



Autism Community Network

Annual Report 2017



Autism Community Network Inc.

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Vision, Mission, Values

Vision:

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

Mission:

The Autism Community Network advances the health and social wellbeing of people with autism, their families and communities by providing:

- Information, support and coordination services for individuals with autism, their parents and carers
- Social skills building programs for children and adults with autism
- Community development programs for disability services and mainstream providers.

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.

What we do

Provide support groups for parents and carers

Provide social groups for people with ASDs and their families

Connect peers through social media and forums

Maintain a website full of useful information

Maintain a directory of services recommended by members, not paid advertising

Promote community awareness

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

Directors	Skills
Terry Lynch	Expertise in governance within the not-for-profit sector
Jane Tzakos	Teaching, Inclusive education in autism
Sharon Fraser	Accounting and finance
Peta Jones	Bachelor of Primary Teaching, Help Desk IT, Medical Secretary, Database developer, small business owner
Richard Goodfellow	Sales, TAFE teaching
Michael Miles	Banking, charity Boards

THE BOARD



Terry Lynch
PRESIDENT



Jane Tzakos
VICE PRESIDENT



Sharon Fraser
TREASURER



Peta Jones
DIRECTOR



Richard Goodfellow
DIRECTOR



Michael Miles
DIRECTOR

MANAGEMENT



Steve Drakoulis
GENERAL MANAGER



Amanda Osborne
OPERATIONS OFFICER



President's Report

2017 has been a stellar year for ACN. Our membership has grown to over 1,100 families and for the first time through a generous benefactor we have a healthy bank balance.

Our board this year has been a healthy mixture of old and new members. Sadly we had one resignation – Claudia Walters who has been a stalwart of the network for many years and a great support to Steve through the last 5 years.

This year your board has focused on:

Youth transitioning into adulthood and purposeful employment. We have entered into discussions with a local community group to develop a program to help our children into careers in drama, theatre and multi media.

In addition, we are pursuing connections with other organisations all ready working in this area.

Fund raising BBQs and grants remain our main source of income but we have been attempting to develop large fund raising event. To date we have not been able but continuing with this work.

Technology innovation. The strategy is to make better use of IT to improve communication between the support groups and board members. The other technology needed was to identify a new Client Management System [CMS]. Both are still a work in progress

This year Liz Diab, our St. George Support Group coordinator became the NSW Volunteer of the Year. Congratulations Liz you are an inspiration to us all.

I would also like to recognise the work of my fellow Board Members;

Jane Tzakos who is stepping down from the role of Vice President and returning as a regular board member. Jane was a foundation board member and continues to be a source of knowledge and inspiration.

Sharon Fraser, our Treasurer, for her work in building on her predecessor, Magdalena Oszywa to produce a sound set of books.

This year Sharon has developed a financial reporting framework that gives the board a clear and concise status report and continues a running monitor of our performance against budget expectations

Peta Jones also a new member and founder of our Richmond Support Group along with her husband Phil have been a fresh point of view from her experiences living and working in the antipathies.

My good friend Dick Goodfellow, thanks for his efforts in particularly helping Steve during his recovery period when Dick became Steve's Uber driver, message boy and stand in. Richard is the only other board member without a family member on the spectrum.

Mike Miles came to us as a highly experienced champion of Autism having served on the Board of Aspect. Mike is leading our program to help our young adults transition from school to adulthood

Finally I would like to acknowledge Steve for his tireless efforts without which ACN would not exist. Thanks Steve.

Terry Lunch

President



RESEARCH PROJECTS

We recognize that change comes with new knowledge. It has therefore been our policy to always support where possible credible research on issues related to autism. We are regularly contacted by individuals from universities and other institutes to help promote research projects. A page has been created on our website and members informed whenever new projects are posed there.

General Manager's Report

We started with one support group in 2011, and now in 2017, we are supporting close to 1,200 families across Sydney and some rural areas, running 23 different support or social groups throughout.

We are very proud of what we do for so many families affected by autism. Our simple model, of using local community volunteers to grow capacity in each community enabling them to support each other is one of our greatest strengths. A lack of funding is not an automatic barrier when good people step up to get involved.



Saying that, my primary aim remains to make this organisation financially strong long term, and develop a structure which is not reliant on the presence of its founder to continue. It is a slow process but I look forward to the day that I can say "Mission Accomplished" and take a long holiday. And we have gotten here without any recurrent funding from anywhere. Imagine what we could achieve with some real funding. Thanks to the Member for Banks, Federal MP Mr David Coleman, and supported by the NSW Minister for Disabilities, Mr Ray Williams, we are now waiting to hear back on an application for funding which could be a game changer for us.

I must say that despite the challenges, I have been frequently left in awe at the results we have achieved, largely due to the incredible people who've given their energy to bring about support in their local community.

We have also formed more partnerships with other organisations, and together we have seen some good things happen for people who struggle.

I want to acknowledge the many people without whom we could not exist. These are the volunteers who give up their time to ensure we can deliver support options to families in their local area. Some of these wonderful people have been doing this for a few years now and the number of awards ACN and its team have received is a reflection of their efforts. I can't thank them all enough. You can read more about them in this publication.

We also have great relationships with many clubs and organisations in the community, they are just as integral to our ability to deliver support to families. Lions clubs, please stand up, you are a godsend. As are Club Rivers, and so many others.

And while I have had the pleasure to meet some very decent people among our State and Federal parliamentarians over the past year, all supportive of our efforts, it is without hesitation that I always describe Member for Oatley Mark Course and Federal Member for Banks David Coleman as our champions. They have each done a great deal to help us time and time again.

I also want to thank the ACN Board, having a cohesive, dedicated group of people helping ensure that we are the best we can be makes my job so much easier.

I have been fortunate this year to have been offered the opportunity to become a Carer Representative with Carers NSW. This role allows me to use my experience as a Carer and as a Community Worker to help more people, but it also presents ACN with a chance to connect with many great people in the caring sector to continue building on strengthening of communities.

On a personal level, a great highlight this year for me has been speaking at the Asia Pacific Autism Conference, held in Sydney. By far however, the greatest high has come in once again connecting with a largely non verbal child who had a conversation with me.

It remains my great honour to be part of this organisation and continue to contribute to helping families just like my own.

Steve Drakoulis
General Manager

VOLUNTEERS: THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS



ACN relies on volunteers to function.

Our model is simple. If we are to provide our support services in any area at no cost, we need an unpaid volunteer to step up in their local community. Equally, others get involved across the network to help us with administration and research and various other needs.

