

# *Spectrum News*

*The Quarterly Magazine of Autism Tasmania Inc.*

· Winter 2015





1300 288 476  
 www.autismtas.org.au  
 autism@autismtas.org.au

**HOBART**

1 Bowen Road Moonah, TAS  
 PO Box 514, Moonah, TAS, 7009

**LAUNCESTON**

59D Amy Road, Launceston  
 PO Box 358, Newstead, TAS, 7250

**Autism Tasmania Inc.**

**Terry Burke**  
 CEO

**Philippa Geard** Accountant  
**Allison Lapham** Administration

**Kate Wilson**  
 Consultant

Southern Information Team

**Robyn Davis**  
**Jodie Denman**  
**Amy Jansen**

North/North West Information Team

**Rose Clark**      **Maree Morgan**  
**Deborah Smith**   **Robyn Thomas**

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**Cover image:**

2014 Autism Awareness Ambassador Zachary Roeth with Constable Kate & Constable Sam at Light it Up Blue 2015

## **"Future Directions - Exploring the opportunities for success in further education and employment for people on the autism spectrum"**

was held at the Derwent Entertainment Centre on 16 June 2015. This event was a collaboration between Autism Tasmania, the National Disability Coordination Officer Program and the Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability.

We were fortunate to secure the services of John X (ABC Radio Announcer and Entertainer) as MC for the workshop which was attended by over 120 people from around the State.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive with 90% rating the event as very good and commenting on the quality of the speakers and the catering. The networking that took place over the breaks was vibrant and there was no drop off during the day even though it did not finish until after 4.00pm. It was noted that due to the chilly morning it



was a while before participants were comfortable as the air conditioning struggled to heat the large room. Chris Varney, Director from the "I Can" Network (pictured left), was well received by the audience during the day and we will be following up with those that expressed interest in

establishing a network within Tasmania.

## **Roberts Limited 150 Year Celebrations**

As one of the two nominated charity partners for the Roberts Limited 150 Year Celebrations, Autism Tasmania has been invited to present at the 150 Anniversary Gala Dinner on the 11 July. We will have dual branded flyers with Rural Alive and Well at each table and our banners on display. It is expected that there will be over 740 attendees including State Politicians and the Ruralco Board. This is a great opportunity for our organisation to raise awareness around autism.

In addition we have the opportunity to have signage in up to 40 Roberts locations throughout the state inviting people to visit our website to increase their knowledge and understanding of autism with the slogan **"Your Awareness will Reward us All"**.

## **Constitution**

The period for member input for the review of the Autism Tasmania Constitution closed on the 15 June and we thank those members that provided their feedback. This will now be collated and the Board will develop a new constitution to be put to members at a Special General Meeting. Notice of this meeting will be circulated once confirmed.

## **New Premises in Southern Tasmania**

It is with a great deal of excitement that we can announce Autism Tasmania is on the move in the South to new premises at 21 Goulburn Street Hobart. After many months of looking for suitable premises we have found this central location on the city fringe that will provide individuals, families, and our members easy access to our resources.

I would like to acknowledge the great support we have received from Langford Support Services Inc, our landlord of the Moonah site over the last five years.

The new premises gives us two training rooms, consult rooms and most importantly access for our visitors to our resources in a more comfortable and relaxed environment. In addition the new site will increase our profile with funders and the public alike with improved signage and presence. The site will accommodate a member drop in centre for information, resources and access to our growing library. So if you are in and around town please pay us a visit to check out your new facility.

We will be moving to the new site on the 8 July and should fully operational by the 13 July. In the meantime your calls will be diverted from the evening of the 7 July to our Launceston office. If you have any matters that are more urgent we will have one mobile that will be operational during this period 0408 376 838 in normal business hours. Telstra cannot guarantee our new numbers until the installation however the current numbers for our land line and fax will be diverted to the new numbers for six months. We will advise our members and clients of our new numbers for the main phone line and fax once confirmed and operational. Your patience during transition is appreciated.

Subject to future funding we would see the Hobart office and facilities as a forerunner to similar sites in the North and North West.

**Terry Burke, CEO**



### **Hobart**

Hobart's Parliament House turned blue again this year to celebrate World Autism Awareness Day. On Thursday the 2nd of April cities around the world participated in "Light It Up Blue", an initiative where major landmarks and buildings are lit up blue to show support for individuals with autism and their families.

The focus was on family fun this year and thanks to an amazing group of professionals, two jam-packed hours of free entertainment was on offer for children of all ages. Due to inclement weather and strong winds, it was decided at the last minute to move the children's entertainment indoors. The Salamanca Inn very kindly made a function room available at very short notice to ensure everyone stayed warm and dry while enjoying the festivities. Constable Melissa Thomas and Constable Rowena Watling were accompanied by Constable Kate (Emily Thomas) and Constable Sam (Adele Auchterlonie) who handed out stickers, posed for photos and encouraged children to dress up in police attire. There were performances by Mr Beep (Daryl Peebles), Tony le Fevre's Marionettes, Bodane Hatten and The Scallywags. Jo from Rompers Dance led a fun musical workshop for the children and The Balloon Lady and The Face Painting Lady kept everyone entertained with amazing balloon creations and blue-themed faces. In partnership with Autism Tasmania, the event also included the screening of the Tasmania Premiere of the documentary Spectroscopic - Stories of Autism which included several Tasmanian contributors.

