



Australian Government

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 change is 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 a 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 others 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. • 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>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 lead 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. 	<p>Improve social inclusion through peer support that is best practice.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services</p>
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. 	<p>Improve social inclusion through peer support.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services</p>



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
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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
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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 Services 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	<p>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.</p>	<p>Improve complaints handling and investigative practice guidelines.</p>	<p>Commonwealth Ombudsman lead in consultation with the Department of Social Services and other relevant stakeholders</p>
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. 	<p>Support the reduction of discrimination, violence, abuse, bullying, vilification and exploitation experienced by Autistic people.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services</p>



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



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. 	<p>Improve access to information and resources for employers about reasonable adjustments in the workplace.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations</p>
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. 	<p>Improve information and resources to build capacity of employers to support Autistic people in the workplace.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations</p>



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
<i>Economic inclusion – Improve supports and services so Autistic people have choice and control over their education, careers and employment</i>			
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
<i>Economic inclusion – Increase representation of Autistic people in leadership positions</i>			
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. • 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 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 website: 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, means 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
<i>Diagnosis, Services and Supports – Improve the autism identification, assessment and diagnosis process for Autistic people and their families and carers</i>			
Commitment 11, Action 1	<p>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.</p>	<p>Review professional training to improve the experience and quality of identification and diagnosis.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services and Department of Health and Aged Care lead in consultation with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations</p>
Commitment 12, Action 1	<p>In collaboration with Autistic professionals and researchers, undertake a review to identify:</p> <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. 	<p>Improve access to resources to help people navigate developmental monitoring, screening, assessment and diagnosis processes.</p> <p>This work will consider: medical and other allied health professionals; educators; researchers; individuals; families and carers.</p>	<p>Department of Social Services lead in consultation with the Department of Health and Aged Care</p>



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><i>(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).</i></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. • 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. 	Improve understanding and acceptance of autism by evaluating training for Government funded service providers.	Department of Social Services

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 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
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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
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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, projects 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
<i>Enabling action – Governance arrangements</i>			
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
<i>Enabling action – Governance arrangements</i>			
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
<i>Enabling action – Opportunities to improve research so it is co-lead by Autistic People and/or neurodiversity-affirming</i>			
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
<i>Enabling action – Evaluate and report on progress of the Strategy</i>			
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"> a. 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. b. Significant person-to-person care and support with daily living skills and personal care. c. Complex communication needs/language impairment which include being non-verbal, minimally verbal or unreliable speakers with complex representations. d. Constant or significant monitoring due to safety concerns such as self-injurious behaviours, pica, and absconding. This includes as adults. e. Life-long/permanent. f. 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 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.

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.





Australian Government

National Autism Strategy

2025–2031

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