In 2017, we have had a few additions to our team and also a few big losses. We've even found the finances to employ an Operations Officer, providing invaluable support to Steve in the office.

Here are some of the key staff changes:

Claudia Walters: Long serving member of the team Claudia Walters resigned from the Board to focus on family needs. Such was her value to the network that we had to restructure across a number of areas. Claudia has helped us get this far and we will always be in debt to her for that.

Amanda Osborne: Amanda's role as Operations Officer is to take on many of our operational matters to free Steve up. Our founder's role will eventually be more about development and relationships building. But just like Steve, Amanda puts in many volunteer hours on top, and we appreciate everything she does.

Andrea Lee: Andrea had been magnificently coordinating and facilitating our Ryde groups for 3 years before she moved interstate. Fortunately, support in the Ryde area is able to continue thanks to new facilitator, Jason Robertson who has stepped up to take on the group

Judi Huxedurp: who has been coordinating and facilitating our Northern Beaches support for 3 years, advised us that she is moving overseas. We have since found a suitable replacement, Nicole Kerrison. We are grateful to Judi for all that she has done for so many in her region and for the ACN itself.

We have also welcomed:

Cathy Bailey who takes on the Parramatta Art group from Belinda Tabbaa, who now runs a support group in Wentworthville for ACN.

Janee Jeske at our Gymea support group.

Peta Jones in Richmond, and Sharon Fraser in Petersham. Peta and Sharon are also members of our Board, as well as volunteers in their communities.

We would like to do more in the community, and we welcome all volunteers who would like to get involved.

SPECIAL EVENTS FOR FAMILIES

As a charity, we receive regular opportunities to help families access special events in the community. For many, it is their only way to afford to do something amazing for their children, in an environment that is supportive to their needs.

Some of the events families have enjoyed as a result in the past year include:

Royal Easter Show: 200 tickets were kindly provided for us to send 52 families to the 2017 Royal Easter Show.

Dream Night at the Zoo: 80 families attended this spectacular annual event at Taronga Zoo.

ACN was able to once again send tickets for 10 families to attend the **Lord Mayor's New Year's Eve picnic**.

Many families received tickets to **Kidsflix Movie Mania Cinema Days**.

We provided tickets to the **Special Children's Christmas party** in Rosehill, another of the special events made possible by great organisations supporting us in our community

Rotary Jumbo Flight: 10 kids were able to attend the special Jumbo flight thanks to Rotary and Qantas.

Together Program Events: With grants by Carers NSW, each of our support groups was able to put on a lunch, dinner, or similar event where Carers could enjoy time together for mutual support.

Carers Week Events: In addition, thanks to funding from Carers NSW Together program and Carers Week, we have provided lunches, dinners and other family events all around Sydney.

Rugby League World Cup: Thanks to Club Rivers, we were able to send some families to this event.



RAISING AWARENESS

STALLS, PRESENTATIONS & MEDIA

ACN regularly accepts requests to speak about the work that we do and about raising awareness of autism issues and carer needs. It is usually Steve Drakoulis who conducts these talks, which are becoming more frequent.

PRESENTATIONS

Steve spoke at the following events or groups during the past year

Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2017

Lions Clubs Conference Cessnock

Autism expo in Gordon

Lions club of Ku-ring-gai

Lions Club of Richmond

Lions Club of Blacktown City

Lions Club of Castle Hill

Japanese Carers Support group

Father's group in Lane Cove.

STALLS

Lugarno Spring Festival

Carers Week Day Out in Redfern

NEWSPAPERS

During 2017, the ACN has featured in the following local newspapers:

The Blacktown Advocate

The Blacktown Sun

The Auburn Review

The St. George and Sutherland Leader

The Greek Herald

Contacted by two Sydney Morning Herald journalists during June about stories on autism issues, posted on network for members with experiences on those issues to participate

RADIO

Steve has also been interviewed on the following radio stations

2NBC (St. George)

2SSR (Sutherland)

TV

A Current Affair conducted an interview and featured our Cooking club, however this was unaired.

OTHER

Steve interviewed on camera by Sutherland Council to promote their club grants across social media and participating clubs



Autism Community Network. Supporters Jane Theo (left) and Irene Adam (right) with the organisation founder Steve Drakoulis at the gala dinner. Picture: Supplied

CONNECTING WITH OUR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

As the ACN is now present across many regions across Sydney, we decided this year that it was important for us to introduce the support network to all our members of parliament.

We had the pleasure as a result to meet thus far with the following MPs.

STATE

The Minister for Disabilities Mr Ray Williams

The Shadow Minister for Disabilities Sophie Cotsis

Member for Baulkham Hills David Elliott

Member for Blacktown John Robertson

Member for Hawkesbury Dominic Perrottet

Member for Kogarah Chris Minns

Member for Lakemba Jihad Dib

Member for Oatley Mark Coure

Member for Parramatta Geoff Lee

Member for Rockdale Steve Kamper

Member for Summer Hill Jo Haylen

FEDERAL

Member for Banks David Coleman

Member for Barton Linda Burney

Member for Parramatta Julie Owens

Since our inception, Mark Coure and David Coleman have been great champions for our community, supporting the ACN in numerous ways. Thanks to these two gentlemen, we have accessed funding, met with Ministers who have helped us and advocated for people in our community. We remain grateful to them, and to all the other Members of Parliament who have been gracious with their time and energy.



The Lions Club remains one of ACN's strongest supporters.



Three years ago, Lions Clubs throughout Sydney mobilized to raise funds so that we could provide non-verbal kids on the spectrum with the means to communicate. It involved providing them with an iPad,

a sturdy cover, and a communication app valued at hundreds of dollars called Proloquo2Go.

In 2017, we completed round 4, the final round of this project, presenting the final unit to a child.

That made 161 children with autism being helped to communicate.

A happy outcome, we look forward to working with Lions and other community organisations to make the lives of people on the spectrum better.

Dear Mr Munzone,

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to yourself and the Lugarno Lions Club for your generous sponsorship of the "Autism Kids Communicate" program. Our son Alex received an iPad from the Autism Community Network yesterday. Alex is 4 years old and does not speak at all; we hope that using the Proloquo software will make a difference in helping him to learn to communicate and ultimately increase his social skills and independence.

Thank you once again, we really appreciate it.

Yours sincerely,

Lara & Albert Pastura.



