

Impact Report

2023-24





Acknowledgement of Country

Amaze acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the land now referred to as Australia, and that sovereignty was never ceded. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Elders past and present on the land and waters where we live, work and provide our services. For thousands of generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for these lands and waters, and we recognise and celebrate their spiritual and ongoing connection to Culture and Country. With the guidance of Elders past and present, we are committed to working towards a future where all Autistic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families are supported to live their best lives.

We are committed to actively and authentically contributing to Australia's journey to reconciliation, and the development and implementation of our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2023 was our first step. To read more about our reconciliation journey, visit www.amaze.org.au/about-amaze/our-reconciliation-journey/.

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Message From Our Chair



We are proud to release Amaze's inaugural Impact Report, which highlights the positive impacts we've had across the autism community, professionals, organisations, and broader systems during 2023-24. These achievements bring us closer to our vision of an Australia that embraces Autistic people and their families living their best lives.

Notable impacts include taking action to meet the needs of Autistic people and their families, that addresses professionals and organisations enhancing their efforts to foster inclusive workplaces for Autistic people, and advances in government policy, such as the Australian Government's release of the draft National Autism Strategy.

During Jim Mullan's tenure as CEO our helpline Autism Connect was transformed into a national service, operated in partnership with Autism organisations across Australia. Amaze also gained influence on Autism Policy and strengthened support from government, corporations, and donors. All of this continues under our new CEO David Tonge.

I am grateful to our Board for their continuing guidance, to our donors for their ongoing generosity, and to all whose support makes our work and the positive impact we achieve possible. Finally, thank you to the Amaze staff for their hard work and dedication throughout the financial year. The success highlighted in this report is in particular a testament to their tireless efforts and hard work.

Professor Warren Bebbington AM
Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Bebbington', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Our Year At a Glance



93% recommend Amaze and/or the service they used

(from 488 survey responses across our services)

Over 14,000 Autism Connect enquiries



605 Autism Peer Assist sessions to 77 carers

78% of Autism Connect contacts took action to meet their needs 1 month after contacting us



11 community webinars with 250+ attendees

31% of enquiries to Autism Connect were from Autistic People



34 Autism inclusion and employment related trainings

7 Autism and health workshops



11 policy submissions across key areas

Who Are We and What Do We Do?

Amaze is a leading autism organisation driving change so that Autistic people and their families can live their best lives. For over 50 years, Amaze has been supporting Autistic people and their families. While based in Victoria, we have an Australia-wide reach and are the home of Australia's national autism helpline - Autism Connect.

We are here for all Autistic people of all ages, and we work together with the autism community and a broad range of supporters to create a more autism-inclusive Australia. As well as working to increase broader community understanding and acceptance of autism and providing high-quality advice and support, we translate autism community experiences into broader policy needs.





Our Vision

An Australia that embraces Autistic people and their families living their best lives.



Our Values

- Community Centric
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Constructive and Solutions Focused
- Determination and Independence
- Evidence Informed and Outcomes Driven
- Strengths Based



Our Strategic Priorities

- Autism Assessment and Diagnosis
- Education and Training
- Employment
- NDIS
- Health and Mental Health



Our Mission

To create positive change with Autistic people and their families at all life stages by advocating, influencing, innovating, mobilising efforts and opening doors. This ambition will be realised by being a trusted source of information, advice and support, and a willing partner in the development of new practices and approaches.

Why Our Work is Needed

Autistic people are estimated to make up 1.1% of the population with around 1 in 100 Australians being Autistic.¹

Yet, Autistic people and their families face many challenges and barriers to meaningful and equitable inclusion in many different areas across society.

Some of the key challenges faced by Autistic children and adults include:

1. Inadequate Support in Schools

Autistic students experience higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to their peers, caused by things like noisy and overwhelming classroom environments, difficulty making and maintaining friends, managing workloads, achieving academic targets, bullying, and loneliness.^{2,3} Nearly half of Autistic students report that they need more support in school than what they are currently receiving.^{3,4} These factors contribute to Autistic students having poorer academic outcomes and lower educational attainment compared to their non-Autistic peers.^{5,6}

2. Underutilisation in the Workforce

The Autistic population are heavily underutilised in the Australian workforce. The unemployment rate for Autistic adults is up to 8 times higher than that of non-disabled people in Australia.³ Autistic adults are also more likely to experience underemployment, either by skill or work hours, than the general working population (37% compared to 8% respectively).^{7,8} Many of these Autistic people are able and motivated to work but a lack of understanding about autism can prevent Autistic people from being able to thrive in the workplace.

