimes struggle to provide.

Families and carers will also benefit, with peer supports designed to help them in their caring roles, including navigating the pressures and challenges of caring roles and being able to share their experiences with others.

Reducing stigma and changing attitudes around autism

Another theme across national public engagement on the development of the Strategy was around the lack of understanding of autism. Improved awareness and understanding were the most common objectives identified by people when asked what National Autism Strategy should achieve.

Many people observed that because autism is often an 'invisible' disability, specific focus and strategies are needed to increase understanding about how it presents in different people. People also said more needs to be done to destigmatise autism, to actively change negative perceptions and stereotypes so it's not seen as a 'vulnerability' or deficit and to ensure Autistic people can live without the burden of social stigma and discrimination.

Under this Action Plan, the Australian Government will invest up to **\$915,000 over 2 years** to develop new awareness and public educational initiatives to foster understanding, inclusion and respect for Autistic people in Australia. Investment will promote greater social inclusion for the Autistic and autism community, while helping the broader population embrace the unique strengths and contributions of Autistic people.

This investment will be informed by existing successful local trials and internationally recognised projects, while a review will look to identify critical gaps in autism awareness and education for any subsequent actions to reduce stigma and support the changing of attitudes around autism.

Supporting the diagnosis of autism journey

Many people shared that the identification and diagnosis process can be complex and overwhelming. A range of issues, from understanding what it may entail and how the process works, to what having a diagnosis may mean for an individual, were raised as significant challenges. Many people noted that the diagnosis process can often be traumatic, confusing or stigmatising. In addition, this experience can differ depending on whether the individual is a child or if they receive a diagnosis later in life, as well as needing to consider cultural, gender and other differences.

Under this Action Plan the Australian Government will **invest up to \$455,000 over 1 year** to deliver resources designed to support Autistic people and their families with pre and post diagnosis information. This action will follow an extensive evaluation of existing information and resources to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Resources will provide clear, practical guidance for every stage of the journey to making the diagnosis experience as supportive and empowering as possible. This action will take into consideration connections with actions under the Autism Health Roadmap.

Resources will be created in consultation with Autistic people, and their families and carers to ensure they reflect lived experience, including those from underrepresented groups. They will be made available in multiple accessible formats ensuring that everyone can find the information they need in a way that works for them.

Improving employment

An additional theme raised in developing of the Strategy was around challenges for Autistic adults to obtain and maintain meaningful employment. Many people commented that Autistic people are significantly underemployed in Australia, or they aren't employed in jobs that utilise their full potential. More can be done to remove biases in hiring practices and make workplaces autism friendly. In addition, it was identified that more could be done to support employers to be aware of their responsibilities and increase awareness around inclusion and creating supportive work environments for Autistic employees.

The Australian Government will invest up to **\$915,000 over 2 years** to improve employment opportunities and supports for Autistic people in the workplace. This priority action supports one of the key outcome areas on economic inclusion and seeks to empower Autistic people to thrive in mainstream employment, student placements, and internships.

This work will be informed by an extensive study of existing programs and their effectiveness, identifying what works and where improvements are needed.

Knowledge Translation

The Autistic community have also reflected the importance of ensuring that policies, services and practices should be neurodiversity-affirming and informed by contemporary evidence of what works.

The Australian Government will invest up to **\$12.2 million over 5 years** to establish a dedicated knowledge translation body to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world practices. This initiative will focus on translating credible autism-related research into practical, evidence-based tools and guidance for service providers, and policy makers.

In addition, this body will conduct collaborative research with Autistic-led organisations, research bodies, and multidisciplinary experts. The research body will be co-led by representatives from the Autistic and autism community and will aim to address key gaps and produce findings that reflect the diverse needs of the community.

This initiative aims to empower Autistic people through solutions that are relevant, practical and impactful by advancing neurodiversity-affirming practices, fostering intersectional approaches, and translating knowledge into action.

Progressing the long-term vision of the Strategy with the Autistic and autism community

A guiding principle of the Strategy is 'In partnership - Nothing about us, without us'. As part of laying the groundwork for improvements in social and economic inclusion, diagnosis, services and supports and representation of Autistic people, a number of reviews and evaluations will be undertaken to scope what works, where there are gaps and best practice to inform change.

Under this Action Plan the Australian Government will invest up to **\$3.7 million over 2 years** to progress these reviews and evaluations in ways that directly involve the Autistic and autism community and autism sector.

Laying the foundations for future longer-term reform

The Autistic community identified future actions that it wanted the Government to implement as part of the delivery of the Strategy, for which the Government first needs to build a solid understanding of what exists, gaps, and where there is best practice to ensure future investment in actions are effective and impactful.

Improving services and supports so they are neurodiversity-affirming, inclusive and appropriate for the Autistic community

The Autistic community emphasised that many services, including those funded by Government, are not designed and delivered with Autistic clients in mind and are not always inclusive or accessible.

The Government will work to identify how to improve Australian Government, and Australian government-funded services, communication, and information in ways that are neurodiversity-affirming, inclusive and appropriate for the Autistic community.

Improving the safety and welfare of Autistic people

The Autistic community called out that Autistic people are more at risk of discrimination, violence, abuse, neglect and bullying compared to the general population. They also reported that resources to support Autistic people to make decisions about their lives are often not tailored to the requirements of Autistic people themselves.

The Government will evaluate, identify and scope effective frameworks, pathways and information resources to improve the safety and welfare of Autistic people. This work will include identifying how to improve the effectiveness of supported decision-making frameworks for Autistic people to make decisions that impact their lives, and designing and delivering clear and consistent information to the community about pathways to report discrimination, violence, abuse, neglect and bullying.

Epidemiological Study

The Australian Government will invest up to **\$2.8 million over 4 years** to conduct a comprehensive epidemiological study of autism in Australia to identify the true prevalence of autism in Australia.

The number of people diagnosed with autism in Australia has increased considerably in recent years. To date, there has been no large-scale, systematic epidemiological study on the prevalence of autism in Australia.

Accurate epidemiological data and investment in autism research is crucial to deepen understanding of autism and to identify and plan for more effective supports for Autistic people, their families and carers.

Evidence and Evaluation Framework

The Australian Government will invest up to **\$858,000 over 2 years** to develop and implement an evidence and evaluation framework to lay the foundations for the Strategy based on reliable and up-to-date information about what works for Autistic people.

This framework will help the Government create services, supports and policies that truly meet the needs of the Autistic and autism community.

Key features of the framework will include:



Measuring what matters, with clear indicators of success that reflect the needs of Autistic people at every stage of life.



Working together with Autistic people and other in the community to design the framework to ensure it is suitable for real-world needs.



Testing and improving the framework with input with the Autistic and autism community to make sure it works well for everyone.



Gathering input through focus groups, surveys, interviews and other methods to understand what is most important to the Autistic and autism community.



Accessible and transparent reporting.



Using lessons learned to refine and adapt future actions, ensuring continuous improvement over the life of the Strategy.

As well as collection of information, the framework is also about listening to the community, aligning actions with clear goals, and turning insights into outcomes that make a real difference.

Governance framework

The Australian Government will invest up to **\$366,000 over 7 years** to establish a governance framework that ensures the Autistic and autism community have sustained involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, this Action Plan and future actions.

A reference group will be established, with Autistic and autism community representatives forming a majority of the group membership, alongside government representatives from relevant Australian Government departments. The reference group will provide strategic guidance to drive the implementation of the Strategy and inform future actions.

The reference group will:

- Oversee monitoring and evaluation processes, including reporting on progress of implementation of the Strategy.
- Coordinate and sequence the delivery of actions across the life of the Strategy.
- Identify and prioritise key focus areas for this Action Plan and future actions.

Additionally, time-limited groups will be established as needed to support consideration of specific issues, including the needs of underrepresented groups, or groups experiencing intersectional disadvantages. These groups will draw on lived experience and specialised knowledge to support implementation, ensuring actions remain meaningful, targeted and effective.

Leveraging and building on existing Government actions

Better supporting Autistic people, their families and carers requires taking into account the barriers they face in all areas of their lives and at all ages.

The actions in this Action Plan build upon the range of existing supports and services available to Autistic people and the autism community and examines where these services can be improved based on what we have heard from Autistic people and the autism community.

While the Department of Social Services has lead responsibility for policies specifically focused on supporting Autistic people, a range of other government departments and agencies deliver services that affect the lives of Autistic people. As a result, actions have been developed in consultation with a wide range of government agencies.

Actions under this Action Plan that build on and leverage existing government services and policies include:



Promoting and facilitating the inclusion of all Autistic people and their families and carers in the delivery of government services, and supporting better representation in key government advisory functions.



Adapting existing resources to support Autistic people to engage with Government services and around best practice accessibility and inclusion.



Ensuring Autistic people are considered in the implementation of actions under the Australian Government response to the Disability Royal Commission.



Ensuring information and processes relating to grant opportunities can be communicated and designed in a way that are accessible to Autistic people, in consultation with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources and the Department of Finance.



Evaluating existing pathways to address workplace bullying and discrimination experienced by the Autistic community.



Building the capability of key workforces to support Autistic people.



Ensuring the experiences of Autistic people from culturally and linguistically diverse and culturally and racially marginalised (CALD/ CARM) communities are considered within the context of the Australian Government response to the Multicultural Framework Review.

First Action Plan Actions

Key outcome area – Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in our society. Social inclusion allows the equal opportunity for people to learn, work, connect and collaborate with others, and have a voice, including those who are non-speaking or minimally-speaking. When people are equally included they can participate and contribute their perspectives.



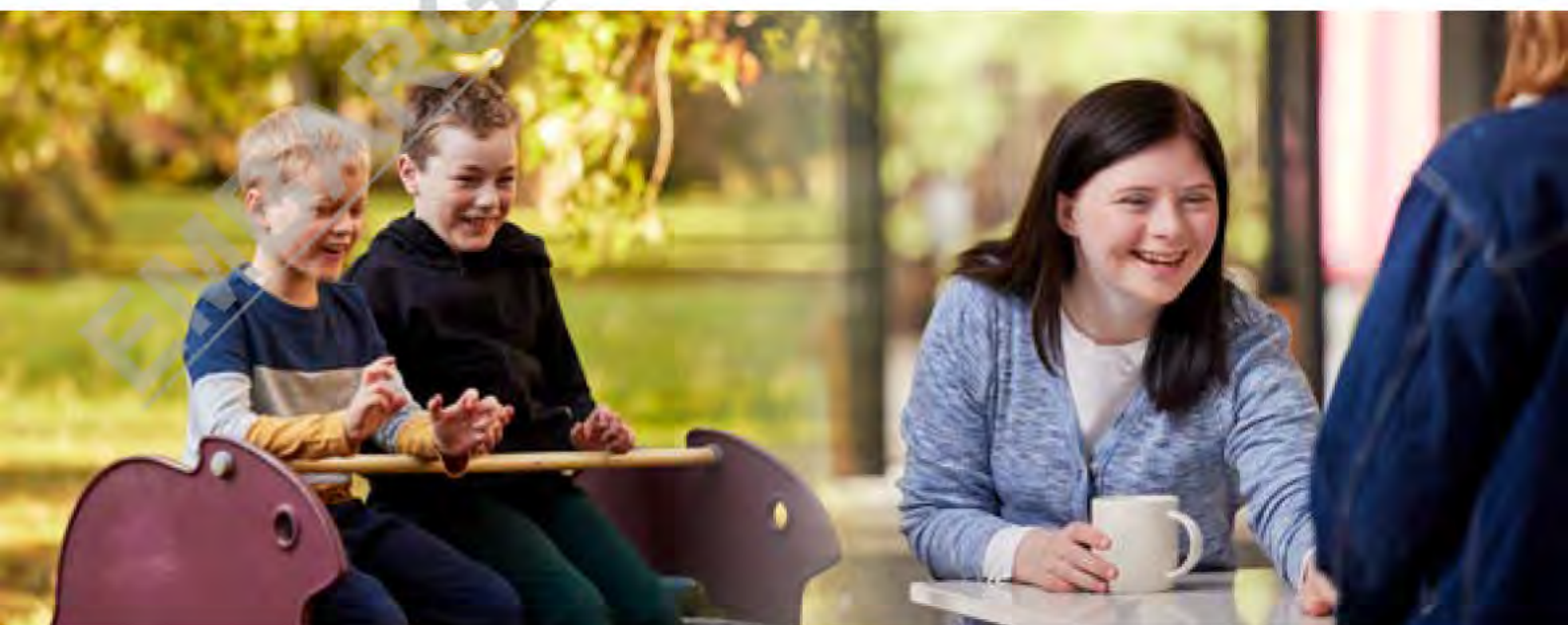
'I would like not to have to mask my Autism in order to feel safe'.

– Participant, online Autistic Voices forum



'Neuro-affirming to us is people have considered acknowledged and validated our Autistic identity and culture, and appreciating we do not want to be neurotypical passing but the best version of our Autistic self'.