MP Canterbury Sophie Cotsis and MP Oatley Mark Oatley were among our honoured guests at our Charity Dinner.

FUNDRAISING

The Autism Community Network does not receive any recurrent funding and relies on grants, fundraising and philanthropy to continue doing what we do. The following are some of the efforts we've made to bring in funds.



Greek Charity Dinner:

Charity Dinner held on 10 June was a successful event, raising \$15,000. Our sincere thanks to Jane Theo and Irene Adam

Bunnings BBQ and cake stalls:

From activities running these fundraisers ACN raised almost \$3622; this included a donation of \$840 in store vouchers by Bunnings.

Shopping Tour:

ACN member Melissa Bessenyei ran a shopping tour promoted through us, and from proceeds raised she donated \$428. We thank Melissa for her kind support.

Grill'd Miranda

We received in May a donation of \$300 from Grill'd restaurant in Miranda as the preferred charity by their patrons during April.

Positive Partnerships:

The ACNN was appointed to the role of Key Local Contact for a Positive Partnerships workshop in Waitara in November. This will involve helping the local community establish more support in the region and generated extra income for the ACN.

Go Blue:

During Autism Awareness month in April, we promoted a schools awareness day which raised \$953

Autism Month Morning Tea:

Jane Theo held fundraising morning tea at her workplace for ACN, raising over \$500.

Entertainment book :

Launched sale of the Entertainment book as a fundraiser for ACN.

City to Surf :

We promoted this event to members and raised enough funds to cover our costs.

Christmas Donation Drive:

We launched this in December 2016 through the network and on our website. This helped us raise \$2,973

End of Financial Year Donation Drive:

We launched in May the End of Financial Year donation drive through the network and on our website. This helped raise \$1,330

Social Stories: Inner West Council has accepted a quote of \$1980 for ACN to produce Social

Stories for each of their 12 properties. Amanda Osborne has been contracted outside of her Operations role to carry out this project.



SPECIAL PROJECTS



Aside from our regular groups and events, the ACN is frequently presented with opportunities to become involved in extra community projects. The Autism Kids Communicate project, in partnership with Lions Clubs, documented elsewhere in this report, is an example of what we can achieve.

Below are some of those we took on in the last year.

Sensory room Marrickville High: We applied and were granted by NSW Government funds to build a Sensory Room for a high school in Sydney's inner west. Marrickville High School supports many children with autism or other conditions and the availability of this space will help regulate children's moods and behaviours when they are struggling to cope.

Assistance Dogs Australia: our relationship with this great organisation has continued in 2017, which has enabled more families

to either receive assistance dogs or access free therapy services using these trained dogs.



FUNDING



ACN does not receive any recurrent funding. We spend a significant amount of energy on planning fundraising events, applying for grants and relying on donations. Some of the funds we have been successful with in the past year include:

Westpac granted ACN \$10,000 to help us continue to grow our community support.

Received from Lions Follow Your Dream program, \$5000 for Scholarships/financial assistance for families to access training and programs.

Our application for funding for an St. George hardship grant of \$4950 was successful. With Club Rivers permission we are providing a Cooking Club instead.

Our application for funding for a hardship grant of \$4950 in Inner West was successful. With Wests Ashfield permission we are providing a Music Therapy program in 2018.

Application for \$3,450 to provide kids club in Cumberland region successful.

Lions Club of Parramatta presented us with \$2000 to continue providing the Art group in Parramatta.

Telstra Community grant of \$1200—to provide a tech club for kids

Sydney Water—Grant of \$1000 for school holiday activities in St. George

And, through Carers NSW Together Program and Carers Week funding, we have provided numerous small events such as dinners and lunches and social days across the community.

Donors

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

We have, for the last 7 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 **\$236,552** in donations during 2017 and would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our donors for their generous contribution.

In particular, we wish to once again express our deepest gratitude to the family of Mrs Maria Krokou of *Elliniki Filanthropiki* Peryiatiki Incorporated who chose the ACN to be a major beneficiary after folding her own foundation. We received \$188,900, which has strengthened our financial position significantly.

Member for Oatley Mr Mark Coure endorsed the ACN to a member of the Chinese business community, Mr Zhan Yuan Chen, who made a donation of \$10,000 to us

Other donors who donated \$1,000 or more to us included:

Georges River Lionesses: this organisation has now folded after many years; I have extended an open invitation for their members to join the ACN volunteers team. They also made a donation to us of \$1000 to provide our computer club.

Member driven donation: Thanks to Mr Rob Smith, we have received a donation totalling \$5,687.08 from him and his employer, LFG Services

Lions Club Blacktown City: Blacktown city club donated \$1200 to help us continue providing Fathers support.

Lions Club Kings Langley: Also donated \$1200 to help us continue providing Fathers support.

Lions Clubs of Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby: combined to donate \$1600 to help us continue providing Fathers support.

Lions Club of Richmond: Received donation \$1000

Microsoft: Donated in excess of \$3000 worth of software to use for fundraising.

AHEPA: Generously donated \$1,000 to help ACN continue our work.



Our Members

As at 20 October 2017, ACN membership stood at 1191 (Households) families.