3. Co-occurring Health and Mental Health Conditions and Barriers to Accessing Healthcare

Autistic people have higher rates of health and mental health conditions compared to non-Autistic people, including anxiety, depression, epilepsy, intellectual disability and sleeping problems.⁹⁻¹² Because of these co-occurring conditions, it is important that Autistic people have access to good healthcare. However, Autistic people face several barriers to healthcare, including difficulty recognising and communicating symptoms, anxiety and overwhelm in healthcare settings, and poor previous experiences with healthcare professionals who did not properly understand autism.¹³⁻¹⁵

4. Barriers to Accessing Autism Assessments, Diagnosis and NDIS Funding

At present, to receive any NDIS funding for autism supports, an official autism diagnosis is required. However, there are several barriers to accessing an autism assessment and/or diagnosis, including high costs, long waitlists and a lack of autism expertise in health professionals, particularly in how autism may present in women, adults, First Nations peoples, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Without a diagnosis, people not only lack a proper understanding of themselves, but can also face barriers when attempting to access key supports.

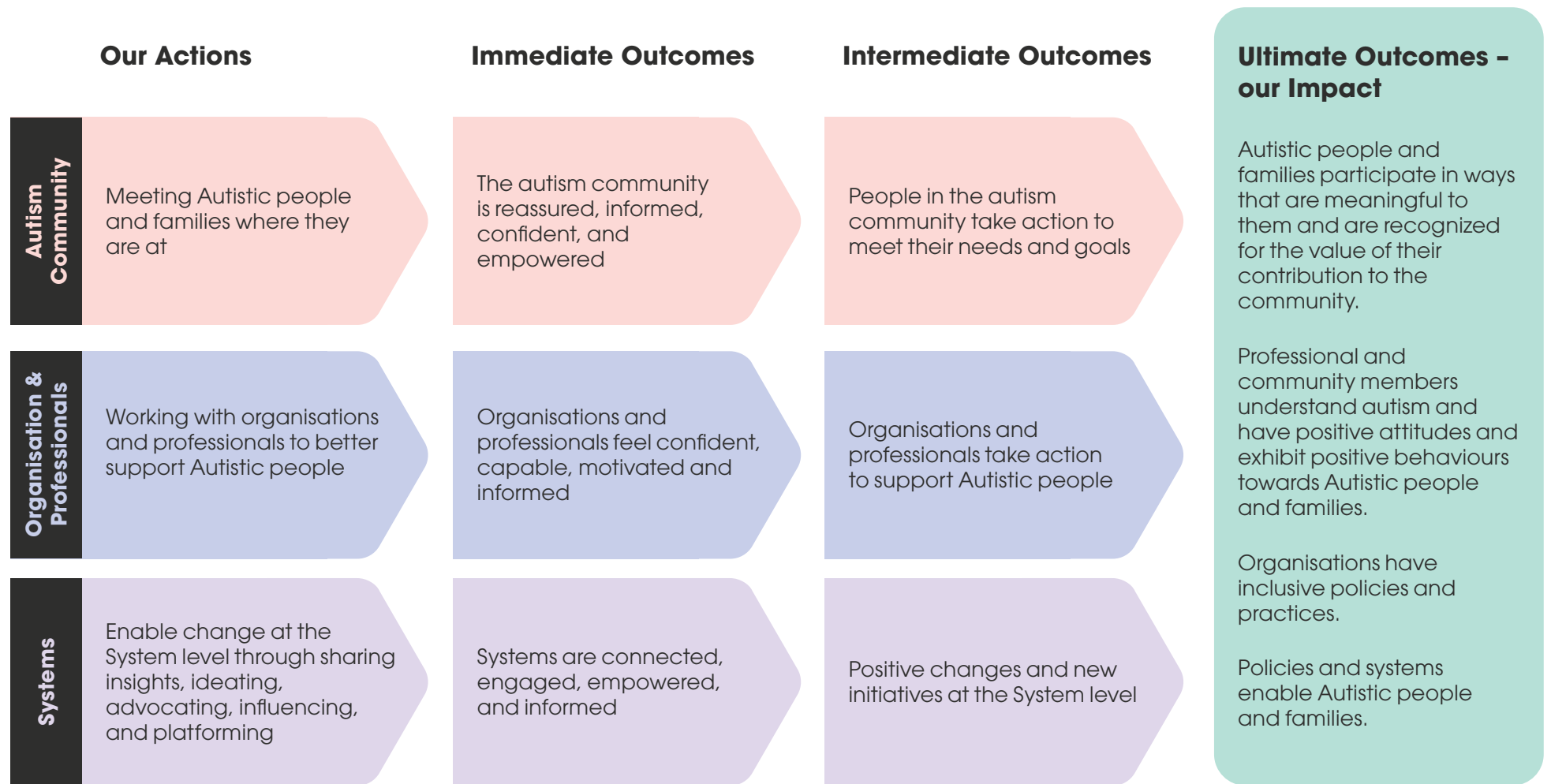
How We Create and Measure Impact

We work towards our vision and mission by enabling our community, shifting organisations' attitudes and behaviours, and influencing System changes.