The evening was concluded with the "Light It Up Ceremony" on Parliament Lawns officiated by the Minister for Human Services and the Minister for Women, the Honourable Jacquie Petrusma MP. Minister Petrusma introduced the 2015 Autism Awareness Ambassador Ashton Hill as well as the two

runner ups Jack Masterton and Liam Nicholson. All three finalists spoke about why World Autism Awareness Day was important to them before Ashton was given the task of leading the crowd in a countdown and turning the lights on. Once again, Light It Up Blue Hobart was made possible due to the support and generosity of local organisations and businesses in particular Gareth Kays from GK Productions Australia who again donated his time and the LED lights for the event. 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**



### **Burnie**

The Makers' Workshop on the highway just next to Burnie's West Park oval turned BLUE on the evening of April 2<sup>nd</sup> to mark World Autism Awareness Day. "Makers", as it is known in Burnie, is now under the wing of UTAS who enthusiastically accepted the suggestion of 'Lighting It Up Blue' to acknowledge this special day.

The 'lighting man' was very committed to making sure people saw the building and used 3 separate logos on the western end of the building which alternated during the evening as well as lighting up the entire front with blue....!

The logos were Autism Tasmania, Light It Up Blue and World Autism Awareness Day.

A small enthusiastic group of parents and children met at Makers', went out for tea and came back to witness the amazing blue of the huge building that is one of Burnie's most noticeable.

It is the first time that the north-west has 'Lit It Up Blue' and it was due, largely to the willingness of UTAS to participate – we thank them greatly.

## Autism Ambassadors 2015

World Autism Awareness Day is important to me because, I have autism.

I think all people with autism should be respected like everyone else, even if people know or not that a person is effected by autism. Sometimes, days can be hard because you can get picked on and teased....all because you think a little different! It really shouldn't matter if you understand things differently, that makes us who we are. So awareness is important to teach people without autism more about it.

- **Ashton Hill**



Hi my name is Liam, I have autism. I am a prefect in Grade 10 at Rokeby High School. World Autism Awareness Day is important to me as more people understand what it is like to have autism. Some things that people might want to be aware of about me, because I have autism, are, that I have trouble concentrating when it is very noisy. And I do not like to be hugged as I do not like the way it feels. There are some things that I like to do the same way every day, such as getting my breakfast and if someone tries to interrupt my breakfast routine I feel tense and annoyed and it makes me feel anxious. Friends know that I have autism and they choose not to talk about their girlfriend's when they are around me, as they know that I am not interested in having a girlfriend at the moment. World Autism Awareness Day also makes me feel special. Thank you.

- **Liam Nicholson**

Jack is 10 years old and in Grade 5. He has high functioning autism. Jack is very passionate about social justice and when I asked him if he would like me to put him forward to be an ambassador he jumped at the opportunity . When I asked him why it is important for there to be greater awareness around autism and autism awareness day his response was as follows:

"Because kids on the spectrum can feel and think that they are alone when they are not. There are people out there that care about them; I care about them!

Autistic people are all unique, caring and have a special gift !OUR AUTISM SHOULD BE EMBRACED! The more people know about it the better."

- **April & Jack Masterton**



### **Sandpiper Ocean Cottages - Escape to Bicheno**

Congratulations - Natasha Kean

In our Autumn Spectrum News edition all members who currently received their Spectrum News via email were automatically placed in a draw for a family holiday on the beautiful East Coast of Tasmania.

For those members who received a printed version of Spectrum News they could also enter the draw by giving instructions to change to the new electronic format. The electronic format is much more user friendly and readable. Please consider changing to this format which will minimise our production costs.

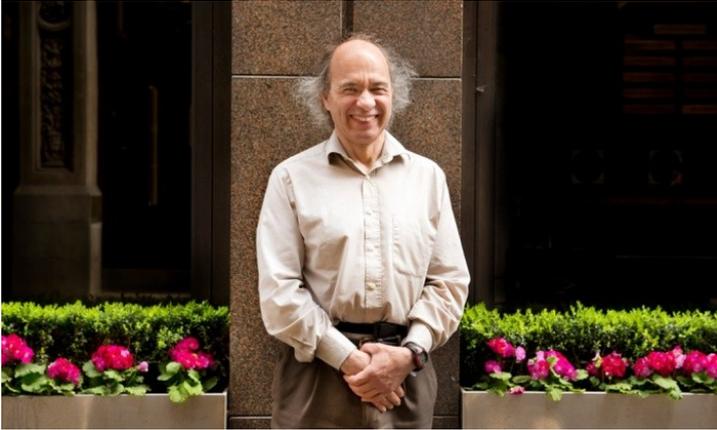
Natasha's name was randomly selected from a draw held on 1 June 2015. Natasha and her family were delighted to

have the opportunity to visit Bicheno.