All Members

Boys	Girls	Men	Women
987	311	429	1138

Members with ASD

Boys	Girls	Men	Women
880	214	196	503

Membership Geography

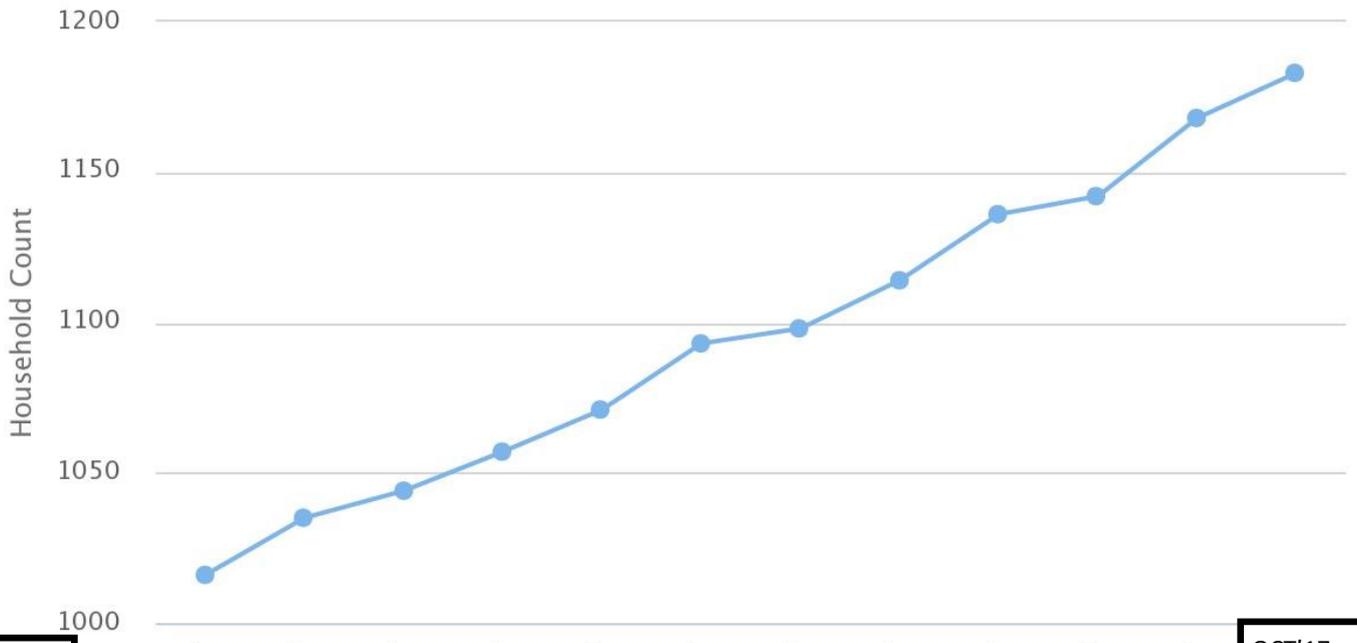
MEMBERS BY REGION

REGION	20 Nov 2017	REGION	20 Nov 2017
Central Coast	8	Northern Sydney	279
Hunter	5	South East Sydney	231
Illawarra Shoalhaven	24	South Western Sydney	99
Murrumbidgee	1	Sydney	131
Nepean Blue Mountains	13	Western Sydney	130

GROWTH BY LGA

LGA	20-Nov-17	LGA	20-Nov-17	LGA	20-Nov-17
Ashfield	9	Auburn	13	Bankstown	52
Blacktown	61	Blue Mountains	7	Botany Bay	9
Burwood	5	Camden	4	Campbelltown	11
Canada Bay	10	Canterbury	68	Fairfield	10
Gosford	5	Hawkesbury	7	Holroyd	11
Hornsby	56	Hunters Hill	1	Hurstville	77
Jerilderie	1	Kogarah	18	Ku-ring-gai	27
Lake MacQuarrie	2	Lane Cove	6	Leichhardt	9
Lithgow	1	Liverpool	21	Maitland	1
Manly	13	Marrickville	12	Moree Plains	1
Mosman	4	Newcastle	1	North Sydney	4
Parramatta	27	Penrith	18	Pittwater	15
Randwick	21	Rockdale	42	Ryde	30
Shellharbour	3	Shoalhaven	1	Strathfield	6
Sutherland	159	Sydney	13	The Hills	50
Warringah	62	Waverley	2	Willoughby	12
Wingecarribee	2	Wollondilly	2	Wollongong	18
Woollahra	4	Wyong	3		

Households/Families



DEC'16

OCT'17

ACN FACEBOOK PAGES - REGION BASED PAGES

When a new ACN member joins the network they are invited to join our Secret Status Facebook pages. We have pages based on region, as well as Common Ground interests. Below are the figures showing how many individuals were connected in each region through Facebook for mutual support.

As at October 2017

ACN Bankstown	13	ACN Northwest	45
ACN East Sydney	22	ACN Penrith-Blue Mountains	22
ACN Hawkesbury	8	ACN Southern Highlands	4
ACN Hills Shire	41	ACN St.George	82
ACN Hornsby	63	ACN Sutherland	101
ACN Hunter	3	ACN Sydney City	11
ACN Illawarra	13	ACN Turramurra	19
ACN Inner West	49	ACN West	56
ACN Liverpool-MacArthur	25		
ACN North Sydney	5	ACN Peer to Peer	240
ACN Northern Beaches	66	ACN Public page	1311



ACN East Sydney

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.



ACN FACEBOOK PAGES - COMMON GROUND GROUPS

As at October 2017

ADD/ADHD	62	NDIS	333
Adult Children	16	Teenage Daughters	25
Anxiety	93	Teens	47
Aspie Friendly Social page	20	Twins	9
Epilepsy	2	Under 7s	101
Home Schooled	19	Women on the Spectrum	12
Indigenous Families	8	Young Daughters	29
More Than One Child	27	Youth and Young Adults	10
Non Verbal	44	Single Mums	3
Primary Aged	108		
Proloquo2Go	40		
RDI families	9	ACN FACILITATORS	24
GLBTIQ carers	5	ACN EXECUTIVE	6



Language or Culture Based Common Ground Groups

- Arabic speaking – 8
- Chinese languages – 19
- Hindi speaking – 11
- Indigenous - 5
- Japanese Speaking – 7
- Korean speaking - 8
- Spanish Speaking – 9
- Vietnamese Speaking – 9

OUR SUPPORT GROUPS

HAWKESBURY

We started this group in Richmond in 2017 and thanks to support from the local community and the amazing energy of Peta, we are seeing it grow.

RICHMOND SUPPORT GROUP

When: Second Wednesday 10am to noon
Venue: Richmond Golf Club
Facilitator: Peta Jones
Funded by: Local area support funded by Lions Club of Richmond
Support: Venue support provided by Richmond Golf Club



NORTHERN SYDNEY - HORNSBY

Hornsby remains our strongest community with volunteers and participants developing a true sense of community.

HORNSBY SUPPORT GROUP - Evening

When: First Tuesday 7.30 to 9.30 pm
Venue: Hornsby RSL Club
Facilitator: Michelle Dalmaris



HORNSBY SUPPORT GROUP - Day

When: Fourth Thursday 10 am to noon
Venue: Hornsby RSL Club
Facilitator: Rachel Hookway

HORNSBY FATHERS AND GRANDFATHERS INFORMATION EVENING

When: Three times a year
Venue: Hornsby RSL club
Funded by: Lions Clubs of Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby
Venue support provided by Hornsby RSL

HORNSBY FAMILY TEN PIN BOWLING

When: Ran for 10 weeks in 2017
Venue: AMF Hornsby
Funded by: Hornsby Council

NORTHERN SYDNEY - NORTHERN BEACHES

After many years of leading the community we have lost our wonderful facilitator Judi Huxedurp who has moved overseas. Nicole stepped up to help us continue the support for the area in late 2017 and we warmly welcome her to the team.

