

Spectrum News

The Magazine of Autism Tasmania Inc.

ISSUE: June 2014



Inside this edition
Ride Tasmania
Autism Awareness Activities
Recreational Programs
And more



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Cover image:

Making Futures Bright Family Fun Day in April at the Domain.

From the CEO Desk

As we approach the end of our reporting period it is an opportunity to reflect on what has occurred recently in our sector and reflect on the challenges going forward.



Above: Terry Burke, CEO Autism Tasmania

With the change in government at both Federal and more recently State level we appear to be entering a period of financial restraint at a time when some commitments are being acted upon. Uncertainty is evident with the State Government delay with finalising a budget until late August and as commentary continues with regard to the merits or otherwise of elements of the Federal budget.

This is in a time when education reform through Gonski is being delayed with uncertainty around the fully funded roll out of the program, disability pension eligibility tightening and the National Disability Insurance Scheme changing from launch to trial sites.

It is with this backdrop that your association needs to frame a plan for the future that underpins the values of our organisation whilst pursuing the vision of making futures brighter for the autism community.

Our strategy of increasing our ability to represent a wider voice in our community has started to kick in with an extra 150 members joining since the removal of membership fees for individuals living with autism and their immediate families being passed at our Annual General Meeting in October last year. We are on track to double our membership in 12 months.

This growth comes with a responsibility to better represent your interests to decision makers and undertake to improve the ways we engage with the membership to garner your views. Although we are not funded for individual advocacy we are charged with responsibility to raise systemic issues, identify gaps in service and advocate for improved quality of services with governments as we improve understanding and awareness of the autism spectrum conditions.

I am pleased to advise that your association will be

undertaking various engagement activities with our membership in the coming six months on the key issues of disability education supports and transition, the experiences with the National Disability Insurance Scheme trial site and autism adult services gaps. This will inform our representations to government whilst at the same time giving you the chance to raise other areas and issues that are relevant to you that will assist with our future planning.

We are also very interested to have a conversation with our members as to the positioning of Autism Tasmania as we consider our strategies to a sustainable future.

I encourage your participation so we can hear your voice and will look to use as many mediums to capture the views of our members as practical.

Autism Tasmania has participated in a working group facilitated by the Department of Education on Inclusive Schools – Disability Focus over the past six months and recently attended the inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Taskforce charged with the review of education of students with disabilities across all sectors of education.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the team at Autism Tasmania during what is traditionally a busy period around International Autism Awareness Day and to the many volunteers and supporters who without which many of these activities would not be possible.

I hope you enjoy the June issue of Spectrum News and I encourage you to invite the people in your network to join our association by completing the enclosed membership form.

Terry Burke
CEO

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Kathryn Fordyce
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Remarkable story: Skating Success for Autistic Boy



Keelan Law

Remarkable story: Skating Success for Autistic Boy

In 2013, after just under a year of serious figure skating Keelan Law, 17, won several competitions and brought 2 trophies home from the Crystal Challenge, a major figure skating competition held in Melbourne Victoria. He has a burning desire to one day represent Australia at international level

Keelan is the only competitive male figure skater in Tasmania at present. He came to figure skating later than most do, taking up ice skating after seeing his coach Oxana Anichkina skating one afternoon. He is dedicated to his sport, putting many hours a week practising his skills both on and off ice. He had his first lesson at the age of 15 and a half but didn't start getting seriously involved until a year later.

Under the guidance of his coach he's developing rapidly and has firmly set his sights on national and international competition.

This is a remarkable enough story in itself. What is more remarkable is that Keelan has serious disabilities, to the extent that he is on the special needs register at school. At the age of 6 he suffered a complete break down. He spent approximately 14 weeks in the children's ward at the Royal Hobart Hospital. When he was discharged into his grandparents' care he was in need of 24 hour support and was recognised as being the most serious case of autism in Tasmania at that time.

In fact, Keelan had to rebuild everything in his life. He left hospital a terrified boy who suffered hallucinations and expressed his anger at what had happened to him in violent outbursts. At the age of 7 he tested with a 0 IQ, and had to be assessed with a test that was designed for babies.

Autism is not his only disability. He had serious language difficulties that had not been fully recognised until his hospitalisation. He has significant auditory processing delay, and he is unable to cope with the stress of socialising in a class room. He has Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and high levels of anxiety. He was bullied, misunderstood and after his break down was written off.

His family was told not to have any expectations of him achieving anything in life, and advised just to try to make him happy. This was until his family was able to have a government funded ABA programme implemented for him. From that point on Keelan began to slowly recover to the point where he was able to participate in the ice skating programme under Oxana's guidance.

Ice skating has changed Keelan's life. From the time his family realised how important figure skating was to him Keelan has never looked back.

In the last 12 months he has begun to shine both as a skater and a fine young man his social skills have improved significantly. He now enjoys sharing jokes and conversation and he feels that he belongs to the

ice skating community, which accepts him and supports him in his skating. He is beginning to overcome his anxiety both caused by his autism and part of his PTSD.

Most importantly he is beginning to articulate his ambitions as a skater. He wants to be taken seriously and recognised for his outstanding abilities, not his disabilities. And not just for his disability he works extremely hard at perfecting his technique and has started taking both dance and gymnastic classes to help him improve his skills and to challenge himself.

If you ask Keelan what it is about ice skating that he loves he will tell you that he loves everything about it except falling. He loves putting height into his jumps he will tell you that if he could he would skate for as many hours as he could every day. He seems to come alive in competition.

Recently he has started ice dancing with Anne Smith, 11, and has joined the Tasmanian Synchronauts team. He is excitedly looking forward to the return of his coach following a 3 month professional commitment and the commencement of the 2014 ice skating competitive season, both in Tasmania and interstate. His aim for 2014-2015 is to move into senior skating competition.

He says that everyone should believe that anything is possible, and that he intends to make his skating dreams come true.

Jean Law

Special Thanks for this article go to:

Oxana Anichkina
Professional figure skater
Figure skating coach Level 2
Ph: 0428 136 126



Keelan Law

The NEW Entertainment™ Memberships are here!



To order your copy please follow the links from the Autism Tasmania website. www.autismtas.org.au

Please remember to reference Autism Tasmania Inc. when registering your 2014 | 2015 Entertainment™ Membership.

Ride Tasmania for Autism Awareness

In reviewing the highlights of this year's awareness ride it was clear that from different perspectives it would be impossible to do justice to all the effort, support and special moments that made this event a huge success. So apologies, in advance, if your key moment is not mentioned here.

It started with the increased support and guidance of all at Ultra 106.5 with putting sponsorship packages together that lead to a increase in sponsorship prior to the event and ultimately to raising in excess of \$23,000.00. The base fundraising from the inaugural year also allowed for the purchase of merchandise and for Autism Tasmania to follow the event with a mobile access point and connect with the Tasmanian autism community.

