

Office of Communities
PFP - Participation Project
AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK
Project Details



Office of
Communities
Sport & Recreation

Project Title

AUTISM KIDS FITNESS CLUB

Major Sport or Activity that the project will benefit

HEALTH AND FITNESS TRAINING

Proposed start date of project

07/13

Anticipated finish date of project

06/14

Project Description

Health and fitness training for children on the autism spectrum at the Morris lemma Indoor Sports Centre (MIISC)

Why is the project needed?

Our members have given feedback regarding difficulties in finding suitable opportunities for their children to participate in structured physical activity.

"Effects of Physical Activity on People with Autism Spectrum Disorder"

Kay Hughes, Physiotherapist, Autism Queensland

The benefits of physical exercise for children and adults who have an autism spectrum disorder were evaluated in two recent studies. The studies reported clear increases in on-task behaviour, academic responsiveness, motor functioning and social functioning as well as decreases in repetitive behaviours, aggression and absconding. These studies provide strong evidence suggesting that including regular physical exercise for a person on the autism spectrum will decrease anxiety, eliminate depression and improve sleep.

<http://www.autismqld.com.au/userfiles/autismnewsletter0912.pdf>

**Office of Communities
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AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK
Contact Details**



**Office of
Communities
Sport & Recreation**

Given Name
CLAUDIA

Family Name
STEVENS

Position
FUNDING COORDINATOR

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Office of Communities
PFP - Participation Project
AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK
Location Details



Location

MORRIS IEMMA INDOOR SPORT CENTRE

Address

150 Belmore Road

Suburb

RIVERWOOD

Postcode

2210

State

NSW

Electorate

Canterbury

Council Name

Canterbury

Office of Communities
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Budget Details



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FUNDING AND APPLICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THIS PROJECT	
Sub-Total	0
YOUR CONTRIBUTION (e.g. applicant's contribution, donations, fees and charges, in-kind contribution etc)	
Sub-Total	0
EXPENDITURE - List all related costs by line item (e.g. venue hire, equipment, presenter fees, travel and accommodation)	
Total	0
Budget surplus or deficit	0

Objective	How will the project do this
<p>Increase regular and on-going participation opportunities in sport, recreation or structured physical activity in a sustainable manner.</p>	<p>AUTISM KIDS FITNESS CLUB will break the ice and give many children on the autism spectrum and their families a first ever experience of participating in a structured physical activity program. This, in itself will assist them to overcome many of the barriers to participation. See below. By providing a tailored program with appropriate levels of support, these children will build confidence and gain a sense of mastery and enjoyment that most of them have not previously experienced. In turn, this will enhance their participation in school and other settings. It will also encourage a number of them to seek out additional opportunities both at the Morris lemma Indoor Sports Centre and other local facilities. In addition to the children and parents that will directly participate in the program, AUTISM KIDS FITNESS CLUB will be a pilot project for our 300+ member families. Given that our organisation revolves largely on parents and carers providing recommendations on programs, activities and therapies that assist their children to reach their fullest potential, we expect that many more children and their families will benefit over time. By making this a family activity, we anticipate that parents and carers will experience increased motivation to continue involving and supporting their children in a program of sport, recreation or structured physical activity. We also expect to increase provision of services through increased demand (see below) and intend to use the project as a training opportunity for one of our members (see below) to enable the incorporation of some elements into our highly successful school holiday program.</p>

Objective	How will the project do this
<p>Address barriers to participation in sport, recreation and structured physical activity.</p>	<p>Children on the autism spectrum experience a triad of impairments including problems with communication, social interaction and repetitive behaviours. Many also experience anxiety, depression, sleep disorders and ADHD. For these reasons, it is very difficult, if not impossible for these children to participate in mainstream sport, recreation and structured physical activities. They find change highly stressful, particularly when new activities are undertaken by new teachers in a new environment. This can cause meltdowns, avoidance behaviour and aggression. Many children on the autism spectrum have sensory issues which cause them to either seek out or avoid gross motor activities in ways that are very challenging in terms of participation in a group setting or to a set program. Many become sedentary, choosing to play computer games rather than participate in activities in which they struggle to engage. There is a lack of tailored programs available to suit their needs, some with extensive waiting lists and most being user pays can add to the burden of cost for parents and carers. In addition, we find that many siblings of children on the autism spectrum lack the kinds of opportunities to participate that their peers take for granted. Parents and carers are often last on the priority list, badly neglecting their own health needs because of the stresses and pressures exerted on them by their caring role. Many avoid trying new activities because they are frustrated or upset by the stigma created when their children meltdown.</p>

