



Australian Government

National
Autism
Strategy



Our National Autism Strategy

We want to know what you think

Easy Read paper



How to use this paper



The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) wrote this paper.

When you see the word 'we', it means DSS.



We wrote this paper in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page **49**.



This is an Easy Read summary of another paper.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other paper on our website.

engage.dss.gov.au/developing-the-national-autism-strategy/developing-the-national-autism-strategy-discussion-paper/



This paper is quite long.

It includes a lot of information.

You don't need to read it all at once.



You can ask for help to read this paper.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.



We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the tradition owners of our land – Australia.

They were the first people to live on and use the:



- land



- waters.



This document includes photos of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It may contain images of people who have passed away.

What's in this paper?

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About our National Autism Strategy



We are creating the National Autism **Strategy**.

We call it our Strategy.



A strategy is a government plan for how we will do things in the future.



Our strategy will support people who are on the **Autism spectrum**.

The Autism spectrum includes the different ways people can experience Autism.

Autism is a disability that can affect how you:



- think
- feel
- communicate
- connect and deal with others.



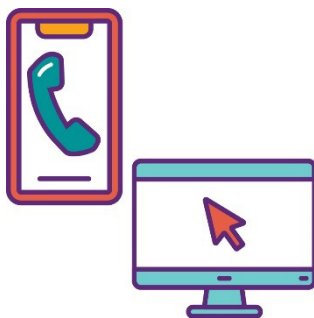
In this paper, we say ‘Autistic people’ when we talk about people who are on the Autism spectrum.



Our Strategy will support Autistic people and their families to get the support they need.



In this paper we talk about things that might upset some people.



If you get upset and need support, there are services you can contact.

Their details are on page **44**.

We want to know what you think



In this paper we share our ideas about how our Strategy will support the Autistic community in Australia.



We want to know what people who have experience with Autism think about our ideas.

This includes:



- Autistic people



- their families and carers

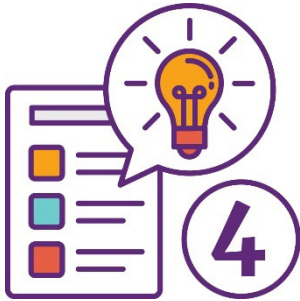


- other community members.



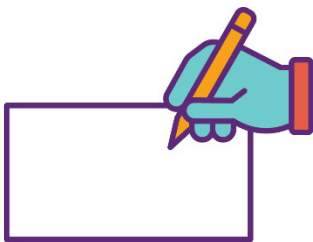
Our Strategy has 4 **themes**.

Themes are important ideas that come up in different areas of our work and lives.



We explain these 4 themes in the next 4 sections.

And we include questions for you to think about for each theme.



You can write your answer in the box below each question.

How you can tell us what you think

We will run activities around Australia.



This means people from different communities in Australia can share their ideas with us.

You can take in part one of these events in person.



You can also sign up for one of our online events.



If you want to take part in these events, you need to sign up on our website.

engage.dss.gov.au/developing-the-national-autism-strategy/



You can share your ideas on our online ideas wall.

nas.thesocialdeck.com.au/



You can send your ideas to our email address.

AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au



You can also send us a video or audio recording of your ideas.

This can include Auslan.



You can also write your ideas to us in a letter.

National Autism Strategy
Department of Social Services
GPO Box 9820
Canberra, ACT 2601



You can visit our website to find out more information.

engage.dss.gov.au/developing-the-national-autism-strategy/

1. Making communities more inclusive



When a community is **inclusive**, everyone:

- can take part
- feels like they belong.



Many Autistic people face challenges that stop them from being able to live how they want to.



Sometimes Autistic people are told they can't take part in certain activities.



Many people don't understand Autism.

This means sometimes Autistic people don't get the support they need.



Information about Autism supports is often hard to understand.



This means some Autistic communities are more at risk.

For example, First Nations Autistic people.



It can be harder for Autistic people to find somewhere to live that:

- is safe
- they can afford.



Autistic people are also more likely to be treated unfairly in the **justice system**.

This happens because people who work in the justice system might not understand Autism.

Our justice system includes:

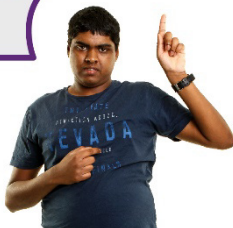


- prisons
- the courts
- police
- the law.

Some Autistic people might experience different treatment because of **intersectionality**.



This is when people treat you differently because of more than one thing about who you are.



For example, because you:

- are an Autistic person
- and
- come from a different background.



Many Autistic people also feel like they have to **mask** their Autism.



When you mask your Autism, you change how you behave to fit in with people who aren't on the Autism spectrum.

