



Australian Government

National
Autism
Strategy



The National Autism Strategy

What we heard from the community

Easy Read version



How to use this report



The Social Deck wrote this report.

They wrote it for the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

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



We wrote this report 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.



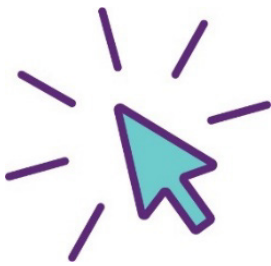
We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 52.



This is an Easy Read summary of another report.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other report on our website.

www.engage.dss.gov.au/developing-the-national-autism-strategy/final-consultation-report



This report 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 report.

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



We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land we live on – Australia.

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



- land



- waters.

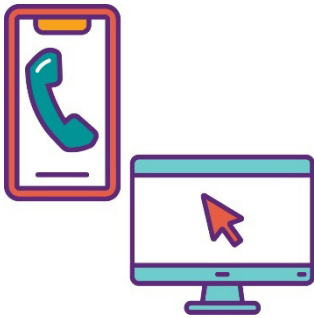


This document includes photos of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It may contain images of people who have passed away.



In this report 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 45.

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About the National Autism Strategy



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

We call it the Strategy.



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



The Strategy will support people who are on the **Autism spectrum**.

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

Autism can affect how you:



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



In this report, we say 'Autistic people' when we talk about people who are on the Autism spectrum.

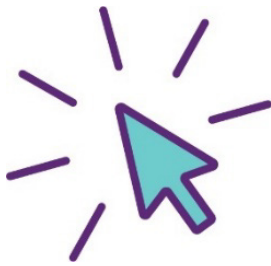


The Strategy will support Autistic people and their families to get the support they need.

About this report

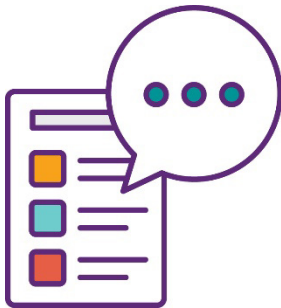


We asked people who have experience with Autism what they thought about our ideas to support the Autistic community in Australia.



You can read more about our ideas on our website.

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



In this report, we explain what the community shared with us.



Thank you to everyone who shared their ideas with us.

Who we heard from



We heard from more than 2,000 people about what the Strategy should focus on.

This includes:



- Autistic people



- families and carers



- other community members.

We made sure that we spoke to:



- First Nations Autistic people



- 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.

We also spoke to Autistic people from **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)** backgrounds.



CALD people:

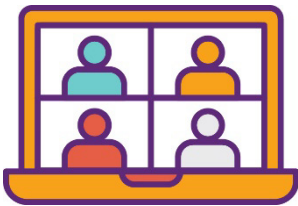
- come from different **cultures** and backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.

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.

We spoke to people:



- online



- in person.

What the Strategy should focus on



We have learned 5 main ideas about what the Strategy should focus on.



Including Autistic people



We need to change the way we do things so that Autistic people feel included in our community.

2

Accepting Autistic people



We need to help our community understand Autism.

This will help Autistic people feel like they belong.



3

Celebrating what Autistic people are good at



We need to start focusing on:

- what Autistic people are good at
- how Autistic people make our community better.



4

Seeing Autistic people as individuals



Every Autistic person has:

- different experiences
- different goals.



We need to support Autistic people to live how they want to.

5

Making life better for Autistic people



We need to make sure Autistic people get the support they need.



This includes being able to get good healthcare.



It also means support to:

- find and keep a job
- get a good education.

We explain more about the ideas that people shared with us on the following pages.

Respect the rights of Autistic people



Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.

People told us that the Strategy needs to respect the rights of:



- Autistic people



- families and carers.

This includes making sure Autistic people can:



- take part in school



- find and keep a job



- have choice and control over where they live.



People shared that we should support Autistic people to:

- speak up for themselves
- make choices about their lives.

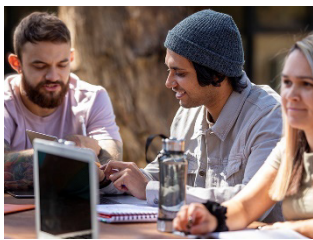


And there should be laws and systems that support Autistic people.

So they can do the same things as everybody else in the community.