We measure our impact across these areas to understand the difference we are making. Our first-ever impact framework was developed and rolled out in 2023/24 to ensure that every project we run contributes to our intended outcomes and that we learn from the results. We are building our data structures over time to track our impact. Acknowledging that there are external factors that can influence our capacity and capability to make change, our logic model* is made up of the following:

* The full logic model can be found in the Appendix.





Immediate outcomes are positive changes people experience soon after engaging with Amaze, such as feeling more confident, engaged and informed. These can lead to **intermediate outcomes** of taking certain actions. For example, meeting the service users' needs or making changes.

Our **ultimate outcomes** are those at the heart of what we do. We advocate for these changes in broader society to improve the lives of Autistic people. We envision these outcomes as critical to creating impact and an autism inclusive Australia.

How Do We Measure Our Impact?

We use a variety of methods to measure our impact including:



Surveys



Interviews



Case Studies



Focus Groups



Reviewing Documents
and Policies



Monitoring Data

Our Supporters

Our ability to build an Australia that embraces Autistic people and their families living their best lives can only be made possible with support from others who share the same vision.

We extend our sincerest thanks and gratitude to the many organisations and individuals who have supported us throughout the 23/24 financial year and those who have helped to fund and make possible our work with Autistic people, their families and the wider community.

Thank you to:

- Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation
- Coles
- Herbert Smith Freehills
- Gandel Foundation
- Giving 4 Tomorrow Foundation
- Pratt Foundation
- Veith Foundation
- Sirius Foundation
- Margaret Attwood Trust
- Norma, Mavis & Graeme Waters Perpetual Charitable Trust
- Pethard Tarax Charitable Trust
- CFMEU
- Australian Government Department of Social Services
- Jobs Victoria
- Victorian Government Department of Education
- Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Victorian Government Department of Health
- Many individual donors

Examples of Impact Across Our Strategic Priorities

The tables below showcases some examples of our impact across our strategic priority areas. We demonstrate our impact in more detail throughout the rest of this report.

Autism assessment and diagnosis

Community

Supported 3,429 enquiries about diagnosis from Autistic people and families contacting Autism Connect. These informed our advocacy to the government for increased access to diagnosis.

Organisation & Professionals

Supported the IPC Health Assessment and Diagnosis model development and trial for cost-effective and timely diagnosis. This was successful, and families in the trial found it affirming and timely which enabled them to access interventions sooner if required.

Systems

Advocated to the government for increased access to diagnosis in the National Autism strategy. The draft strategy included this as a priority.

Education and Training

Community

Supported 1,025 enquiries about education from Autistic people and families contacting Autism Connect.

Informed Autistic people and families on transition to life after high school in our webinar.

Supported parents to build connections through our resource: "Inclusive education: building parent-to-parent connections within your school community."

Organisation & Professionals

Supported 122 enquiries about education from professionals contacting Autism Connect. 59 of these were from Education professionals.

Provided practical strategies to teachers for supporting Autistic students in the classroom through our resource: "Executive functioning: Flexible thinking, self-monitoring and managing distractions."

Systems

Advocated for reforms to improve schooling for Autistic students in policy submissions to:

- Western Australia's Parliamentary inquiry into support for Autistic children and young people in schools. The subsequent report recommended a cross-sector WA neurodiversity education strategy.
- Parliamentary Inquiry into Victoria's state education system.

Employment

Community

Supported 632 employment-related enquiries from Autistic people and families contacting Autism Connect. Designed and successfully piloted Autism Connect @ Work, supporting Autistic individuals to attain desirable employment and thrive at work.

Organisation & Professionals

Launched the A-Plus program to enable workplaces to become neuro-inclusive. Delivered 34 autism inclusion and employment-related trainings to increase workplaces' capacity to be neuro-inclusive. We received positive feedback.

Systems

Advocated to prioritise and increase employment of Autistic people in:

- Establishing a disability employment centre of excellence.
- Jobs and Skills Australia 2024 – work plan development.

NDIS

Community

Supported carers of Autistic people with NDIS, with 52% of Autism Peer Assist sessions about NDIS. Supported 970 NDIS inquiries from Autistic people and families contacting Autism Connect. Empowered people to confidently navigate the NDIS through 9 webinars.

Organisation & Professionals

Supported 125 enquiries about the NDIS from professionals contacting Autism Connect.

Informed professionals who attended our NDIS webinars on barriers and ways to support their clients accessing NDIS.

Systems

Advocated for the proposed definition and approach to defining NDIS supports to be reviewed, and for a commitment to co-design and support community engagement in 'Amaze submission to NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No.1) bill'.

Health and Mental Health

Community

Supported carers in Autism Peer Assist with self-care strategies and supports they can access. Informed people on topics around Autistic Health and Wellbeing in workshops across Victoria. Informed people on sexuality and relationships in a webinar with the Association for Children with a Disability (ACD).

Supported accessible enjoyment of the Australian Open by running activities for families and children at the Australian Open All Abilities day.

