

## **AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK**

### Annual Report 2015

#### **President's Report**

During 2015 the ACN experienced continued growth. We conducted projects for our member families in a variety of areas. The children were able to participate in Drama – Art – Youth Clubs – Tae Kwondo Fitness – social play days and attend events such Dreamtime at Taronga Zoo

Parents now have support groups meetings in eleven regions of the Sydney Metropolitan area.

The passing of our amazing board member and friend, Timothy Walters saddened all of us who were fortunate to know this wonderful man.

Timothy's brilliance in technology and his unselfish dedication and willingness to work voluntarily earned him the respect and admiration of all our team.

Continuing on from his desire to assist young people in gaining employment the ACN is working towards "Transition to Work" to support people with ASD to get into the workforce. The program is dedicated to the memory of Timothy Walters.

In conclusion we are very grateful to our wonderful volunteers and our board members for their valuable contribution to the ACN. Our founder Steve Drakoulis has worked long hours and his dedication and caring support is highly valued by our members.

Warren Thompson

#### **Manager's Report**

I am proud of all that the ACN has achieved and that it continues to achieve. We started as one group, a handful of families and we are now a major source of support for so many families across much of Sydney.

We have faced some strong challenges this past year. None more significant than the loss of our Chief Information Officer Timothy Walters who lost a long brave battle with cancer. This also resulted in the loss of his wife and our Strategic Manager Claudia Walters. They have been responsible for shaping us into who we are and we will always be grateful to them. Their absence will always be felt.

For me, proudest among our achievements are the breakthroughs we witness among our children. A child who rarely speaks begins to bloom through our groups and is no longer as isolated. Another who hadn't played with anyone for 2 years is now a part of the Youth Club and enjoying himself. There are many wonderful stories.

We enjoy the support of many good people in the community and it means a lot to me. My respect for the Lugarno Lions is no secret. My appreciation to our local members in government is immense. From State to Federal and even local, thank you David Coleman, thank you Mark Coure, and thank you Minister Ajaka.

Every single member of our Board is a parent or carer of someone on the spectrum and all of them have been everything you would want from your Board.

One of the blessings in my life is the good people I have met over the last 5 years in this network and the friendships built. No other job has ever given me so much meaning.

I said at the start of the year that we are at a critical stage. We could become a major organisation but equally we could fold. Money is always an issue despite all the fundraising efforts of the incredible people around us. But more concerning is the growth level. I am struggling to keep up at the moment and we are exploring ways to make sure the ACN is still here in the long term. We expect the NDIS will be good for an organisation like ours but that's still not here.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us. The ACN is unique in what it does and how it operates. Without community support, without people putting their hand up to maintain and develop a society of mutual support, we couldn't exist.

I will continue to do my best to make sure other families, just like mine, are able to connect for the benefit of our community.

Steve Drakoulis - Founder

**Vision:**

A society where people on the autism spectrum and their families lead full, rich and rewarding lives.

**Mission:**

The Autism Community Network supports people with autism, their families and communities across NSW.

**Values:**

Community - further develop a sense of community between families and the broader community.

Respect - treat everyone with dignity and care.

Integrity - be transparent in all our actions and maintain trust and faith in what we do.

Empowerment - support each other to make well informed choices which improve our quality of life.

Excellence - strive to maintain the highest level of effort and commitment in all that we do.

**Objectives:**

1. Strategy - Sustainably deliver on core service offerings by:
  - a. Maintaining a vibrant community of support where emerging needs and aspirations inform our planning
  - b. Partnering with existing autism service providers and other community groups to improve outcomes

- c. Assisting mainstream services to provide autism friendly programs
- 2. Governance - Ensure effective organisational management and growth through:
  - a. Commitment to best practice
  - b. Implementation of robust, user friendly systems
  - c. Ongoing training of a skilled and committed, parent run Board
- 3. Marketing - Deliver responsive programs that meet emerging demand through:
  - a. Robust mechanisms for gathering, interpreting and reporting stakeholder needs, aspirations and satisfaction
  - b. Comprehensive knowledge of existing systems and services including government and non-government programs
  - c. Provision of accurate, timely and relevant information in a variety of formats
- 4. Financial sustainability - Attract and manage resources to enable us to work towards our ultimate vision by:
  - a. Securing funding, in-kind and volunteer support from diverse sources
  - b. Allocating funding to employ staff and meet administrative and program costs as outlined in the annual budget
  - c. Implementing financial management practices that ensure accountability and transparency while maximising outcomes
- 5. Information and knowledge management - Provide Information Management Systems that suit the needs of all stakeholders by:
  - a. Ensuring that Corporate knowledge is documented fully and presented consistently
  - b. Ensuring that data is collected, analysed, stored, shared and used to inform planning in ways that protect confidentiality and security
  - c. Maintaining a fully integrated Information Technology platform that maximises efficiency
- 6. Quality - Achieve continuous improvement through:
  - a. Planning that is guided by the articulated and demonstrated needs and aspirations of our families, our vision and core values
  - b. Focus on outcomes with an understanding of the resources employed to achieve the desired results
- 7. Human Resources - Develop HR systems that ensure we have the right people in the right jobs to maximise our outcomes including:
  - a. Clear articulation of authorities and responsibilities for each role.
  - b. Effective recruitment, training and performance management systems.

