



PDG Elvio Munzone
Lugarno Lions Club
District 201N5-Coordinator
The Follow Your Dream Foundation-Australia

30 March 2017

Dear Lions,

We are writing to ask your assistance in providing scholarships for children, young people and adults with autism to enable them to participate in a range of educational activities within their communities.

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by impaired social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted and repetitive behavior. It impacts include social isolation, poor educational outcomes, high levels of unemployment and significant mental health issues.

Many families supporting people with autism are also dealing with considerable financial disadvantage due to the high cost of therapies, multiple people needing support, reduced work hours and marriage breakdown.

According to prevalence statistics, there are currently around 2,535 people with autism in the Greater Sydney area alone. The majority of these being under 18 years of age.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is currently rolling-out over the Greater Sydney region. Unfortunately, not everyone diagnosed with autism will be eligible for funding under this scheme. In addition, feedback from our members suggests that there is a lack of services available to cater for the demand that has already been created by the NDIS.

The Autism Community Network (ACN) has successfully provided a range of social, communication and life skills development programs including Art, Cooking, Drama, Fitness, Music and Youth Clubs. We now support over 1,060 families. The demand for services has continued to grow to the point where we can no longer cater through our current model of direct service provision.

In 2017-2018, the ACN will partner with a range of businesses and community based organisations to deliver more programs to more people than ever before. These activities will be provided on a user pays basis so that families that can access the NDIS and others that have the capacity to pay, will have access to suitable services that meet their needs.



Unfortunately, this still leaves families dealing with significant financial disadvantage.

We need your help to provide scholarships to subsidise the cost of attending user pays activities promoted through the ACN. Your contribution will enable a child to attend a weekly activity during school terms such as Fit and Friendly circuit class or a once a month Cooking Club. These programs focus on improving health and wellbeing through developing a positive exercise habit and expanding the diet for children who typically self-restrict movement and food due to sensory sensitivities.

\$5,000 will provide scholarships to children, young people or adults with complex needs to access educational programs which will improve communication, socialisation and life skills.

We thank you for considering our request and encourage you to contact our Operations Manager, Steve Drakoulis on 0431 724 229 for any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Lynch", is written over a light grey circular watermark that contains the ACN logo.

Terry Lynch
President