– Participant Yellow Ladybugs focus group



Social Inclusion Actions

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
<i>Social Inclusion – Increased understanding, acceptance, appreciation and changed attitudes towards Autistic people and increased social inclusion</i>			
Commitment 1, Action 1	<p>Examine examples, including internationally, of autism and disability awareness and public education activities to inform the following actions and approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness and increase understanding, acceptance and appreciation of Autistic people, and cover the diverse presentations of autism across the lifespan. • Challenge ableist attitudes about Autistic people. • Include targeted approaches to support awareness of, acceptance of and engagement with, Autistic people with communication support needs. • Centre and amplify Autistic lived and living expertise • Include public education and awareness information about emergency and disaster situations. • Provide Autistic people with information about their rights. <p>Support First Nations people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse and culturally and racially marginalised (CALD/CARM) communities to reflect on different cultural understandings of autism.</p> <p>Following this work, develop initial national awareness and inclusion activities to support immediate social inclusion actions for Autistic people, with a preferred model informed by best-practice examples.</p>	Produce advice on best practice, and gaps, to inform initiatives to increase understanding, acceptance and appreciation of Autistic people.	Department of Social Services

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 1, Action 2	In the context of the Australian Government response to the Multicultural Framework Review, ensure the experiences of Autistic people from CALD/CARM communities are considered in actions to support social inclusion.	Improve social inclusion for Autistic people from CALD/CARM communities.	Department of Home Affairs led in consultation with the Department of Social Services
Commitment 1, Action 3	<p>Evaluate existing autism-related training¹ for workers and professionals within the education, health, justice, migration and media sectors, with an intent to make recommendations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase an autism-specific focus within professional services, through public education, awareness and acceptance of autism. • Develop targeted approaches to support awareness and acceptance of, and engagement with, Autistic people with communication support needs. • Facilitate the growth of professionals within the allied health and the disability sectors, including support for openly identifying Autistic professionals within these sectors. • Report on autism within the media. <p><i>Note The evaluation of autism-related education and awareness activities for the housing sector will occur following the finalisation of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.</i></p>	Make recommendations to increase awareness and acceptance of autism in training for workers in mainstream sectors, and identify opportunities to support openly identifying Autistic professionals.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with relevant Australian Government departments

¹ “Training” refers to non-accredited training i.e. training not housed in the national vocational education and training system.

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 2, Action 1	<p>Evaluate existing government funded peer support models and report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is working well for the Autistic community and their families and carers. • If the models consider the needs of Autistic people who face intersectional disadvantage and the needs of those with carer responsibilities. • Geographical factors. • The safety of peer workers, including peer workers for families and carers of Autistic people by providing adequate, safe, trauma-informed co-reflection and individual supervision. 	Improve social inclusion through peer support that is best practice.	Department of Social Services
Commitment 2, Action 2	<p>Informed by the evaluation under action 2.1, deliver a peer support program that provides age-appropriate and culturally sensitive support tailored to the diverse needs of the Autistic and autism community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The peer support program will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide Autistic-led peer support that is tailored to the specific needs and strengths of each priority cohort. - Create safe and inclusive spaces where participants can connect, share experiences, and build practical skills for navigating life as Autistic individuals or families and carers. - Increase access to resources, services and advocacy for underrepresented groups, including First Nations and CALD/CARM communities. - Foster self-advocacy, independence, and a sense of belonging within both the Autistic and autism community and broader communities. - Promote cultural safety, reduce stigma, and celebrate diversity within the Autistic community. 	Improve social inclusion through peer support.	Department of Social Services

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
<i>Social Inclusion – Improving Australian Government service delivery, communication and information to better meet the needs of Autistic people</i>			
Commitment 3, Action 1	<p>In line with Australian Government response to recommendations 6.1 and 6.2 of the Disability Royal Commission, the Australian Government will lead the development of an Associated Plan under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 to improve the accessibility of information and communications for people with disability. In the development of the Associated Plan consideration will be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The varied communication, accessibility and reasonable adjustment needs of Autistic people accessing government services. • Consider intersectionality, Autistic people with very high support needs and their families and carers, Autistic people who use interpreters, and those who use Augmentative or Alternative Communication (AAC) or are non-speaking or minimally-speaking. • The development of additional resources for Autistic people accessing government services. • Autism awareness, and understanding training, including skills development and training for relevant government employees providing frontline government services. 	Improve accessibility of Australian Government communication and information for Autistic people.	Department of Social Services

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 3, Action 2	<p>Evaluate government grants management to ensure how information and processes relating to grant opportunities can be communicated and designed in ways that are accessible to Autistic people. The evaluation will inform development of resources and information, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy Read grant guidelines and application forms. • Provide transparency of grant round purposes and processes. • Support to apply for grants. 	Improve accessibility of Australian Government grant opportunities.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Finance and the Department of Industry, Science, and Resources
Social Inclusion – Consider the needs of Autistic people in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992			
Commitment 4, Action 1	<p>The Australian Government has committed to reviewing and modernising the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth) as part of the Australian Government's Response to the Disability Royal Commission. As part of this review, the Government will consult with Autistic people, including representatives for Autistic people with very high support needs, and the Autistic community about their thoughts and needs regarding proposed amendments to the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth). The review will ensure the perspectives of those who experience intersectional discrimination are considered, including First Nations people, and people from CALD/CARM communities.</p>	Ensure consideration of the needs of Autistic people in the upcoming review of the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth) and associated disability standards.	Attorney-General's Department in consultation with the Department of Social Services

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 4, Action 2	The statutory reviews of the associated disability standards, which are scheduled to be reviewed every 5 years, will consider the needs of Autistic people. The Disability Standards for Education 2005 is scheduled to be reviewed during the first-year action plan, with the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 and Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 scheduled to be reviewed in future years.	Ensure consideration of the needs of Autistic people in the upcoming review of the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i> and associated disability standards.	Department of Education Department of Industry, Science and Resources, and Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts in consultation with the Department of Social Services
Social Inclusion – Improving the safety and welfare of all Autistic people			
Commitment 5, Action 1	Evaluate current pathways and information for reporting workplace bullying and discrimination, including seeking advice from the Autistic community on ways to better tailor these pathways and information for Autistic people in the future.	Improve bullying and discrimination reporting pathways and information.	Department of Social Services to lead work in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Comcare, Safe Work Australia, the Fair Work Commission, and the Fair Work Ombudsman and other relevant Australian Government departments

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 5, Action 2	The Australian Government will work closely with women and children with disability to apply a disability lens to the First Action Plan of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 as part of the Australian Government’s Response to the Disability Royal Commission. This will identify how each action will address the support needs of women and girls with disability, including Autistic women and children.	Support Autistic women and children who are impacted by, or at risk of gender-based violence.	Department of Social Services
Commitment 5, Action 3	The Department of Social Services will partner with State and Territory governments to embed best practice guidelines and resources of an audit of the Accessibility of Family Domestic and Sexual Violence Service for Women and Girls with Disability in Australia to improve the accessibility of family, domestic and sexual violence service systems.	Support Autistic women and girls through improved access to Family Domestic and Sexual Violence Services.	Department of Social Services
Commitment 5, Action 4	Explore opportunities to expand targeted supports for educators to assist Autistic children and young people with their mental health, including through the “Be You” initiative, and to explore opportunities to expand supports for parents of Autistic children and young people, including through the “National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health” initiative.	Support the mental health of Autistic children and young people, and support for parents and carers.	Department of Health and Aged Care lead in consultation with the Department of Social Services and the Department of Education

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 5, Action 5	The Australian Government has accepted in principle recommendation 11.5 of the Disability Royal Commission report, related to complaints handling and investigative practice guidelines. The Commonwealth Ombudsman has agreed to consider how recommendation 11.5 could be implemented and will work with relevant stakeholders including the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to consider possible approaches and timeframes.	Improve complaints handling and investigative practice guidelines.	Commonwealth Ombudsman lead in consultation with the Department of Social Services and other relevant stakeholders
Commitment 5, Action 6	<p>Examine examples, including internationally, of autism and disability awareness and public education activities about reducing all forms of discrimination, violence, abuse, bullying, vilification and exploitation experienced by Autistic people. The department will report on how activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information for Autistic people and their families to improve their understanding of discrimination, violence, bullying, vilification and exploitation and to understand their rights. • Provide clear and consistent information about pathways to report discrimination, violence, abuse, bullying, vilification and exploitation that are accessible and inclusive for Autistic people, including in a language/format for First Nations Autistic people and Autistic people from CALD/CARM communities. 	Support the reduction of discrimination, violence, abuse, bullying, vilification and exploitation experienced by Autistic people.	Department of Social Services

Existing Government Action – Social inclusion

Disability Representative Organisations (DRO) Program (Funded for \$10,658,000 over two years to 30 June 2026)

- The Department of Social Services' DRO program provides an opportunity for people with disability, through their representative organisations, to communicate their views to the Australian Government.
- The DRO program provides a platform for organisations, including organisations with a focus on autism, to provide systemic disability advocacy and promotes an understanding of the lived experience of people with disability.
- Further information regarding the DRO program is available on the Department of Social Services website: www.dss.gov.au/disability-advocacy/disability-representative-organisations

Supporting Participation by Representatives of People with Disability in Key International Forums on Human Rights Program (Supporting Participation Program) – (Funded \$1,312,822 over four years to 30 June 2028)

- The Department of Social Services continues to contribute funding to support people with disability to participate at key international human rights forums, such as the United Nations (UN) Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
- The Supporting Participation Program is an important component of Australia's compliance with the UN CRPD, which requires that civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, shall be involved in and participate fully in the implementation of the CRPD.
- In recent years, delegations to COSP have included strong representation from the Autistic community. In addition, the Official Australian Side Event at the 17th Session of COSP in June 2024 was about Development of Australia's National Autism Strategy and included the lived-experience expert and Co-Chair of the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council, as well as Ministerial and Government representatives.
- Further information regarding the Supporting Participation Program is available on the Department of Social Services website: www.dss.gov.au/international-disability-rights.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) (Funded for \$44.3 billion in 2023–24, with committed funding in future years)

- The NDIS delivers funding for disability supports to people with permanent and significant disability to maintain their independence, access new skills, jobs or volunteering in their community, and improve their quality of life.
The NDIS takes a lifetime approach, investing early in people with disability and children with developmental delay to improve their outcomes later in life. The NDIS now supports over 600,000 Australians with disability to access the services and supports they need. Autism is the most common type of disability in the NDIS, with over 250,000 Autistic participants (as at 30 September 2024).
- Further information can be found on the National Disability Insurance Scheme website: www.ndis.gov.au

Key outcome area – Economic Inclusion

An inclusive economy ensures all parts of society have full, fair, and equitable access to market opportunities as employees, leaders, entrepreneurs, and community members. Employment and financial security are central to improving outcomes for Autistic people, including providing jobs and career opportunities, and having adequate income for people to meet their needs.



‘Many Autistic people have extraordinary leadership skills, are dedicated to integrity, transparency & social justice, communicate easily with other ND. Recruit Autistic staff co-lead and deliver.’

– Participant, online Autistic Voices forum



‘We need to have more support from secondary school into higher education. I did pretty well at school but then went into Uni and everything started to fall apart. It’s a radically different style of learning and no one prepares you for that at all.’

– Autistic person, VALID focus group



Economic Inclusion Actions

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
<i>Economic Inclusion – Improving employment opportunities and support for all Autistic people in the workplace.</i>			
Commitment 6, Action 1	<p>Evaluate the effectiveness of existing autism-specific employment programs, including supports for mainstream, open employment, student placements and internships, to determine what works well from an outcomes and Autistic perspective. The evaluation should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify pathways to employment that focus on access, not on incentives for employment providers and employers to place a person in a role. • Identify how personally meaningful long-term employment opportunities, including opportunities for career progression, and outcome for Autistic people can be measured. • Inform development of training and resources for employment providers, recruitment agencies, career advisors, small and large employers, professional associations and job accreditation boards on good practice employment supports and the benefits of employing Autistic people. <p>Raise awareness about the universal benefits of making workplace adaptations to support employing Autistic people and showcase good practice examples of effective employment practices to recruit, employ and retain Autistic employees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result in a baseline identifying gaps, challenges and examples of good practice that can be implemented more broadly. 	Improve employment supports and opportunities for Autistic people by determining what works well	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Education

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Autistic people, families and carers, to build a better understanding of the needs of Autistic people and their carers who are not in the workforce, to inform future actions. <p>Following the evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop effective autism-specific employment training and resources for the Autistic and autism community, employers and employment providers (across mainstream, open employment, student placements and internships) that is supported by training, awareness and best practice. • Link this work with the new Disability Employment Centre of Excellence (Centre of Excellence), which will be established 2025. 		
Commitment 6, Action 2	Identify ways to engage with existing regional employer and service provider networks to share experiences and practices to support Autistic people to find and retain roles that align with their interests, skills, experiences and goals.	Identify ways to improve employment support and opportunities for Autistic people in regional areas.	Department of Social Services lead with input from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Commitment 6, Action 3	Evaluate existing training ² and resources to support Autistic people with money management, preparing and lodging tax returns, applying for work, and managing businesses.	Improve resources and training to support participation in the workforce.	Department of Social Services together with the Australian Taxation Office and Services Australia, and in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

² "Training" refers to non-accredited training i.e. training not housed in the national vocational education and training system.