### **What we do**

1. Provide support groups for parents and carers
2. Provide social groups for people with ASDs and their families
3. Connect peers through social media and forums
4. Produce a regular e-newsletter
5. Maintain a website full of useful information
6. Maintain a directory of services recommended by members, not paid advertising
7. Run community awareness campaigns
8. Deliver training to disability services and mainstream providers
9. Support the work of individuals and groups providing mutual support to others

Our services don't include crisis intervention, accommodation, advocacy, professional medical advice or financial support.

### **Our Members**

ACN membership is now at 758 (Households) families.  
ACN individuals are now at 1738

Members Breakdown  
As at 30 June 2015

| Boys | Girls | Men | Women |
|------|-------|-----|-------|
| 655  | 162   | 206 | 714   |

Members with ASD

| Boys | Girls | Men | Women |
|------|-------|-----|-------|
| 604  | 128   | 64  | 113   |

As at end of June 2015 the ACN supported 758 families, comprising of 1737 individuals. This means that 909 out of 1737 ( 52.3%) of members are on the spectrum.

| Region                    |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Canterbury/Bankstown      | 93         |
| St George                 | 113        |
| Sutherland                | 116        |
| Northern Beaches/ Suburbs | 86         |
| Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai       | 37         |
| Inner-west/city           | 38.        |
| Eastern suburbs           | 19         |
| Western Sydney            | 62         |
| South-west                | 34         |
| Ryde & The Hills          | 58.        |
| Illawarra                 | 14         |
| Southern NSW              | 7.         |
| Northern NSW              | 9.         |
| Unknown                   | 72         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>758</b> |

**GROWTH BY LGA**

| LGA       |    | LGA            |   | LGA          |    |
|-----------|----|----------------|---|--------------|----|
| Ashfield  | 5  | Auburn         | 7 | Bankstown    | 33 |
| Blacktown | 34 | Blue Mountains | 3 | Botany Bay   | 6  |
| Burwood   | 4  | Camden         | 4 | Campbelltown | 8  |

|              |    |             |    |                 |     |
|--------------|----|-------------|----|-----------------|-----|
| Canada Bay   | 6  | Canterbury  | 48 | Fairfield       | 6   |
| Gosford      | 4  | Hawkesbury  | 2  | Holroyd         | 7   |
| Hornsby      | 37 | Hurstville  | 59 | Jerilderie      | 1   |
| Kogarah      | 17 | Ku-ring-gai | 15 | Lake MacQuarrie | 1   |
| Lane Cove    | 4  | Leichhardt  | 4  | Liverpool       | 13  |
| Maitland     | 1  | Manly       | 8  | Marrickville    | 9   |
| Mosman       | 1  | Newcastle   | 1  | North Sydney    | 1   |
| Parramatta   | 16 | Penrith     | 9  | Pittwater       | 11  |
| Randwick     | 15 | Rockdale    | 31 | Ryde            | 21  |
| Shellharbour | 1  | Strathfield | 5  | Sutherland      | 116 |
| Sydney       | 10 | The Hills   | 33 | Warringah       | 40  |
| Waverley     | 2  | Willoughby  | 10 | Wingecarribee   | 1   |
| Wollongong   | 13 | Woollahra   | 2  | Wyong           | 1   |

### Support Groups

During 2014-15, ACN ran support services across 12 regions.

As we are still developing our database we are not able to provide figures for every group yet.

ACN Bankstown – we offered a support group for Bankstown residents but unfortunately it never took off. Feedback from carers suggested the location of the venue played a part, something we will need to take into account in future.

|                |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |              |              |              |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>2014-15</b> | <b>MAY</b> | <b>MAY</b> | <b>JUN</b> | <b>JUN</b> |            |            |            |            |            |              |              |              |
| <b>Date</b>    | 8th        | 22nd       | 12th       | 26th       |            |            |            |            |            |              |              |              |
| <b>Carers</b>  | 2          | 0          | 1          | 2          |            |            |            |            |            |              |              |              |
| <b>Kids</b>    | 3          | 0          |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |              |              |              |
| <b>2014-15</b> | <b>SEP</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>Feb</b> | <b>March</b> | <b>March</b> | <b>April</b> |
| <b>Date</b>    | 25th       | 11th       | 25th       | 14th       | 28th       | 12th       | 23rd       | 13th       | 27th       | 6th          | 13th         | 24th         |
| <b>Carers</b>  | 5          | 0          | 3          | 2          | 2          | 3          | 5          | 1          | 1          | 8            | 3            | 4            |
| <b>Kids</b>    | 10         | 0          | 5          | 2          | 3          | 3          | 6          | 1          | 1          | 13           | 4            | 4            |

ACN Blacktown – with funding from Junaya Family Development Services and support from volunteer Briana Blackett, we have established a strong presence in Blacktown. The group has been meeting in her area each month with plans to introduce more activities.