The launch of the event took place with a live Ultra 106.5fm breakfast radio broadcast from John Paul II Catholic Primary School. It was a fantastic roll up of that school community to adding both to the fundraising and awareness of autism.

The efforts of all riders was great and for those that completed the whole event through the sunny conditions of the East Coast to horizontal rain en route to Devonport, from the chilling rain of the West Coast to the searing heat going into New Norfolk, from flat coastal sections to the never ending hills of the West Coast it can only be described as inspirational and awesome.

Picking out highlights of engagement along the way we received great media coverage on arrival in the Launceston Mall, made a big impression with the children of Deloraine Primary School and had an informative visit with Tim Chugg, the staff and students at Giant Steps in Deloraine.

The entrance into Burnie was certainly a high point as the riders met with children, parents and staff from the North West Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre and cycled with them along the Esplanade to a welcomed BBQ awaiting at Oakleigh Park.

The final leg returning to Parliament House Lawns was an emotional moment for these men that had cycled over 1200km through all kind of conditions including extreme hill climbs to rejoin family and friends, awaiting media and most importantly a well earned rest.

We now look to 2015 to see how this event can again raise autism awareness across Tasmania. Autism Tasmania is humbled by the efforts of so many to assist us in our work.



Congratulations and thank you to our Riders

Clinton Taylor, Scott Haas, Nigel Dunn, Bryan Sinclair, John Hyland

and all those people that joined in for a section or two in support

Thank you event Sponsors

Carer Solutions Australia
Ultra 106.5 fm
Bargain Car Rentals
Peopleworks Pty Ltd
Kaura Sports Apparel
Ricoh Ulverstone
Statewide Constructions
Island Fresh Markets
Amble Inn Snack Bar
Deloraine
Rokeby Petrol Station
Take Away
Supermarket
The Bike Shop
Avantiplus
Tania Morgan
Mandy Booth
John Hyland
Bryan Sinclair
West Coast Support
Group
Tasmanian Freight
Services Pty Ltd
John Paul II Catholic
Primary School

Thank you event Supporters

Gateway Cafe Orford
Barkmill Bakery Swansea
Scamander SLSC
East Coast Support
Group - Karen
Rawnsley
The Hillcrest Tourist Park
& Mini Market
Dorset Community House
Scottsdale
Bridport Holiday Park
Discovery Holiday Parks
Devonport
Autism Specific Early
Learning & Care Centre
Tullah Lakeside Lodge
Queenstown Motor
Lodge
Queenstown RSL
Lake St Clair Lodge
Hamilton Inn
Star and Garter Hotel
New Norfolk
Our Valley Kitchen New
Norfolk

Queenstown- Autism Awareness, a Bike ride *And* Amazing Parents:

As many of you will know there was a bike ride by Clinton and group of wonderful men to raise Autism Awareness in Tasmania leading up to 2nd April which is the international autism awareness day.

This group of bike riders were welcomed across the state as they rode around – Hobart to Hobart and all points in between.

Queenstown on the 30th March was the place the group rode into to be welcomed by a large group of **people attending a 'welcome and awareness' function** organised by parents who regularly attend the west coast parent group. The group led by Carolyn Stubbs and Sharon Bryce included Sharon McKenzie and Wendy Daft who together had items for a raffle donated by local businesses, cooked amazing food and organised the RSL to donate their venue.

The community of Queenstown has experienced some difficult times recently so it was wonderful to see so many people come along to learn about Autism Spectrum Disorder, welcome the riders and have some wonderful food before the raffle was drawn.

The morning started with a short talk about Autism Spectrum Disorder with input from the parents of **children in the community followed by "The Magnificent Seven", a non-fiction movie** about British mother, Jacqui Jackson. The family in the movie consists of seven children, four boys on the spectrum and three neuro-typical girls and was shown to the audience of over 20 people. Comments afterwards indicated that people attending had learned a lot about Autism Spectrum Disorder.

From the photos you can see the bike riders who arrived early in the afternoon from Tullah, the presentation of the raffle proceeds by Carolyn Stubbs – well in excess of \$600 – to Terry Burke, CEO of Autism Tasmania. Terry Burke accompanied the riders around the state setting up the mobile information and awareness gazebo where the opportunity presented.



Riders LR Scott Haas John Hyland Nigel Dunn and Bryan Sinclair

The end of the afternoon saw the riders disappear to a warm shower, the parents and helpers cleaning up the RSL and yours truly driving back through the beautiful west coast to Devonport.

Thank you to Carolyn, Sharon and Sharon, Wendy and the Queenstown community for putting on such a wonderful event.

Rose Clark
Autism Support
North West Coast



Carolyn Stubbs presenting cheque to Autism Tasmania CEO Terry Burke with Jane Morrell Carers Solutions



Clinton Taylor and Carolyn Stubbs

Josh explores his talents at Cosmos

From woodwork to photography, 23 year-old Josh Grubb explores his eclectic range of interests through the diverse programs available to him at Cosmos five days a week.

Mondays sees him working in the Skills Program's *Odd Jobs* where a recent project allowed him to creatively embrace one of his deep passions – anything to do with the Titanic.

Knowing Josh's strong interest in the doomed ship, the Cosmos team had Josh assembling two wooden scale models of the ship which, says Josh, were "a bit difficult around the stern", but came up beautifully.

A Cosmos *Camera Crew* film shoot on Mount Wellington presented an entirely different challenge.

"It was very windy," he says **"Almost blew my hat off!"**

Later in the week, Josh is at *Independent Living Skills*, travelling to "New Town, Salamanca, Glenorchy or Eastlands", to shop and at the same time develop greater independence and confidence in a supported environment.

Cosmos Skills Program Coordinator, Warren Wadawu, says the staff enjoy working with Josh and helping him meet the challenges he faces as a young person with autism.

"A lot of what we do with Josh is around confidence", he says **"He communicates well, but struggles to open up to people he doesn't know".**

"We are really working on that with him through his amazing talents and interests. And of course, we learn a lot from him."

One of those talents is Josh's phenomenal memory for dates.

As well as his siblings' birth dates and relative ages during various life events, Josh can accurately pinpoint dates for many significant historical events, including of course, the sinking of the Titanic - **"April 15th, 1912".**



Josh Grubb

Cosmos Services

Offering learning and leisure for people with intellectual disabilities, Cosmos runs over 120 programs a week to meet the individual goals of people aged 5 to 80:

For kids (5 to 12)

Occasional Care: A chance for kids to be kids and parents to catch up on weekend jobs, Occasional Care runs on selected Saturdays from 10am to 3pm.

24 hour Short Breaks: Run several times a year, this is the slumber experience all kids need to have!