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 6, Action 4	<p>Evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and initiatives that support inclusive and accessible entrepreneurship opportunities for Autistic people. The evaluation should identify programs and initiatives that support Autistic people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start out with an idea or passion or to fill a gap in the market. • Provide advice about research and market testing. • Support development of ideas and business plans. • Provide financial advice to support setting up a business. • Build stakeholder networks. • Build and scale up their business 	Improve entrepreneurship opportunities for Autistic people.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Commitment 6, Action 5	Work with the priority cohorts identified in the Strategy to identify actions to support meaningful employment opportunities particular to their needs.	Improve employment support and opportunities for Autistic people, with a focus on priority cohorts.	Department of Social Services
<i>Economic inclusion – Support for employers to hire and retain Autistic employees</i>			
Commitment 7, Action 1	<p>Evaluate existing information and resources on accessible open employment hiring practices. The evaluation could inform development of resources that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are Easy Read and accessible for employers and available in a variety of formats that are easily distributed via social media, via various professional networks, and available in hard copy. • Demonstrate small changes that employers can make to increase accessibility of their job application and recruitment practices. 	Improve access to information and resources for employers about accessible open employment practices.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 7, Action 2	<p>Evaluate existing resources that provide information and support for employers and employees to identify and implement reasonable adjustments in the workplace. The evaluation should identify if resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately meet the needs of Autistic people. • Provide clear guidance to employers about their responsibilities. • Provide clear advice to Autistic employees about their rights in the workplace. • Use appropriate neurodiversity-affirming language. • Provide current advice. 	Improve access to information and resources for employers about reasonable adjustments in the workplace.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Commitment 7, Action 3	<p>Evaluate existing resources to build the capacity of employers to support Autistic people in the workplace. The evaluation could inform development of new resources and should consider resources that include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autism, neurodiversity-affirming and inclusive practices • bullying in the workplace • managing reasonable adjustments • how to write Autistic-friendly job ads and positions descriptions • how to conduct recruitment and onboarding processes • providing sensory safe and accessible work environments • supervising and communicating with Autistic people • recognising Autistic people's strengths, skills and experience. 	Improve information and resources to build capacity of employers to support Autistic people in the workplace.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 7, Action 4	Better promote the JobAccess Hub for employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers, including promotion of the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF). The EAF provides financial help to eligible people with disability and mental health conditions and employers to buy work related modifications, equipment and Auslan services and workplace assistance and support services. The EAF is available to eligible people with disability who are about to start a job, are self-employed or who are currently working.	Improve awareness of existing employment information and support for people with disability, employers and service providers	Department of Social Services
Commitment 7, Action 5	Evaluate existing programs and initiatives for employment service providers to refer Autistic people to support or mentoring to help them transition into employment	Improve access to support and mentoring to assist Autistic people transition into employment.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Commitment 7, Action 6	Develop guidance on innovative hiring practices which support greater diversity in the Australian Public Service (APS) and facilitate greater awareness of APS Affirmative Measures – Disability and RecruitAbility measures to support agencies to adopt better practices to attract, recruit and retain diverse individuals into the APS, including Autistic people.	Improve guidance on inclusive hiring practices to support greater diversity in the APS.	Australian Public Service Commission lead in consultation with the Department of Social Services

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Economic inclusion – Improve supports and services so Autistic people have choice and control over their education, careers and employment			
Commitment 8, Action 1	<p>Evaluate information and resources for Autistic people, and their families and carers, on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported and informed decision-making about education and employment. • Understanding and exercising their rights in education and employment. 	Improve information and resources on supported and informed decision-making and understanding and exercising rights in education and employment.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Education and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Commitment 8, Action 2	Evaluate the Department of Education's targeted resources for educating diverse learners, particularly Autistic students, and consider if updates or additional resources are required to help teachers and school leaders create more inclusive learning environments	Improve information and resources to create more inclusive learning environments for diverse learners.	Department of Education lead in consultation with the Department of Social Services
Commitment 8, Action 3	Evaluate existing resources for Autistic people on how to independently self-advocate in employment, including how to navigate the employment system and understand their workplace rights.	Improve information and resources on how to self-advocate in employment.	Department of Social Services
Economic inclusion – Increase representation of Autistic people in leadership positions			
Commitment 9, Action 1	Explore opportunities to expand the existing partnership between the Department of Social Services and the Australian Institute of Company Directors for scholarships for Autistic people to have development and training opportunities for senior executive and board positions. Also consider other existing autism-specific governance and future leader programs.	Explore opportunities to provide development and training opportunities for senior executive and board positions for Autistic people.	Department of Social Services

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 9, Action 2	Explore opportunities to adapt existing and future Australian Public Service Commission and Academy programs and events, including mentoring and coaching opportunities, to ensure they are fit for purpose for Autistic participants.	Explore opportunities to adapt Australian Public Service Commission mentoring and coaching opportunities for and with Autistic people.	Australian Public Service Commission lead in consultation with the Department of Social Services
Commitment 9, Action 3	Support and leverage the Public Sector Neurodiversity Community of Practice to increase the visibility of Autistic people in leadership positions, in particular Autistic people from intersectional and diverse backgrounds.	Support increased visibility of Autistic people in leadership positions.	Australian Public Service Commission lead in consultation with the Department of Social Services
<i>Economic inclusion – Supporting inclusive education.</i>			
Commitment 10, Action 1	<p>Examine the barriers that Autistic students experience across the higher education student lifecycle through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving and building the evidence base including optimising collection of student disability data in higher education. <p>A stocktake of services, supports, resources and practice, including gaps to understand the support landscape for Autistic students in higher education.</p>	Support improved inclusion and outcomes for Autistic students through identification of best practice approaches.	Department of Education and Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Existing Government Action – Economic Inclusion

Positive Partnerships – (Phase 4 funded for \$30.35 million GST exclusive over 2020–21 to 2025–26)

- The Department of Education program that aims to improve the educational experience of school aged Autistic children by providing workshops and other learning opportunities to parents, carers, teachers and school staff. Positive Partnerships work in partnership with families, educators and communities to strengthen positive outcomes for Autistic young people.
- Positive Partnerships is available to staff and families from all government and non-government, primary and secondary schools across Australia
- Further information can be found on the Positive Partnerships web site: www.positivepartnerships.com.au

Aurora Neuroinclusion Program (Aurora) – (Funded for \$1,684,815 over 18 months to 30 June 2025, with a commitment to continue the program into future years)

- The Services Australia program helps Autistic people and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) people start their career in the APS. The APS has other programs supporting Autistic people in the workforce including the Apollo Program (Department of Home Affairs).
- Aurora is an award-winning program recognised by the Australian HR Institute (AHRI) as the 2023 winner of Best Attraction, Recruitment and Retention Strategy in the organisation category. Aurora was also recognised as the 2024 winner in the Education Category at the TechDiversity Awards.
- As at 30 October 2024, Aurora has provided employment opportunities for 123 neurodivergent job seekers
- Aurora recognises the strengths, skills and talents people who are neurodivergent can bring to work. As part of the program, the agency offers professional development and work experience opportunities in the APS. Autism and awareness training is provided as part of this program to managers, buddies and other co-workers.
- Further information on Aurora can be found on Services Australia's website: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/aurora.

Key outcome area – Diagnosis, Services and Supports

Autistic people and their families and carers and support networks can experience difficulties at all stages of the identification, assessment, and diagnosis process, in particular the time it can take to receive a diagnosis, and the associated cost. It can also be hard to find, access and navigate appropriate supports and services once a person has an autism diagnosis.

Access to neurodiversity-affirming early developmental monitoring, screening, and timely and comprehensive autism identification assessment and diagnosis, mean an individual will be better able to access supports and services that meet their individual needs, improving long-term outcomes.

‘Inequitable access to diagnosis, supports, or services limits an Autistic person’s ability to be supported across their lifetime. It is imperative the Strategy provide approaches for improvement in equitable access to support across an Autistic person’s whole life regardless of socioeconomic status, diagnosis, or the ability to qualify for NDIS supports.’

– **Life Without Barriers submission**

‘...being diagnosed was the final piece of a puzzle that allowed me to get employed because I understood what I needed.’

– **Autistic person, Adelaide Community forum**



Diagnosis, Services and Supports Actions

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Diagnosis, Services and Supports – Improve the autism identification, assessment and diagnosis processes for Autistic people and their families and carers			
Commitment 11, Action 1	In collaboration with Autistic professionals, the Government will consider opportunities in current training and professional development programs to better support the identification (including developmental monitoring and screening) and diagnosis of autism. This should include consideration of known biases such as gender and race and cultural influences in these processes and how to align training and professional development programs with the Strategy's vision, goal and guiding principles to improve the experience and quality of these processes for Autistic people and their families and carers.	Review professional training to improve the experience and quality of identification and diagnosis	Department of Social Services and Department of Health and Aged Care lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Commitment 12, Action 1	In collaboration with Autistic professionals and researchers, undertake a review to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian and international resources currently available to medical and other allied health professionals and educators, researchers and individuals and their families and carers to navigate developmental monitoring, screening, assessment and diagnosis processes. • If the resources are available in accessible formats, such as videos, visual information, Auslan, Easy Read materials and languages other than English, and can be widely distributed. • Cover the diverse presentations of autism across the lifespan and the intersection with race, culture, gender and co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and medical health conditions. 	Improve access to resources to help people navigate developmental monitoring, screening, assessment and diagnosis processes. This work will consider: medical and other allied health professionals; educators; researchers; individuals; families and carers.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Health and Aged Care

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 12, Action 2	<p>In collaboration with Autistic people, the Government will evaluate existing resources and scope the development of pre-diagnosis and post-diagnosis information packages that can be used by individuals and their families and carers. Information could cover navigating the identification (including developmental monitoring and screening) assessment and/or diagnosis processes, the diverse presentations of autism across the lifespan and co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities, and medical health conditions, and across different races, cultures and genders. Information should be provided in accessible formats such as videos, visual information and Easy Read materials, and be widely distributed.</p> <p>Following the evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop information and resources designed for Autistic people (and their families) to support access to affordable and quality diagnosis. • Produce information and resources in accessible formats (including videos, visual information, Easy Read and key languages) and ensure they are widely distributed. <p>These resources will be developed for the Autistic and autism community, including families, friends and carers, and cover pre-diagnosis and post-diagnosis information.</p>	Evaluate pre and post diagnosis resources and information for individuals, family and carers, including consideration of needs across different life stages and diversity groups, to improve these resources.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Health and Aged Care

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 13, Action 1	<p>A priority action in the <i>National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People</i> (being developed by the Department of Health and Aged Care), is to consider how to improve access to and affordability of primary care services, including general practice, to address the health and mental health needs of Autistic people. This includes considering different funding models to allow for more timely and affordable identification, diagnosis and supports pathways for Autistic people of all ages.</p> <p>(Note: The Autism Health Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic people is yet to be finalised. Therefore, this action may be updated).</p>	Improve access to and affordability of primary care services, including general practice, to address the health and mental health needs of Autistic people.	Department of Health and Aged Care lead in consultation with the Department of Social Services
Commitment 14, Action 1	Explore with states and territories the potential for screening and developmental monitoring for early signs of autism. This could be incorporated into standard developmental assessments throughout early childhood. Targeted approaches could also be undertaken with those who have a family history of autism, are premature, have a low birth weight, or are identified as having developmental delays or differences, including those who are twice exceptional.	Explore with states and territories the potential for improved screening and developmental monitoring for early signs of autism.	Department of Social Services and the Department of Health and Aged Care lead in consultation with the Department of Education
Diagnosis, Services and Supports – Ensure services and supports are neurodiversity-affirming, inclusive and appropriate for the Autistic community.			
Commitment 15, Action 1	Commission research, in consultation with Autistic people from the Strategy's priority cohorts, to define what neurodiversity-affirming care and practice is within the Australian context. Research focused on identifying key principles and ways to implement quality and timely supports and services in different settings and communities will be prioritised.	Define neurodiversity-affirming care and practice within the Australian context.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Health and Aged Care