ACN East Sydney – a support group had been running for local carers meeting each month at Maroubra RSL Club. Unfortunately, when the local volunteer facilitator became unavailable mid-year, we could not recruit a replacement to continue the group.

|               |      |                 |                 |                 |                 |                  |                  |                 |                 |                  |                 |                 |
|---------------|------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Month</b>  | 15   | <b>Feb</b>      | <b>Mar</b>      | <b>Apr</b>      | <b>May</b>      | <b>Jun</b>       | <b>Jul</b>       | <b>Aug</b>      | <b>Sep</b>      | <b>Oct</b>       | <b>Nov</b>      | <b>Dec</b>      |
| <b>Date</b>   |      | 4 <sup>th</sup> | 4 <sup>th</sup> | 1 <sup>st</sup> | 6 <sup>th</sup> | 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |                  |                 |                 |                  |                 |                 |
| <b>Carers</b> |      | 3               | 1               | 0               | 4               | 5                |                  |                 |                 |                  |                 |                 |
| <b>Month</b>  | 2014 |                 |                 |                 | <b>Jun</b>      | <b>Jun</b>       | <b>Jul</b>       | <b>Aug</b>      | <b>Sep</b>      | <b>Oct</b>       | <b>Nov</b>      | <b>Dec</b>      |
| <b>Date</b>   |      |                 |                 |                 | 4 <sup>th</sup> | 18 <sup>th</sup> | 16 <sup>th</sup> | 6 <sup>th</sup> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 10 <sup>th</sup> | 5 <sup>th</sup> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| <b>Carers</b> |      |                 |                 |                 | 5               | 10               | 4                | 4               | 3               | 4                | 3               | canc            |

|                |                        |                        |            |                       |                        |                       |            |            |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>2014-15</b> | <b>Nov</b>             | <b>Dec</b>             | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b>            | <b>Mar</b>             | <b>Apr</b>            | <b>May</b> | <b>Jun</b> |
| <b>Date</b>    | <b>13<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>11<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>N/A</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>11<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>9<sup>th</sup></b> |            |            |
| <b>Carers</b>  | <b>5</b>               | <b>7</b>               |            | <b>5</b>              | <b>5</b>               | <b>3</b>              |            |            |

ACN Hills Shire – Local mum Elena Barnes, who had built a strong support network in her local community, continued to run her support group as part of the ACNN. She ran her groups every few months, often as lunches for locals.

|               |                        |                        |                        |                        |                        |             |                        |                        |
|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>2014</b>   | <b>Aug</b>             | <b>Sep</b>             | <b>Oct</b>             | <b>Nov</b>             | <b>Dec</b>             | <b>2015</b> | <b>May</b>             | <b>Jun</b>             |
| <b>Date</b>   | <b>14<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>11<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>15<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>13<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>10<sup>th</sup></b> |             | <b>25<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>24<sup>th</sup></b> |
| <b>Carers</b> | <b>5</b>               | <b>5</b>               | <b>15</b>              | <b>4</b>               | <b>12</b>              |             | <b>7</b>               | <b>3</b>               |

ACN Northwest – with 21 families registered in the Ryde and surrounding areas, we started a new support group in this region. Coordinated by Andrea Lee, she has helped bring about a monthly family day as well as an art group for children in her community which has proven very popular.

ACN Hornsby – this is a strong community with friendships formed and great communication among local carers. The support group has continued this year as well as having a regular family day.

|               |            |                       |                       |                       |                       |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|---------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>2015</b>   | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b>            | <b>Mar</b>            | <b>Apr</b>            | <b>May</b>            | <b>Jun</b> | <b>Jul</b> | <b>Aug</b> | <b>Sep</b> | <b>Oct</b> | <b>Nov</b> | <b>Dec</b> |
| <b>Date</b>   | <b>N/A</b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b> | <b>7<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>5<sup>th</sup></b> |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| <b>Carers</b> | <b>N/A</b> | <b>11</b>             | <b>3</b>              |                       |                       |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |

  

|               |            |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>2014</b>   | <b>Jan</b> | <b>Feb</b>            | <b>Mar</b>            | <b>Apr</b>            | <b>May</b>            | <b>Jun</b>            | <b>Jul</b>            | <b>Aug</b>            | <b>Sep</b>            | <b>Oct</b>            | <b>Nov</b>            | <b>Dec</b>            |
| <b>Date</b>   | <b>N/A</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> | <b>6<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> | <b>1<sup>st</sup></b> | <b>5<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> | <b>7<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> |
| <b>Carers</b> | <b>N/A</b> | <b>4</b>              | <b>5</b>              | <b>10</b>             | <b>5</b>              | <b>canc</b>           | <b>4</b>              | <b>9</b>              | <b>8</b>              | <b>4</b>              | <b>11</b>             | <b>12</b>             |

ACN Penrith-Blue Mountains – Working with the Luke Priddis Foundation (LPF) we formed a support group for families in this region. While initially slow, the group has grown thanks to support from LPF and it now runs fortnightly.

ACN St. George – this region enjoys the most amount of support options for carers and children as it is where ACN began. Groups include:

Kingsgrove Information Day – this group has attracted good numbers at times while it has also struggled at others. We continue to provide different guest speakers on topics relevant to the needs of carers with ASD kids.

|             |                       |                       |                       |                       |                        |             |                       |                       |                       |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|             | <b>August</b>         | <b>Sep</b>            | <b>Oct</b>            | <b>Nov</b>            | <b>Dec</b>             |             | <b>Mar</b>            | <b>May</b>            | <b>Jun</b>            |
| <b>2014</b> | <b>7<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> | <b>5<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>10<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>5<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>7<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup></b> |
|             | <b>12</b>             | <b>14</b>             | <b>10*</b>            | <b>6</b>              | <b>12</b>              |             | <b>10</b>             | <b>15</b>             | <b>3</b>              |

Kids Art group – Liz Diab took over from Steve Drakoulis and the group continues to attract good numbers of children each time.

Kids Cooking Club – this group presents children with the chance to prepare simple recipes while developing social skills and making friends. A very popular program with each class filling fast.

