



5 December 2024

Department of Social Services  
Australian Government  
c/o The Social Deck  
32 Sunshine Beach Rd  
Noosa Heads QLD 4567

Submitted via email: [foundationalsupports@thesocialdeck.com](mailto:foundationalsupports@thesocialdeck.com)

Dear Consultation Team,

**Amaze submission to Foundational Supports for children with developmental concern, delay and/or disability and their families, carers and kin consultation paper.**

Amaze is a leading autism organization driving change so that Autistic people and their families can live their best lives. Informed by evidence, experts and lived experience, we influence policy change for Autistic people and provide trusted and independent information, support and referral services, and capability building initiatives and resources to individuals, families, professionals, government, and the wider community.

We are closely connected with our community through our national Autism Connect helpline, peer support networks and capacity building initiatives.

**It is vital that General and Targeted Foundational Supports meet the needs of all Autistic children (and their families, carers and kin),** including:

- Autistic children with complex and high support needs, including complex communication and behaviour support needs.
- Autistic children experiencing co-occurring conditions and/or intersectional disadvantage that may require wrap around supports.
- Autistic children who have traditionally fallen through the cracks, including those deemed ineligible for the NDIS and other support services.
- Undiagnosed children seeking to understand their differences/identity and support needs, and/or access a pathway to timely and affordable diagnosis.

**Please refer to our submission to your General Foundational Supports consultation paper.**

Our submission (please see attached) applies to the diverse needs of Autistic people of all ages (including children under 7) and their families, carers and kin. It shares our experiences, learnings and expertise from delivering Autism Connect and a range of connected evidence- and lived- experience informed individual and community capacity building supports. These include [Autism Peer Assist](#) (an autism specific 1:1 peer support program connecting vulnerable or isolated parents with lived experience peers), [A-Plus](#) (a capacity building initiative empowering organisations and employers to create inclusive work environments that better support Autistic employees) and numerous other co-designed and neuro-affirming [initiatives and resources](#), tailored to the diverse needs of Autistic people and their families, carers and kin.

**We strongly endorse and support the recommendations of the Child and Family Disability Alliance (CAFDA) in its submission to this inquiry.**

We firmly support CAFDA's call for an ambitious Foundational Supports model that drives systemic change, strengthens the capacities of children and their family, carers and kin, and is peer and disability-led, with a nationally coherent approach anchored via a network of family-led organisations.

**Joining the call of CAFDA and drawing on the recommendations and evidence contained in our General Foundational Supports submission, we make the following key recommendations.**

General Foundational Supports for children under 9, and their families, carers and kin must:

- Be shaped by the Solid Foundations model designed by CAFDA and co-designed with Autistic people and their families, carers and kin.
- Meet the diverse needs of all Autistic children and their families, carers and kin.
- Provide well-connected and aligned ISR services and capacity building supports, delivered via a network of proven and trusted disability organisations.
- Drive a systematic approach to improving accessibility and inclusion across all aspects of our diverse community, including all places that children live, learn, play and visit.
- Include social media campaigns that can build the general community's understanding and acceptance of disability, including autism.
- Support the families, carers and kin of Autistic children, including by driving their social and economic participation.
- Fund autism specific ISR services and capacity building initiatives (including peer support) that compliment and can help inform the autism accessibility and inclusion of all other ISR services and capacity building initiatives and resources.
- Meet the needs of Autistic children and their families, carers and kin in emergency or crisis situations, including health crisis, family violence or when experiencing Autistic burnout, meltdown or engaging in behaviours of concern.
- Deliver neuro-affirming, sustainable and reliable ISR services and capacity building supports, including peer supports, that are tailored to diverse individual needs, and are well promoted and delivered via multiple accessible and inclusive channels (phone, email, online, in person, group and 1:1).

- Invest in research and data collection, transparently measuring outcomes and with a commitment to ongoing growth through learnings.
- Drive a systemic approach to building sector capacity and delivering capacity building initiatives across diverse organisations, including through the development of a capacity building framework, training accreditation program and skills register.

Targeted Foundational supports for children aged under 9, and their families, carers and kin must be:

- Co-designed by families, young people and their representative organisations.
- Delivered via demand-based funding so that every child who meets thresholds can receive support, with a guaranteed minimum level of support for each tier of targeted Foundational Support.
- Flexible, equitable and tailored to the needs of this cohort, including by ensuring they are culturally safe, individualised and can meet the changing needs of children and their families, carers and kin.
- Embedded across environments, including early learning and school settings.
- Supporting early identification of developmental concerns and access to timely and affordable diagnosis.
- Enabling assessments to be cross-purposed and operate as a child's "passport" for access to various supports.
- Delivered in accordance with Early Childhood Intervention best practice.

We are ready to assist and would welcome further opportunity to share our experiences, learnings and expertise gained through delivering Autism Connect and our capacity building supports and initiatives. We would also welcome the opportunity to share our expertise and experiences in data collection and evaluation to help inform the Foundational Supports model and support other government and non-government entities to deliver transparent and accountable services and supports, capable of achieving the model's intended outcomes.

Please contact me by email at [david.tonge@amaze.org.au](mailto:david.tonge@amaze.org.au) or by phone on [03 9657 1600](tel:0396571600) if we can provide further information or assistance, or answer any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,



David Tonge  
Chief Executive Officer