For teenagers (13 to 18)

Vacation Care: **Here's the kinds of things we do on** our school holiday program: mini-golf, pedal cars, Masterchef, science day, movies and popcorn, devil jets on the Derwent – we could go on, but we reckon you get the idea – **it's fun** (and lets Mums and Dads rest easy knowing their teenager is safe and happy)!

After School Care: That bit between school and going home, where teenagers need some support but parents need to work. We take care of it all from transport to the venue and afternoon tea.

48 Hour breaks: The ultimate teenage slumber party – **48 hours (but we're not counting!)**

Summer camps: Held in late January over two nights,

the camp is about making friends, adventure and action. We hear there may even be a few water fights.

Out of Hours: Friday nights and Saturday afternoon outings where the aim is friendship in a social kind of way

For Adults (18 and over)

The Arts Our participants really shine exploring their artistic talents in art, performance art, multi media (including the Cosmos Xpress radio show on Edge radio) and so much more. The annual art show is a showstopper!

Skills Development We emphasise the whole person, equipping people with independence, workskills and lifeskills

Leisure and Lifestyle Programs to suit all interests, including sport and exercise (zumba and bowling are popular), makeup and fashion and gardening.

Out of hours Restaurant outings, movies, concerts, theatre and all the social stuff that people do in their free time

For more information about Cosmos and our programs feel free to:

Call us on: 6228 6394

Email us at: info@cosmos.org.au

Visit us at: 52 New Town Road, New Town

Check us out at: www.cosmos.org.au

Find Cosmos on Facebook

Does your ASD child aged 10-16 show an interest in computers?

Would they be interested in being mentored by professionals to develop their skills in an interactive group covering topics such as gaming design and programming? The Lab program may be for them.

www.thelab.org.au

The Lab is a growing network of technology clubs for 10 to 16 year-old young people diagnosed with **Asperger's Syndrome or High Functioning Autism** who enjoy working with computers. It offers one-to-one tuition by technology professionals in areas such as programming, 3D, digital design and gaming. The Lab started in April 2011 with a single weekly group in Footscray, Melbourne. The concept proved popular and The Lab has since expanded to a number of locations in Victoria (Maidstone, Werribee, Doncaster, Geelong), New South Wales (Hornsby, Blacktown, Dee Why) and Darwin, with more Labs on the way in 2014. The Lab is guided by an incorporated national not-for-profit company, The Lab Network, and each local Lab is formed and managed by a local partner organisation.

If there is enough interest the program would run on a Saturday in Rosny between 10am and 12pm.

To register your interest please email Robyn Davis (robyn@autismtas.org.au) with your contact details, child's name and age



Aquatic Therapy for Autism

Programs offered at Award Swimming Kingston

Group or one on one sessions available with a qualified instructor.

There are a wide range of benefits from the program offered including, Physical benefits, Social Skills, Cognitive Improvements, and Water Safety.

Award Swimming Kingston: Water temperature a constant 32 degrees Celsius. A salt water pool with chlorine produced by the centres own salt water chlorinator.

Registration: NDIS registered, qualified Autism Australia, APA registered.

Times: Award swimming have many time slots available Monday through to Friday. Each session is 30 minutes, parents are encouraged to join in the group sessions as well as one on one.

Phone Mark Award Swimming Kingston 6229 6017



Glee Club Services

The Club provides a leisure and recreation program and gives assistance to people with disabilities to enable them, at best, to integrate with people in a club situation as playing members. The club assists in the development of skills, and provides a social situation where members can meet regularly with others. The Club also provides an activity program where members can acquire work and craft skills. The Gleeclub Centre is involved in recycling and cottage craft. The Club relies heavily on a dedicated band of volunteers. Expert instructors are paid for their services if required. Volunteer training sessions are a feature of the service. Holiday Respite Program operates during school holidays for children with moderate and severe disabilities. Social Club meets on Thursday evenings.

The Glee Club provides services to surrounding districts of Devonport, Latrobe, Port Sorell, Sheffield and Ulverstone. Services include:

Recreational Leisure Services Social Club and Specific Interests Groups
Social Skills Programs Rendezvous and Members Association

In-Home Support Options Personal care, Household assistance and Safety and wellbeing options

Individual support options Community Access, Access to attractions cultural and sporting events etc, Access and support to local clubs, organisations and special interest groups.

Assistance to promote and develop independent living skills such as: Cooking, Personal care, Shopping

Daytime Respite: School Holiday Program and Weekend Activities

Daytime Activities: School Holiday Program and Weekend Activities, Day options, Centre-based support, Specific interest focus

Individual and/or small group support

GC Services Inc.

PO Box 168 Latrobe TAS 7307

Ph. (03) 64261831 email. s.artis@gcservices.org.au



SPEAK

Speak is a program for children on the autism spectrum and their parents being offered by True Trails, a not-for-profit organisation, at Marion Bay, in South East Tasmania.

This program is specifically designed to create bonds and communication between participants and horses in a non-competitive, natural, relaxed outdoor setting. Involving a range of opportunities for **learning to "speak" and listen which cannot be found** in the normal school system.

Horses and animals open us to understand forms of non-verbal communication. Research shows that involvement with animals can encourage a willingness to communicate.

As Autism Spectrum Disorder is a group of conditions that can cause difficulties with social communication, people on the autism spectrum can benefit significantly from experiences that promote the bond between animal and human.

What we see natural horsemanship doing is revealing the abilities found in what is termed disability. In working with people/children of any type of **"disability" we take a very decisive, and deliberate FOCUS** on abilities.

What we provide at True Trails

*Specifically a non-**competitive environment... aiming** to develop intimacy and connectedness between **people and animals ... and therefore between people** who love the animals.

The "Speak" program to date has been a wonderful success. Participants have engaged according to their

ability levels with two sessions each. Although a brief opportunity, the benefits for those who are particularly interested and engaged can be measured by smiles and the chattering responses.




Parents can also benefit by gaining some respite.

This program is costed out at \$75.00 per session. This can cater for two riders: parent and child if deemed appropriate or can be a single session specifically to focus on the child.


On this particular round of funding each participant has been allocated two sessions each. However continuation with the program would certainly be beneficial.

A session goes for a generous hour and encompasses the whole involvement with horsemanship: safety, greeting and catching the horse, grooming, tacking up, and speaking the equine language, leading, riding, and de-tacking. Relationship to the horse and its care is an essential part of this program.

Cheri Allanby: Teacher/Manager/ Youth worker
M: 0437 818570 or T: 62 535480




Gymability



Hobart Gymnastics Academy in collaboration with Autism Tasmania, are offering an exciting autism friendly new program being held at the YMCA Glenorchy


Please call Hobart Gymnastics Academy on 6263 3460 for additional information & to book your place for Term 2



Our accredited and experienced Coaches will be running a specialized Gymability program.