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 15, Action 2	<p>Explore the feasibility of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A framework for Australian Government funded service providers to certify they provide neurodiversity-affirming supports for Autistic people, in coordination with the Autism Affirming Framework proposed in the Autism Health Roadmap. • A certification model for government and non-government providers who meet the minimum requirement framework, including options for how members of the public can find certified providers. 	Explore feasibility of a certification model for Australian Government funded service providers to certify they provide neurodiversity-affirming services.	Department of Social Services
Commitment 15, Action 3	<p>Work with Autistic researchers and professionals to explore the feasibility and acceptability of current outcome measures and approaches used in research and practice within Australia. In line with the Strategy's vision, goal and guiding principles, work with relevant stakeholders to develop neurodiversity-affirming outcome measures and supporting resources for use with Autistic people across the lifespan.</p>	Develop neurodiversity-affirming outcome measures and supporting resources across the life-course.	Department of Social Services
Commitment 16, Action 1	<p>Consider how current programs can better enable people with lived experience to deliver supports and services to Autistic people. Consideration should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring education and training environments are accessible and inclusive. • Consideration of existing training programs. • Increased support for employment in service delivery roles. 	Explore how current programs can better enable people with lived experience to deliver supports and services to Autistic people.	Department of Social Services, and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to lead in consultation with the Department of Education

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 16, Action 2	Ensure key advisory and reference groups that relate to the Australian Government supports and services for Autistic people, include Autistic representation, with a focus on the Strategy's priority cohorts, to provide input to service design and delivery.	Work to ensure Australian Government key advisory and reference groups include Autistic representation.	Department of Social Services in consultation with other relevant departments
Commitment 16, Action 3	Actively promote and facilitate the inclusion of all Autistic people and their families and carers to be represented on boards and professional bodies representing government funded service delivery, including where Autistic people could be called upon for their expertise.	Actively promote Autistic people and their families and carers to be represented on boards and professional bodies representing Government funded services.	Department of Social Services
Commitment 17, Action 1	<p>Evaluate the effectiveness of existing targeted training³ for people providing services and supports to Autistic people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve understanding and acceptance of autism, lived experience, strengths and support needs. • Challenge and address ableist attitudes about Autistic people. • Include and promote experiences shared by and about Autistic people and the benefits this brings to improve services. <p>Raise awareness of different and diverse presentations of autism across the lifespan, or less understood presentations of autism, including how it presents in marginalised communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcase best practice examples of how to support, include and accommodate for Autistic people when providing supports and services. 	Improve understanding and acceptance of autism by evaluating training for Government funded service providers.	Department of Social Services

³ "Training" refers to non-accredited training i.e. training not housed in the national vocational education and training system.

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 17, Action 2	<p>Evaluate and adapt existing resources around best practice accessibility and inclusion to inform government entities, businesses and non-government organisations on how to ensure that they are accessible to Autistic people. This should consider factors such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lighting • noise • design • the need for remote service provision (for example: via telehealth) • flexibility in delivery methods and timing, • asking the client what works for them (client-led and individualised where possible) • communication methods of support / service staff • accessibility of service information • cultural competency of organisations • the use of trauma informed frameworks. 	Evaluate and adapt existing resources around best practice accessibility and inclusion.	Department of Social Services
Diagnosis, Services and Supports – Improve decision-making support for Autistic people			
Commitment 18, Action 1	Evaluate current decision-making and supported decision-making frameworks, and associated guidance material, and report on the effectiveness to support Autistic people to make decisions that impact their lives.	Provide advice to improve decision-making supports.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with relevant Australian Government departments
Diagnosis, Services and Supports – Improve the experience of accessing supports			
Commitment 19, Action 1	Work to ensure the perspectives and voices of Autistic people are considered in implementing responses to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, the Review of the NDIS and through ongoing reform and action taken under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031.	Improve access and experience of accessing services.	Department of Social Services lead in consultation with relevant Australian Government departments

Existing Government Action – Diagnosis, Services and Supports Actions

Child and Youth Assessment and Treatment Services (CYATS) (\$18.4 million has been committed over four years until 30 June 2026 for the expansion of CYATS)

- The Department of Health and Aged Care's CYATS program is a specialist service that offers the Alice Springs First Nations community the opportunity to seek formal diagnostic assessment, speech pathology and occupational therapy intervention for children and young people who are suspected of having a neurodevelopment delay or disorder. This includes, but is not limited to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- CYATS has assisted First Nations families not only to receive early detection of and intervention for their child's neurodevelopmental condition, but also to enter a network of support services across health, education, social and family supports.
- The funding committed to the expansion of CYATS will allow neurodevelopment assessment of around 200 First Nations children and young people annually, compared to 90 individuals annually prior to the expansion.
- Further information on the CYATS program can be found on the website: www.caac.org.au/makethechange/

Jobs and Skills Councils – Strengthening Australia's National Vocational Education and Training System Program (Jobs and Skills Councils Program) – (\$459.7 million over four years to 30 June 2028)

- Through the Jobs and Skills Councils Program, the Australian Government has established 10 Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) to ensure the national vocational education and training (VET) system is responsive to current and emerging workforce priorities and skill needs across the Australian economy. JSCs are also responsible for engaging with employers, training providers and governments to devise and implement ways to improve training outcomes for priority learner cohorts, including people with disability.
- HumanAbility is the JSC for the care and support workforce, covering the disability support, health, human (community) services, children's education and care, aged care, and sport and recreation sectors. HumanAbility is responsible for reviewing and updating nationally recognised VET training packages to ensure they meet identified workforce priorities and skill needs in care and support.
- Further information can be found on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' website: www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/jobs-and-skills-councils

Key outcome area – Enabling Actions



‘The development, implementation, evaluation and ongoing review of the Strategy must be undertaken in co-design with Autistic people, their families and representative organisations. The views, voices and aspirations of Autistic people should be at the centre of all government decisions, policy, project and services that impact them’.

– Amaze submission



Enabling Actions

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Enabling action – Governance arrangements			
Commitment 20, Action 1	<p>Within the first year, develop and implement a governance framework, with representation to reflect the diversity of the Autistic and autism community with a focus on the priority cohorts identified in the Strategy, to oversee implementation of the Strategy and this Action Plan, and development of subsequent actions. The governance framework will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial oversight of the implementation of the Strategy. • Continuing co-leadership through a representative group of Autistic people and their families and carers, researchers and professionals, and representatives from relevant Australian Government departments. • A whole-of-government approach, recognising coordinated effort is required across all areas of government and sectors including health, education, disability, and employment. • Ongoing ways to listen to and include Autistic people and their families and carers, support networks, and communities. • Monitoring and public reporting about implementation of the Strategy. 	The governance framework will set out a visible and robust accountability structure to drive implementation and decision-making under the Strategy.	Department of Social Services

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Enabling action – Governance arrangements			
Commitment 20, Action 2	Continue to work with community members from the priority cohorts identified in the Strategy to review and develop definitions and terminology for Autistic people to reflect the full diversity of the Autistic community.	Ensure diversity of experiences and representation through Strategy Governance.	Department of Social Services
Commitment 20, Action 3	Continue to work with community members from priority cohorts identified in the Strategy to develop actions to be implemented to address the additional barriers and challenges these cohorts face.	Ensure diversity of experiences and representation through Strategy Governance.	Department of Social Services
Enabling action – Opportunities to improve research so it is co-lead by Autistic People and/or neurodiversity-affirming			
Commitment 21, Action 1.	<p>Commence work to evaluate existing Australian and international autism-specific research to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in research • How autism related research can be best applied to policy and service delivery and underpinned by the Strategy's Vision, Goal and Guiding Principles. <p>The evaluation will result in development of a priority list to further build on the understanding of the lived experience of autism and identify the types of services, supports, policies and programs that deliver the best outcomes for Autistic people.</p>	Identify how autism related research can be best applied to policy and service delivery and underpinned by the Strategy's Vision, Goal and Guiding Principles	Department of Social Services in consultation with relevant departments

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Enabling action – Governance arrangements			
Commitment 21, Action 2	In collaboration with Autistic and autism researchers, commit funding for an epidemiological study of autism in Australia to identify the true prevalence of autism in Australia. This work will help inform the scope and funding required for the commitments in the Strategy to be fully realised.	Development of data and evidence that informs policies and practices that are inclusive and responsive to the Autistic and autism community.	Department of Social Services in consultation with the Department of Health
Commitment 21, Action 3	Work with government research funding bodies to evaluate options to ensure that where Australian Government funded research specifically impacts Autistic people, the research is co-led by Autistic people and the development and/or ethics committee/approval process directly involves Autistic people. Research should also be underpinned by the Strategy's Guiding Principles and consider priority cohorts identified in the Strategy.	Work to ensure research about Autistic people is informed by the views and experience of Autistic people.	Department of Social Services in consultation with relevant departments
Commitment 21, Action 4	Work with government research funding bodies to develop best practice information for researchers who may be engaging in projects that have specific impacts on Autistic people to support foundational understanding of neurodiversity-affirming practice, common co-occurring neurotypes, disabilities and medical health conditions, and intersectionality in delivering supports.	Develop best practice information for researchers who may be engaging in projects that have specific impacts on Autistic people.	Department of Social Services

Strategy Commitment and Action	Action	What issue will this address / what will this action achieve	Lead Government department/s
Commitment 21, Action 5	Explore approaches to strengthen Autistic research capacity and practice in Australia, aligned with the Strategy's Guiding Principles.	Look to strengthen Autistic research capacity and practice.	Department of Social Services
Commitment 21, Action 6	The Australian Government will invest funding to establish a knowledge translation research body that will lead on the bulk of actions under Commitment 21.	Invest in a knowledge translation research body	Department of Social Services
Enabling action – Evaluate and report on progress of the Strategy			
Commitment 22, Action 1	Within the first year, develop an Evidence and Evaluation Framework and reporting mechanisms for the Strategy.	Development of an Evidence and Evaluation Framework and reporting mechanism.	Department of Social Services

Acronyms

AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
APS	Australian Public Service
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
Autism CRC	Autism CRC is an independent national source of evidence for best practice in relation to autism across the lifespan and the spectrum
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CARM	Culturally and racially marginalised
COSP	United Nations Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
(Cth)	Commonwealth
DRO	Disability Representative Organisation
DSS	Department of Social Services
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual. The + stands for all other identities not encompassed in the short acronym.
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
UN	United Nations
UN CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Glossary

Ableist	Relating to, involving, or fostering discrimination against people with disability.
Accessible	Environments, facilities, services, products and information that people are able to use and interact with in a way that suits their needs.
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)	This includes all the ways a person can communicate without using spoken language, including use of gestures, sign language, pictures, technology or a combination of these that reflect the preferences of the person. Access to AAC provides language input and output that allows people to participate and express their views.
Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–31	Australia's national disability policy framework to drive action at all levels of government to improve the lives of people with disability.
Autistic and autism community	Refers to the collective community of Autistic people, their families and carers, friends and support networks, advocacy groups, researchers, and other people in their lives.
Autism	Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference. Autistic people experience differences in the way they process information and interact with their environment compared to non Autistic people. This means the way that Autistic people communicate, connect with others, and engage with aspects of day-to-day life are different to those of non-Autistic people.
Autism Health Roadmap	The National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People.

<p>Autistic people with very high support needs</p>	<p>Also known as profound autism, severe autism, severe and profound autism, profound needs, profound and multiple learning disabilities, high support needs, very significant supports, high dependency needs and requiring intensive support may have the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptive functioning requiring 24-hour access to an adult who can care for them if concerns arise, being unable to be left completely alone in a residence, and not being able to take care of basic daily adaptive needs. Significant person-to-person care and support with daily living skills and personal care. Complex communication needs/language impairment which include being non-verbal, minimally verbal or unreliable speakers with complex representations. Constant or significant monitoring due to safety concerns such as self-injurious behaviours, pica, and absconding. This includes as adults. Life-long/permanent. Adaptive behaviour score.
<p>Autonomy</p>	<p>A person's right and freedom to make decisions, control their life and exercise choice</p>
<p>Best Practice</p>	<p>In the context of the Strategy and this Action Plan, best practice is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths-based, trauma-informed and neurodiversity affirming • Embracing safety, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and respect for diversity. • Co-leadership between government and the Autistic and autism community. • Informed and guided by lived experience, expertise and insights. • Evidence-based decision making (see definition of evidence based). • Data-driven, outcomes focussed, with robust monitoring and evaluation. • Culturally safe. • Includes people with diverse support needs, including those with very high support needs, and their families and carers.