Organisation & Professionals

Informed Disability Liaison Officers on how to support Autistic people accessing public hospitals, with tailored resources.

Advocated for increased accessibility in sports at the FIDA 2024 launch, and in a presentation to Sports Inclusion Australia.

Systems

Advocated for the Online Safety Act to better protect and support the safety of Autistic people online, and develop information resources and accessible complaint mechanisms, through co-design and consultation.

- Australian Government's Online Safety Act review.



Campaigns

Promoting Understanding and Acceptance



Australia Hoodie's Up

Many individuals and communities across Australia again joined us in championing inclusion and showed their support for Autistic people and their families with their hoodie or hat!

In celebration of World Autism Month, every year in April we hold our annual 'Hoodie Up' campaign which promotes understanding, acceptance and inclusion of the Autistic community. This year, we made it bigger and better by encouraging everyone to hoodie or hat up in support of autism.

People supported the campaign in many different ways including purchasing an official Amaze branded hoodie or hat, making a generous donation, holding a fundraising event, or wearing their own hoodie or hat on the official Hoodie Up day or throughout April to show their support.

Making small autism friendly adjustments to your workplace can make the world of difference for both Autistic and non-Autistic employees.

Autism Friendly Workplaces Work for Everyone

Businesses and organisations are always in need of skilled and productive workers, managers want people in their team who will contribute to their workplace's success, and employees want to work alongside colleagues they can trust and rely on. Autistic people are those workers, team members and colleagues.

Yet, the unemployment rate among Autistic individuals remains disproportionately high at almost eight times that of individuals without disabilities.³ For those Autistic people currently employed, many experience challenges in the workplace that don't allow them to perform at their best.

Making small autism friendly adjustments to your workplace can make the world of difference for both Autistic and non-Autistic employees.

Thanks to generous funding support from the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, we launched our 'Autism Friendly Workplaces Work for Everyone' campaign in November 2023. The campaign highlighted four Autistic adults working in different employment settings – construction, education, corporate office and hospitality. The faces of the campaign Steve, Christina, Rebecca, and Jonathon are all Autistic and have professional working experience in the industries they represented.

As Amaze's major brand awareness campaign, its purpose was to raise awareness and understanding of autism, particularly in the workplace. The campaign was initially rolled out over an 8-week period in late 2023/early 2024 across several digital channels including social media, digital advertising and radio.

To find out more about the campaign, visit **www.amaze.org.au/autism-friendly-workplaces/**.



LinkedIn A-Plus Employment Program — Social Media Campaign

LinkedIn awarded Amaze a \$250,000 USD grant to run a campaign promoting employment opportunities and outcomes for disadvantaged groups in Nov-Dec 2023.

We used this grant to:

- 1** **Generate awareness of the A-Plus program** with professionals from human resources, diversity and inclusion, and C-Suite/ management. We targeted these audiences because they make many decisions around hiring, and diversity and inclusion within their organisations.
- 2** **Facilitate engagement with the A-Plus program** across digital platforms to increase awareness and understanding of the program and its unique benefits to organisations.
- 3** **Acquire leads we can engage with to potentially enrol in the program.** Leads are individuals and organisations who expressed interest in the A-Plus program by submitting contact details.
- 4** **Test and validate key messaging** and program direction with target groups.
- 5** **Build understanding** around autism-inclusive employment and practices.

Our Outcomes

As shown by these metrics, the generous LinkedIn grant has helped us make many organisations more aware of our A-Plus program, and enables us to engage organisations from a variety of sectors with our program to increase the inclusion of Autistic people in the workplace.

Leads

251

(Leads are any individuals/ organisations that have provided their contact details with us and are happy for us to contact them about engaging further with the A-Plus program).

Reach

1.6 million

(The number of people who have seen our content).

**A-Plus program
webpage visits**

9,000+

(The number of people who have seen our content).

Impressions

>7.4million

(The number of times our content is displayed).

Engagement

64,000+

(The number of interactions with our content e.g. likes, shares, and comments).

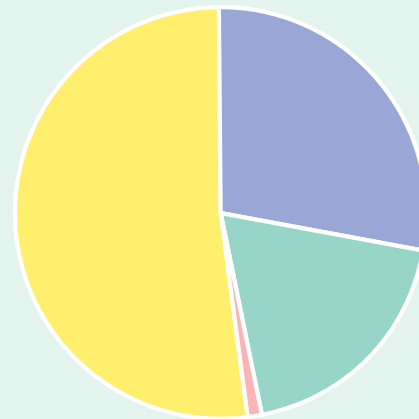
Autism Connect

What do we do?

Autism Connect is our free, national Autism helpline that provides independent and expert information over phone, email and webchat. We help people find resources, connect with supports, and receive evidence-informed information. While the helpline is open to anyone, majority of our calls are from Autistic people, their families and supporters.

Who did Autism Connect support?