You might do this:

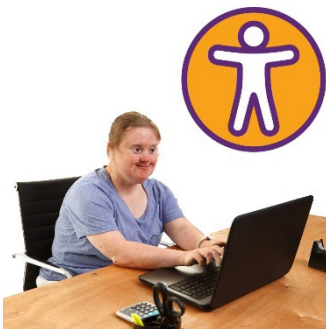
- without meaning to
- to keep safe.

Areas our Strategy could focus on



Our Strategy could focus on supporting people to better understand:

- Autism
- the different ways people can experience Autism.



When something is **accessible**, it is easy to:

- find and use
- understand.



We need to make information about Autism more accessible.

This includes information about support that Autistic people and the families might need.

Our Strategy could also focus on:



- supporting Autistic people to have choice and control over where they live



- creating spaces where Autistic people feel safe



- improving our justice system to better support Autistic people



- better supporting First Nations Autistic people throughout their lives.

Questions



What has stopped you from taking part in your community?



How can we improve services so you can:

- take part in the community?
- live the life you want to?



How can we help the community to understand Autism better?



What does including Autistic people in the community:

- look like?
- feel like?

2. Making work and learning more inclusive

Autistic people who are students can face challenges including:



- feeling like they don't belong
- **bullying.**

Bullying is when someone says or does something to make you feel bad over and over again.



Often Autistic students don't get the support they might need to take part in school.

This can be because:



- many teachers and students don't understand Autism
- some Autistic students have trouble speaking up for themselves.



Autistic people can also face challenges with finding and keeping a job.

These challenges include:



- other people not understanding Autism



- being treated badly in their workplace



- not getting the support they need in their workplace



- not earning enough money to live without support.



Autistic people are also more likely to work in **Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)** than in other jobs.

ADEs are businesses that train and employ people with disability.



Many Autistic people have bad experiences using public transport.

For example, buses and trains.



Public transport might make them feel:

- uncomfortable
- unsafe.

This can make it hard to get to work or school.

Areas our Strategy could focus on



Our Strategy could focus on making sure schools and places where people work understand Autism better.

This will support people to:



- give Autistic students the support they need



- support Autistic people to get the job they want.



We also need to make public transport more inclusive for Autistic people.

Questions



What challenges do you face when trying to:



- study?
- find and keep a job?
- use public transport?



How can we improve services and supports so you can:

- take part in study?
- run your own businesses?
- find and keep a job?



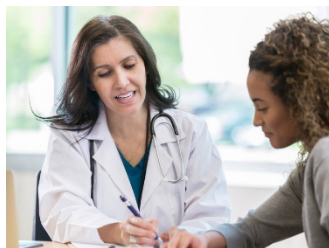
Are there other ways that we can support
Autistic people in these areas?

A large, empty rectangular box with a purple border, intended for handwritten notes or answers to the question above.

3. Improving the steps around an Autism diagnosis

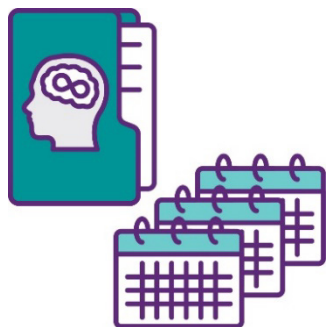


It can be hard to get an **Autism diagnosis**.



An Autism diagnosis is when a doctor:

- checks your health
- says if they think you are on the Autism spectrum.



Sometimes Autistic people have to wait a long time to get a diagnosis.

So they might not get the support they need when they are young.



Getting a diagnosis can also cost a lot of money.



It's common for Autistic people to:

- be given the wrong diagnosis
- not be diagnosed with Autism.

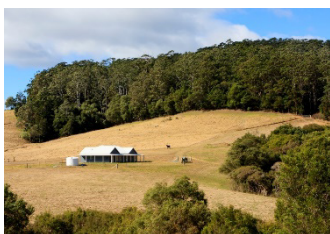


Some Autistic people experience this more often.

For example:



- women and girls



- People living far away from cities and towns often experience this.



It is also challenging for Autistic people to get the support they need after they get a diagnosis.

This includes support that their families and carers need.

Sometimes the services that support Autistic people don't:



- understand Autism

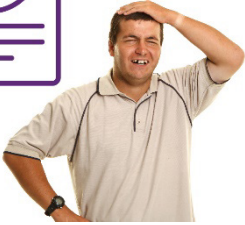


- provide support in a way that is safe for every **culture**.

Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.



It can be hard to get information about support services.

This means it can be hard for Autistic people to make the right choice about the support they need.



Early intervention doesn't always support Autistic children in places like their home and school.