People told us that the Strategy should also support Autistic people to be leaders in their community.



And we need to involve First Nations people when we:

- make the Strategy
- use the Strategy.

Help the community understand Autism

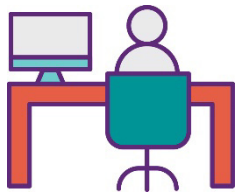


People told us that they don't think the community understands Autism.



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

This can make it hard for Autistic people to:



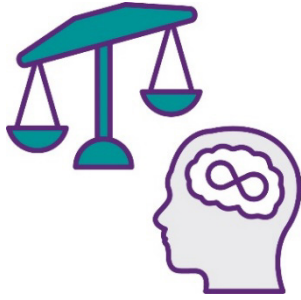
- find a job



- go to school



- find somewhere to live.



It can also mean that Autistic people are treated unfairly in the **justice system**.

Our justice system includes:



- prisons
- the courts
- police
- the law.



The Strategy needs to help change community **attitudes** about Autism.

Your attitude is what you think, feel and believe.



We can do this in lots of ways.



We can teach young children about Autism in school.



And we can give people training on how to better understand Autistic people.

For example, people who work in shops or the police.



People told us we should show positive examples of Autistic people in the media.

For example, playing sport or making art.

Make our community more inclusive



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

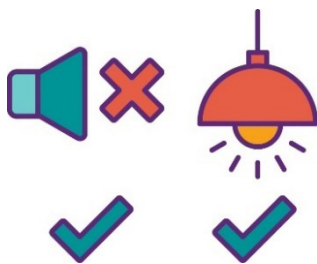
- can take part
- feels like they belong.



People told us that our community isn't very inclusive for Autistic people.



This includes the community online and in person.



A lot of people said that we need more places in the community that are 'sensory-friendly'.

For example, places that are quiet and not too bright.



And we should start helping pay for events and activities that are for Autistic people.

So Autistic people can meet in a safe space.

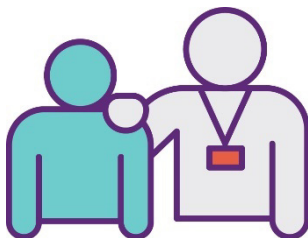


People also told us we need to make the justice system more inclusive.

For example:



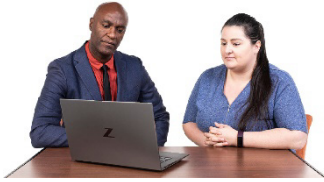
- training people who work in the justice system to understand Autism



- supporting Autistic young people in the justice system.



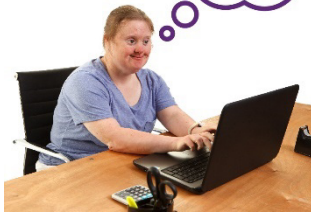
It also means making sure Autistic people can get legal support that:



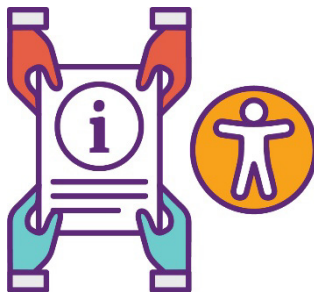
- they can afford
- is **accessible**.



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



- find and use
- understand.



We also need to make sure that when we share information it is accessible to Autistic people.



And we need to make our public transport more inclusive for Autistic people.

For example, buses and trains.

Support to take part in school



People shared that Autistic students don't get the support they need to take part in school.

This includes:



- primary school



- high school



- university



- TAFE.



People told us there should be training for how to support Autistic students at school.



This training should be for:

- teachers
- other people who work at schools.



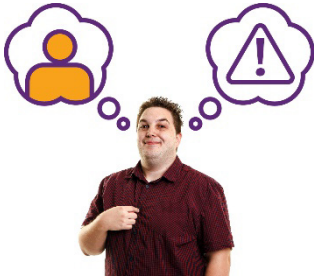
Autistic people should design this training.



People also told us that learning and classrooms should be more inclusive for Autistic students.



There should also be more support for Autistic students and their **mental health**.



Mental health is about how you:

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



A lot of young Autistic people told us that there needs to be more support when they finish high school.



For example, support to find a job.

Support to find and keep a job



People told us that Autistic people need more support to find a job.