Benefits of this program are:

- ✓ Gross & Fine Motor skills
- ✓ Balance




STOP PRESS!!!

Due to lack of registrations for Term 3 the Gymability is unlikely to continue.

Please contact us immediately if your child wishes to participate in Term 3

Gymnastics is a sport that provides an enriching environment filled with opportunities for sharpening the mind by stimulating the brain, fostering social skills and strengthening gross and fine motor skills, while providing children with ASD an alternative method for learning and developing new skills.



For further information please contact us at:
Hobart Gymnastics Academy Inc.
27-29 Hurst Street Bridgewater
(old Derwent Indoor Sports Centre)
Ph: 6263 3460
Email: admin@hobartgymnastics.com.au
www.hobartgymnastics.com.au
Find us on Facebook



Phoenix Danze Studio run a dance class for children with Autism

If your child:

- is between the age of 7-12, and
- Loves Music & Dance

Then please come along and join us!

Sunday's from 3-4pm

Term 2 begins 6th July.

\$5 per session.

For enquiries or to register please call Kate
0459 068 939




True Trails Community Programs Association Inc.

True Trails is a Not For Profit organisation also !
We are running programs in the community and presently seeking funding to run new and exciting opportunities for community groups.

For information please call Cheri on 0437 818570



north-west parent group are always welcome to meet. The formalities were accompanied by locally produced and donated wine and cheese with biscuits and various juices for the younger people and those who were driving.

It was very generous of the Makers Workshop to give us such a big space, hang it for us and provided both Donna and Russell to serve

refreshments at the opening. It was truly a community awareness/involvement event.

North West Art Exhibition for Autism Awareness

Autism Tasmania and ASELCC (Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre) combined for the second time to present an art exhibition featuring art work of people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The exhibition was again at the Makers Workshop in Burnie in a very open, large and airy space overlooking the main beach – a delightful setting.

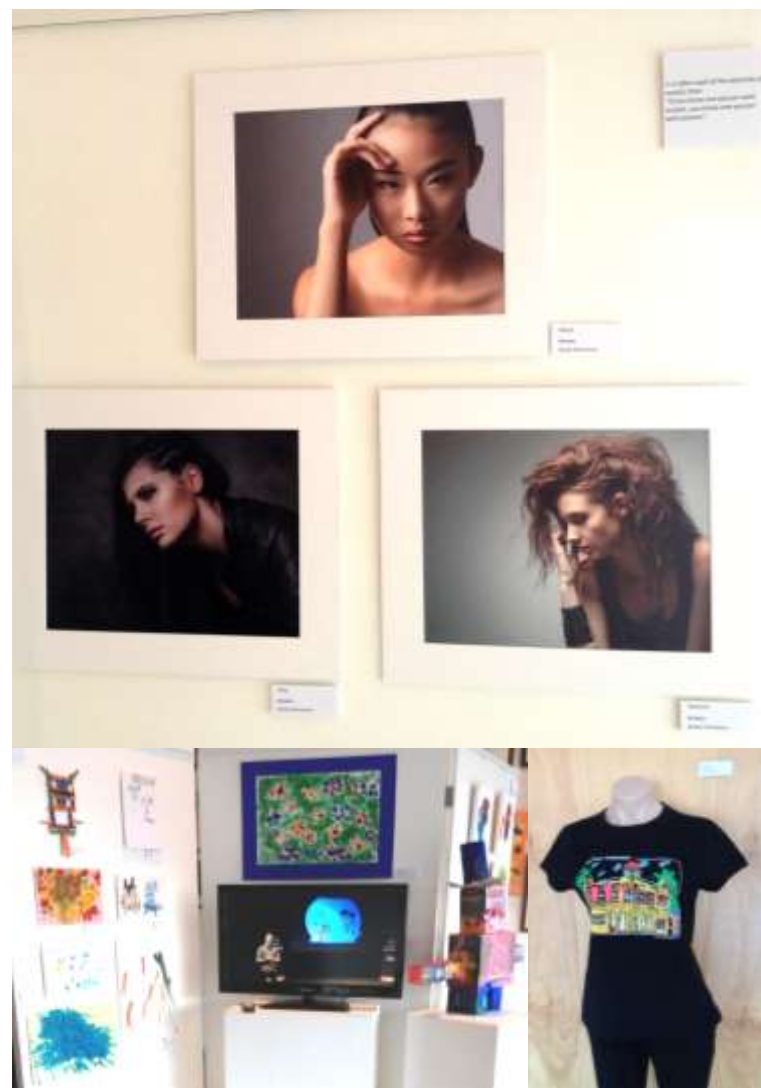
The day of April 16th saw many artworks: paintings, 3 D works, infra-red photo's, studio photos all delivered to the Makers centre ready to be hung and placed in various positions in the allotted area. We were most fortunate this year to have Donna and Russell who both work at the centre hanging the art for us in a very professional way.

Besides the visual art, Ben Lambert a young man on the spectrum from Hobart gave permission for his TED talk to be used during the exhibition. This meant that those people who wanted to know more about **ASD could listen to Ben's talk as they viewed the work on display.**

At 5.30 on the evening of April 16th many people: families with children, members of the adult Asperger groups and quite a few professionals who work with children with ASD, gathered for the official opening of the artwork. The official opening was performed by Tracey from Burnie's Community House where the

Rose Clark

Autism Support North West Coast





Autism Support Officer, Robyn Davis, and the Autism Tasmania stall at the recently held Hobart Family Expo.

HOBART FAMILY EXPO Saturday 17th May 2014 Mathers House, Hobart

As part of National Families Week (15-21 May 2014) Hobart City Council and the Hobart Mum's Network launched a pilot initiative, a Hobart "Mini" Family Expo.

The aim of the Expo was to showcase local services and programmes available to children and families in Hobart. There were over 20 stallholders from various services/organisations and community groups, as well as entertainment, fun activities and creative workshops.

Autism Tasmania were excited at the opportunity to have a stall at this event and both Robyn Davis and Jodie Denman from our Southern Office enjoyed meeting families and making connections with the other stall holders.

A wonderful day, enjoyed by all those in attendance, and hopefully the success of this event will see it become an annual event.

Robyn Davis

Autism Support South 13



Michelle Harris and Christina Heine

Port Sorell Banking on Autism Awareness!

A wonderful event was hosted at the newly opened Bendigo Bank at Port Sorell to raise Autism awareness. Blue cup cakes, balloons and t-shirts created a festive mood attracting curious shoppers interested in Autism and what that means for families. The Bank had a dedicated table with all things blue to promote Light it Up Blue April 2nd. Well done to Jane, Christina and staff at Bendigo Port Sorell Community Bank for your efforts and kind donation.