NORTHERN BEACHES SUPPORT GROUP

When: Third Wednesday 7.30 to 9.30 pm
Venue: Manly - Warringah Rugby Leagues Club
Facilitator: Nicole Kerrison
Venue support provided by Manly Leagues



NORTHERN SYDNEY - RYDE

After many years leading the community in the area Andrea Lee has moved interstate. We will miss her greatly. Jason Robertson has stepped up to support the local area by taking on the group.

RYDE SUPPORT GROUP

When: Second Thursday 7.30 to 9.30 pm

Venue: Eastwood Rugby Club (John Haynes Room)

Facilitator: Jason Roberston

Venue support provided by Eastwood District Rugby Union Football Club

RYDE KIDS ART GROUP

This group ran for 2 years thanks to funding by Ryde Council, which ended at the end of the financial year. We hope to bring it back next year.

SOUTHEAST SYDNEY - ST.GEORGE

OATLEY COOKING UP LIFE SKILLS

When: 2nd and 4th Tuesday 4.00 to 6.00 pm

Venue: Oatley Seniors Citizens Centre

Facilitator: Liz Diab

Support: 3Bridges Community

Kids learn cooking skills and have fun while their parent or carer can watch them getting right into all the fun. We aim to give as many children an opportunity so new kids will be given priority each month.

PENSHURST FIT & FRIENDLY CLUB

When: Weekly Wednesday 4.15 to 5.15 pm

Venue: Hurstville Aquatic Leisure Centre

Host: Warren and Rosaria

We aim to give children with autism an opportunity each school term to participate in a fitness program run by the team at the Hurstville Aquatic Centre. Funded by Lions Clubs

PEAKHURST KIDS ART GROUP

When: 1st Friday 4.00 to 5.30 pm

Venue: George River Life Care

Facilitator: Liz Diab

This is run as a social skills group for children with an ASD and their siblings are also encouraged to attend. We have painting, drawing and craft activities and a chance for kids to make friends. Venue support provided by Georges River Life Centre

ACN KIDS & YOUTH D.I.Y. CLUB

Bunnings Kingsgrove are supporting the ACN by providing a monthly ASD Kids DIY Club.

When: 3rd Friday 4.30 to 6.00 pm

Venue: Bunnings warehouse Kingsgrove

Facilitator: Liz Diab

This is run as a social skills group for children with an ASD and their siblings are also encouraged to attend. Bunnings staff will provide creative opportunities for children who are part of the ACN.



SOUTHEAST SYDNEY - ST.GEORGE

HURSTVILLE SUPPORT GROUP

New facilitators Emi Manabe Chung and Sherry Zou took over from Steve Drakoulis in 2017, enabling the group to target support for Chinese families in the area.

When: Third Thursday 7.30-9.30 pm

Venue: Club Central Hurstville - 214 Park Rd & Cross Street, Hurstville

Facilitator: Sherry and Emi
Mandarin & Cantonese translators provided.



PEAKHURST YOUTH CLUB

When: 2nd and 4th Friday 4.00 to 5.30 pm

Venue: George River Life Care (rooms upstairs) 23 Stanley Street, Peakhurst

Facilitator: Geoff Marks

This is a social group for teens between 13 and 18 years old who have high functioning autism

Venue support provided by Georges River Life Centre



BULL PROOF KIDS CARLTON

The Bully Proof Kidz Taekwondo program ran again this year in the St. George area. The 10 week program again proved a great success and some of the children who participated have chosen to continue in United Taekwondo's mainstream classes.

The program focuses on building confidence, social skills and fitness, with secondary focus on self-defense. By the end of the program, every one of the participants, ranging from age 6 to 17, graduated to the next level yellow belt.

This is all made possible by United Taekwondo, who offer the program at very little cost to our families.

SOUTHEAST SYDNEY - SUTHERLAND SHIRE

The Sutherland Shire represents the highest amount of families registered with the ACN, however, we struggle to get volunteers. As a result we have been unable to introduce more activities in that area.

CARINGBAH SUPPORT GROUP

When: Third Tuesday 7.30 to 9.30 pm

Venue: Tradies Club Caringbah

Facilitator: Steve Drakoulis

Venue support provided by Tradies Club



MENAI KIDS CLUB

When: Fortnightly Wednesdays 4.00 to 5.30 pm

Venue: Fun4Kids Menai

Facilitator: Bianca Wong

For ACN kids 3 to 13.

This is ideal for children with higher needs who may not otherwise have the ability to participate in other more structured ACN programs.



GYMEA SUPPORT GROUP

May launched the Gymea support group, hosted by Janeen Jeske

When: First Monday each month 10 am to noon

Venue: Tradies Club Gymea

Facilitator: Janeen Jeske



SOUTHEAST SYDNEY - SUTHERLAND SHIRE

SYLVANIA TEN PIN BOWLING SOCIAL

When: Fourth Sunday each month 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Venue: Southgate AMF - TENPIN BOWLING -
Facilitator: Liz and Rosaria
EACH PAY OWN GAME

KIDS TECH CLUB

We started a Tech club for kids, using money donated from Telstra and allocating funds from a donation received from Georges River Lioness Club. This ran as part of a 10 week program, however internet access issues and low numbers forced us to stop after 7 sessions. The program is being reviewed and hope to be brought back next year.

SYDNEY - CITY

While initially funding was provided for a support group in the CBD, low attendances previously led us to believe that the community would be better served by a regular social opportunity in the city. With the support of the clubs who provided the grant, we now provide a popular monthly excursion for families.

SYDNEY SOCIAL GROUP

When: Second Sunday each month 10.30 am
Venue: Meet at prearranged locations within the City of Sydney area.
Facilitator: Liz Diab
Provided By: City of Sydney RSL
Families meet each time to experience a social outing together.
Funded by City of Sydney RSL

SYDNEY - INNER WEST

This year we replaced the Leichhardt support group with a new group in Petersham to serve the inner west.

PETERSHAM SUPPORT GROUP

When: Second Tuesday each month 7.30-9.30pm
Venue: Petersham RSL Club
Facilitator: Sharon Fraser
Venue support provided by Petersham RSL Club

SYDNEY - CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN

The Belmore group has now relocated to Lakemba, providing support for the Bankstown area.