We responded to 14,000+ enquiries



- Calls 52%
- Emails 28%
- Webchats 19%
- Other 1%

31% of enquiries were from Autistic people.

703 enquiries were from LGBTQIA+ people.

925 enquiries were from culturally or linguistically diverse people.

180 enquiries were from Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander people.

People contacted us from every state and territory with the most from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

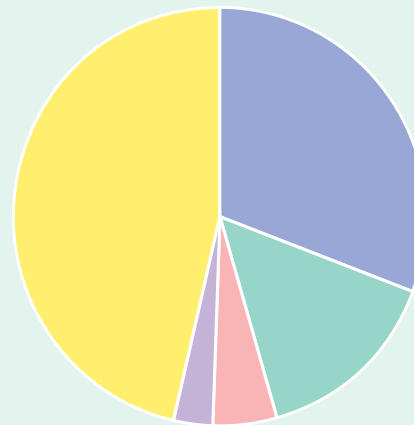
What did we help with?

What people contacted us about

Accessing diagnosis	34%
Autistic informed support	18%
Accessing therapy	10%
Family and community info	9%
Support in education	8%
NDIS	6%
Support in employment	5%
Other	10%

47% of all enquiries were from family members, highlighting the support needed by family members.

Who contacted us?



- Family Members 47%
- Autistic People 31%
- Professionals 15%
- Supporters 3%
- Other 5%

Delivery partners

We worked with our delivery partners to build more local knowledge and service more Australians. Our delivery partners over this reporting period included:



Feedback Direct From the Community

We sent a survey to people after they contacted Autism Connect to understand their experience with our service. Here is a snapshot of what they said:

91%
**would recommend Amaze to
others in a similar situation**

**Reassuring and understanding
people's experiences**

86%

said they felt reassured by the Advisors.

"I felt heard and validated from the first 30 seconds of calling Amaze, and I didn't think I had done anything bad which is the way I usually feel. They weren't trying to fix anything with me, they just were understanding where I was at. It gave me hope. My sense of gratitude was overwhelming."

Many of our Advisors are Autistic, a parent/carer of an Autistic person and/or neurodivergent. People said they found it valuable to talk to someone with lived experience.

"She had lived experience, you know, she was much more holistic. It's one thing to study something and know about it and another if you have to get up and live that day to day... that lived experience is really important to me."

Connecting with useful information and supports

91%

said the information provided by our Advisors was relevant to them.

“If I hadn’t had a good experience, I might not be where I am now because I have realised there are so many people going through the same thing, particularly at my age as a woman. I would definitely recommend the service to other people.”

Helping people take action to meet their needs

92%

said that they have acted or intend to act on the information provided to them.

78%

said they have taken action to meet their needs one month after contacting us.

Case Study

A mother contacted Autism Connect who was finding it difficult to communicate with her Autistic son’s school. She felt reassured after talking to an Advisor. The Advisor sent her information about schooling rights, supporting her son at school, advice on how to talk to the school, and resources she could share with them. She felt confident enough to ask the school for more regular contact about her son. This led to a repairing of the relationship with the school, and more frequent meetings and support for her son.

Autism Peer Assist

Autism Peer Assist is a one-to-one peer support program for carers of Autistic people, with a focus on assisting families with complex needs. Carers attend up to 10 individually tailored sessions where they can openly discuss their challenges with a Peer Mentor who also has lived experience of caring for an Autistic person/s.

With 61% of Autistic people reporting needing assistance with at least one activity on a daily basis³, the service offered by our Peer Assist program is critical in empowering carers with the confidence and capability to support the Autistic person they care for.

Who did Autism Peer Assist support?

77 carers supported

605 sessions delivered

109%

increase in sessions delivered compared to FY 22-23 (290 sessions) due to a doubling of staff.

What topics were covered (% of sessions where the topic was covered)

NDIS	52%
Understanding Autistic Behaviours	29%
Therapies	27%
Carers Supports	26%
Education	26%

Supporting through understanding

Many carers said that talking to someone who also has lived experience caring for an Autistic person helped them feel less alone in their experiences and more understood. They found the Peer Mentors had excellent knowledge about autism support and took the time to listen to their needs.

“Being able to talk to people with experience helped us with confidence in the actions we’re taking, how to improve and to know that it’s a constant work in process, so don’t despair.”

“It was nice to talk to people who understand - some friends will sympathise but they don’t really know what it’s like. That felt like someone was helping us with the load.”

Autism Peer Assist supports carers to make positive changes in their lives

Carers reported that Autism Peer Assist helped them make positive changes, especially around their self-care and caring role, and connecting with supports.

“(My mentor’s) advice was always useful and very motivating. After a session I would feel ready to use the advice I had been given, instead of feeling swamped by all that there was to do.”