Youth Club – twice a month teens with high functioning autism have been able to meet at a social club. Friendships have been made, confidence built and social skills developed.

|       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |      |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
|-------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Month | Feb              | Feb              | Mar              | Mar              | Apr              | May              | Jun  | Jun              |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Date  | 13 <sup>th</sup> | 27 <sup>th</sup> | 13 <sup>th</sup> | 25 <sup>th</sup> | 24 <sup>th</sup> | 8 <sup>th</sup>  |      |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Kids  | 2                | 6                | 7                | 2                | 4                | 8                |      |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Month | Jun              | Jun              | Jul              | Aug              | Aug              | Sep              | Sep  | Oct              | Oct              | Nov              | Nov              | Dec              |
| Date  | 13 <sup>th</sup> | 27 <sup>th</sup> | 25 <sup>th</sup> | 8 <sup>th</sup>  | 22 <sup>nd</sup> | 12 <sup>th</sup> | hols | 10 <sup>th</sup> | 24 <sup>th</sup> | 14 <sup>th</sup> | 28 <sup>th</sup> | 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| Kids  | 5                | 10               | 8                | 7                | 5                | 6                |      | 5                | 7                | 6                | 5                | 7                |

Monthly Family Day – Meeting on the last Sunday of each month in Kingsgrove, children play while parents relax together. This was the first social group we introduced 5 years ago and continues well to this day.

Bully Proof Kids Taekwondo – we ran again this year a 10 week program in partnership with United Taekwondo for ASD kids. It focused on building confidence, social skills and fitness, with secondary focus on self-defense. By the end of the program, every one of the 17 participants, ranging from age 6 to 17, graduated to the next level yellow belt. We are very proud of this program and what it does for our children and look forward to continuing it again next year.

ACN Sutherland – while we have a large number of families in the Sutherland Shire, we have generally struggled for volunteers which inhibits our ability to develop more programs. The monthly evening support group in Caringbah has consistently drawn 4-5 carers each time. We also introduced a day option in Gympie for a time but availability of facilitators restricted its impact.

| SUTHERLAND SUPPORT GROUP |     |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |     |
|--------------------------|-----|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----|
| 2015                     | Jan | Feb              | Mar              | Apr              | May              | Jun              | Jul              | Aug              | Sep              | Oct              | Nov              | Dec |
| Date                     | N/A | 17 <sup>th</sup> | 17 <sup>th</sup> | 21 <sup>st</sup> | 19 <sup>th</sup> | 16 <sup>th</sup> |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |     |
| Carers                   | -   | 4                | 6                | 5                | 4                | 5                |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |     |
| 2014                     | Jan | Feb              | Mar              | Apr              | May              | Jun              | Jul              | Aug              | Sep              | Oct              | Nov              | Dec |
| Date                     | N/A | 18 <sup>th</sup> | 18 <sup>th</sup> | N/A              | 20 <sup>th</sup> | 17 <sup>th</sup> | 15 <sup>th</sup> | 19 <sup>th</sup> | 16 <sup>th</sup> | 21 <sup>st</sup> | 18 <sup>th</sup> | N/A |
| Carers                   | N/A | 10               | 5                | N/A              | 8                | 4                | 5                | 3                | 4                | 5                | 6                |     |

ACN Inner West – Our monthly support group in Belmore is the ACN's oldest support group. Facilitated currently by Jan Wright and supported by Jane Tzakos, the group has continued to provide regular support for that community.

|        |      |                 |                 |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                 |                  |
|--------|------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Month  | 2015 | Feb             | Mar             | Apr              | May              | Jun              | Jul              | Aug              | Sep              | Oct              | Nov             | Dec              |
| Date   |      | 8 <sup>th</sup> | 8 <sup>th</sup> | 12 <sup>th</sup> | 17 <sup>th</sup> | 14 <sup>th</sup> |                  |                  |                  |                  |                 |                  |
| Carers |      | 6               | 9               | 2                | 6                |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                 |                  |
| Month  | 2014 | Feb             | Mar             | Apr              | May              | Jun              | Jul              | Aug              | Sep              | Oct              | Nov             | Dec              |
| Date   |      | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | N/A-            | 6 <sup>th</sup>  | 4 <sup>th</sup>  | 8 <sup>th</sup>  | 13 <sup>th</sup> | 10 <sup>th</sup> | 14 <sup>th</sup> | 12 <sup>th</sup> | 9 <sup>th</sup> | 14 <sup>th</sup> |
| Carers |      | 6               | N/A             | 1                | 0                | 5                | 3                | 0                | 2                | 2                | 11              | 6                |

ACN City of Sydney – the intention with this group was to bring support to residents or workers within the city area. After consistent effort we decided that this experiment didn't work.

|        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |        |  |  |
|--------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------|--|--|
| Month  | August           | Sept             | Oct              | Nov              | Feb              | Mar              | Apr              | May              | Jun    |  |  |
| Date   | 28 <sup>th</sup> | 25 <sup>th</sup> | 30 <sup>th</sup> | 27 <sup>th</sup> | 26 <sup>th</sup> | 26 <sup>th</sup> | 28 <sup>th</sup> | 28 <sup>th</sup> | dinner |  |  |
| Carers | 1                | 1                | 4                | 2                | 1                | 1                | 1                | 0                | 4      |  |  |

ACN Northern Beaches – the group has been running well and is now run by a local parent who is popular with her peers. The monthly social club is a little slow but we will explore all options.