We had a fantastic time celebrating "Light it up Blue", with lots of positive vibe and feedback. All up we raised \$200 for Autism Tasmania, and met a lot of kind and interesting people along the way!

Hope you guys also got to enjoy the celebration! We are looking forward to next years "Light it up Blue"!

Christina Heine



Pictured left to right are Belinda Jones, Jane McMillan, Doug Welch (Branch Manager) and Michelle Harris.



New Autism Apps Launch

To mark World Autism Awareness Day on Wednesday April 2, the Autism Association of Western Australia launched an exciting new initiative: the *Apps for Autism Website*. iPads and tablet devices have become commonplace in the community. Over the recent years, The Autism Association of Western Australia has received an increasing number of enquiries on how best to utilise an iPad or tablet for a person with Autism. There are so many Apps available that families can have a confusing time knowing which App delivers what it promotes and which one is best suited to the needs of their child. In response, we have developed the new Autism Apps website that will take away much of the

confusion families often experience in knowing how **to choose an App suited to their child's age and skill level**. It will also give them the tools to assess Apps against criteria relevant for their child and it will assist them to choose between recreational and educational Apps.

The Apps for Autism Website provides a range of information about specific Apps which the Autism **Association's multi-disciplinary team** has reviewed and evaluated. Apps will continue to be reviewed and added to the website by the team as they come on to the market. This website is one of the ways we can open up a world of learning to the child and save parents the time and expense of trawling through endless Apps that may or may not be suited to their needs.

<http://autismapps.org.au/>

The Autism Association of Western Australia would like to sincerely thank The Non-Government Centres Support for Non-School Association (NGCS). The support from the NGCS has helped to make this website the amazing resource we envisaged.



Jewellery
for a
Cause



The founder of Jewellery for a Cause, Kirin Matthews, has a passion for supporting charitable organisations and important causes.

With Jewellery for a Cause, *buying something special means you're doing something special*. Jewellery for a Cause donates 20% of every jewellery sale to a charitable organisation the jewellery represents, helping raise not only awareness, but also financial support for valuable services.



Check out the Jewellery for a Cause website and Facebook page.



Please consider nominating Autism Tasmania as the beneficiary of your 20% donation.





Hobart's Parliament House Photo by: Damien Brockie

In Hobart both the historic Hobart Town Hall and Parliament House were turned blue this year. To celebrate the event, there was free children's entertainment on Parliament Lawns including The Scallywags, The Balloon Lady, Tony le Fevre's Marionettes and Face Painting. Tasmania Police even provided a police car and police hats and vests for children to dress up and have photos taken. The evening was well attended with many families braving the cooler weather to watch Parliament House turn blue. This year, Autism Awareness representative Cassie Xintavelonis enlisted the help of two Autism Awareness Ambassadors, Zachary Roeth, a 13 year old on the Autism Spectrum and Grace Smith whose younger brother has been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Zachary and Grace spoke briefly at the "Light It Up" Ceremony at 7:30pm before turning on the lights. The Lord Mayor Damon Thomas also hosted a reception at the Town Hall in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day and to officially thank the volunteers who supported the event.

Light It Up Blue Hobart is a community event that was only made possible due to the support and generosity of local organisations and businesses. Gareth Kays from GK Productions Australia kindly donated his time and the LED lights that were used to provide the blue lighting effects. Thanks must also go to the large group of volunteers who all donated their time and supported the event including Autism Tasmania, in particular Robyn Davis.

Cassie Xintavelonis
Autism Awareness (Tasmanian Representative)



Mayor Albert van Zetten addressing the gathering crowd.



The 2nd of April is World Autism Awareness Day and cities around the world "Light It Up Blue". Major landmarks and buildings are turned blue with light to show support for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families. Everyone is encouraged to participate and "Turn it Blue on April 2" by wearing blue, holding blue fundraisers and turning social media blue to raise awareness of Autism.

We wanted to share with you some of the photos of the spectacular Launceston Town Hall glowing blue for autism awareness. The Launceston mayor was very obliging when we put him on the spot by asking him to make an announcement before we switched on the lights, and the crowd of 35 or so helped to countdown. We look forward to Light it up Blue 2015, and this fantastic event growing.



Launceston Town Hall turned Blue for the first time this year.



Taking time to Care for yourself with Carers Tasmania

Becoming a parent is a life changing event, and the role of a parent is enormous. It is important for any parent to learn ways of looking after themselves, but this becomes even more important if you have a child with Autism, as there can be so many extra challenges.

Carers Tasmania understands that caring for your child can also bring many positives into your life, such as the opportunity to grow and change and learn and deal with things you never imagined you had the strength to. You may also feel satisfied knowing you are doing your best for you child, and enjoy a rich and interesting relationship with them.

There are tasks over and above what the average parent is required to do in caring for your child and for this reason you may be called a carer. The term **carer refers to "a person who is providing, or who has provided, unpaid care and support to family members or friends who are living with a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or terminal illness, or who are frail or aged"**.

This may be a confronting term as you may see yourself as simply performing the task of parenting **your child. Perhaps the term "carer" is not what is important, but the support that is available to which allows you to become more resilient in caring for your child.**

The unique thing that Carers Tasmania can offer you is the opportunity for a Carer Support and Wellbeing Check, and emotional support, through our Talking it Over, Caring for Carers program.

The Carer Support and Wellbeing check is an opportunity to speak with someone who is focused on *your* needs and experience, which can be overlooked when life is so intensely busy caring for your child. We like people to make an appointment as early as possible in their caring role, rather than waiting until tiredness and stress is out of hand. This appointment is also an opportunity to get to know the organisation, and you will be given information which can help you in your role.

For those who need additional support, there is *Talking it over Caring for Carers*, a free counselling program where you will receive encouragement and support, along with ideas and techniques for coping and bringing about change. Our professional counselling staff are tertiary qualified and experienced in dealing with carer issues. This is a free program, and all you need to do is call and request an appointment, there is no need to speak to a doctor or be referred by someone else. We have offices in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie, and counselling appointments can take place over the phone if it is too difficult to meet in person.

If you don't feel you need or have time for these things, you may consider simply becoming a member. This would enable you to receive our quarterly newsletter, and invitations to attend various functions and workshops across the year. In becoming a member, you can join your voice with our 2200 other members, so we can continue to create change for the estimated 73,800 Carers in Tasmania.

Please contact Carers Tasmania on 1800 242 636
www.carerstas.org.au

Simone Favelle
Carer and Community Engagement Officer



The Canary in the Coalmine: an 'insiders guide' to overload for loved ones and teachers.

Have you been to a Sydney domestic airport lately? Have you noticed the twelve foot high television screens with bright adverts, featuring shiny faced models, black on bright ice fonts, clicking over every few seconds?