Carer	Someone who provides supports to a person with disability on an unpaid basis, often a family member. These family members can include young people and carers. Some legislation refers to ‘carers’ and some people with disability prefer the term over ‘support person’.
Co-design	A design process where stakeholders are equal partners and take leadership roles in the design of products, services, systems, policies, laws and research.
Co-led/Co-leadership	Stakeholders equally share power and influence over decisions, rather than one being a single leader.
Co-occurring conditions	The occurrence of more than one neurotype, disability, or medical health condition at the same time.
Complex communication needs	Complex communication needs is a broad term, which describes people with difficulties understanding speech, using speech or with little or no speech. It includes people who are able to speak but may have difficulty with comprehension or expressing their wants and needs; those who require extra time to process what is said and to respond; and those who are not able to speak but can express themselves through augmentative and alternative communication.
Co-produced/Co-production	An extension of ‘co-design’, where stakeholders are involved in the development and design, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of products, services, systems, policies, laws and research.
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)	This broad term describes communities with diverse languages, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, traditions, societal structures and religions. This includes people with a different heritage or linguistic background than dominant Australian culture and language, people with dual heritage, and people who are migrants and refugees. Some members of the Deaf community and Auslan users also identify as members of a cultural minority.
Culturally and racially marginalised (CARM)	This term refers to people who face marginalisation due to their race. The term ‘culturally’ is added because these people may also face discrimination due to their culture or background.
Developmental monitoring	A process whereby children’s development is routinely observed across time by health and/or education professionals to identify if any developmental differences are present.

Disability Representative Organisation (DRO)	A peak organisation providing systemic advocacy and representation for people with disability.
Evidence-based	<p>The definition of evidence-based is comprised of three pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research evidence (science). 2. Clinical expertise (trauma-informed, culturally responsive, LGBTQIA+ inclusive). 3. Clients' values and preferences. <p>These pillars should be underpinned by lived experience and none of the pillars are to be valued higher than the other; they must all work together to be considered evidence based.</p>
First Nations person or people	First Nations or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the first peoples of Australia. They are not one group but comprise hundreds of groups that have their own distinct set of languages, histories and cultural traditions.
Intersectionality	Intersectionality refers to ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation based on attributes such as: age; disability; ethnicity; gender identity; race; religion; and sexual orientation. Intersectionality recognises that the causes of disadvantage or discrimination do not exist independently, but intersect and overlap, resulting in compounding impacts.
Lived experience	First-hand involvement or direct experiences and choices of a given person, and the knowledge they gain from it, as opposed to the knowledge a given person gains from second-hand or mediated source.
Neurodiversity-affirming practice	Neurodiversity-affirming practice is a strengths and rights-based approach to brain differences that can take many forms depending on each person's needs and context. It promotes safety through accepting and valuing differing ways of thinking, learning, communicating and experiencing the world. Rather than trying to 'fix' or change neurodivergent people to fit into a narrow idea of what is considered 'normal' or 'better', neurodiversity-affirming practice aims to provide supports, services, accommodations and adjustments that are person-centred and affirm neurodivergent identity and individual needs.

Neurodivergent and neurodiverse	<p>Neurodivergent – A person or people whose neurodevelopment falls outside of (or diverges from) the range usually considered “typical”.</p> <p>Neurodiverse – A collective term for groups including mixed neurodevelopment, for example: this may be a group of Autistic and non-Autistic people or neurodivergent and neurotypical people.</p>
Neurodiversity	A term used to describe the natural variation and development in human neurocognition and within communities. Although all people process the world differently, some differences are grouped and named. The neurodiversity of a community arises from the presence of both neurodivergent and neurotypical people.
Neurotype	A type of brain, in terms of how a person interprets and responds.
Neurotypical	A label for people who are not neurodivergent.
Participatory Evidence Framework	A framework for conducting research and generating knowledge centred on the belief that those who are most impacted by research should be involved in framing the questions, the design, methods, and the modes of analysis of such research projects.
Program logic model	A visual representation that describes how an initiative is intended to work by linking activities with outputs and short, medium and longer-term outcomes.
Reasonable adjustment	The <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth) s 4(1) defines an adjustment to be made by a person as a reasonable adjustment ‘unless making the adjustment would impose an unjustifiable hardship on the person’.
Screening	Assessing individuals to identify the presence or absence of disabilities, conditions and/or other differences.
Support network	These networks refer to the informal relationships people have with family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and other members of their community, that help them achieve their personal goals.
Theory of change	A method that explains how a given intervention, or set of interventions, are expected to lead to a specific development change, drawing on a causal analysis based on available evidence. It serves as a roadmap, illuminating the causal relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Trauma-informed	Frameworks and strategies to ensure that the practices, policies and culture of an organisation and its staff understand, recognise and respond to the effects of trauma and minimise, as far as possible, the risk that people may be re-traumatised.
Twice exceptional	Twice exceptional (2e) people are those who possess high cognitive potential or advanced abilities (giftedness) while also having one or more disabilities, learning differences, or neurodiverse traits
Whole-of-government	Joint activities performed by a range of departments and/or agencies in order to provide a common solution to particular issues.

Appendix A: National Autism Strategy Commitments

The National Autism Strategy includes 22 commitments for the social inclusion; economic inclusion; and diagnosis, services and supports key outcome areas. The Strategy also includes enabling commitments focussed on governance; reporting and evaluation; and research. Actions to achieve the commitments will be detailed in this Action Plan, and future actions.

Social inclusion commitments

1. Increase understanding, acceptance and appreciation of, and change attitudes towards, all Autistic people across all of society, through:
 - a. Greater public education including building a better understanding of the diversity of autism within workplaces and service systems, with a focus on health, education and the federal justice system.
 - b. Increasing representation of the diversity of Autistic people in the Australian Public Service, media, sports and the arts
 - c. Increasing accessible and sensory-friendly public, broadcast and online spaces.
 - d. Increasing the capacity and capability of advocates and advocacy organisations to challenge and reduce stigma of autism and education of Autistic people and their families and carers about their rights.
2. Increase opportunities for social connections and peer support that reflect individual preferences.
3. Improve Australia Government service delivery, communication, and information to meet the needs of all Autistic people.
4. Ensure consideration of the needs of all Autistic people in the upcoming review of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and next statutory reviews of the associated disability standards.
5. Improve the safety and welfare of all Autistic people through the reduction of all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, bullying and victimisation across all four Strategy outcome areas.

Economic inclusion commitments

6. Increase meaningful employment opportunities (including business ownership, self-employment, and entrepreneurship and social enterprises) for Autistic people.
7. Support employers to hire and retain Autistic employees through improving the

accessibility of recruitment processes and workplace environments that are safe and inclusive for all Autistic people.

8. Improve the supports and services available to Autistic people to ensure they have choice and control over their education and careers.
9. Increase the diverse representation of Autistic people in management, senior executive and board positions promoting Autistic people as visible role models.
10. Improve inclusive practices, accommodations, awareness of communication needs and the quality and accessibility of advocacy resources for Autistic students, and their families, carers and support networks.

Diagnosis, services and supports commitments

Diagnosis

11. Consider the use, accuracy, feasibility and acceptability of current identification screening and diagnostic tools. Work with relevant professional bodies to develop a set of standardised co-designed training/professional development and resource materials to support professionals involved in the identification and diagnosis of autism to improve the experience, and quality of this process for Autistic people (including intersectional cohorts) and their families and carers.
12. Develop best practice resources to support Autistic people and their families, carers and support networks through the identification, assessment and diagnosis process.
13. Explore ways to make autism diagnosis and assessment processes more affordable.
14. Consider early screening and developmental monitoring to promote early identification and diagnosis of autism and improved access to health and other professionals.

Services and Supports

15. Improve access to quality timely, neurodiversity-affirming and equitable supports and services for Autistic people, including for people living in rural, regional and remote areas.
16. Encourage greater representation of people with lived experience in delivering supports and services to Autistic people.
17. Develop a set of best practice training and resource materials for people providing supports and services to Autistic people.
18. Assess the availability and suitability of current decision-making tools aimed at empowering Autistic people to make informed decisions about all areas of their life and consider ways to improve access to high quality decision-making tools.
19. Work with states and territories to improve the experience of Autistic people accessing supports through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), disability supports outside the NDIS and mainstream services.

Actions delivered under these commitments will take into account: the differences in presentation by different cohorts (for example: girls, women and gender diverse people); intersectionality; and the need for tools, supports and services to be tailored for different cohorts and to be neurodiversity-affirming. The development and delivery of actions will seek to be co-designed or involve Autistic community/academics as appropriate.

Enabling commitments

Governance

20. Develop a governance framework to support:

- a. strong accountability mechanisms
- b. continuing co-leadership through a representative advisory group to oversee implementation of the Strategy and First Action Plan and development of subsequent actions, and active involvement of a diverse range of Autistic people, as well as families and carers, and professionals within the autism sector
- c. whole-of-government, cross-sectoral and coordinated approaches to implementation.

Research

21. Ensure Government funded autism research conducted in Australia is underpinned by the Strategy's Guiding Principles and is used to inform policy and service delivery with a focus on priority cohorts.

Evidence, Evaluation and Reporting

22. Develop a National Autism Strategy Evidence, Evaluation and Reporting Framework (including Outcomes and Process Frameworks), using Theory of Change and Program Logic models. Including a Participatory Evidence Framework involving Autistic people and their families and carers in the design, methods, and modes of analysis, and transparent reporting mechanisms, co-produced with the Autistic and autism community.

Notes

EMBARGOED FOR EDUCATION





National Autism Strategy

2025–2031

For more information about the National Autism Strategy,
go to dss.gov.au/national-autism-strategy

From: s 22
To:
Cc: [Autism Policy](#); s 22
Subject: RE: Education feedback on Action 10.1 [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 4 December 2024 1:54:14 PM

Thanks s 22 I'll resend the attachments we sent yesterday (s 22 confirmed receipt of the email). It sounds like you *are* getting our emails but without the attachments, is this correct?

From: s 22
Sent: Wednesday, 4 December 2024 1:27 PM
To: s 22
Cc: Autism Policy <AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au>; s 22
Subject: RE: Education feedback on Action 10.1 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi s 22

We have not received any attachments from you so far.

I've sent through a file request via Kiteworks (DSS system to transfer large files externally) as alternative way for you to send attachments. You should get an email notification shortly. Please let me know if you experience any issues with this method.

Cheers

s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Wednesday, 4 December 2024 12:57 PM
To: s 22
Cc: Autism Policy <AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au>; s 22

Subject: RE: Education feedback on Action 10.1 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s 22

Thanks for your email. We are not experiencing any issue with receiving emails from other departments.

Can I check – you refer to the attached NAS Action Plan with edits to 10.1 – an attachment was attached to your email – or are you referring to the table pasted in your email below?

Regards

s 22

Autism Policy Team

Foundational Supports and Early Childhood Reforms Branch
Department of Social Services

s 22

[National Relay Service](#)

The Department of Social Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

From: s 22

Sent: Wednesday, 4 December 2024 12:52 PM

To: s 22

Cc: Autism Policy <AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au>; s 22

s 22

Subject: Education feedback on Action 10.1 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Team

It appears as though some or most of our emails are not getting through. We are not receiving bounce backs and our IT support could not identify anything obviously awry on our end.

Could you please investigate with your IT support and let me know if we need to escalate on our end?

In the meantime, I have attached the NAS Action Plan with some additional edits to 10.1 for inclusion if possible in the Co-Ord Final.

Thanks and very happy to discuss s 22

<i>Economic inclusion – Supporting inclusive education.</i>			
Commitment 10, Action 1	Examine the barriers that Autistic students experience across the higher education student lifecycle through: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● improving and building the evidence base including optimising collection of student disability data in higher education● a stocktake of services, supports, resources and practice, including gaps to understand the support landscape for Autistic students in higher education.	Support improved inclusion and outcomes for Autistic students in higher education.	Department of Education and Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

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From: s 22
To: s 22
Cc: [Autism Policy](#); s 22
Subject: RE: NAS and First Action Plan [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Monday, 2 December 2024 12:09:12 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Thanks for the update s 22

From: s 22
Sent: Monday, 2 December 2024 11:03 AM
To: s 22
Cc: Autism Policy <AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au>; s 22
Subject: NAS and First Action Plan [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s
22

Just a quick note that we are still finalising our feedback and will come back to you today with edits to the NAS and action plan.

s 22

s 22

Inclusive Schooling & Disability Strategy
Inclusion and Disability Branch
Australian Government Department of Education
s 22

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From: [Autism Policy](#)
To: s 22
Cc: s 22 [Autism Policy](#)
Subject: REVIEW / INPUT: National Autism Strategy – First Action Plan – Procurement Process and Evaluation Panel [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Thursday, 27 February 2025 11:24:34 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[Employment - Schedule 5 – Request for Quotation DRAFT.docx](#)
[Service Providers - Schedule 5 – Request for Quotation – DRAFT.docx](#)
[Summary of Procurements.docx](#)

Good morning, s 22

As you are aware, the Autism Policy team are progressing the implementation for the *First Action Plan 2025-2026*, under the for the *National Autism Strategy 2025-2031*. This email seeks your assistance in our upcoming procurement activities, details have been outlined below.

