



Chair's Report AABA 8 November 2024

As we reflect on the achievements and challenges of the 2023/24 year, I am pleased to share a number of significant developments that will help shape the future of the AABA and the autistic and autism community.

Key Highlights

Submission to the NDIS Review: Focus on Early Childhood and Markets

In a pivotal year for the NDIS, we submitted our response to the comprehensive review led by the Hon Bill Shorten. Our focus was on two crucial areas: Early Childhood and Markets. We emphasised the urgent need for enhanced early childhood supports, ensuring that families and young children receive the services they require from the outset. Additionally, we provided insights on market accessibility, aiming to improve the overall effectiveness of service delivery within the NDIS framework.

The outcome of this review, which coincides with the 10th anniversary of the NDIS, is of profound importance to the autism community, as over a third of NDIS participants are Autistic. Our advocacy work will continue to prioritise these areas, ensuring that the needs of our members are heard and addressed.

Delivery of the AABA Business Plan

This year, we developed a business plan that centres on building internal capability and strengthening AABA's identity. Key elements of our plan include:

- **Strengthening AABA's Identity:** Development of effective engagement strategies with autism stakeholders to help shape future structure and create inclusive and active membership.
- **Deliver Distinctive and Impactful Initiatives:** Develop solutions focussed positions to support our response to the NDIS Review; Deliver projects on neuro-affirming service delivery; Pilot a Community of Practice in Autism Service; and support the delivery of a successful APAC 2025 event.
- **Collaborating for Impact:** Engage with NDS National Policy team and build advocacy; support practical connections and collaboration with the Australian Autism Alliance.

Continued Advocacy and Collaboration

We have continued our efforts to support the work towards a National Autism Strategy (NAS), actively contributing to the Autism and Mental Health working group. The NAS will be crucial in guiding future policies and supports for the autism community.

We strengthened our collaborative relationship with National Disability Services (NDS) through a joint submission in response to the draft NAS.

AABA continues to have representation on the Autism Advisory Group of the NDIA, and the Autism Guidelines Working Group to assist the NDIA to embed autism best practice within its own staff and practices.

Board Transitions

Regretfully, with the closure of Autism Tasmania, we lost not only a member organisation, but Director Donna Blanchard. We thank her for her passionate contribution to the work of the AABA.

We also farewelled Professor Cheryl Dissanayake as she retired from OTARC. We wish Cheryl all the very best for her future and thank her for her service to the AABA and the field of autism research.

We welcomed Professor Alison Lane to the Board in September, 2024. Alison is an occupational therapist and internationally-recognised for her scholarship regarding sensory processing challenges in children, particularly as they relate to functioning in autistic individuals.

APAC 25

The AABA's Asia Pacific Conference (APAC 25) is just one year away, and we look forward to continuing to support AAWA to deliver a successful conference for the Autistic and autism community.

Australian Autism Alliance (The Alliance)

The separation of The Alliance from AABA to be incorporated as an entity in its own right, was a significant milestone. Envisioned years ago as 'one united voice for autism' comprising Autistic-led organisations working alongside autism community service and support organisations, and made possible through AABA support, we wish the Alliance every success in the future, and look forward to continuing efforts alongside the Alliance for the benefit of our communities. We also commend Jenny Karavolos for her tireless efforts.

In Conclusion

I sincerely thank my fellow directors for their commitment of time, expertise and moral support for each other, as we work towards a better life for Autistic people and their families.



Jacqui Borland

Chair AABA