Objective	How will the project do this
<p>Deliver a program or service that will assist people become more active through participation in sport and recreation.</p>	<p>The AUTISM KIDS FITNESS CLUB program will be delivered in a state of the art new facility, the Morris lemma Indoor Sports Centre which is easily accessible for a large number of our families. The program will be delivered by a qualified YMCA Trainer and supported by an Aide with extensive experience of dealing with children on the autism spectrum. Up to 40 children on the autism spectrum will gain access to a 10 week program giving them the time to get comfortable in the setting. Parents and carers will be able to support their child to participate if required. Up to 8 parents and carers will also be given the opportunity to participate in the casual adult health and fitness program during their child's session. In addition, up to 20 siblings of children on the autism spectrum will be invited to participate in the program thereby increasing opportunities for participation in this group as well as providing good role models for their brothers and sisters to follow. In total, 10 children on the autism spectrum and 5 of their siblings will be invited to attend sessions during each term.</p>

Objective	How will the project do this
<p>Build the capacity of the organisation to enhance provision of sport and recreation services.</p>	<p>The YMCA have expressed great interest in supporting us in the delivery of this project. We see particular opportunities for the establishment of ongoing services at the Morris lemma Indoor Sports Centre due to an increase in demand created through participants in the project. We will also promote the YMCA and the Morris lemma Indoor Sports Centre as an autism friendly venue to our membership. This project will further build the skills of the Trainer in working with children on the autism spectrum and provide us opportunities to increase awareness amongst staff at the centre. We will work closely with the YMCA to ensure that the safety and enjoyment of all involved is paramount. This may include the implementation of a range of strategies to deal with issues such as absconding or aggressive behaviour. The Aide that we will be providing, along with the parents that will participate have a wealth of knowledge and expertise that will be harnessed to ensure that this is the first of many such programs for our children at the centre.</p>

Objective	How will the project do this
<p>Provide accreditation or training to develop the skills of volunteers to enable sport, recreation and structured physical activity programs to be conducted in locations across NSW.</p>	<p>The AUTISM KIDS FITNESS CLUB will also provide the opportunity for our Aide and parents/carers to learn from the YMCA Trainer. These skills and the confidence that they engender will encourage our parents and carers to support their child's participation in other sport, recreation and structured physical activity settings, whilst increasing their own capacity for volunteering. We also hope to augment our very successful school holiday program by incorporating some structured physical activity as part of our BBQ park 'n' play days which are currently held 4 times per year.</p>

Year	Description
2013	<p>The Autism Community Network was established in September 2011 by the father of a child on the autism spectrum. It is an incorporated organisation with a Board of Governance consisting of parent members with a deep commitment to supporting our now 300+ member families across Sydney. Our skills include senior management in business and not-for-profit sectors, training and assessment, teaching, business analysis, accounting, community development, human resources, journalism and medicine. We contract a number of people to provide specialist services including for our parent support program, children's drama, children's art and school holiday programs. We have received funding from Hurstville and Warringah Councils and from Clubs NSW to deliver our programs to date and are working towards expanding our services through forward planning and the development of effective partnerships. We are very well regarded throughout the sector.</p>

Beneficiaries/Target Groups	Number of Participants	Benefit to the participants
CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM	40	Access to a tailored program of structured physical activity. The legacy of increased participation.
SIBLINGS OF CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM	20	Access to structured physical activity. Social connection and support.
PARENTS/CARERS OF CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM	8	Access to structured physical activity. Respite. Social connection and support.
AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK MEMBER FAMILIES	300	Information about services and facilities for sport, recreation and structured physical activity.
NETWORK OF AUTISM AND GENERAL COMMUNITY ORGS	10	Information about services and facilities for sport, recreation and structured physical activity.
YMCA	1	Increased participation in services provided. Increased capacity re: autism groups
CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL	1	Increased exposure and usage of the Morris lemma Indoor Sports Centre
AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK	1	Increased capacity in incorporating structured physical activity in our school holiday program.

What is the longer term benefit to the sport, community or industry

The longer term benefits to sport and the industry include increased participation rates, not only for children on the autism spectrum but their siblings and even their parents and carers. So much of family life is managed based on the demands and limitations of a child with special needs that effectively engaging said child in sport and recreation programs can greatly influence outcomes for the entire family. This kind of reengagement can promote excellence as well as increased levels of volunteering.

The longer term benefits to the community are improved health and wellbeing in a target group at risk of a lifetime of inadequate physical activity. This has significant flow on benefits in terms of cost of healthcare as well as lower levels of anti-social behaviour and incarceration due to improvements in anxiety, aggression and socialisation in the target group. Improved outcomes for the child on the autism spectrum can also lead to reduced family stress and improved cohesion. Over 70% of families of children with special needs experience divorce.

Office of Communities
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AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK
Partnerships



Office of
Communities
Sport & Recreation

First Name

SARAH

Family Name

COTMAN

Name of Organisation

YMCA, NSW

Business Phone

(02)95241800

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sarah.cotman@ymca.org.au

Role in Partnership

Community Development Officer, Southern Region. Sarah has been our contact point in developing the partnership and has offered in-kind support. She will continue to be a liaison for the project.

Contribution to project

Access to the facilities at the Morris lemma Indoor Sports Centre and \$18,600 in in-kind contribution for 8 parent/carers to attend 10 x 1 hour adult health and fitness sessions each.