Request for Quotes

The Autism Policy team has identified 19 actions that require external expertise, and we are working towards procuring these consultancy services through the Management Advisory Services Panel (MAS Panel). These 19 actions have been ‘bundled’ together based on similar focus areas, deliverables and expected outcomes. The Procurement Summary (**attached**) provides for an overview of the 8 separate Request for Quotes (RFQs).

As the actions cover multiple areas of responsibilities, we are consulting with several departments on the draft RFQs and would appreciate any feedback you may have on these draft documents. We are acknowledge your subject-matter expertise and knowledge in this area. It is important that the deliverables outlined in the RFQ is clear, identifies the work required and will produce a useful product to inform policy develop and in turn, improve the lives of Autistic people.

Timeframes

Preparation of these procurements and appropriate authorisations are being progressed by the Autism Policy team as a matter of priority. We are working towards releasing the RFQs as soon as practicable, with a view of identifying successful providers and signing contracts prior to the end of June 2025. The RFQs will be circulated no later than 28 March 2025, likely earlier depending approvals.

We are mindful of the pending caretaker period, and note that this may impact on our timeframes.

Evaluation

We would like to gauge whether a suitable representative from your department would be interested and available in participating as a member of the procurement Evaluation Panel. This will involve the evaluation of supplier submissions against the *Statement of Work Requirements*.

Further information regarding the Evaluation Panel will be communicated closer to the release of the RFQ and all panel members will need to sign conflict of interest and deed of confidentiality forms, prior to assessment.

The time commitment will be dependent on how many responses are received. We are looking

for suitable Executive Level staff with the relevant skills or knowledge in the area of the RFQ to participate evaluation panel. Online participation can be facilitated - evaluators do not need to be based in Canberra.

Action Required:

It would be appreciated if you could please action the following and provide a response back to AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au by **COB Monday 3 March 2025**:

1. Review the draft RFQ (**attached**) and provide changes and feedback on the document. Please mark up the document with track changes.
2. Circulate the draft RFQ to relevant areas within your department and coordinate a response for your department, where practicable.
3. Advise if you would like to review and provide feedback on other RFQs. We are happy to provide these drafts on request.
4. Consider whether there are any suitable individuals (at the Executive Level) that would be interested in participating in the Evaluation Panel.

Probity Reminder

Please be mindful of maintaining probity requirements when reviewing or further distributing these documents. Please direct any internal or external enquiries you may receive regarding these future procurements to the Autism Policy Team within DSS.

Please let contact AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au if you have any questions or concerns.

Regards

s 22

If using assistive software, the message ends here. Email signature below.

s 22

- Autism Policy

Foundational Supports and Early Childhood Reforms
Department of Social Services

s 22

(Part-time arrangements: Monday – Wednesday)

[National Relay Service](#)



The Department of Social Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

Schedule 5 – Request for Quotation Template

Note to Service Provider:

This Schedule 5 provides a Request for Quotation (RFQ) template that includes the typical information that an Agency will provide to the Service Provider to request a quotation for the provision of Management Advisory Service to an Agency, as detailed in clause 11.2 of the Head Agreement. It is intended that the RFQ will be provided as a smart form. The intent of this template and any smart form is to achieve a high level of standardisation and consistency in Agency RFQs to provide efficiencies to Agencies and Service Providers, however, it will not be mandatory that Agencies use this RFQ Template or any resulting smart form to request quotes from Service Providers.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This RFQ is issued under clause 11.2 of the Head Agreement between the Service Provider and the Department of Finance.

<u>Request For Quotation for Services</u>	
<i>Agency Information</i>	
Agency	Department of Social Services (the department)
Agency File Reference	[Insert Agency file reference number]
RFQ Reference	[Insert Agency RFQ reference number]
Agency Representative	Name: s 22 Position: s 22, Autism Policy Team Address: National Office, GPO Box 9820, Canberra ACT 2601 Email: AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au
<i>RFQ and Proposed Order Details</i>	
RFQ Release Date	TBC
RFQ Closing Date	TBC
Proposed Order Commencement Date	Friday 6 June 2025
Proposed Order Term and/or Completion Date	Monday 30 June 2026
Options to extend	The department may extend the Contract for six (6) months by providing written notice to the Service Provider prior to the Order Completion Date.

Request For Quotation for Services

Milestones

All payment milestones are based on the acceptance to the department's standards of the following deliverables (as negotiated):

Milestone	Due Date
Project inception meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend an in-person or online meeting with the department (and other stakeholders as required by the department) to discuss the scope of work and key questions. 	7 June 2025
A draft workplan for both Economic Inclusion Package 1 and Economic Inclusion Package 2 including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> project plan and schedule, risk register and stakeholder engagement plan for the department's review. 	23 June 2025
Acceptance of the draft workplan by the department	7 July 2025
Regular project reports/status updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular status reports to include progress, risk and/or concerns *Economic Inclusion Package 1 to commence immediately and Economic Inclusion Package 2 to commence from December 2025. 	Regular basis (monthly), or as needed.
Governance meeting/progress report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a written report detailing progress to date to the department and the Governance Reference Group (Reference Group) (refer to subheading Governance Framework). Incorporate feedback, where appropriate from the department and/or Reference Group 	October 2025
Interim report, Economic Inclusion Package 1 covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of stakeholder consultations, approach to report development of each outcome area and best practice findings 	Early Oct 2025
Draft report, Economic Inclusion Package 1 for comment by the department	24 Nov 2025
A final report for Economic Inclusion Package 1	Early Dec 2025
Interim report, Economic Inclusion Package 2 covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of stakeholder consultations, approach to report development of each outcome area and best practice findings 	March 2026
Draft final report, Economic Inclusion Package 2 for comment by the department	May 2026
Final report, Economic Inclusion Package 2	Early June 2026

Request For Quotation for Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capability training to the department and / or external stakeholders (presentation in person or by teleconference) 	June 2026
Statement of Work	
Service Area	Commercial M
Service Category	Programs and Projects
Service Sub-category	Program/Project evaluation
Services Required	<p>Services Required</p> <p>The National Autism Strategy 2025-31 (the Strategy) and the First Action Plan 2025-26 (First Action Plan) were publicly released on 14 January 2025. The Strategy and First Action Plan aim to improve life outcomes for all Autistic people living in Australia.</p> <p>The Strategy outlines a framework to create a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.</p> <p>The Strategy and First Action Plan are focussed on driving actions and enabling change in areas of Australian Government responsibility across four key outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> social inclusion, economic inclusion, diagnosis, services and supports, and health and mental health through the National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People (developed by the Department of Health and Aged Care). <p>Statement of Requirements</p> <p>The aim of this RFQ is to deliver Actions 6.1 (A), 6.2, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.5 as outlined in the First Action Plan. These actions have a broad common policy direction in improving employment opportunities and supports for Autistic people in the workplace.</p> <p>The Australian Government is seeking a supplier to work across the 6 actions to deliver 2 separate reports that provide comprehensive advice and information on employment for Autistic people and employers and employees.</p> <p>Economic Inclusion Package 1: Commitment 6, Action 1 (A) and 6.2</p> <p>A review on the inclusiveness and effectiveness of existing autism-specific employment training¹ and programs. This includes supports for mainstream, open employment, student placements and internships. The review will also include engagement practices with existing regional employer and service provider networks.</p> <p>The review will:</p>

¹ 'Training' refers to non-accredited training i.e. training not housed in the national vocation education and training system.

Request For Quotation for Services

- identify the current pathways to employment are available, focusing on individuals' access to employment and determining any gaps with the current pathways to employment.
- Identify best practice examples of:
 - training* and resources across different models of employment such as: employment providers, recruitment agencies, career advisors, inclusive of the benefits of employing Autistic people
 - employment practices, to recruit, employ and retain Autistic employees.
- determine how personally meaningful long-term employment opportunities for Autistic people can be measured.
- identify existing regional employers and service provider networks.
- determine what avenues are available to engage with existing regional employer and service provider networks to support Autistic people to improve their employment opportunities and support.
- identify whether these avenues are sufficient and whether there are any gaps that need to be considered.
- the gaps and challenges for Autistic people, families and carers, across employment, training and resources and outline opportunities for best practice that can be used to help guide future activities
- recommendations on potential awareness activities to enhance support of employing Autistic people.

A final report will be presented covering the key findings of the review.

The outcome of this review will inform a future grant opportunity to develop effective autism specific employment training and resources for the Autistic and autism community, employers and employment providers that is supported by best practice. Further details are outlined in 'Background' for context.

Economic Inclusion Package 2: Commitment 7, Actions 1, 2, 3 and 5

A review on supports for employers to hire and retain Autistic employees with the view to improve access to information and resources for employers about accessible open employment practices, reasonable adjustments and build capacity for employers to support Autistic people in the workplace. The review will also focus on transition into the workplace arrangements. existing autism-specific employment training* and programs.

The review will:

- identify existing information and resources on accessible open employment hiring practices and reasonable adjustments in the workplace, and identify any accessibility gaps or improvements that could be made to increase accessibility (e.g. job application processes, recruitment practices, improved guidance and advice to Autistic employees and employers etc).
- examine existing resources to build the capacity of employers to support Autistic people in the workplace and identify areas where new or improved resources could be developed.
- assess existing programs and initiatives for employment service providers to refer Autistic people to support or mentoring to help them transition into employment.

Request For Quotation for Services

The results of the review will inform potential future work with a focus on:

- improved access to information and resources for employers about accessible open employment practices and reasonable adjustments in the workplace
- building capacity of employers to support Autistic people in the workplace; and
- improving access to support and mentoring to assist Autistic people transition into employment.

Priority Cohorts

The following priority cohorts have been identified as experiencing greater barriers and compounding disadvantage, and should be considered in the development of the RFQ response.

- First Nations Autistic peoples
- Autistic people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) communities
- Autistic women and girls and gender diverse people
- Autistic people from the LGBTQIA+ community
- Older Autistic people
- Autistic children and young people
- Autistic people with very high support needs

Background

Future Grant Opportunity

The findings from the Commitment 6, Action 1 (A) review into the effectiveness of existing autism-specific employment programs, will inform Commitment 6, Action 1 (B):

- Develop effective autism specific training and resources for the Autistic and autism community, employers and employment providers (across mainstream, open employment, student placements and internships) that is supported by training, awareness and best practice.
- Link this work with the new Disability Employment Centre of Excellence, which will be established 2025.

Commitment 6, Action 1 (B) will be undertaken through a separate grant opportunity. Service Providers are not expected to develop training and resources as part of this RFQ response.

Development of the Strategy and First Action Plan

The Strategy and First Action Plan were developed with guidance from the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council and involved extensive consultation with Autistic people, their families and carers, and the broader autism and disability sectors, researchers and experts, and relevant Australian Government departments.

Request For Quotation for Services

	<p>The Strategy and First Action Plan focus on key outcome areas that will help guide strategies and solutions to help overcome the unique barriers and challenges Autistic people face.</p> <p>As there is a strong expectation from community to continue with the co-led approach used through the development of the Strategy, Service Providers will need to demonstrate a strong connection to the Autistic and autism community, and/or partner with organisations that are Autistic-led.</p> <p>Governance Framework</p> <p>The governance framework will include the establishment of a Reference Group with Autistic and autism community representatives forming a majority of the group membership, alongside government representatives from relevant Australian Government departments. The Reference Group will provide strategic guidance to drive the implementation of the Strategy and the development of any future actions.</p> <p>Additionally, time-limited working groups will be established as needed to support consideration of specific issues, including the needs of underrepresented groups, or groups experiencing intersectional disadvantages. These groups will draw on lived experience and specialised knowledge to support implementation, ensuring actions remain meaningful, targeted and effective.</p> <p>The successful Service Provider will need to consider feedback and guidance from the Reference Group and / or Working Groups at key milestones in their project.</p>
Deliverables	<p>The Service Provider will deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Work Plan including a project plan for the two Economic Inclusion Packages and schedule, risk register, and stakeholder engagement plan for DSS review and acceptance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Key stakeholders to be consulted include: the National Autism Strategy Reference Group (Strategy Reference Group), employment program providers including regional employer and service provider networks, other relevant Commonwealth departments, and other relevant stakeholders to be identified by the Service Provider. • Draft interim reports (x2) Scope and data/information/evidence collection plan. The plan will define parameters of the review and outline methodologies of data/information/evidence collection. • Draft reports (x2) including data/information/evidence collection and preliminary analysis and initial findings for comment by DSS and the Strategy's Reference Group. • Final Recommendation and Summary Reports (x2) which includes any feedback provided by DSS and the Strategy Reference Group for both Economic Inclusion Packages 1 and 2. • A presentation of the findings and recommendations to DSS and the Strategy's Reference Group on both Economic Inclusion Packages 1 and 2.
Subcontractors	<p>The Service Provider may nominate subcontractors to provide some or all of the Services.</p> <p>The Service Provider must ensure that any subcontractors engaged have the qualifications and experience required to deliver the work described in the Detailed Statement of Work. The subcontractor must be Autistic-led</p>