“(My mentor) was my guiding light through the process, she really went above and beyond to help me and to make sure that I would obtain everything I needed to start my journey to a better life. Even though the 10 sessions have ended and this is only the start of the positive journey, Autism Peer Assist is really critical in helping me get the supports that I needed. Autism Peer Assist is really essential when you really need that helping hand. I cannot thank them or repay them enough.”

Autism and Health Workshops

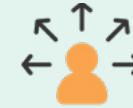
Our Autism and Health workshops were run across different locations in Victoria to inform and lead discussions on different topics related to Autistic Health and Wellbeing, including:

- COVID-19 and how the pandemic highlighted ways the healthcare system is inaccessible for Autistic people.
- Healthcare barriers for Autistic people.
- Sensory, social and information processing accommodations and adjustments that can be requested.
- What a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) is and how can they support you in a public hospital.
- Hospital Health Passports and how to use them.
- Health and wellbeing tips.



Workshops

7 total – 6 in-person and 1 webinar



Locations

Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura Shepparton, Melbourne, Inverloch and online



Time period

January 2024 – May 2024



Attendees

68

Connecting community to supports

We received feedback from multiple attendees that they valued the information we provided about different supports and organisations and how to access them, and that some of them hadn't known about this information before.

“Great information about support and considerations when going to hospital/healthcare”



Webinars

Our team delivered a range of webinars throughout the year on areas we identified Autistic people and their families needed more information on.

Total webinars

11

Total attendees

250+

9 webinars on the NDIS

1 on Transition to Life after High School

1 on sexuality and relationships in collaboration with the Association for Children with a Disability (Let's Talk: relationships, sex and pornography)

Empowering people to confidently navigate the NDIS

The NDIS can be hard to navigate, and many people rely on community information and resources to understand how to confidently interact with the Scheme. We have responded to this need by running a series of webinars that support Autistic people and parents/carers to take action.

“It was brilliant to be able to attend this session. I’m looking forward to next month’s session. It feels so encouraging to have this support. Thank you so much.”

Feedback from the community

Feedback from the community on the changes they have made because of participating in our NDIS webinars includes:

“Review what we submitted to NDIS. Get in touch with a disability advocate to help navigate the system.”

“As an allied health professional, I will make some changes to my reports to increase clarity.”

“Reflect on what is working and what is not working before my sons NDIS review”

A-Plus Program

Our A-Plus program empowers organisations and employers to create inclusive work environments that better support their Autistic employees. We do this through training and development solutions, including practical and sustainable strategies that promote a culture of diversity and acceptance, and attract and retain Autistic talent.

Over the reporting period, our team has delivered the following:

34x

autism inclusion and employment related trainings.

Our training is relevant

We focus on ensuring our training meets the needs and objectives of the audience so that practical actions can be taken, success achieved, and meaningful impact is made.

Of 196 responses,

95%

agreed that the topics covered were relevant to their role's needs or field of work.

“Amaze’s training for managers is comprehensive, detailed, well-presented and thought-provoking. I’d highly recommend other organisations or workplaces run it for managers regularly to better support neurodivergent team members!”

“Great practical ways to put our learning into action.”

The A-Plus approach increases workplace's capability to be neuro-inclusive

From a survey, attendees identified the following as the most important takeaways that they will likely use to create change in their workplace:

- 1** Implementing flexible workplace practices.
- 2** Supporting sensory adaptations such as noise reduction and having a sensory room.
- 3** Ensuring workplace supports are available for all employees to access.
- 4** Using language intentionally (e.g. identity-first language when referring to Autistic people).
- 5** Using clear communication and allowing time to process and respond.



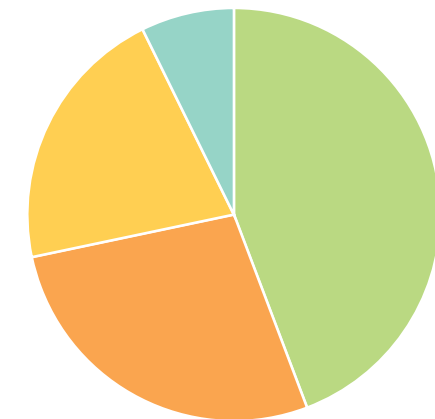
Autism Connect – Professionals and Organisations

Enquiries from professionals

We supported 1677 enquiries from professionals to Autism Connect. Enquiries were from a range of allied health and medical professionals, NDIS workers (caseworkers, support co-ordinators, and LACs). 25% of enquiries from professionals were about diagnosis, 17% about Autistic informed supports, 17% about family and community information, and 9% about therapy and supports. These topics show the importance of informing professionals in these areas about autism-specific services and supports.

Enquiries about employment

We supported 590 enquiries about employment. 49% of these enquiries were from Autistic people, 29% from family members, 14% from professionals, 5% from a supporter, and 2% from 'other'. Most of our calls were about preparing for employment, followed by supporting an Autistic person in the workplace and issues at work. Most of these calls were from Autistic people. This shows the need for tailored support for employed, unemployed, and job-seeker Autistic people.