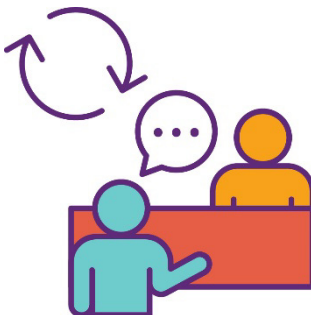


They said we could have new job training programs for Autistic people.



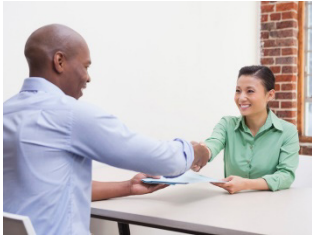
The training should focus on:

- what people are good at
- what they need to do a job well.

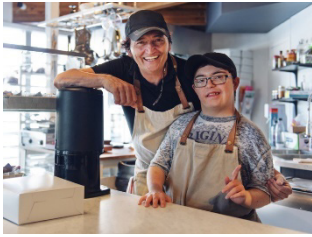


People also shared that the Strategy should make sure **employers** understand Autism.

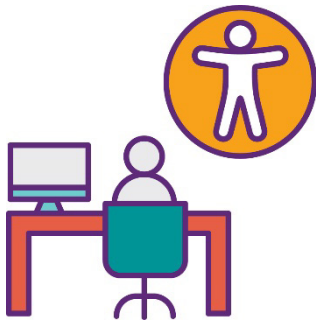
For example, changing how they do job interviews so it is easier for Autistic people.



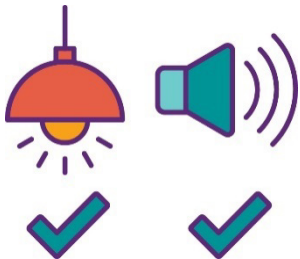
An employer is a person who hires other people to work for them.



People told us that Autistic people need support to keep a job.



They said that employers should have to make the places where they work more accessible for Autistic people.

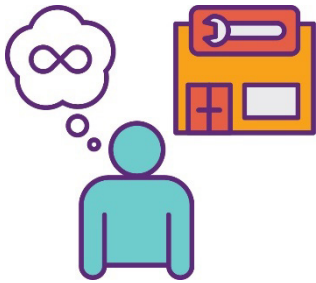


For example, making sure there aren't too many bright lights or loud noises.



Autistic people also need more support from the Australian Government to pay for the things they need, like their:

- supports
- medications.



Some people told us that there should be more support from the Australian Government for Autistic people to start their own businesses.

Healthcare for Autistic people



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

- health
- mental health.



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



Many Autistic people aren't able to get the healthcare they need.

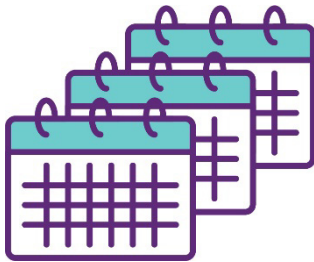
People told us this is because:



- many healthcare workers don't understand Autism



- it costs too much



- they have to wait for a long time.

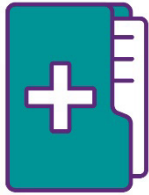


Autistic people might not get the healthcare they need because it isn't safe for their culture.

This includes:

- First Nations people
- people from different backgrounds.

Getting an Autism diagnosis



A **diagnosis** is when a doctor:

- checks your health
- says what health condition they think you have.

People told us that getting an Autism diagnosis should be:



- quicker



- more accessible.



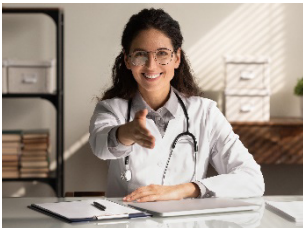
They also said an Autism diagnosis should be easier to afford.



Especially for families that might have more than one Autistic person who needs a diagnosis.



People shared that it should be easier for people in places far away from cities to get an Autism diagnosis.



People told us that getting an Autism diagnosis should be:

- more respectful
- safe for everyone's culture.



They also told us that it can be harder for some people to get an Autism diagnosis.

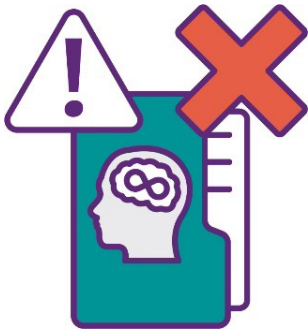
Especially:



- women and girls



- older children and adults.