LAKEMBA SUPPORT GROUP

When: First Sunday 2.00 to 4.00 pm
Venue: **The Lakemba Club** - 26 Quigg St Lakemba
Facilitators: Rosaria and Jean
Venue support provided by Canterbury Leagues Club

WESTERN SYDNEY - GREATER WEST

Western Sydney is the ACN's fastest growing region. With the wonderful help of local volunteers we now run a number of groups for the area.

BLACKTOWN SUPPORT GROUP

When: First Wednesday 10 am to Noon
Venue: Westpoint Blacktown - Coffeeland cafe
Facilitator: Briana Blackett



WESTERN SYDNEY - GREATER WEST

BLACKTOWN FATHERS AND GRANDFATHERS INFORMATION EVENING

Launched Fathers group in Blacktown with guest speaker Dr Tom Tutton discussing Theory of Mind. This group is funded by Lions Clubs of Kings Langley and Blacktown City.

When: Three times a year
Venue: Blacktown Workers club
Facilitator: Steve Drakoulis
Funded by Lions Club of Blacktown City and Lions Club of Kings Langley
Venue support provided by Blacktown Workers Club



PARRAMATTA AUTISM KIDS ART GROUP

The Lions Club of Parramatta have again provided funding to support children with autism in their local area. They also provided a venue at no cost.

When: Fourth Thursday of the month 4.30 -6.00pm
Venue: The Den, Parramatta
Facilitator: Cathy Bailey

This is run as a social skills group for children with an ASD and their siblings are also encouraged to attend. We have painting, drawing and craft activities and a chance for kids to make friends.

Funded By: Lions Club of Parramatta



WENTWORTHVILLE AUTISM SUPPORT GROUP

When: Second Thursday of month 10am to 12pm
Venue: Wentworthville Leagues Club
Facilitator: Belinda Tabbaa

WESTERN SYDNEY - CUMBERLAND

CUMBERLAND ACTIVE KIDS LASER TAG

When: Third Sunday on alternate months 11am
Venue: CodeRed Rosehill
Facilitator: Lucy Doherty
Funded by Guildford Leagues Club

CUMBERLAND ACTIVE KIDS - BOWLING

When: Third Sunday on alternate months 11 am
Venue: TenPin City Lidcombe
Facilitator: Lucy Doherty
Funded by Club Merrylands Bowling



AUBURN SUPPORT PROJECTS

While we no longer run a monthly support group in the area, thanks to local volunteers we provide support and social activities across the year.

SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

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 etc.

These are offered mainly in the St. George, Sutherland, Hornby, Inner West, and Northern Beaches areas. Ability to run holiday events is reliant on availability of volunteers within each area.



A Community of Support in Pictures





A Community of Support in Pictures



Financial Statement 2016

Autism Community Network Balance Sheet

Assets 30 Jun 16

Accounts Receivable	\$2,172.10
Bond	\$588.00
Cash on Hand	\$550.00
Deposit Paid	\$420.00
Furniture & Equipment	\$2,005.16
Furniture & Equipment Accum. Depr.	-
\$2,005.16	
Inventory	\$12.26
Leaders Program Hurstville	\$39.80
Leaders Program Hurstville; Erin Normoyle;	-\$100.00
PayPal Account	\$5,369.22
Society Cheque Account	\$79,542.68
Tax Paid on Purchases	\$1,382.32
Together program; Auburn SG;	\$44.50
Together program; Blacktown2 SG;	-\$294.00
Together program; Eastern Suburbs SG;	\$244.50
Together program; Eastern Suburbs2 SG;	\$244.50
Together program; Inner West SG;	\$244.50
Together program; Inner West2 SG;	\$244.50
Together Program; Northern Beaches SG;	\$94.50
Together program; Ryde SG;	\$91.04
Together program; St George SG;	\$244.50
Together program; Sutherland SG;	\$244.50
Together program; Sutherland2 SG;	\$244.50
Together Program; Sydney City SG;	\$244.50
Together Program; Sydney City2 SG;	\$244.50
Together program; Turrumurra SG;	\$244.50
Together program; Turrumurra2 SG;	\$244.50
Visa Card (ED)	\$96.45
VISA Card (SD)	\$215.78
Total Assets	\$91,814.15
Liabilities 30 Jun 16	
Accounts Payable	\$14,275.40
Employee PAYG Payable	\$1,676.00
Employee SGC Super Payable	\$1,029.98
Tax Collected from Sales	\$4,244.81
Total Liabilities	\$1,226.19
Net Assets	\$70,587.96

Auditor's Report
Attached

Equity 30 Jun 16
Current Earnings
\$25,001.05
Retained Earnings

Autism Community Network Profit & Loss Summary

Profit & Loss Summary - Saasu <https://secure.saasu.com/a/reports/profitlosssummary>

Employee SGC Super	\$4,075.64	3.33%
Entertainment	\$18.16	0.01%
Equipment	\$2,532.10	2.07%
Fundraising	\$2,703.91	2.21%
Gifts	\$430.34	0.35%
Insurance	\$1,732.43	1.41%
Internet	\$481.92	0.39%
IT	\$7,762.51	6.34%
Marketing	\$78.93	0.06%
Materials	\$424.57	0.35%
Office Supplies	\$1,314.14	1.07%
Parking	\$57.45	0.05%
Postage	\$503.17	0.41%
Printing	\$618.13	0.50%
Rent	\$3,852.15	3.14%
Telephone	\$1,886.67	1.54%
Travel	\$1,581.21	1.29%
Venue hire	\$4,034.54	3.29%
Water	\$31.51	0.03%
Workers Compensation	\$532.82	0.43%
Expense Total	\$96,608.30	78.87%
Operating Profit	\$25,874.45	21.12%
Other Income		
Interest Income	\$23.06	0.02%
Other Income Total	\$23.06	0.02%
Other Expense		
Other Expense Total	0.00	0.00%
Net Profit	\$25,897.51	21.14%

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.