- Preparing for employment 44%
- Supporting an Autistic person in the workplace 28%
- Issues at work 21%
- Other 7%

Autism Connect @ Work

Autism Connect @ Work supports Autistic people who are currently employed, underemployed and jobseekers/unemployed to make informed decisions about employment and achieve greater success in the workplace. With a designated specialist Advisor, people receive up to 4 sessions where they will be equipped with the tools, knowledge and advice they need to build their confidence and capability in the workplace. This service launched in October 2023 and referrals into this program are made through our Autism Connect service.

Reporting period:
October 2023 - June 2024

Total number of people supported: 53

Topics covered:

- 1 Understanding employee and workplace rights
- 2 Self-advocacy for reasonable adjustments
- 3 Navigating workplace social environments
- 4 Pathways of support
- 5 Understanding support needs

Providing one-to-one neuro-affirming coaching

Multiple participants interviewed said that they found Autism Connect @ Work neuro-affirming, and that they valued how it provides coaching from a lived experience perspective.

“There is something so affirming about speaking to someone who understands, through lived experience, what you’re going through. The Advisor that I spoke to, while of course always remaining professional, had a real kindness and empathy, and I found it so much easier to receive advice and coaching from someone like that.”

“A lot of (other services) were able to provide me with lists of resources that I could explore on my own. Autism Connect @ Work is the only one that has provided me with one-on-one coaching. Really, the one-to-one real-time support is what makes a huge difference.”

Helping people take practical actions to support themselves in employment

Autism Connect @ Work has helped both unemployed and employed Autistic people.

We heard from interviewees that our service has helped them to:

- 1** Feel better prepared to advocate for themselves
- 2** Gain knowledge about potential employers who would be supportive
- 3** Create ‘ways of working’ documents to reduce burnout
- 4** Decide whether to disclose that they are Autistic to their workplace
- 5** Better understand their autism and sensory needs

Consultancy

We provide accessibility advice to organisations that enable them to create autism-friendly venues and events by offering the following services:

- **Environmental audit:** assessing the sensory and accessibility aspects of a space/site and providing a report with recommendations on sensory considerations, wayfinding and signage, relaxed events, staff training, and accessibility information.
- **Development/review of accessibility resources:** such as social scripts and sensory maps to better support an Autistic persons experience at a specific space or event.

Our consultancy clients include:



Northland



Policy Influence and Government Engagement

We have influenced policy and engaged with government on issues that affect Autistic people in the following ways:



11 Policy submissions



Advocacy work to government and relevant agencies (i.e. member of AFDO)



Engaging Autistic people and families in advocacy on matters that impact them

Participation in expert advisory groups and networks

Supporting the work of partner organisations

Our submissions over the 23/24 FY covered:

- Western Australia's Parliamentary inquiry into support for Autistic children and young people in schools
- Victorian Parliamentary inquiry into state education system
- National Autism Strategy Discussion Paper
- Draft National Autism Strategy
- Establishing a Disability Employment Centre of Excellence
- Australian Government's consultation on Disability Royal Commission response
- Jobs and Skills Australia 2024 – Work Plan development
- Electoral matters committee regarding voting accessibility
- NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1)
- Australian Government's Online Safety Act review

How we evaluate our impact

We evaluate the impact of our policy and advocacy work by looking at what changes have happened at a policy and government level and if they align with recommendations and advice we gave in our submissions, on advisory committees, and in our direct consultation.

However, it must be noted that it is difficult to see the immediate effects of policy and advocacy change due to:

- 1 Multiple voices** – policy and advocacy change we engage in is usually done alongside other autism and disability organisations so it is a collective effort.
- 2 Time** – policy and advocacy change can take many years to see its effects.

Key highlights

Advocating for Autistic education supports in WA

- This inquiry investigated the support for Autistic children and young people in WA schools, with a particular interest in the prevalence of autism and the demand for supports for Autistic students. It also looked into how needs are coordinated between schools and other service areas, and how evidence-based practices are implemented across the school system.
- In our submission, we proposed an Autism education strategy be established and informed the WA inquiry of learnings from Victoria's Disability Inclusion Reforms and Autism Education Strategy, particularly around the importance of targets and outcome measures.
- In line with our recommendations, the Education and Health Standing Committee of the inquiry recommended a cross-sector neurodiversity education strategy co-designed with Autistic and neurodivergent people, that is funded and includes measurable indicators at school and system level. They directly referenced Amaze throughout their report for the learning on the Victorian Autism Plan and Autism Education strategy.

NDIS amendment Bill 2024

- Submission to NDIS amendment Bill May 2024.
- The Bill was passed by the House of Representatives on 5 June 2024 with numerous amendments. These amendments were consistent with our recommendations (and the recommendations of many disability sector organisations) that the proposed definition and approach to defining NDIS supports be reviewed, and that a commitment to co-design and community engagement be expressly included in the Act.