And many Autistic people are given the wrong diagnosis.



We need to make sure everybody gets the right diagnosis.

Supporting Autistic people's health



People told us that the Strategy should make sure Autistic people get the mental health support they need.



This means we need to understand why some Autistic people struggle with their mental health more than other people in the community.



We also need to give better training to healthcare workers so they understand Autism.

For example, nurses and doctors.

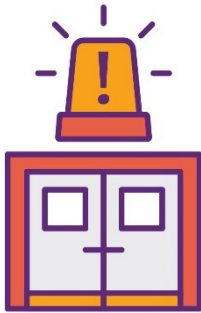


People also told us that places where Autistic people get healthcare need to be more accessible.

For example, places like:



- hospitals



- emergency rooms



- doctor's offices.



And we need to make sure every emergency room has people who are trained to support Autistic people.



We also need to support Autistic people to manage other health problems they might have.

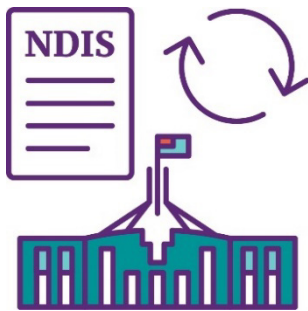


For example, not being able to get enough sleep.

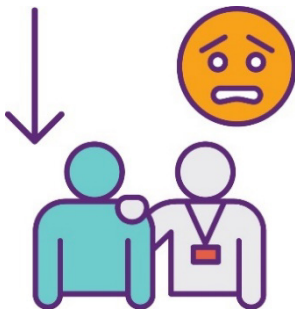
Make sure Autistic people can use the NDIS



The **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** provides services and supports to people with disability.



The Australian Government is making changes to the NDIS.



People told us they are worried that there will be less support for Autistic people when these changes happen.

The Strategy needs to make sure we:



- provide better support for Autistic people



- make it easier for Autistic people to use the NDIS.



We also need to give better support to the families and carers of Autistic people.



And we need to make sure NDIS staff have training so they can understand Autism.

Listen to First Nations Autistic people



We spoke to First Nations Autistic people to learn how we can support them more.



They told us that First Nations Autistic people:

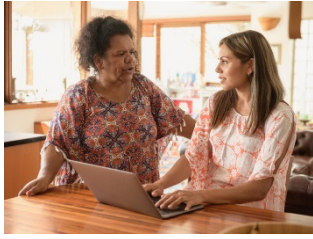
- don't get enough support
- feel alone.



They said that getting a diagnosis and support can cost too much money.



And healthcare workers don't understand their culture.



They also shared that they get most of their support from their families.

Especially their parents.



The Strategy needs to make sure places far away from cities and towns get the support that they need.



People told us there should be a group of First Nations healthcare workers who support Autistic people.



This would provide support in a way that is safe for their culture.

People also shared that First Nations Autistic people need more support to:



- get an education



- find and keep a job.



First Nations Autistic people also told us how important their community is to them.



But they have trouble taking part in their community because of their Autism.

For example, they might feel stressed or worried about what other people might think of them.

The Strategy needs to support First Nations communities so that they understand:



- Autism



- how to support Autistic people.

How we will make the Strategy work

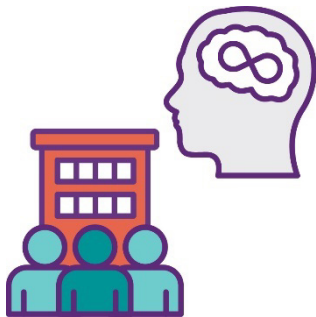


Everyone will need to work together to make sure the Strategy supports Autistic people.

This includes:



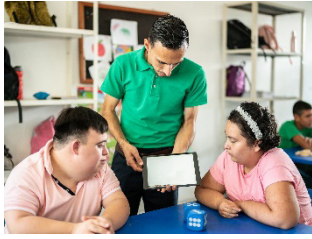
- all levels of government



- organisations that support Autistic people



- organisations that support the whole community.



We will work with Autistic people to create the Strategy.



And we will make sure Autistic people can tell us:

- what we are doing well
- what we can do better.

