

AFSA's summary of the Autism State Plan Consultation Summary by Meredith Ward



The full Consultation Summary can be found at:-

<http://autismstateplan.dhs.vic.gov.au/consultation/summary.htm>

The Consultation Summary's consistent themes were evident after careful analysis of the feedback from forums and written responses. As an attendee of about half of the 23 forums I can verify these themes.

Overwhelmingly the top issue and therefore priority for this Government is around education issues such as the need to address the lack of access to support at Government & Non-Government schools especially for those with High Functioning Autism and Aspergers. Those with an ASD and no accompanying Intellectual Disability who are deemed ineligible under the Disability Act 2006, to access services closely followed this.

Below is my summary of the issues and the solutions offered by the Autism Community, which are supported by extracts, found in the Consultation Summary.

Issue: Students with Aspergers and High Functioning Autism were not receiving support at Government & Non-Government Schools.

Solution: Greater access to the Program for Students with a disability (PSD), Make education inclusive and ASD friendly.

What the summary said.....

"There were calls for greater access to support for ASD students within schools including simplification and broadening of access to Program for Students with a Disability Support for students with an ASD."(pg 5)

"Discussion focused on the difficulties of students with an ASD who do not have an intellectual disability (ID) and who may not get extra help in the school setting. The lack of extra help may compound the impact of stress and anxiety arising from being misunderstood and in some cases bullied by others. Many respondents drew attention to the critical issues of adolescence when mental health issues are not uncommon as the young person with an ASD becomes increasingly aware of isolation from peers.

"Consultation participants want educational settings to be ASD friendly, to be available locally, and to make real the commitment to inclusive education. (pg6)

Issue: Eligibility and Access to Disability Services.

Solution: Broaden eligibility to allow people without an accompanying intellectual disability to access services.

What the Summary said.....

"Participants in the consultation process were clear that the State Plan must recognise the diversity of strengths and needs of individuals with an ASD – from those with high functioning ASD or Asperger's to those who have an ASD and a severe intellectual disability or other complex needs.

This is the intellectual property of the Autistic Family Support Association Inc.



Autistic Family Support Association Inc.



PO BOX 235, ASHBURTON, VIC., 3147 P: 03 9885 8777 F: 03 9885 0508 E: afsa_aust@bigpond.com

“For many people participating in the consultation, recognising ASD as a disability under the *Disability Act 2006* was key to ensuring that all those on the spectrum (including those with no intellectual disability) had access to service.(pg 3)

Issue: (a) Difficulty finding services and (b) when you find them, you only find a waiting list!

Solution (a): Simplify pathways to services, seamless service system. Provide lifelong quality services and supports.

What the summary said.....

“Transition across the life stages – childhood to adolescence, adolescence to adulthood, and adulthood into old age – were viewed as critical times in the life of an individual with an ASD, their families and carers. Appropriate support and information was seen as a priority.(pg5)

“Consultation participants said that it would be helpful if service providers knew more about where to refer families. They also said it would be better if service providers more readily shared information so that the service user didn’t have to continually repeat their story.

“Contributors were aware that for service providers to be able to work better together they needed good systems to help them, so there were many suggestions about how to make working together easier and communication flow and referral better.

“Many people said that a key worker or case manager would be a good way to help them find their way to services, especially early after diagnosis. Finally,

many people suggested a regional “hub” to promote good information flow, collaboration, sharing of expertise and referral to appropriate services.(pg8)

“Accreditation of services working with individuals with an ASD was particularly important for some especially with regard to diagnostic practice where respondents spoke of wide variations in skills, approaches and knowledge. (pg9)

Issue (b) when you find them, you only find a waiting list!

Solution (b): Reduce waiting lists and address service gaps.

What the summary said.....

“There were many people in the consultation who said that above all else there needed to be more services and getting the service needs to be easier. People living in country Victoria said that it was even more difficult for them as there were fewer services and they often had to travel long distances, including coming to Melbourne to services.” (pg7)

Issue: Information and services for the whole family they can trust.

Solution: Whole family approach

What the summary said.....

“Individuals with an ASD and their families/carers want good advice, information they can trust and practical support. It’s important that quality of life issues for the whole family are considered and that siblings’ and carers’ needs are not overlooked.

“Consultation participants said they wanted to feel more confident about what the future might hold for the individual with an ASD whether that be through fulfilling potential and making a



contribution to society or through having security about living and support arrangements. (pg 3)

Issue: Parents and carers know more about ASD's than Teachers, Aides, Doctors and other professionals they deal with.

Solution: Build ASD expertise across the service sectors

What the summary said.....

"Participants in the consultation process said that more ASD trained professionals and workers were needed across the state in all sectors, including early childhood, health, education and justice.

"There were many suggestions from contributors about how to increase numbers in rural areas and how to make specialising in ASD attractive. The role of the GP received special attention because they are the only professional who may be involved in an ongoing way with an individual with an ASD and their family across the lifespan.

"The consultation identified support for increasing the number of professionals and workers skilled in ASD and improving or augmenting the undergraduate, postgraduate and in-service ASD training of workers. A better understanding of ASD and/or specialized training was recommended for many in the workforce including early childhood staff, maternal and child health nurses, respite workers, public transport workers, accommodation staff, teachers, doctors, police, judicial and court officers. (pg9)

Issue: Despite inadequate services in early childhood, the service gaps for adolescents and adult services are even greater.

Solution: Address the service gaps in adolescent and adult service systems.

What the summary said.....

"Enhancing the opportunities for people with ASD to be employed in either the paid or voluntary sectors begins with good vocational planning during adolescence.

"Access to that support followed by employment opportunities in adulthood is essential so that people with ASDs can function to their fullest and make a contribution to society. Some people with ASD may need minimal support to enter the workforce and maintain employment over time. Others will need more intensive support.

Notwithstanding, there will be some adults with an ASD who are not able to take up employment.

(pg 6)

Issue: Misunderstanding of people with an ASD by the general public.

Solution: Build public awareness and understanding of ASD's.

What the summary said.....

"A lack of community understanding of ASDs and the distinctive and diverse nature of these conditions was cited by many participants as causing particular difficulties and concerns for individuals with an ASD, families and carers. A number of people proposed broad community awareness campaigns, and targeted ones for particular groups, be put in place. (pg 4)