What about the tracks of startling fluorescent lights spaced every half meter, their reflection in an eternal bounce from floor to ceiling across every wall and counter surface?

Have your ears encompassed the beeping at the bag check, the ever-present reversing taxis outside, as well as taking in the growl of the cappuccino machine and the squeaking and bashing of the expensive luggage trollies as they are manhandled into the crush of humanity waiting in the hall?

Have you seen the mass movement of the many thousand different bodies, clad in all colours, of all angles seething and writhing, waiting in snaked queues, accompanied by a thousand different timbre voice-notes?

Add in the simultaneous conflicting announcements from various carriers and blanket it all with a constant stream of not-so-background music, light years from any symphonic harmony.

Put it all in the washing machine that is a sensitive, autistic mind, crank it to rapid spin cycle and I can say you have a window into our world.

When children are asked to draw their happiest place, **their 'ideal world', they draw willowy trees, saucer-sized flowers, emerald grass and sapphire skies.** They don't draw concrete and metal and too loud, chaotic scenes.

I hear all the time "I am stressed...have too little time...need a holiday... to get away into the quiet..."

Why then, are we steam barreling toward a world that is the opposite of what we all need?

Perhaps we need to listen to the autistic soul.

Really listen.

Listen rather than just *observe* (as has been the *mistaken route of the past*) and use such insights of overload as a barometer for sanity.

Pull back, slow down, quieten. Simplify.

We allow ourselves to be dictated to by those few percent paid to make it all bright, flashy, stand-out-above-all-the-rest.

Meanwhile we all suffer the subtle corrosive effects eroding our serenity and our sanity.

Those in the minority, in this case: the sensitive autistic minds of this world, have a richness to teach on these matters.

Alyssa Aleksanian

I have been living with ASD for the last 40 years. I am a primary school teacher with a Masters in Teaching. I also hold a BA in Conservation of Cultural Material (majoring in chemistry) and BA in Visual Arts.

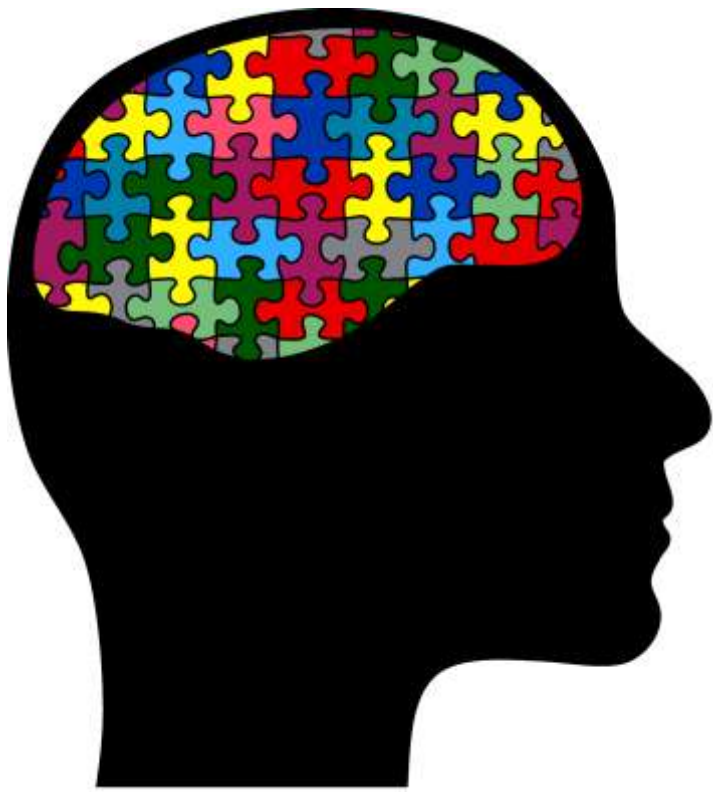
'Finding the light within darkness'

I guess I should start at the beginning my name is Jim Cashion and this is my story. When I was younger a group of people who shall not be named, tried to make my brother and I disabled. When we discovered this, we left to live with our father and step mother in Tasmania in 2012 just after Christmas.

Once we had finished settling in my brother found a school to go to very quickly but since I had lots of bad school problems I was very concerned about what kind of school it was and then I found City Campus and I have been going for 3 years. At the **start I wasn't sure about it until I was told that they don't allow bullying in the school and that rule still stands.** 1 year had passed and I got an offer to go to the Career Awareness program were I could go with other students from other schools to do a course on **children's services and it was great and once the 20 days were finished I resumed my learning at City Campus but I still keep in touch with my CAPs friends whenever possible.**

I have just started term 2 and started this Article. I hope that you have enjoyed reading my story and **here's a quote from me 'I may have Autism but I'm not Disabled'.**

Jim Cashion



ASD and the Brain: A discussion paper that examines some of the research on the morphology and functioning of the brain and how difficulties with information processing impact the development and functioning of individuals with ASD.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has a neurological basis. Since the 1960s neurologists have attempted to identify the brain structures and functions which cause the atypical information processing characteristics that are synonymous with ASD. This essay examines some of this research and discusses how difficulties with information processing impact on the development and functioning of individuals with ASD.

Information processing can be defined as the way in which the brain attributes meaning to information. Research has shown that individuals with ASD are able to acquire information equally as well as their neurotypical peers, but that their capacity to attach meaning to this information is constrained⁽¹⁾. Specifically, individuals with ASD experience difficulty

with the complexity and speed of the information processing demands inherent in everyday life. These difficulties have given rise to neuropsychological theories indicating that individuals with ASD have deficits in Theory of Mind, executive functioning and central coherence.

Theory of Mind (ToM) is the ability to recognise and understand the mental states of others. Individuals who lack ToM have difficulty attributing meaning and intent to the behaviours of other people, and are less able to predict subsequent actions⁽²⁾. Impaired ToM impacts the ability to interpret complex social interactions, specifically with regard to recognising and responding to the emotions and intentions of others.

Courchesne⁽³⁾ explains that the frontal lobe is primarily responsible for social understanding and the ability to process emotions. His post-mortem studies have revealed that individuals with ASD have excess neurons in their frontal cortex, but that these cells have not developed their full functions. This supports research involving magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) which has consistently identified several brain structures that are hypoactive in individuals with ASD during tasks which require ToM. The frontal and temporal lobes and the amygdala are particularly affected⁽⁵⁾.

Executive dysfunction in individuals with ASD accounts for deficits in organisation, planning, problem solving and impulse control. These difficulties impact on the ability to use information gleaned from previous experiences and apply it to a current novel situation in order to respond appropriately. These deficits are particularly evident when the individual is feeling anxious⁽²⁾.