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	and/or can demonstrate a strong connect to the Autistic and autism community.
Location	Work is expected to be undertaken at the Service Provider's premises. Any consultation activities should be reflected in the Service Providers' RFQ, where relevant.
Fees	<p>In response to the RFQ, Service Providers must itemise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the fixed-price cost of each proposed payment milestone the maximum value of each type of reimbursable expense the maximum total cost of the contract payable by the department considering all deliverables and activities travel expenses. <p>Reimbursable expenses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> travel expenses (where applicable) participant incentives/reimbursements (where applicable) other expenses (please specify). <p>The final payment schedule and key deliverable due dates will be negotiated with the successful Service Provider.</p>
Payment Terms	20 calendar days
Travel	Regular Project Management meetings between the Service Provider and the department will be held online, where possible. Engagements with the National Autism Strategy's Reference Group may be in person (e.g.: presenting final report and recommendations) and the Service Provider should factor this into the response to this RFQ where relevant.
Agency Material	Not applicable
Existing Material	<p><i>National Autism Strategy 2025-31</i></p> <p><i>First Action Plan 2025-26</i></p> <p><i>National Autism Strategy consultation report</i></p> <p><i>Developing the National Autism Strategy – Discussion Paper</i></p> <p><i>National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People 2025–2035</i></p>
Contract Material	Not applicable
Confidential Information	Not applicable
Key Personnel Requirements	
Required Qualifications and Experience	<p>Essential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An understanding of autism, disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including the needs and challenges of consumers and providers. An understanding and demonstrated knowledge of best practice in relation to supports and services for Autistic people and issues facing

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	<p>families and carers of Autistic people, including those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise in research / evaluation methodology and the ability to build an evidence base through a desktop/literature review and triangulation of data, including skills and experience in both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. • Evidence of successfully delivering research projects of a similar scale and complexity on time and on budget. • The ability to successfully critically synthesise literature and other input from a range of sources. • Strong experience in engaging with, consulting and communicating with a broad range of stakeholders, including Autistic people. • Demonstrated experience in working in partnership with the Autistic and autism community • Excellent project management, risk and issues management. • Demonstrated experience in design, organisation and facilitation of consultations to be accessible, culturally sensitive and enable the participation of all individuals. • Significant expertise in report writing and report presentation in a government context. <p>Desirable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in delivery of research and evaluation projects with a focus on autism or disability. • An understanding of the employment landscape (across regional, and metropolitan areas) • Demonstrated knowledge of current best practice in the employment space.
Other Requirements for Key Personnel	Not applicable.
<i>Additional Requirements</i>	
Agency Data Storage Requirements	Department data storage requirements are set out in clause 23.2 of the Head Agreement. The Service Provider will need to identify how they plan to meet these requirements in their proposal.
Agency Security Requirements	Not applicable.
Security Clearance Requirements	Not applicable
Liability	The default liability cap is set out in clause 19 of the Head Agreement.
Agency Insurance Requirements	Please upon providing a response quoting the scope of work sought in this RFQ, outline your organisation's insurance information to the procuring department to confirm compliance against.
Agency Service Levels	Not applicable.
Conditions/Restrictions for Personal Information	The Service Provider must comply with the Privacy Act, Australian Privacy Principles, and the Privacy Obligations in the Head Agreement for the handling of all personal information

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Other Additional Requirements	<p>Disability Diversity and Accessibility Awareness</p> <p>This project will include working with people with diverse, visible and invisible disability, who have diverse requirements for participation and access. The Service Provider must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be aware of the discrimination that people with disability have experienced associated with participation in our society, and stigma and misconceptions about their ability • ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ understanding of the laws and legislative frameworks which provide support for people with disability, nationally and internationally. ○ understanding, identification and removal of barriers impacting people with disability's access to participate in the evaluation, including having screen-reader accessible documents, clear information available in Easy Read that is very easy to understand, access to translators (including Auslan), and access to supports if required. ○ understanding of disability discrimination and how to apply practical measures to prevent biases from occurring. <p>The Service Provider will be required to implement and adhere to safe practices when dealing with vulnerable cohorts, including appropriate screening of staff before they commence work.</p>
Commonwealth Policy Requirements	
Shadow Economy Policy	Not applicable
Indigenous Procurement Policy	Not applicable
Australian Industry Participation Plan	Not applicable
Evaluation Criteria	
<p>Responses to this RFQ will be evaluated against the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service Provider's demonstrated understanding of the Services required, including the identification of any key challenges and the management of risk. • The Service Provider's demonstrated capability and capacity to provide the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work to a very high standard and within the specified timeframes. • The Service Provider's demonstrated organisational experience in providing the similar services to the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work, including experience with Autistic people and the autism community, and/or partnering with Autistic-led organisations. • The relevant experience of nominated Key Personnel in providing the similar services to the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work. • The professional and other standards that your organisation would apply to the Services and the measures your organisation proposes to ensure that standards are maintained for the term of the Contract. • The risk that the project will be delivered to a high level of quality and on time. • The extent to which the level and structure of fees proposed provides value for money for the Australian Government. 	

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Responding to this RFQ

The Service Provider is required to complete the following information:

- Service Provider's Representative
- Service Provider's Name
- Service Provider's Address
- Service Provider's ABN
- Service Provider's email address

In responding to this RFQ, the Service Provider should:

- describe its understanding of the Services required, including the identification of any key challenges and the management of risk
- detail its capability and capacity to provide the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work to a very high standard and within the specified timeframes
- detail its organisational experience in providing the similar services to the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work
- detail the relevant experience of nominated Key Personnel in providing the similar services to the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work including any relevant qualifications, certifications or affiliations that the nominated Key Personnel have
- describe the professional and other standards that your organisation would apply to the Services and the measures your organisation proposes to ensure that standards are maintained for the term of the Contract.

The response to this RFQ should be no more than 25 pages in length. This is exclusive of referees and biographies (or similar), but includes all other parts of the response, including title pages and tables of contents. Responses longer than 25 pages may be judged non-compliant and may not be evaluated. The Service Provider is also required to:

- identify any subcontractors nominated to provide the services and their role in the delivery of the services
- disclose any conflicts of interest it would have with the delivery of the Services
- include any information in its respond that it requests to remain confidential.

Service Provider Confidential information	Period of Confidentiality

Schedule 5 – Request for Quotation – National Autism Strategy – Service Providers

Note to Service Provider:

This Schedule 5 provides a Request for Quotation (RFQ) template that includes the typical information that an Agency will provide to the Service Provider to request a quotation for the provision of Management Advisory Service to an Agency, as detailed in clause 11.2 of the Head Agreement. It is intended that the RFQ will be provided as a smart form. The intent of this template and any smart form is to achieve a high level of standardisation and consistency in Agency RFQs to provide efficiencies to Agencies and Service Providers, however, it will not be mandatory that Agencies use this RFQ Template or any resulting smart form to request quotes from Service Providers.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This RFQ is issued under clause 11.2 of the Head Agreement between the Service Provider and the Department of Finance.

<u>Request For Quotation for Services</u>	
<i>Agency Information</i>	
Agency	Department of Social Services (the department)
Agency File Reference	[Insert Agency file reference number]
RFQ Reference	[Insert Agency RFQ reference number]
Agency Representative	Name: s 22 Position: s 22, Autism Policy Team Address: National Office, GPO Box 9820, Canberra, ACT, 2601 Email: AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au Contact number: s 22
<i>RFQ and Proposed Order Details</i>	
RFQ Release Date	TBC
RFQ Closing Date	TBC
Proposed Order Commencement Date	Friday 13 June 2025
Proposed Order Term and/or Completion Date	Friday 7 November 2025
Options to extend	The Department of Social Services (the department) may extend the Contract for 6 (six) months by providing written notice to the Service Provider prior to the Order Completion Date
Milestones	

All payment milestones are based on the acceptance to the department's standards of the following deliverables (as negotiated):

Milestone	Due Date
Contract start date	6 June 2025
Project inception meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend an in-person or online meeting with the Agency (and other stakeholders as required by the Agency) to discuss the scope of work and key questions. 	11 June 2025
A draft workplan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> project plan and schedule, risk register, and stakeholder engagement plan provided for the department's review. 	27 June 2025
Feedback on draft workplan	11 July 2025
The department's acceptance of final workplan.	18 July 2025
Draft Report and Summary including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> data/information/evidence overview and preliminary analysis and initial findings for the departments review. 	10 October 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department to provide feedback to the Service Provider. 	17 October 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report and summary received, incorporating the department's feedback on the draft report and summary 	24 October 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The departments acceptance of final report and summary. 	31 October 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capability training to the department and / or external stakeholders (presentation in person or by teleconference). 	6 November 2025
Contract end date	7 November 2025

Statement of Work

Service Area	Commercial
Service Category	Programs and Projects
Service Sub-category	Program/Project evaluation
Detailed Statement of Work	<p>Services Required</p> <p>The National Autism Strategy 2025-31 (the Strategy) and the First Action Plan 2025-26 (First Action Plan) were publicly released on 14 January 2025. The Strategy and First Action Plan aim to improve life outcomes for Autistic people living in Australia.</p> <p>The Strategy outlines a framework to create a safe and inclusive society where all Autistic people are supported and empowered to thrive in all aspects of life.</p>

The Strategy and First Action Plan are focused on driving actions and enabling change in areas of Australian Government responsibility across four key outcome areas:

- social inclusion,
- economic inclusion,
- diagnosis, services and supports, and
- health and mental health through the National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People (being developed by the Department of Health and Aged Care).

Statement of Requirements

The aim of this RFQ is to deliver **Actions 1.3 and 17.1** as outlined in the First Action Plan. These actions focus on the awareness and acceptance of autism in training for workers in mainstream sectors and identifying ways to improve understanding and acceptance of autism through training for Government funded service providers.

Commitment 1, Action 3

Review existing autism-related training for workers and professionals within the education, health, justice, migration and media sectors, with an intent to make recommendations to:

- increase an autism-specific focus within professional services, through public education, awareness and acceptance of autism.
- develop targeted approaches to support awareness and acceptance of, and engagement with, Autistic people with communication support needs.
- facilitate the growth of professionals within the allied health and the disability sectors, including support for openly identifying Autistic professionals within these sectors.
- report on autism within the media.

Note: The review of autism-related education and awareness activities for the housing sector will occur following the finalisation of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Note: Training refers to non-accredited training i.e. training not housed in the national vocational education and training system.

The final report will be presented covering key findings of the review including and recommendations on how to increase awareness and acceptance of autism in training for workers in mainstream sectors, and Government funded service providers.

Commitment 17, Action 1

Review the effectiveness of existing targeted training for people providing services and supports to Autistic people to identify ways to:

- improve understanding and acceptance of autism, lived experience, strengths and support needs.
- challenge and address ableist attitudes about Autistic people.
- include and promote experiences shared by and about Autistic people and the benefits this brings to improve services.
- raise awareness of different and diverse presentations of autism across the lifespan, or less understood presentations of autism, including how it presents in marginalised communities.
- showcase best practice examples of how to support, include and accommodate for Autistic people when providing supports and services.

