**Organisation Name:**Autism Community Network (ACN)

**ABN:**64 103 662 535

**Tax Status:** Income Tax Exempt Charity Status [ITEC] and Deductible Gift Recipient [DGR]

**Bank Details:**  BSB 062234   Account  10417253

**Incorporated Association Number:**INC9896017

**Charitable Fundraising Authority Number:**CFN/22825

**Public Officer:**Steve Drakoulis

**Background/history:**Founded by a father of a child with an autism spectrum disorder, as a means for parents to provide information and support to each other through their own efforts and experiences.

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

**Mission:**The Autism Community Network works in partnership with a range of organisations to deliver flexible programs which are responsive to emerging needs and aspirations while building capacity in people on the autism spectrum, their families and their communities.

**Project Title:** Bring ‘The Lab’ to southern Sydney

**Project Description:** Partner with ‘The Lab’ to establish a technology club for children with autism in southern Sydney.

**Project Partners:** The Lab is a growing network of technology clubs for 10 to 16 year-old young people diagnosed with High Functioning Autism who enjoy working with computers. The Lab offers mentoring by technology professionals in areas such as programming, 3D, digital design and gaming. The Lab’s approach is unstructured and does not have expectations of specific education or technology outcomes. There are currently 19 Labs operating throughout Australia (12 VIC; 4 NSW; 2 QLD and 1 TAS). In NSW, Labs service the communities of Hornsby, Northern Beaches, Bega and Cooma).

**Identified Need:** Autism is a lifelong developmental disorder characterised by difficulties in communication, social interaction and restricted and repetitive behaviours. Young people with High Functioning Autism have a unique mix of skills and deficits. They often have an interest and talent in the area of Information Technology. They also suffer from anxiety, experience higher than average levels of bullying, struggle to make friends, have difficulty in achieving academic goals, are unable to find employment and are more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. There are no comparable programs currently running in this area.

**Local impact:** “Bring ‘The Lab’ to southern Sydney” will enable two groups of up to ten, 10-16 year olds to participate in 2 hour weekly Technology Club sessions during school terms. These young people will be mentored by two skilled technology professionals, working at their own pace in areas such as programming, 3D, digital design and gaming. In total, we anticipate that 30 young people will benefit from the service during its first year.

The project seeks to improve the wellbeing and life prospects of young people who are often highly skilled but whose condition can lead them to fall through gaps in the mainstream education system. Specifically it will improve confidence, team work and social skills by giving these children the opportunity to socialize with their peers in a supportive environment while building technical skills and knowledge for future employment. Check out the video at <http://thelab.org.au>

**Legacy Impact:** Equipment purchased through the grant will be available to continue the project beyond the funded period. We hope to be able to expand to western Sydney after establishing the pilot through this grant funding.

**Project Coordinator:** Claudia Walters

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**Budget:**

Hardware – 4 laptops (2 PC, 2 Apple) + Data projector =

Software –

Mentors – 2 mentors x 2 groups x 40 sessions x 2 hrs/session x $40/hr = $6,400

ADSL Internet – 11 months x $69.95/month = $770

Rent – 40 weeks x $65/week = $2,600

ACN Administration – insurance, supervision and promotion = $1,000

The Lab Network fee – 80 sessions x $20/session = $1,600

TOTAL