Similarly to ToM, the frontal lobe is primarily indicated in executive functioning deficits. Courchesne (2013) reports that the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is closely linked with EF including planning, reasoning and high level cognition. MRI studies have shown that areas of the parietal lobe are also affected⁽⁵⁾. Regions of these lobes which are involved in the control of attention are particularly influenced⁽⁵⁾.

Central coherence (CC) refers to the ability to determine a higher level of meaning from various details in the environment. Deficits in CC impact the ability to generalise skills across settings (Attwood,

2008). CC difficulties also mean that individuals with **ASD often miss the intended "point" of a task or activity** and consequently misinterpret expectations and fail to respond appropriately.

Research into the brain systems that account for CC deficits in ASD suggests the combination of three main brain functions. Firstly, strong synchronisation between the parietal and occipital lobes indicates that individuals have strong visual and spatial processing skills. Secondly, reduced activity in the frontal lobe indicates that reasoning is impaired. Thirdly, the primary sensory cortices are strongly engaged ⁽⁵⁾. These three factors combine to indicate that individuals with ASD process sensory (particularly visual and spatial) information reasonably easily, but are less able to apply reasoning to this input to attribute global meaning.

In conclusion, a variety of brain structures have been identified by research to help explain atypical information processing in ASD. It is also important to consider the processes for interactions between these brain structures and the rest of the neural system. Research suggests that neural connectivity is atypical in autism, although the exact nature of this is as yet unknown ⁽⁵⁾.

Robyn Thomas
Autism Support
North

Footnotes:

1. Minsheu & Williams, 2008
2. Attwood, 2008
3. Courchesne, 2013
4. Meng-Chuan, Lombardo & Baron-Cohen, 2014
5. Philip, Dauvermann, Whalley, Baynham, Lawrie & Stanfield, 2012



FREE one day workshop for PARENTS/CARERS of school age students on the autism spectrum

Workshop: 2014TASPC3

Location: North West - Smithton

What will you learn?

As a result of participating in the workshops and information sessions as parents/carers you will gain:

- a greater understanding of the impact of autism on your child, both at school and at home
- knowledge about how to develop effective parent, school and teacher partnerships
- specific strategies on how to:
 - advocate for your child
 - **support your child's participation at school**
 - develop an awareness of ongoing learning needs
 - **information about your local school system's processes**
 - opportunities to network and share strategies with other parents/carers and key community members
 - opportunities for discussion around a range of topics relevant to students with an ASD and their families

Some key community representatives that support families living with autism will be identified and invited to participate in the workshop with a view to supporting a community focus beyond the workshop.

Workshop details:

Venue: Tall Timbers

5/15 Scotchtown Road, Smithton, Tasmania 7330

When: One day workshop – Wednesday 25 June 2014
9.00 am - 4.30 pm (Registration from 8.15 am)

Registration opens Wednesday 14 May 2014, and closes 2 days prior.

Online registrations preferred: please go to the website

www.positivepartnerships.com.au.

Positive Partnerships Info Line number: 1300 881 971
The Positive Partnerships initiatives have been developed and delivered by Partnerships between Education and the Autism Community (PEAC) and funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, through the Helping Children with Autism package.

The Positive Partnerships initiative is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education through the Helping Children with Autism Package. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or the Australian Government Department of Education.





Josh Timbs

Making Futures Brighter Family Fun Day at the Domain

On April the 13th at the Domain in Hobart we held a family fun day and walk to help raise community awareness about Autism.

We had a great turn out with heaps of people joining in the fun and lots of activities for the kids to do.

There was loom band making, brightly coloured hair, hand tattoos, face painting, a jumping castle, sports, games, arts and crafts, a balloon artist and we even **had some super heroes drop by to say "hi"**.

At the end of the day we all came together and walked a lap of the track to show our support for Autism Awareness.

Autism Tasmania would like to thank everyone who came and supported the Autism Awareness Making Futures Brighter Family Day.



At the starting line of the Making Futures Brighter Walk

We would like to say a special thanks to the business that donated goods for the day:

Cadburys, Lions Club of Hobart, Phil Robinson from **Robinson's Meats Glenorchy, Ingham's foods, Heroes**

4 kids, Toby and Gabby Wilson for the event flyer, Sally Sunshine Children Entertainment for our lovely flower balloons.

We would also like to thank the people that volunteered their time to help out on the day, Alice Taylor Cottrell, Miranda and Jesse Fox, Maggie, Eva, and Ashton Hill, Izzy Lindsay, Sophia Vella, Jess Walton, Anya Howard, Bec Vanveen, Alisa Walton for the face painting, Dannika Stewart and Robert Holzberger

And a very special thank you to Rebecca Wiaczek for all her hard work helping put the day together and on the day.

Robyn Davis
Autism Support South



And they are off...



Emma Lapham



Family Fun Day Launceston

Autism Awareness was celebrated in Launceston with a vibrant and busy atmosphere. Approximately one hundred people joined us on a chilly but fine day to

participate in a wide variety of activities. Popular was the jumping castle which provided a great outlet for children who wanted to warm up and exercise. Autism Tasmania was fortunate to work in partnership with Playgroup Tasmania and Giant Steps School this year to provide a richer experience for all attending. Of particular interest for children and adults were the sensory type activities which allowed for curious exploration of varied textures and mediums.

St Catherine's was the perfect venue for our event especially for children to whiz around the circuit on equipment generously provided by Playgroup Tasmania. The generous indoor area allowed for freshly popped pop corn, face painting and a quiet sensory space for those who wanted time away from activity.

After watching all this activity weary adults were able to enjoy a hot coffee from a coffee cart selling all sorts of delicious treats and beverages. In



conclusion a great day was had by all and we are keen to build on this event for 2015. A big thank you to all participants, volunteers, staff of Playgroup Tasmania and Giant Steps school and those who donated to help our event and ensured a successful day!

Deborah Smith
Autism Advisor North

Tips for the school assembly – ASD students

- Provide consistency and predictable patterns, eg. assembly leaders and routines, thereby minimising anxiety and any controlling or repetitive behaviours which tend to escalate in times of stress.
- The student may benefit from clear information about what is expected from them, a simple written list of assembly agenda items is calming to hold and refer to (can use visuals eg., PECS, photos, images, drawings).
- Some students with ASD benefit from transitioning or moving to a new environment or activity on their own so as to be settled into the activity or environment before the other students arrive. Alternatively, planning to move in smaller groups, such as half with the class teacher and half with the teacher aide, limits the sensory demands.
- Practise assembly routine as an individual or in small groups initially if possible. For example, go to the assembly area and listen to the music which will be played in advance.
- Minimise sensory demands of assembly such as the closeness of others, the noise of music and large groups, unexpected movement and distractions.
- Students may sit more successfully during assembly if they have access to fidget toys or preferred item to hold during assembly.
- Headphones can be used to dull the sensory demands of assembly music and speakers.
- The provision of increased structure via the choice of sitting in a predictable spot on a mat, using an individual carpet square or a specific chair may also help.
- Giving the student something concrete to focus on can address some of the anxiety relating to change – for example, a specific job or task to complete, such as carrying or operating equipment.
- Some students are too overwhelmed by the sensory demands of assembly and may need alternative activities and supervision. A gradual introduction to assembly (eg. attend until the principal finishes his/her talk then leave) may help develop the skills to cope with assembly.