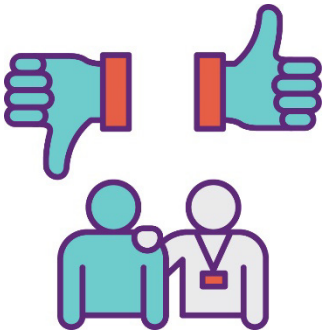
Early intervention is when people get services and support:

- as early as possible in their lives
- when they get a diagnosis.

We need more research about:



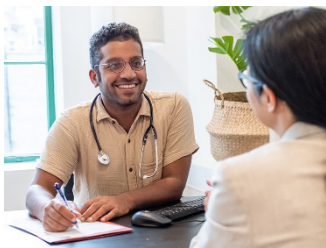
- the experiences of Autistic people from different backgrounds



- how well different supports work.

Areas our Strategy could focus on

Our Strategy could focus on making it easier for Autistic people to get:



- a diagnosis



- the support they need after they get a diagnosis.

Our Strategy could also focus on:



- supporting services to understand Autism

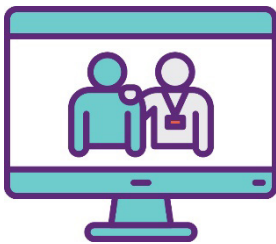


- supporting Autistic people to find and use early intervention services



- supporting First Nations Autistic people to get a diagnosis and support.

Our Strategy could also focus on:



- building a website where people can find Autism services and supports



- creating a plan to do more research about Autism.

Questions



What has stopped you from:

- getting a diagnosis?
- finding and using the right services and supports?



What has helped you to get:

- a diagnosis?
- the support you need?



How can we provide support in a way that is safe for every culture?



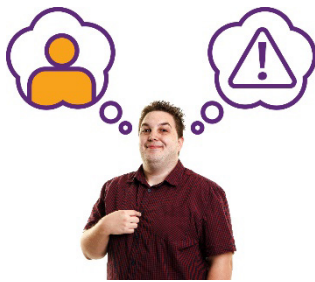
Are there other ways that we can support Autistic people in these areas?

4. Improving health and mental health



The Department of Health and Aged Care is creating a plan to improve Autistic people's:

- health
- **mental health.**



Mental health is about how you:

- think and feel about yourself
- deal with things in your life.



The plan is called the *National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People.*



Often Autistic people aren't able to get the health care they need.

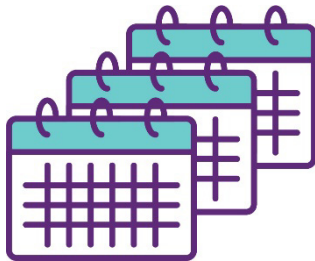
This can be because:



- many health care workers don't understand Autism



- it costs too much



- they have to wait for a long time.



Autistic people might not get the health care they need because it isn't safe for their culture.

This includes:

- First Nations people
- people from different backgrounds.



It can also be challenging for Autistic people to find and use the right government services.

This is because different levels of government provide different supports.



We will share your ideas on this theme with the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Questions



Do Autistic people experience other health and mental health issues?

How could our Strategy support these issues?



How can we improve health and mental health services?

Empty response box for the first question.

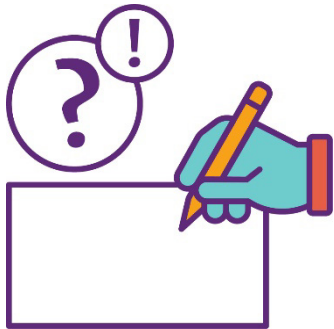


Are there other ways that we can support Autistic people to have better:

- health?
- mental health?

Empty response box for the second question.

Final questions about our Strategy



There are some important questions that we want you to answer.

These questions will help you share your ideas about our whole Strategy.



What does our Strategy need to achieve?



How can we make sure our Strategy better supports the **rights** of Autistic people?

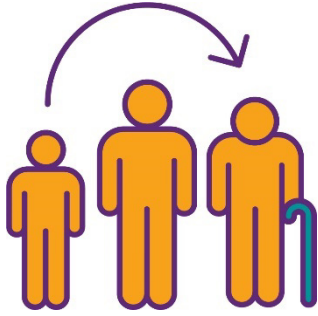
Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



This includes the rights of Autistic people to make their own decisions.





How can our Strategy make sure Autistic people get the support they need across their whole life?



How can we better support Autistic people with different experiences?

This includes:



- First Nations Autistic people

- Autistic women and girls



- Autistic people of all ages



- Autistic people with disability



- Autistic people that are members of the **LGBTIQA+** community.

The letters of LGBTIQA stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning and asexual.



The '+' is for people who are part of the LGBTIQA + community but don't talk about themselves using a word from this list.

This also includes:



- First Nations Autistic people



- Autistic people from **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)** backgrounds.