### **NORTHERN BEACHES SUPORT GROUP**

|        |      |                  |                  |      |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
|--------|------|------------------|------------------|------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 2015   | Jan  | Feb              | Mar              | Apr  | May              | Jun              | Jul              | Aug              | Sep              | Oct              | Nov              | Dec              |
| Date   | N/A- | 19 <sup>TH</sup> | 19 <sup>th</sup> | hols |                  | dinner           | 14               |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Carers | -    | 4                |                  |      |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| 2014   | Jan  | Feb              | Mar              | Apr  | May              | Jun              | Jul              | Aug              | Sep              | Oct              | Nov              | Dec              |
| Date   | -    | 20 <sup>th</sup> | 20 <sup>th</sup> | N/A  | 15 <sup>th</sup> | 19 <sup>th</sup> | 17 <sup>th</sup> | 21 <sup>st</sup> | 18 <sup>th</sup> | 16 <sup>th</sup> | 19 <sup>th</sup> | 18 <sup>th</sup> |
| Carers | -    | 8                | 12               | -    | 7                | 7                | 10               | 7                | 6                | 7                | 11               | 3                |

### **NORTHERN BEACHES SOCIAL GROUP**

|         |                  |       |      |      |                  |                  |                  |     |     |
|---------|------------------|-------|------|------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----|-----|
| 2014-15 | Oct              | Nov   | Dec  | Jan  | Feb              | Mar              | Apr              | May | Jun |
| Date    | 18 <sup>th</sup> | NOT   | HOLS | HOLS | 22 <sup>nd</sup> | 29 <sup>th</sup> | 26 <sup>th</sup> |     |     |
| Carers  | 3                | AVAIL |      |      | 1                | 14               | RAIN             |     |     |

ACN Fathers & Grandfathers groups : Our Fathers and Grandfathers groups ran across 4 different regions – Sutherland, Burwood, Chatswood and Penrith. Different speakers each time on subjects we hoped would interest the males in ASD children’s lives were arranged. As seen below, some worked while others weren’t as popular.

|        |            |           |       |            |           |       |       |       |
|--------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| 2015   | Feb        | Mar       | May   | Jun        | Aug       | Sep   | Nov   | Dec   |
| Venue  | West       | InnerWest | South | North      | InnerWest | West  | South | North |
| Attend | 16         | 6         | 0     | cancelled  |           |       |       |       |
| 2014   | Feb        | Apr       | Jul   | Oct        | Nov       | Dec   |       |       |
| Venue  | Inner West | South     | North | Inner West | South     | North |       |       |
| Attend | 27         | 23        | 9     | 2          | 7         | 9     |       |       |

### **School Holiday programs**

Experience has shown us that during school holidays attendance at our regular support groups drops significantly. Instead of running those we instead offer different social opportunities for our members, across different regions of Sydney. Typical events we offer include:

- Laser Tag
- Rock climbing
- Ten Pin Bowling
- Play days
- Swimming
- Movie Day

These are offered mainly in the St.George, Sutherland, Hornby, Inner West, and Northern Beaches areas.

### **Common Ground Groups**

The ACN enables families to connect for mutual support through a number of ways we provide for them. These include our Common Ground groups, designed to help people with similar interests or support need to connect. As example, parents with teenage daughters on the spectrum can connect to share information and advice or arrange social opportunities.

Most of these groups are run via our Facebook pages which have secret status to allow privacy.



Language based groups do not have Facebook access but are instead allowed to connect via a regular email with relevant contact details for members of each group provided.

|                            | <b>Jun</b> |                        | <b>Jun</b> |
|----------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
| ADD/ADHD                   | 30         | Teenage Daughters      | 10         |
| Adult Children             | 6          | Teens                  | 21         |
| Anxiety                    | 40         | Twins                  | 6          |
| Aspie Friendly Social page | 11         | Under 7s               | 55         |
| Home Schooled              | 10         | Women on the Spectrum  | 7          |
| Indigenous Families        | 11         | Young Daughters        | 15         |
| More Than One Child        | 5          | Youth and Young Adults | 8          |
| Non Verbal                 | 19         | Proloquo2Go Users      | 54         |
| Primary Aged               | 26         | Same Sex Families      | 4          |
| RDI families               | 8          |                        |            |

### **Language Based Common Ground Groups**

- Japanese Speaking – 4
- Spanish Speaking – 5
- Chinese languages – 8
- Vietnamese Speaking – 2
- Arabic speaking – 3
- Hindi speaking - 3

### **“I Wish” Seminar**

Reversing the normal process of carers attending events to learn from professionals, we provided this event where professionals came to listen to the experts – parents and carers who deal with ASD every single day. This allowed them to learn more about our needs and expectations to better be able to service their clients. More than 60 attended and we plan to make this a regular event.

### **Police and ASD**

We invited NSW Police to present a Talk in Kingsgrove with the objective of educating carers on the issues police face with individuals on the spectrum; at the same time it was designed to help the police understand our concerns as carers and parents as well as improve their awareness about autism issues. The talk was successful and it resulted in discussions with senior police staff on the development of a training video for new recruits on autism awareness. We look forward to working with our police to bring this project to fruition.

### **Autism Kids Communicate**

Another 40 non-verbal ASD children this year were helped, a total of 121 kids and their parents/carers benefitting from the Autism Kids Communicate project. This has been funded through Lions Club of Lugarno, the Australian Lions Foundation and the StGeorge Foundation to date. Children received an iPad or iPad mini with Proloquo2go to be used as an Assistive or Augmentative Communication device. Training was provided with support from the Apple

Broadway store and a Facebook page was established to facilitate ongoing sharing of information between families.