National Autism Strategy

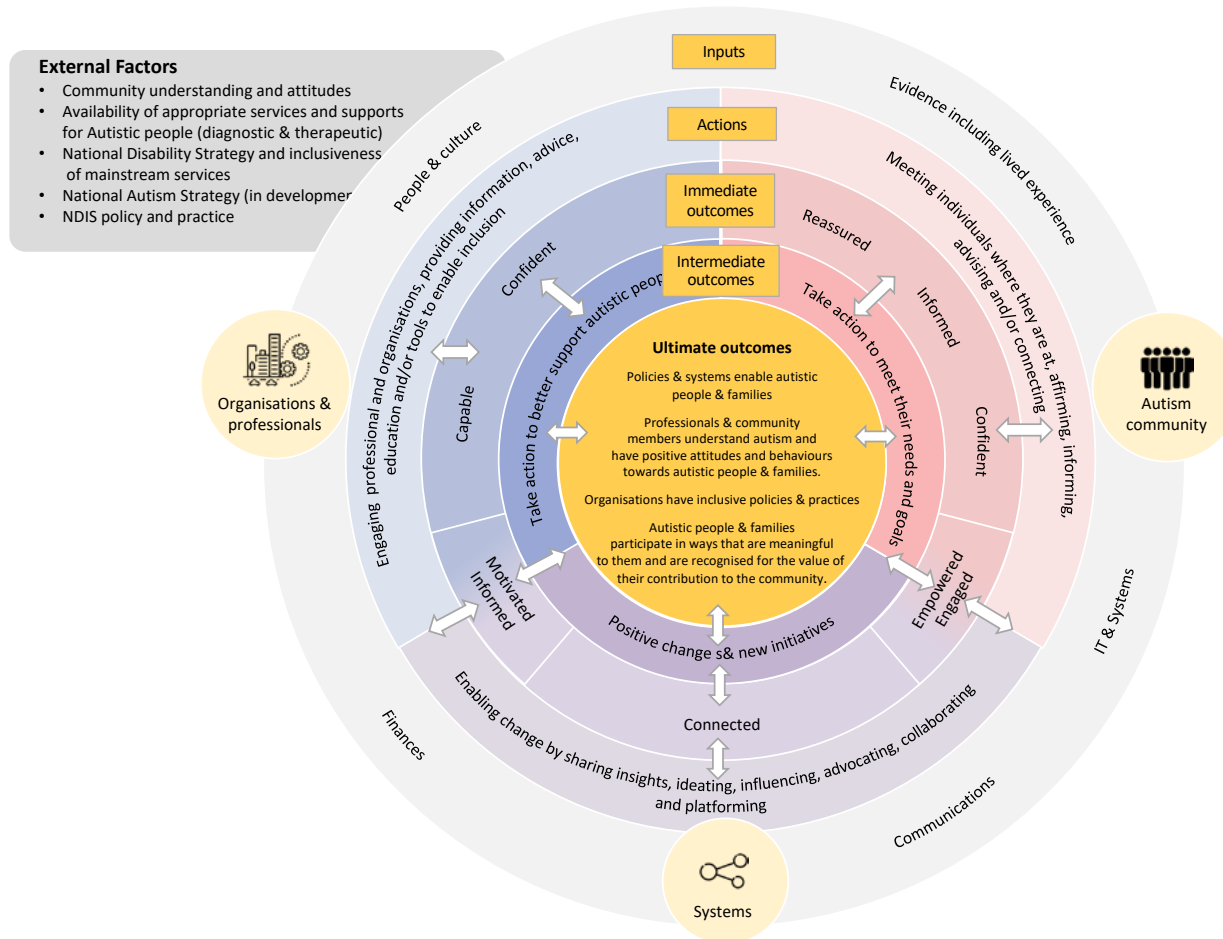
- The National Autism Strategy will recommend and outline steps to reform areas such as services, healthcare, education, and employment for all Autistic Australians. The draft strategy was released for public feedback in April – May 2024.
- Amaze has greatly influenced the development of the National Autism Strategy over the years. In 2019, we led numerous submissions and direct advocacy with the Australian Autism Alliance. This led to establishing the Senate Select Committee on Autism in 2020, and its recommendation for a National Autism Strategy (2022), as well as the Government’s subsequent commitment to develop a National Autism Strategy (2022).

From there, we have continued our support and advocacy for the National Autism Strategy by:

- 1** Supporting the Australian Government by sharing evidence, expertise, and data
- 2** Aiding members of the Oversight Council and working groups when requested
- 3** Being involved in working groups to create a National Roadmap to improve the health and mental health of Autistic people
- 4** Participating in the co-design stakeholder reference group
- 5** Attending stakeholder consultations on the draft strategy (April to June 2024)
- 6** Providing 2x submissions on October 23 and May 24

Appendices

Impact framework



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