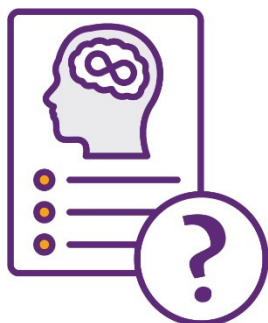


CALD people:

- come from different cultures and backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.



How can we help the community to understand Autism better?



Are there other areas that we don't talk about in this paper that you think we need to include in our Strategy?

Supports



If you need support there are services you can contact.

We explain these services below.

Lifeline



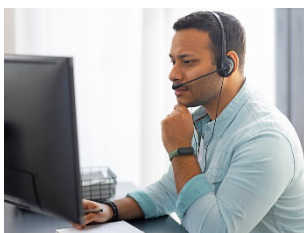
Lifeline is a service for people who might be at risk of **suicide**.

This is when someone ends their own life.

You can call them any time.

13 11 14

Beyond Blue

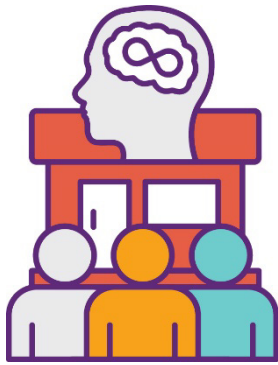


Beyond blue is a service that can support you with your mental health.

You can call them anytime.

1300 224 636

Autism Connect



Autism Connect is a service that supports:

- Autistic people
- their families and carers
- members of the community who want to learn more about Autism.



You can call Autism Connect:

- Monday to Friday
- from 8 am to 7 pm.

1300 308 699



You can also visit their website.

www.amaze.org.au/autismconnect/

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)



If you need something in a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

131 450



You can ask TIS to connect you to one of the services in this section.



You can call them anytime.

National Relay Service



You can call the National Relay Service if you:

- are deaf or hard of hearing
- find it hard to speak using the phone.



TTY

1800 555 677



Speak and listen

1300 555 727



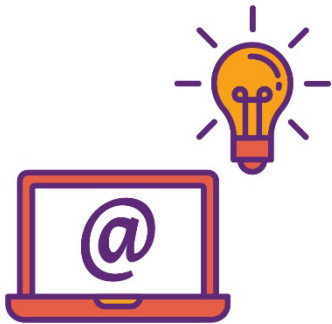
You can ask the National Relay Service to connect you to one of the services in this section.

Contact us



You can send us an email.

AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au



An organisation called The Social Deck will run our events.

If you have any questions about how to share your ideas, you can email The Social Deck.

engage@thesocialdeck.com



You can also call The Social Deck.

0458 228 142

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Accessible

When something is accessible, it is easy to:

- find and use
- understand.



Autism

Autism is a disability that can affect how you:

- think
- feel
- communicate
- connect and deal with others.

Autism diagnosis



An Autism diagnosis is when a doctor:

- checks your health
- says if they think you are on the Autism spectrum.



Autism spectrum

The Autism spectrum includes the different ways people can experience Autism.



Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)

ADEs are businesses that train and employ people with disability.



Bullying

Bullying is when someone says or does something to make you feel bad over and over again.



Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)

CALD people:

- come from different cultures and backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.

Culture

Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.

Early intervention



Early intervention is when people get services and support:

- as early as possible in their lives
- when they get a diagnosis.

Inclusive



When the community is inclusive, everyone:

- can take part
- feels like they belong.



Intersectionality

Intersectionality is when people treat you differently because of more than one thing about who you are.

Justice system



Our justice system includes:

- prisons
- the courts
- police
- the law.

LGBTIQA+



The letters of LGBTIQA stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning and asexual.

The '+' is for people who are part of the LGBTIQA + community but don't talk about themselves using a word from this list.

Mask

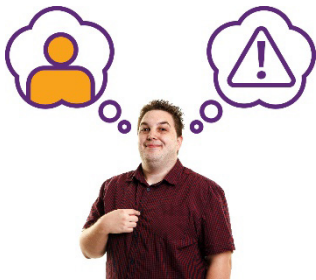


When you mask your Autism, you change how you behave to fit in with people who aren't on the Autism spectrum.

You might do this:

- without meaning to
- to keep yourself safe.

Mental health Rights



Mental health is about how you:

- think and feel about yourself
- deal with things in your life.

Rights



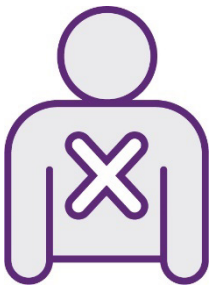
Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



Strategy

A strategy is a government plan for how we will do things in the future.



Suicide

This is when someone ends their own life.



Themes

Themes are important ideas that come up in different areas of our work and lives.



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