As a charity, the ACN is offered a number of opportunities each year for our members to attend special events. In the last 12 months, different families have attended the following:

- Lord Mayor's New Year's Eve Special Party
- Taronga Zoo Dreamnight Experience
- Kidsflix Movie Days
- Rotary Club Circus
- Great Moscow Circus
- Lugrano Spring Fair
- House with No Steps – bikes for kids

### **Volunteers**

Our organisation is managed and run by a small group of adults with ASDs and parents/carers of children on the autism spectrum. Collectively, we estimate that this group of 36 people has provided in excess of 7128 hours of voluntary contribution through 2015, valued at over \$178,000

36 volunteers assist with a range of tasks including administration, coordinating groups and conducting research.

594hrs x12mths      12      7128 hrs      at      \$25      \$178,200

### **Partners**

2015 has seen us continue to develop strong relationships with other community groups.

Lions Club of Lugarno: Our association with the Lions Club of Lugarno has been tremendous and through them we have been able to run the Autism Kids Communicate project to help nonverbal children with iPads. They have also introduced her to other people and groups, helped us with fundraising and provided volunteers to help us. We remain grateful to this wonderful group.

Junaya Family Development Services: Based in Blacktown, they are our partners in supporting their local community. Junaya provide funding to run a support group in Blacktown and we have seen that area grow in membership over the last year.

Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre: KCAC work with ACN to provide the St.George community with support through the monthly Information days we stage at their centre. They have also worked with us to provide the Cooking Club for kids during the last year.

Luke Priddis Foundation: We have established a relationship with LPF to help more families in the west with their support needs. A new support group as well as Fathers and Grandfathers Information Evenings are now part of the options available to carers.

### **Supporters**

99 on York: Funding enabled ACN to run a support group during 2015 for carers living or working within the city of Sydney area.

Together Program by Carers NSW: funding has meant we have been able to provide many of our groups with special experiences such as lunches or high teas to help bring more people together.

Bunnings Rockdale: Thanks to Bunnings Rockdale we have been able to raise in excess of \$4000 during the year through fundraising BBQs at their store.

Absopositively: We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the late Mr Timothy Walters, who was contracted to build the ACNN's database, reporting systems and improve our website. \$2000 was paid for this but the total work provided was in excess of \$50,000 at no further charge.

#### Venues to run support groups

To enable us to run our various support groups throughout the community, we rely on the support and goodwill of clubs and other venues. We would like to express our thanks to the following:

- Chatswood Club
- Club Burwood
- Eastwood Rugby Union Club
- Tradies Gynea
- Juniors on the Junction
- Manly Leagues Club
- Penrith Golf & Recreation Club

#### **Donors**

The Autism Community Network is a registered charity and Deductible Gift Recipient.

We have, for the last two years, been supporting an ever growing network of individuals, parents and carers to create a strong and cohesive community.

While we explore all funding options available to us, like every organisation, we rely on our community to keep us going.

We received \$16,528.58 in donations during 2015 and would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our donors for their generous contribution.

Any donation over \$2 is tax deductible and will help us to continue our support for the autism community in Sydney. There is no donation too small, every bit helps.

To make a donation, please go to the DONATIONS tab on our website [www.autismcommunity.org.au](http://www.autismcommunity.org.au)

Or make a direct deposit to: Autism Community Network BSB 062 234 Account 10417253

Or by cheque to: Autism Community Network PO Box 188 Riverwood NSW 2210

#### **Grants**

The achievements of the Autism Community Network are largely dependent on the generous support of government and philanthropic organisations who provide funding towards our various activities.

State Govt Grants \$23,500.00

Local Govt Grants \$9,800.00

| Source           | Founder                                     | Program                       | Amount (GST exclusive) |
|------------------|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| State Government | Carers NSW Together Program                 | Support Groups                |                        |
|                  |   | Penrith                       | \$1,500.00             |
|                  |   | St George                     | \$1,500.00             |
|                  |   | Ryde                          | \$1,500.00             |
|                  |   | Sydney City                   | \$1,500.00             |
|                  |   | Hills District                | \$1,500.00             |
|                  |   | Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Group | \$1,500.00             |
|                  |   | Northern Beaches              | \$1,500.00             |
|                  |   | Inner-west                    | \$1,500.00             |
|                  |   | Blacktown Support Group       | \$1,500.00             |
|                  | Minister for Disability Services            | Core Funding                  | \$10,000.00            |
|                  |   |                               |                        |
|                  |   |                               |                        |
| Local Government | Parramatta City Council                     | Support Group                 | \$4,800.00             |
|                  | Holdsworth Community Centre                 | Eastern Suburbs Support Group | \$635.00               |
|                  |   |                               | \$593.89               |
|                  | Hurstville City Council                     | Hurstville Cooking Club       | \$5,000.00             |
|                  | Sutherland Shire Carer Support Service Inc. | Sutherland Support Group      | \$1,499.10             |
|                  | Lugarno Lions                               | Core Funding                  | \$545.45               |
|                  |   |                               |                        |
| Philanthropy     | Gorges River Church of Life                 | St George Art Club            | \$560.00               |
|                  |   |                               | \$560.00               |
|                  |   |                               | \$560.00               |
|                  | Bankstown Sports Club                       | Bankstown Art Club            | \$4,423.64             |
|                  | Junaya                                      | Blacktown Support Group       | 554.55                 |
|                  | Fox Sports Australia Pty Ltd                | Core Funding                  | \$5,000.00             |
|                  | Mates on a Mission                          | Core Funding                  | \$1,000.00             |
|                  | Epping Eastwood Lions Club                  | Core Funding                  | \$500.00               |
|                  | Walters Claudia                             | Core Funding                  | \$5,000.00             |
|                  | Maroubra Seals                              | Eastern Support Group         | \$3,085.08             |
|                  | South Sydney Juniors Rugby Leagues Club     | Eastern Support Group         | \$319.05               |
|                  | Kingsgrove Community Aid Center             | St George Drama Club          | \$156.36               |
|                  |   |                               | \$156.36               |
|                  |   |                               | \$938.16               |
|                  |   | St George SG                  | \$469.08               |
|                  |   |                               | \$900.55               |
|                  |   |                               | \$750.00               |