INCOME STATEMENT

Revenue/Receipts	
Government Grants	\$18,685
Donations and bequests	\$88,101
Other revenue/receipts	\$15,701
Total revenue/receipts	\$122,487
Other income (for example, gains)	\$23
Total income/receipts	\$122,510
Expenses/Payments	
Employee expenses/payments	\$52,238
Other expenses/payments	\$44,294
Total expenses/payments	\$96,532
Net surplus/(deficit)	\$25,978

BALANCE SHEET extract

Total assets	\$91,809
Total liabilities	\$21,146
Net Assets/Liabilities	\$70,663

Autism Community Network Profit & Loss Summary

Income 01 Jul 15 to 30 Jun 16

% Performance vs Total Income		
Donations	\$36,206.07	29.56%
Fundraising	\$11,392.30	9.30%
Membership fees	\$3.50	0.00%
Philanthropy	\$51,898.54	42.37%
Sales	\$4,305.93	3.52%
State Govt Grants	\$18,685.62	15.25%
Income Total	\$122,491.96	100.00%
Cost of Sales		
Stock	\$9.21	0.01%
Cost Of Sales Total	\$9.21	0.01%
Gross Profit	\$122,482.75	99.99%

Expense

Accounting Fees	\$1,000.00	0.82%
Administration	\$152.26	0.12%
Advertising	\$150.00	0.12%
Bank Fees	\$518.97	0.42%
Catering	\$1,805.34	1.47%
Contractors	\$9,691.00	7.91%
Electricity	\$474.22	0.39%
Employee Annual Leave Pay	\$3,097.60	2.53%
Employee Annual Leave Pay Leave		
Loaded	\$542.08	0.44%
Employee Base Pay	\$44,524.53	36.35%

Income statement and balance sheet extract

Income statement for small charities	
Revenue/receipts	
Government grants	\$18,685
Donations and bequests	\$88,101
Other revenue/receipts	\$15,701
Total revenue/receipts (a + b + c)	\$122,487
Other income, if applicable	\$23
Total income/receipts (d + e)	\$ 122,510
Expenses/payments	
Employee expenses/payments	\$52,238
Grants and donations made for use in Australia	\$0
Grants and donations made for use outside Australia	\$0
Other expenses/payments	\$44,294
Total expenses/payments (g + i + j + k)	\$96,532
Net surplus/deficit (f - l)	\$25,973
Balance sheet	
t. Total assets	\$91,809
y. Total liabilities	\$21,146
z. Net assets/liabilities (t - y)	\$70,663

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

LITTLEWOODS

Chartered Accountants

ABN: 25 531 054 227

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK INCORPORATED

We have audited the attached financial report, being a special purpose financial report which comprises the balance sheet as at 30 June 2016 and the profit and loss statement for the year ended on that date of Autism Community Network Incorporated.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Committee are responsible for the preparation of the financial report and has determined that the accounting polices used are appropriate to meet the needs of *the Associations Incorporation Act 2009* and the needs of the members. This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion to the members on the special purpose financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the directors, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

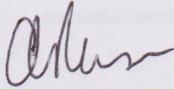
The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*. We disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial statements to which it relates to any person other than the members, of any purpose other than that for which it was prepared. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Auditor's Independence Declaration

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Australia.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion, the special purpose financial report of Autism Community Network Incorporated presents a true and fair view of the entity's financial position as at 30 June, 2016 and the results of the operations for the year then ended.



Aubrey Reisen
Littlewoods
Chartered Accountants
Sydney

3rd November 2016

FEEDBACK

FROM MEMBERS



The following comments are feedback taken from our last Members' survey which we conducted in mid-2016. While they are overwhelmingly positive, the criticisms show how desperate families are for more opportunities across all regions.

THANK YOU SO MUCH. ACN have always been incredibly wonderful and so much more...always Thanks again

Thanks for all the effort and support you provide. The ACN is awesome and irreplaceable. I'm not sure how our family would

cope without you.

Thank you so much ACN for all that you do for our community of ASD children and their carers. The ACN is a unique organisation and always there for the community.

I think ACN does a great job and looking forward to you growing in the future and offering more kid based programs in Blacktown/Parramatta area

I think the Autism Community Network is wonderful and want to see it grow and do what I can to help out

Thank you for your ongoing support & guidance

Create more opportunities to seek committed people to help run ACN activities.

Even though my son is 19 now and the support group meeting time didn't suit me I always read the newsletter to see where i can help out and am really happy that ACN is there for families to use and get the support and help needed. I have benefited a lot from ACN and got to know and form friendships with other wonderful people so i hope it continues its services and I'm still a member and always interested in seeing how things are going. Thank you for the great work you're doing.

ACN is excellent

Keep up the good work!

Steve and the ACN do an amazing job! You came along just when I needed you most (when my second son was also diagnosed with ASD). Thank you.

Can drama be on a week night? This helped my child socially.

You are an amazing bunch of people who obviously care deeply for those with ASD & their families by the constant supports you give. MANY THANKS TO YOU ALL.

I have been a member since January. It's very difficult to know where to start. There don't seem to be any groups in my area and I wasn't aware of any of the activities mentioned in this survey. I would really like to connect with other parents but don't know how to get started.

A group on the lower north shore would be great I would be able to travel to that one. Also info about things available on lower north shore would be useful. All activities and talks are too far away.

Thank you for all your advice, help and support.



Thanks for last night and all that ACN do for us all
Really appreciated
What a great night and a big thank you also to to Carers NSW
Great night
Deb :)

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



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

2017 ACN received a St. George Community award

2017 ACN Treasurer Sharon Fraser received a St. George Community award

2017: ACN Volunteer Liz Diab won the NSW Adult Volunteer of the Year Award

2017: ACN Youth Club facilitator Geoff Marks received the Georges River Lioness Club Caring Award

2017: ACN Volunteer Richard Goodfellow recognised with a Banks Volunteer award

2016: Ryde Council Volunteer of the Year Nomination ACN Volunteer Andrea Lee

2016: Ryde Council Citizen of the Year Nomination ACN Volunteer Andrea Lee

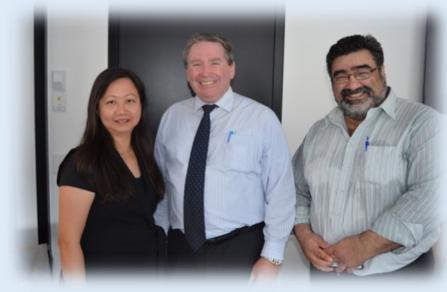
2016 ACN Vice President Jane Tzakos received St. George Community Volunteer Award

2016 ACN Board Member and volunteer Terry Lynch recognized at the Banks Community Awards

2016 ACN Treasurer Magdalena Oszywa received St. George Community Volunteer Award

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

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



ACN PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

2017 has seen us continue to develop strong relationships with other community groups. We are grateful to all our partners in helping us bring support to so many people.



3 Bridges Community: Our partner in providing venue support for local families to access social and support groups in St. George



Assistance Dogs Australia: Provide trained companion dogs to people with disabilities and have worked with us to do this for families with children on the spectrum.