'Not Even Wrong: A Father's Journey into the Lost History of Autism', by Paul Collins, published by Fusion Press in 2004.

I first read this book in 2005, a year after it was published and thought at the time what an amazing book and after re-reading **it hasn't lost any of its appeal or impact.**

The reason for re-reviewing this book, is that after having loaned it many times, to many different people: parents, carers and adults on the spectrum, **the comment that keeps being repeated is, 'this is a book that everyone should read, whether it be parents, family members or professionals.'**

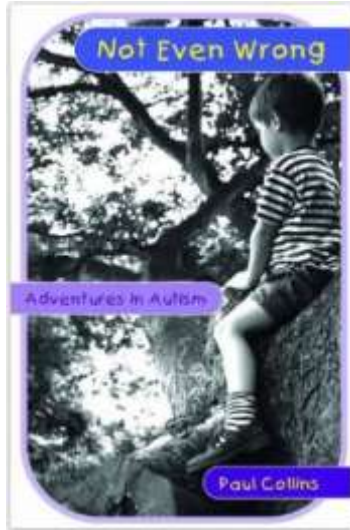
The book's author, Paul Collins, was charged with writing the history of Autism, for the publishers Fusion Press. He began by researching Peter the Wild Boy, the feral child found in a forest in France and ending up under the care of King George 1st court in the United Kingdom. Peter the Wild Boy was most likely one of the first recorded cases of autism. As the back cover of the book explains, 'the author, intrigued by this story set about uncovering the lost history of autism, examining forgotten geniuses and obscure medical history, travelling from English churchyards to the Seattle labs of Microsoft.'

In a fascinating read as the author takes us on a journey, first to understand the likes of Kanner and Asperger and their respective histories and where they came from but also from the viewpoint as a parent.

The book is a blend of Paul Collins' own personal experiences as a father and a wonderful journey through the historical and contemporary figures who may well have been on the spectrum. By the most amazing co-incidence during the research process the author's own two year old son, Morgan was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum.

It really is a wonderful read and if you haven't read it I highly recommend it to anyone who has an interest in ASD.

Rose Clark
Autism Support
North West Coast



I'll Tell You Why ... I Can't Wear Those Clothes: Talking About Tactile Defensiveness

Author: Noreen O'Sullivan

Jessica Kingsley Publishers



The *I'll Tell You Why...* book series aims to answer questions parents and teachers ask children each day: "Why can't you just...?"

Reading it for the first time, I was struck by the use of language which gives the impression of a child speaking directly to you.

The book helps to explain some of the seemingly inscrutable reactions caused by tactile defensiveness, and could be a good starting point for discussion with your child about how things feel for them. I think it would help to explain tactile defensiveness to adults in your circle who struggle to understand why a child just can't wear those clothes!

A quick and easy read, it's designed to be read along with your child. Although my son didn't seem to have as much of a connection with it as I thought he might. There is potential for extension activities and spaces left for drawing and writing with guiding questions, should your child engage with the book.

Ideally the book would provide an opportunity for children to talk about their individual needs and experiences.

The series is initially focusing on sensory issues, other books in the series are, *I'll Tell You Why... Eating Should Be Fun!* and *I'll Tell You Why... I Just Can't Sit Still!* **Both of which I am looking forward to reading!**

Sara Lindsay

Are you a member of Autism Tasmania?

If so, you can borrow books and DVDs (3 in total) from our libraries in Newstead and Moonah?

Books can be borrowed for 1 month,
DVDs for 1 week.

Check out our website for the listing of resources in your area.



Diagnosis: Autism?
Where to now?
Launceston workshops

Tips for Everyday Skills

June 23, 9:30 – 12pm

During this workshop you will learn:

- Why everyday self help skills can be hard for a child with ASD
- Strategies to help develop all skills
- Tips to specifically help with toileting
- Tips to specifically help with sleep

Understanding Behaviour – A Step by Step Guide for Parents

September 22, 9:30-2:30pm

During this practical workshop you will learn:

- **How to understand your child's behaviour**
- Ways to select and teach your child new behaviour
- How to promote positive behaviours

Autism Tasmania are proudly supporting families by providing workshops for mothers, fathers and other family carers of children who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Early Days is a national program funded by the Federal Government under the Helping Children with Autism Strategy and is run by local facilitators.

- Free of charge to attend
- Workshops are held in small groups and give you the chance to meet other parents
- Light refreshments provided, BYO lunch
- Childcare is not provided

REGISTER TODAY!
Email: robymt@autismtas.org.au
Phone: Robyn Thomas (Northern facilitator): 0458 375 604
or Hobart: 1300 288 476

This workshop is for parents and other family carers only. For professional development opportunities, please contact your state/territory Autism Association.

Autism Specific
Professional Development
for Teachers, TA's & Child Care Educators

Choose from topics focusing on students with ASD in the school setting.

Transitions & Routines

Planning for major and minor transitions and establishing routines.

Launceston 24 June 2014

Hobart 26 June 2014

Sensory sensitivities

Raising awareness and strategies for the school setting

Launceston 29 July 2014

Hobart 31 July 2014

Understanding anxiety

Recognising symptoms and triggers.

Launceston 19 August 2014

Hobart 21 August 2014

Social Skills

Explicit teaching of social skills to promote inclusion and social interactions.

Launceston 9 September 2014

Hobart 4 September 2014

Positive Behaviour Support

Reducing challenging behaviour with replacement skills

Launceston 14 October 2014

Hobart 16 October 2014

Individualise the programme to meet your needs.

Cost: \$38.50 per session

(GST included)

Certificate of attendance for each session

Hobart: Autism Tasmania Training Room 2
1 Bowen Road Moonah

Time: 7-9pm

Launceston: Northern Children's Network
Training Room

59D Amy Road Newstead

Time: 7-9pm

For booking enquiries

Phone: 1300 288 476

or email: admin@autismtas.org.au



ABN: 90 215 494 454

Hobart

1 Bowen Road, Moonah
PO Box 514, Moonah 7009
Ph: (03) 6278 9985

Launceston

59D Amy Road, Newstead
PO Box 358, Newstead 7250
Ph: (03) 6344 1212

Phone: 1300 288 476
Fax: (03) 6278 3020
Email: autism@autismtas.org.au
www.autismtas.org.au