|       |               |                         |             |
|-------|---------------|-------------------------|-------------|
|       | Lugarno Lions | Autism Kids Communicate | \$1,200.00  |
|       |               |                         | \$19,954.55 |
| Total |               |                         | 82660.82    |

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our supporters for 2015 and look forward to working with them in future towards a society where people on the autism spectrum and their families lead full, rich and rewarding lives.

### **Sales and Fundraising events**

In 2015, gross revenue from sales and fundraising activities was:

Sales \$10,549.47

Fundraising events \$14,832.25

### **Administrative Milestones**

The Autism Community Network registered for Charitable Fundraising Authority through the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing (OLGR) on 11 July 2013

### **Financial Statement 2015**

#### Autism Community Network Profit & Loss Summary

#### **Income 01 Jul 14 to 30 Jun 15**

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Donations           | \$16,528.58         |
| Fundraising         | \$14,832.25         |
| Local Govt Grants   | \$9,800.00          |
| Membership fees     | \$5.00              |
| Philanthropy        | \$29,964.14         |
| Sales               | \$10,549.47         |
| Sponsorships        | \$2,045.45          |
| State Govt Grants   | \$23,500.00         |
| <b>Income Total</b> | <b>\$107,224.89</b> |

#### **Cost of Sales**

**Cost Of Sales Total \$0.00**

**Gross Profit \$107,224.89**

#### **Expense**

Accounting Fees \$2,218.18

Accounting Fees \$2,218.18

Administration \$141.43

Bank Fees \$366.65

Catering \$5,281.04

Contractors \$7,260.00

Council Rates \$439.83

Depreciation \$2,005.16

Electricity \$741.44

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Employee Annual Leave Pay              | \$903.76            |
| Employee Annual Leave Pay Leave Loaded | \$107.45            |
| Employee Base Pay                      | \$35,181.69         |
| Employee SGC Super                     | \$3,326.84          |
| Equipment                              | \$538.14            |
| Fundraising                            | \$2,015.22          |
| Gifts                                  | \$101.80            |
| Insurance                              | \$1,516.18          |
| Internet                               | \$854.33            |
| IT                                     | \$23,973.66         |
| Marketing                              | \$291.80            |
| Materials                              | \$66.80             |
| Office Supplies                        | \$951.89            |
| Parking                                | \$60.96             |
| Postage                                | \$543.84            |
| Printing                               | \$1,385.35          |
| Rent                                   | \$7,500.00          |
| Resources                              | \$19.05             |
| Staff                                  | \$103.60            |
| Stock written off                      | \$164.83            |
| Subscriptions                          | \$211.82            |
| Telephone                              | \$ 1,230.78         |
| Training                               | \$395.00            |
| Travel                                 | \$1,999.97          |
| Venue hire                             | \$24.98             |
| Water                                  | \$318.75            |
| Workers Compensation                   | \$900.36            |
| <b>Expense Total</b>                   | <b>\$103,142.58</b> |

**Operating Profit** **\$4,082.31**

**Other Income**

Interest Income \$11.02

**Other Income Total** **\$11.02**

**Other Expense**

**Other Expense Total** **0.00**

**Net Profit** **\$ 4,093.33**

Gross Profit = Income - Cost of Sales

Operating Profit = Gross Profit - Expenses

Net Profit = Operating Profit + Other Income - Other Expenses

Please note that this report shows amounts excluding tax.

Profit & Loss Summary - Saasu <https://secure.saasu.com/a/net/pl.aspx>

## Autism Community Network Balance Sheet

As at: 30 Jun 15 Report created: 06 Feb 16 12:47 PM Tags: -- All Tags --

|                                    |             |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Accounts Receivable                | \$970.50    |
| Bond                               | \$660.00    |
| Furniture & Equipment              | \$2,005.16  |
| Furniture & Equipment Accum. Depr. | \$-2,005.16 |

|                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Inventory                | \$21.47            |
| PayPal Account           | \$108.23           |
| Society Cheque Account   | \$48,416.58        |
| Tax Paid on Purchases    | \$577.26           |
| Visa Card (ED)           | \$18.59            |
| VISA Card (SD)           | \$176.58           |
| <b>Total Assets</b>      | <b>\$50,949.21</b> |
| Accounts Payable         | \$2,990.92         |
| Employee PAYG Payable    | \$1,662.00         |
| Tax Collected from Sales | \$1,418.90         |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b> | <b>\$6,071.82</b>  |
| <b>Net Assets</b>        | <b>\$44,877.39</b> |
| Current Earnings         | \$44,877.39        |
| <b>Total Equity</b>      | <b>\$44,877.39</b> |