Assistance Dogs
Australia

Autism Link: Partners in providing support services for families in its local area.



Blue Fit - Hurstville Aquatic Centre: Working together to provide the Fitability program for ASD children in the southern areas of Sydney.



Bunnings Rockdale: Presenting us with opportunities each year to fund raise through their BBQ facilities

Canterbury Leagues: Provide us with a venue to run our support group in Lakemba at no cost



Carers Australia NSW: We are proud to work with Carers Australia on projects assisting the community



Careflight: Regularly provide tickets to special social events for families in the support network.

City of Sydney RSL Club: Funding our Sydney city family social days in 2015-16



Club Merrylands Bowling: Funding our 2016-17 Cumberland Kids social group



Club Rivers: Long time partner in the St. George area, regularly fund ACNN family and kids activities.

Eastwood Rugby Club: Supporting carers in the Parramatta and Ryde LGAs with a venue for us to run a monthly support group



Focus group Technologies: Provide professional I.T. support and advice for the ACN.

Funtime 4 Kidz: Working with ACN to provide weekly fun and fitness for children in the Sutherland Shire



Georges River Council: Funding activities in the local area for ACN families

Georges River Life Care: Supporting children with autism through their own programs as well as providing free space and facilities for our Art group Youth Club. GRLC also supports ACN with school holiday activities and other services for our families.



Guildford Leagues: Funding our 2016-17 Cumberland Kids social group

ACN PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS



it-ology IT: Provide professional IT support and advice for the ACN.



Australian Lions Foundation: The generous support of Lions Clubs throughout NSW has enabled us to provide over 160 families with iPads and assistive technology to help non verbal children with ASD to communicate.



Lions Club of Blacktown City: Have generously provided funding and support for ACN to run programs in their area.



HORNSBY

Lions Club of Hornsby: Have generously provided funding and support for ACN to run programs in their area.



LUGARNO

Lions Club of Lugarno: A longtime partner of ACN, this wonderful club have been there alongside us whenever we have wanted to support our local community.



Lions Club of Parramatta:

Lions Club of Parramatta: Families in Sydney's west are able to bring their children to a social skills art club thanks to generous support by the Lions Club of Parramatta.



We Serve

KINGS LANGLEY
LIONS CLUB INC

Lions Club of Kings Langley: Have generously provided funding and support for ACN to run programs in their area.



KU-RING-GAI

Lions Club of Ku-ring-gai: Have generously provided funding and support for ACN to run programs in their area.



FOUNDATION

Luke Priddis Foundation: Our partner in providing support for families in the Penrith and Blue Mountains areas.



Manly-Warringah Leagues Club: Generously provide space for our monthly support group to meet on the northern beaches.



Petersham RSL: Generously provide space for our monthly support group to meet in the inner west.



Pop Design & Print
www.popgraphics.com.au

Pop Graphic Design: Supporting ACN with our professional design and printing needs.



A New Tradition



Richmond Golf Club: Generously provide space for our monthly support group to meet in the inner west.

Sutherland Shire Council We are privileged to enjoy the support of our local council and through it our main office is based in one of its facilities.



support groups for
carers of people with
a disability in NSW



Together Program - Carers NSW: We gratefully acknowledge the annual support from the Together program which enables us to provide programs for carers throughout all our regions.

Sydney Water: supporting families in St. George via their grant to provide school holiday activities for children with autism.



ACN PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

Taronga Zoo: We are grateful to Taronga for their annual allocation of tickets for families to experience the very special *Dream Night at the Zoo*.



Telstra: Supporting families with autism in through us via a community grant

Tradies Club: Generously provide space for our monthly support group to meet in the Sutherland Shire.



United Taekwondo: Working with ACN to provide opportunities for children on the spectrum.



Westpac: Supporting families with autism in through us via a generous community grant of \$10,000.



Wests Ashfield: Kindly funding our support program in the inner west.

Wests Ashfield: Kindly funding our support program in the inner west.



Workers Club Blacktown: Generously provide space for our support group to meet in the Blacktown region.

Zakumi Consulting: We are grateful for the specialist advice and support of Zakumi Consulting.

COMING UP IN 2018

Some of the programs and projects either currently being planned or being explored for 2018 are as follows:

We have set up a committee to promote post school support options for young people.

We are speaking with Apple store in Miranda about setting up an ACN Kids Tech club there

We are looking forward to bringing more support for the inner west via a Kids Music Club (starting February), as well as workshops and other groups in the area.

We are about to introduce a sailing club in Kogarah Bay

We are working on starting support groups in Wollongong and on the Central Coast

Our Peakhurst Art group will be an Art Therapy group from next year.



SOCIAL IMPACT STRATEGY

The Autism Community Network (ACN) exists to support people with autism, their families and communities across NSW to improve their health and social wellbeing

Current Situation

Autism affects 1 in 100 children born today. This rate is growing. The impact this can have on our community in the future is immense.
Many families experience isolation and yearn for opportunities to connect with others in their community for mutual support and understanding

Participants

We support families across all of Sydney metropolitan area and parts of NSW. These include parents and carers, children, teens, siblings, and adult individuals on the autism spectrum.
As at May 2017, we have over 1,100 families registered, comprising of more than 2,600 individuals.

Activities

ACN provides :

- Information and support for individuals with autism, parents and carers
- We have carer support groups in St. George, Sutherland, Hornsby, Turramurra, Brookvale, Ryde, Hurstville, Belmore, Caringbah, Blacktown, Auburn and Leichhardt.
- Regular social groups for families
- Social skills programs for children including Drama, Fitness, Cooking, Art, Youth club, play groups, and more

Outcomes

- **32 Members** provided **7,140** hours of voluntary contribution valued at **over \$188,500** and raised a further \$149,330 through grants, fundraising and donations.
- 90% of respondents in our Annual Member Survey said that ACN services were excellent. The other 10% said they were very good.
- Along with projects assisting The NSW Auditors Department, building a Sensory room for a high school, and helping families access dogs through Assistance Dogs Australia, ACN again this year issued iPads to another 40 nonverbal children on the spectrum, now totaling over 160.

Impact

Since then, 1,000+ families who rely on this network have found support, built confidence, developed friendships, and seen their children benefit from our programs.

We've built capacity across communities, developed relationships with other support organisations, and provided access to information for many who previously struggled to cope.

We've given access to appropriate services for early intervention and at key transition times throughout life.