	<p>A final report will be presented covering the key findings of the review including recommendations on ways to improve understanding and acceptance of autism through targeted training for people providing services and supports to Autistic people. The outcomes of this review will inform future action plans under the Strategy, and the potential development of additional training and resources.</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Development of the Strategy and First Action Plan</p> <p>The Strategy and First Action Plan were developed with guidance from the National Autism Strategy Oversight Council and involved extensive consultation with Autistic people, their families and carers, and the broader autism and disability sectors, researchers and experts, and relevant Australian Government departments.</p> <p>The Strategy and First Action Plan focus on key outcome areas that will help guide strategies and solutions to help overcome the unique barriers and challenges Autistic people face.</p> <p>Continued engagement with the Autistic and autism community, as well as professional research bodies, need to be maintained through the implementation of the Strategy and First Action Plan.</p> <p>Governance Framework</p> <p>The governance framework will include the establishment of a Reference Group with Autistic and autism community representatives forming a majority of the group membership, alongside government representatives from relevant Australian Government departments. The Reference Group will provide strategic guidance to drive the implementation of the Strategy and the development of any future actions.</p> <p>Additionally, time-limited working groups will be established as needed to support consideration of specific issues, including the needs of underrepresented groups, or groups experiencing intersectional disadvantages. These groups will draw on lived experience and specialised knowledge to support implementation, ensuring actions remain meaningful, targeted and effective.</p> <p>The successful Service Provider will need to consider feedback and guidance from the Reference Group and / or Working Groups at key milestones in their project.</p>
<p>Deliverables</p>	<p>The Service Provider will deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Work Plan including a Stakeholder Engagement Plan that highlights consultation methods that are appropriate for the Autistic and autism community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stakeholders to be consulted include Autistic people and their families and carers, Autistic professionals, medical and allied health professionals, educators, researchers, the Customer, the National Autism Strategy Reference Group (the Reference Group), support and advocacy organisations for Autistic people, other relevant government departments, and other relevant stakeholders identified by the Service Provider. • A desktop review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Current targeted training programs for people who provide services and supports for Autistic people. ○ Existing autism-related training for workers and professionals within the education, health, justice, migration and media sectors ○ Current decision-making and supported decision-making frameworks, and associated guidance material.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with Autistic people via consultation evaluate the effectiveness of existing targeted training for people providing services and supports to Autistic people to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve understanding and acceptance of autism, lived experience, strengths and support needs. ○ Challenge and address ableist attitudes about Autistic people. ○ Include and promote experiences shared by and about Autistic people and the benefits this brings to improve services. ○ Raise awareness of different and diverse presentations of autism across the lifespan, or less understood presentations of autism, including how it presents in marginalised communities. ○ Showcase best practice examples of how to support, include and accommodate for Autistic people when providing supports and services. • In collaboration with Autistic people via consultation, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop recommendations to increase an autism-specific focus within professional services, through public education, awareness and acceptance of autism. ○ Develop targeted approaches to support awareness and acceptance of, and engagement with, Autistic people with communication support needs. ○ Develop recommendations to facilitate the growth of professionals within the allied health and the disability sectors, including support for openly identifying Autistic professionals within these sectors. ○ Develop recommendations to increase reporting on autism within the media. • In collaboration with Autistic people via consultation, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ evaluate current decision-making and supported decision-making frameworks, and associated guidance material, and ○ report on the effectiveness to support Autistic people to make decisions that impact their lives. ○ develop recommendations to increase effectiveness of frameworks and guidance materials ○ explore the feasibility of mandatory training for service providers supporting Autistic people with and providing advice on supported decision making • A Draft Report and a Summary for review and comment by the department and the Strategy's Reference Group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A Final Report and Summary which includes addressing any feedback provided by the Customer and the Strategy's Reference Group. • A presentation of the findings and opportunities to the department and the Strategy's Reference Group.
Subcontractors	<p>The Service Provider may nominate subcontractors to provide some or all Services.</p> <p>The Service Provider must ensure that any subcontractors engaged have the skills, qualifications and experience required to deliver the work described in the Detailed Statement of Work. The subcontractor must be Autistic-led and/or can demonstrate a strong connect to the Autistic and autism community.</p>
Location	<p>Work is expected to be undertaken at the Service Provider's premises. Consultation should be undertaken remotely wherever possible.</p>

Fees	<p>In response to the RFQ, Service Providers must itemise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the fixed-price cost of each proposed payment milestone the maximum value of each type of reimbursable expense the maximum total cost of the contract payable by the Agency considering all deliverables and activities. travel expenses <p>Reimbursable expenses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> travel expenses (where applicable) participant incentives/reimbursements (where applicable) other expenses (please specify). <p>The final payment schedule and key deliverable due dates will be negotiated with the successful Service Provider.</p>
Payment Terms	20 calendar days
Travel	<p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Regular Project Management meetings between the Service Provider and Customer will be held online, where possible. Engagements with the National Autism Strategy's Reference Group may be person (e.g.: presenting final report and recommendations) and the Service Provider should factor this into the response to this RFQ where relevant.</p>
Agency Material	No departmental material is attached to this RFQ.
Existing Material	<p><i>National Autism Strategy 2025-31</i></p> <p><i>First Action Plan 2025-26</i></p> <p><i>National Autism Strategy consultation report</i></p> <p><i>Developing the National Autism Strategy – Discussion Paper</i></p> <p><i>National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People 2025–2035</i></p>
Contract Material	Contract material as specified in the Detailed Statement of Work and Deliverables.
Confidential Information	Not applicable
Key Personnel Requirements	
Required Qualifications and Experience	<p>Essential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An understanding and demonstrated knowledge of best practice in relation to supports and services for Autistic people and issues facing families and carers of Autistic people, including those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. Expertise in research/ evaluation methodology and the ability to build an evidence base through a desktop/literature review and triangulation of data, including skills and experience in both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Evidence of successfully delivering research projects of a similar scale and complexity on time and on budget. The ability to successfully critically synthesise literature and other input from a range of sources.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong experience in engaging with, consulting, and communicating with a broad range of stakeholders, including Autistic people. • Demonstrated experience in working in partnership with the Autistic and autism community • Excellent project management, risk and issues management. • An understanding of autism, disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including the needs and challenges of consumers and providers. • Demonstrated experience in design, organisation and facilitation of consultations to be accessible, culturally sensitive and enable the participation of all individuals. • Significant expertise in report writing and report presentation in a Government context. <p>Desirable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in delivery of research and evaluation projects with a focus on autism or disability. • Experience in or knowledge of learning and development. • Experience in or knowledge of supported decision making and developing frameworks
Other Requirements for Key Personnel	Key personnel will be required to follow the Commonwealth Service Provider Code of Conduct .
Additional Requirements	
Agency Data Storage Requirements	Departmental data storage requirements are set out in clause 23.2 of the Head Agreement. The Service Provider will need to identify how they plan to meet these requirements in their proposal.
Agency Security Requirements	Not applicable.
Security Clearance Requirements	Not applicable.
Liability	The default liability cap is set out in clause 19 of the Head Agreement.
Agency Insurance Requirements	Not applicable.
Agency Service Levels	All written work must comply with the Australian Government style manual . The final outcomes framework must be written in plain language and fully meet WCAG 2.1 AA requirements.
Conditions/Restrictions for Personal Information	Not applicable.
Other Additional Requirements	<p>Disability Diversity and Accessibility Awareness</p> <p>This project will include working with people with diverse, visible, and invisible disability, who have diverse requirements for participation and access. The Service Provider must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be aware of the discrimination that people with disability have experienced associated with participation in our society, and stigma and misconceptions about their ability • ensure:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ understanding of the laws and legislative frameworks which provide support for people with disability, nationally and internationally. ○ understanding, identification and removal of barriers impacting people with disability's access to participate in the evaluation, including having screen-reader accessible documents, clear information available in Easy Read that is very easy to understand, access to translators (including Auslan), and access to supports if required. ○ understanding of disability discrimination and how to apply practical measures to prevent biases from occurring. The Service Provider will be required to implement and adhere to safe practices when dealing with vulnerable cohorts, including appropriate screening of staff before they commence work. <p>The Service Provider will be required to implement and adhere to safe practices when dealing with vulnerable cohorts, including appropriate screening of staff before they commence work.</p>
Commonwealth Policy Requirements	
Shadow Economy Policy	Not applicable.
Indigenous Procurement Policy	Not applicable.
Australian Industry Participation Plan	Not applicable.
Evaluation Criteria	
<p>Responses to this RFQ will be evaluated against the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service Provider's demonstrated understanding of the Services required, including the identification of any key challenges and the management of risk. • The Service Provider's understanding of the Human Rights model of disability and a strengths-based and neurodiversity affirming approach to working with Autistic people. • The Service Provider's demonstrated capability and capacity to provide the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work to a very high standard and within the specified timeframes. • The Service Provider's demonstrated organisational experience in providing the similar services to the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work, including experience with Autistic people and the autism community, and/or partnering with Autistic-led organisations. • The relevant experience of nominated Key Personnel in providing the similar services to the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work. • The professional and other standards that your organisation would apply to the Services and the measures your organisation proposes to ensure that standards are maintained for the term of the Contract. • The risk that the project will be delivered to a high level of quality and on time. • The extent to which the level and structure of fees proposed provides value for money for the Australian Government. 	
Responding to this RFQ	
<p>The Service Provider is required to complete the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Provider's Representative • Service Provider's Name 	

- Service Provider's Address
- Service Provider's ABN
- Service Provider's email address

In responding to this RFQ, the Service Provider should:

- describe its understanding of the Services required, including the identification of any key challenges and the management of risk
- detail its capability and capacity to provide the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work to a very high standard and within the specified timeframes
- detail its organisational experience in providing the similar services to the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work
- detail the relevant experience of nominated Key Personnel in providing the similar services to the services described in the Detailed Statement of Work including any qualifications, certifications, affiliations that the nominated Key Personnel have
- describe the professional and other standards that your organisation would apply to the Services and the measures your organisation proposes to ensure that standards are maintained for the term of the Contract.

The Service Provider is also required to:

- identify any subcontractors nominated to provide the services and their role in the delivery of the services
- disclose any conflicts of interest it would have with the delivery of the Services
- include any information in its respond that it requests to remain confidential.

Service Provider Confidential information	Period of Confidentiality

Summary of Proposed Procurements

RFQ Release	Action/s
RFQ 1	Evidence and Evaluation Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an Evidence and Evaluation Framework and reporting mechanisms for the Strategy (<i>Commitment 22, Action 1</i>).
RFQ 2	Health (single RFQ covering multiple actions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with Autistic professionals, consider opportunities in current training and professional development programs to better support the identification (including developmental monitoring and screening) and diagnosis of autism. (<i>Commitment 11, Action 1</i>). In collaboration with Autistic professionals and researchers, undertake a review to identify Australian and international resources currently available to medical and other allied health professionals and educators, researchers and individuals and their families and carers to navigate developmental monitoring, screening, assessment and diagnosis processes. (<i>Commitment 12, Action 1</i>). In collaboration with Autistic people, review existing resources and scope the development of pre-diagnosis and post-diagnosis information packages that can be used by individuals and their families and carers. (<i>Commitment 12, Action 2</i>).
RFQ 3	Review of Peer Support Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing government funded peer support models and report on what is working well for the Autistic community and their families and carers; if the models consider the needs of Autistic people who face intersectional disadvantage and the needs of those with carer responsibilities; geographical factors; and the safety of peer workers, including peer workers for families and carers of Autistic people by providing adequate, safe, trauma-informed co-reflection and individual supervision (<i>Commitment 2, Action 1</i>).
RFQ 4	Employment (single RFQ covering multiple actions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the effectiveness of existing autism-specific employment programs, including supports for mainstream, open employment, student placements and internships, to determine what works well from an outcomes and Autistic perspective (<i>Commitment 6, Action 1</i>). Identify ways to engage with existing regional employer and service provider networks to share experiences and practices to support Autistic people to find and retain roles that align with their interests, skills, experiences and goals (<i>Commitment 6, Action 2</i>). Review existing information and resources on accessible open employment hiring practices (<i>Commitment 7, Action 1</i>). Review existing resources that provide information and support for employers and employees to identify and implement reasonable adjustments in the workplace (<i>Commitment 7, Action 2</i>). Review existing resources to build the capacity of employers to support Autistic people in the workplace (<i>Commitment 7, Action 3</i>). Review existing programs and initiatives for employment service providers to refer Autistic people to support or mentoring to help them transition into employment (<i>Commitment 7, Action 5</i>).
RFQ 5	Community Awareness (single RFQ covering multiple actions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine examples, including internationally, of autism and disability awareness and public education activities (<i>Commitment 1, Action 1</i>). Examine examples, including internationally, of autism and disability awareness and public education activities about reducing all forms of discrimination, violence, abuse, bullying, vilification and exploitation experienced by Autistic people (<i>Commitment 5, Action 6</i>).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing resources around best practice accessibility and inclusion to inform government entities, businesses and non-government organisations on how to ensure that they are accessible to Autistic people (<i>Commitment 17, Action 2</i>).
RFQ 6	<p>Service Providers (single RFQ covering multiple actions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing autism-related training¹ for workers and professionals within the education, health, justice, migration and media sectors (<i>Commitment 1, Action 3</i>) Review the effectiveness of existing targeted training for people providing services and supports to Autistic people to improve understanding and acceptance of autism, lived experience, strengths and support needs (<i>Commitment 17, Action 1</i>).
RFQ 7	<p>Research (single RFQ covering multiple actions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission research, in consultation with Autistic people from the Strategy’s priority cohorts, to define what neurodiversity-affirming care and practice is within the Australian context. Research focused on identifying key principles and ways to implement quality and timely supports and services in different settings and communities will be prioritised (<i>Commitment 15, Action 1</i>). Work with Autistic researchers and professionals to explore the feasibility and acceptability of current outcome measures and approaches used in research and practice within Australia. In line with the Strategy’s vision, goal and guiding principles, work with relevant stakeholders to develop neurodiversity-affirming outcome measures and supporting resources for use with Autistic people across the lifespan (<i>Commitment 15, Action 3</i>).
RFQ 8	<p>Epidemiological Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with Autistic and autism researchers, commit funding for an epidemiological study of autism in Australia to identify the true prevalence of autism in Australia. This work will help inform the scope and funding required for the commitments in the Strategy to be fully realised (<i>Commitment 21, Action 2</i>).

¹ “Training” refers to non-accredited training i.e. training not housed in the national vocational education and training system.