### **Auditor's Report**

attached

### **Management Committee**

Warren Thompson, (President), Grandparent, Welfare Officer Men of League Foundation, Human Resources Management

Jane Tzakos, (Vice President), Parent, Teacher

Fiona Cox, (Secretary), Parent, TAFE teacher

Magdalena Oszywa, (Treasurer), Accounting background

Jamie Blake, (Member), Parent, Social Welfare, Community Welfare

Terry Lynch, (Member), Grandparent, retired I.T. manager, governance background

Geoff Marks, (Member), Parent, studying Diploma in Community Services work

Timothy Walters, (Member), Parent, Software Developer

Najwa Sawan, (Member), Parent, Health Care Professional

Lora Agius (Member) Parent, Banking industry

### **Staff & Volunteers**

Steve Drakoulis, (Operations Manager), Parent, Founder, Operations Management

Claudia Stevens, (Strategic Manager), Parent, Community Development



36 volunteers assist with a range of tasks including administration, coordinating groups and conducting research.

594hrs x12mths      12      7128 hrs      at      \$25      \$178,200

### **Testimonials from Members**

*“Andrea, thank you for sharing that! I feel so reassured that this is real, this does happen, because sometimes I really do second guess myself; it's a situation I'm completely ready to say is absolutely nuts, but it's happening anyway! It's our reality. Knowing you experienced similar is so helpful, thank you! Thank you everyone and Steve Drakoulis I'm so grateful to you for founding & maintaining this forum. Its amazing how good it is to be among fellow travelers & the strength that comes from it. Over one year since Emmet's diagnosis and we're still trying to catch up with it.”*

*Rosemary,*

*“Thank you very much Steve. Have i told you lately that every minute you put into helping someone is greatly appreciated. We just don't mention it enough. Thank you very much”.*

*Laisani.*

*“Dear Steve, I am writing to express my gratitude for the opportunity to visit and talk with you last Friday. Your insights on father-inclusive practice and work with vulnerable families were deeply appreciated and are very valuable for my learning. The contribution you are making to support families, children and the community is truly inspirational. I realise how busy you are and I thank you for your time. Best wishes for all your endeavours”.*

*Fatima—UWS Early Childhood Masters Student*

*“Yes we would love the 4 tickets to the dream night at the zoo! Thank you very much, you have made my son Thomas very happy. He was jumping with joy around his bedroom when I told him”.*

*Sally*

*“What a great night! Can't tell you all how much hope and what a re-charge it gave me.(attending the Hornsby group) I loved meeting you all and hope to see you Sunday”*

*Tracey*

*“Thanks Steve, I've done that (registered) and received my first email to the group! This is awesome work you and your team do, I really can't believe the detail of your newsletter and all the events going on. I'm impressed, keep up this great work”*

*Mary*

*“Thanks you so much Steve, bless you for all the great work you are doing. It makes a huge difference in families' lives”.*

*Laureine*

*“Hi Steve and everyone from the ACN team,  
We just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts for giving us the chance to experience what sounds to be the most amazing and spectacular event of the year.*

*This year since Caleb's diagnosis in February has been the hardest and most emotional roller coaster we have ever faced to date. So many ups and downs, questions and uncertainties.... And still while I feel like my heart is constantly aching with anguish about what our little boys future will look like, we try to be positive and enjoy the blessing that our son is to us and focus on the here and now. But these tickets will mean so much to him and our older son because they both just love the zoo and dinosaurs and seeing them so happy really lifts our spirits. Thank you for making my day with this news and for everything that you all do to support us”.*

*Sarah F*

*“Hi Steve, I'm looking forward to this meeting, both me & my husband will be attending, thank you.*

*It will be a first for us as our 14 year old son was diagnosed with ASD level 2 earlier this year. A support community is what we really need! Sometimes it has all felt very very hard, it would be great to meet other families in similar situations & talk it all out, so thank you very much for organising”*

*Rosie*

## **Business Planning 2015-2017**

Our Business Plan 2015-2017 was adopted by the Board 26 June 2014.

### **Key areas of focus**

Key areas of focus during 2015-2017 are:

- Secure government and philanthropic funding to ensure financial viability and enable expansion
- Develop fundraising program to meet unfunded costs and build cash reserves
- Engage 3 staff to deliver core service functions
- Develop services to assist other autism user groups in supporting their communities
- Build and promote training program for mainstream and disability specific organisations
- Develop QS and IT systems to support business expansion

Due to the loss of key personnel Claudia Walters (resigned) and Timothy Walters (deceased) the previously listed key area focus below has been suspended while we consolidate and restructure aspects of our operation.

- Replicate the delivery model to 14 new communities across NSW

## **THE COMMUNITY HAS NOTICED US AND OUR TEAM'S EFFORTS RECOGNISED**

2015 ACN President Warren Thompson received Banks Volunteer of the Year Award

2015 ACN Director Terry Lynch received St. George Community Volunteer Award

2015 ACN Founder Steve Drakoulis nominated for Pride of Australia Award

2015 ACN Founder Steve Drakoulis nominated for ASPECT Volunteer Award

2014 ACN Volunteer Liz Diab received St. George Community Volunteer Award

2014 ACN Founder Steve Drakoulis awarded International Association of Lions Clubs Medal of Merit

2014 ACN Founder Steve Drakoulis nominated for NSW Disability Industry Innovation Award.

2014 ACN Founder Steve Drakoulis nominated for Pride of Australia Award