

# Securing a Fairer Future for Autistic Australians

## Commit to a Fairer Future for Autistic Australians through accountability and action.

Current systemic barriers prevent a fairer future for Autistic Australians. Investing in targeted reforms and policies that improve choice, social justice, life experiences, and outcomes for all Autistic people to thrive across the life span is not only a human right but also a strong investment.

Adverse childhood experiences are higher for Autistic children and young adults and cost at least **\$500 million per year** that can have **life-long negative impacts** on health, education, opportunity, and well-being.

Autistic students face **higher non-attendance and drop-out rates** due to a lack of appropriate support, limiting their contribution to the workforce. **Pre-school-aged** Autistic children are **10 times more likely** to be permanently excluded from childcare.

Autistic Australians face an unemployment rate nearly **six times higher** than non-disabled peers, despite many having valuable skills.

Improved **employment support programs and workplace adjustments** could **increase productivity** by at least **\$2 billion per year** and improve the standard of living.

Autistic individuals are **2.5 times more likely** to experience **depression** with the majority (50-80%) experiencing co-occurring mental health issues and **have higher emergency hospital admissions** with a cost to Australia annually of mental illness and suicide of **approx. \$6.1 billion**.

Research suggests that Autistic individuals are **more likely** to experience **homelessness** compared to the general population with an annual cost estimated to be around **\$1.5 billion per year**.

## Key commitments needed.

In the lead-up to the 2025 Federal Election, we are calling on all major parties to make the following commitments through action and accountability to secure a fairer future for Autistic Australians:

### 1. Full support, implementation, and oversight of the National Autism Strategy.

Shifting the dial for Autistic people needs an integrated and interconnected government focus to enable accountability and action.

- Secure a firm commitment from all major governments to fully implement the National Autism Strategy (NAS) 2025-2031, with an Assistant Minister for Autism and an independent oversight mechanism.
- Commitment and alignment by all States & Territories to the National Autism Strategy.
- Ensuring an autism lens across all relevant policies with accountability measures and consequences for non-achievement through the establishment of a Department of Disability, Equality, and Inclusion (DRC Recommendation 5.6).

### 2. Effective neuro-affirming education for all Autistic students.

All education settings should provide the same rights, choices, and opportunities for all.

- Deliver a National Roadmap for Safe, Quality and Inclusive Education across all settings (early learning and care, primary, secondary, vocational training, and tertiary) and end the growing "School Can't" crisis.
- Introduce "Effective Inclusive Design" Education Certification, providing funding of education settings that offer choice and opportunity with evidence-based inclusive-design learning standards that remove harm and provide a range of outcomes-based approaches to respect the diversity of autism.

### 3. Accessible and quality health & mental health for all Autistic Australians.

Autistic people struggle to access timely, affordable, available, and accessible care.

- Fund the National Roadmap to Improve the Health and Mental Health of Autistic People 2025-2035.
- Expand access to autism-informed service through Medicare by removing age caps, and increasing rebates for autism assessments, and cover for neurodivergent-specific therapy options.
- Establish a national standard for early autism screening in primary healthcare settings.

### 4. An inclusive society, supporting diversity, independence, and growth.

Society should be safe and supportive for all Australians.

- Co-design and implement affordable, accessible, and available housing and inclusive communities' options for Autistic adults, particularly to address housing & homelessness risks.
- Develop a National Autism Economic Independence Framework so there is a roadmap that prioritises economic independence for all Autistic Australians, including those with high support and dependency needs.
- Access to autism-informed independent advocacy services.

### 5. Enduring social & and economic outcomes for all.

By addressing the needs of Autistic people early on, we can reduce harm and longer-term costs.

- Develop a Governance Framework for an integrated and interconnected Disability Ecosystem – underpinned by a Human Rights Act.
- Develop a nationally consistent model for Foundational Supports to cover that ineligible for individual NDIS plans and ensure this is in place effectively before transitions out of the NDIS.
- Launch a Productivity Commission Inquiry into Autism to investigate the benefits of supporting and the economic cost of under-supporting Autistic Australians.

**Written & authorised by the Australian Autism Alliance: Australia's strong voice for autism.**