Contact us

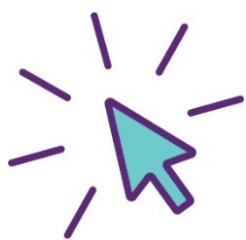


There will be more chances for you to tell us what you think about the Strategy.



To learn more, you can send us an email.

AutismPolicy@dss.gov.au



You can visit our website.

www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/national-autism-strategy

Support for you



If you need support because of this document, there are services you can contact.

We explain these services below.

Lifeline



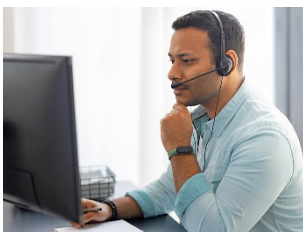
Lifeline is a service for people who might be at risk of **suicide**.

This is when someone ends their own life.

You can call them any time.

13 11 14

Beyond Blue

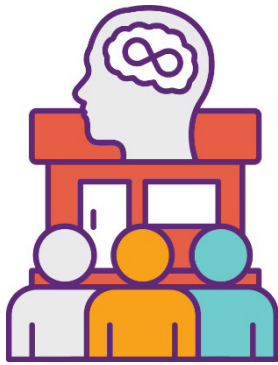


Beyond Blue is a service that can support you with your mental health.

You can call them anytime.

1300 224 636

Autism Connect



Autism Connect is a service that supports:

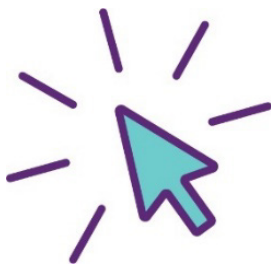
- Autistic people
- their families and carers
- members of the community who want to learn more about Autism.



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

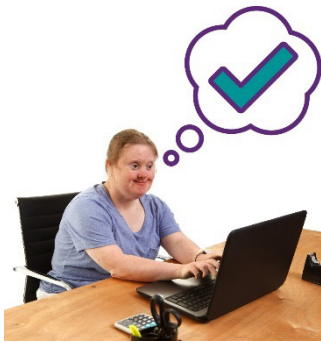
1300 555 727



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

Word list

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



Accessible

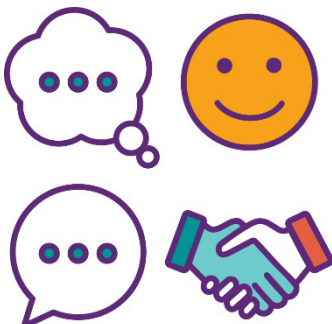
When something is accessible, it is easy to:

- find and use
- understand.



Attitudes

Your attitude is what you think, feel and believe.



Autism

Autism is a disability that can affect how you:

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



Autism spectrum

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

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)



CALD people:

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

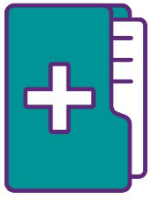
Culture

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.

Diagnosis



A diagnosis is when a doctor:

- checks your health
- says what health condition they think you have.



Employer

An employer is a person who hires other people to work for them.



Inclusive

When the community is inclusive, everyone:

- can take part
- feels like they belong.

Justice system



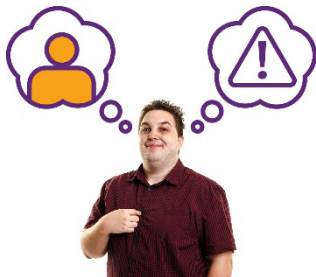
Our justice system includes:

- prisons
- the courts
- police
- the law.



LGBTIQA+

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



Mental health

Mental health is about how you:

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



National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

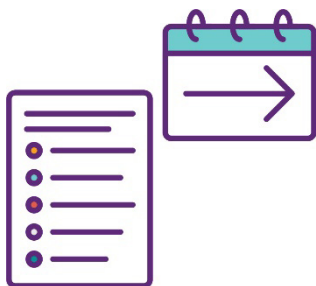
The NDIS provides services and supports to people with disability.



Rights

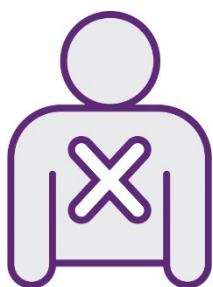
Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



Strategy

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



Suicide

Suicide is when someone ends their own life.



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