### ***The innovators: matching autistic people with jobs needing special skills***

**Where often the normal recruitment process can fail, Specialisterne helps place people with autism into firms that need workers with a keen eye for detail**



Thomas Madar, who is on the autistic spectrum, struggled to find employment, but now checks software for Ernst & Young after being placed by Specialisterne. Photograph: Linda Nyland/Guardian

Although he enjoyed his first job in software development when he left university in the late 1970s, Thomas Madar found difficulty in fitting in. Like many people on the autistic spectrum, the now 58-year-old had problems in the working world and was dismissed as a poor communicator.

Over the coming years, he went from courses in third-level education to jobs and back again, but sometimes struggled in interviews where, by his own admission, he would not sell himself as someone who was likable and who fitted into teams.

When he got his current position as a software tester at Ernst & Young last year, he says his social skills had improved over the years. Also at hand was [Specialisterne](#) (Danish for the Specialists), a company which strives to match up people with autism to jobs where characteristics such as attention to detail and an adherence to structure act as a competitive advantage.

Thorkil Sonne was what he describes as a “traditional career man” before his son Lars was diagnosed with autism at the age of three, leading to questions about

what would happen to his child in the future when he and his wife Annette were unable to support him. The answer was very little. By 2004, Sonne had remortgaged his house and set up Specialisterne with the aim of getting people with autism, who are vastly underemployed or unemployed, into jobs where their skills can be taken advantage of, usually in the IT industry where attributes like seamless repetition and attention to detail are cherished.

“The idea that people who formally have a disability can produce and sometimes even outperform non-disabled people in the workspace is quite a disruptive thought for employers,” said Sonne.

The organisation – a trading entity which is owned by a charitable foundation – has now spread to 13 countries, including Britain, where for the last two years it has placed people on the spectrum in positions in the BBC, the NHS and Lockheed Martin in Glasgow among others.

“We are trying to help people who are employable who have what we consider to be needless hurdles put in their way by employers, not in any kind of malicious way, but by kind of not really thinking about the hurdles that do exist,” said Tom Brundage, director of the UK operation.

“Most of the candidates we talk to are living with parents, in many cases ageing parents, and all the ones that come across our radar, are universally keen to work.”

According to the [National Autistic Society](#), there are around 700,000 people with autism in the UK. Of these, Brundage said 85% – almost 600,000 – are unemployed even though many of them are employable. The problems can start at the interview stage for a job, should they even get to that stage.

“People with autism are very literal for the most part so they get very confused by metaphors and business speak. They will understand things very directly and they will speak very directly and sometimes without us there to facilitate that interview process, it won’t go well even to the point where people on the spectrum are not very good at selling themselves and touting their skills,” he said.

Where Specialisterne operates is in between – linking up their database of candidates with jobs which would fit, typically in software testing and web

development. Candidates are accompanied to their interviews so that they can be assisted to display their best side. If they get the position, they are contracted to the employer via Specialisterne.

The "autism advantage" to employers can be an attention to detail and the ability to repeat tasks numerous times without losing interest or getting bored, coupled with a loyalty to their employer.

"People on the spectrum with their attention to detail and their intolerance for errors, they have very good pattern-recognition skills. Those really fit the big data environment right now. We are talking to a number of the banks to provide our specialists for projects to do with fraud detection and anti-money laundering," said Brundage. "For people on the spectrum, if they find a place that they like, they won't move, they tend to stay put."

Toby Hildon, who works in diversity and inclusion for BBC Digital, describes his experiences working with people with autism as positive. Downsides, he said, were only present if staff were not geared towards inclusiveness in general.

In Britain, up to 20 people have been placed in positions so far, said Brundage. Worldwide that number is in the "three figures" according to Sonne. "What you see is what you get. There is not really a political agenda. They are very honest. Some [employers] have to get used to that. It is really a relief," he said.

Problems can arise when that honesty is taken in the wrong way, although Brundage maintains that "sometimes fresh talk is good". Typically those who are placed by Specialisterne are male between 20 and 30. Advancement in positions is not necessarily an aim, as sometimes candidates are happy and content in the position that they find themselves in, he said.

"I think there is much more optimism now. There are many examples of employment projects or concepts and there are a lot of employers who are willing to talk about their experiences. I think the idea that many people with autism can actually be big assets for a company, that message is spreading very well," said Sonne.

Madar finds his new role in Ernst & Young, where he gets to understand software and tests its performance, technically challenging and satisfying. "I

am a very meticulous person and I am ideally suited to software testing," he said.

"I can detect small discrepancies which neurotypical [not on the autistic spectrum] people can't detect so my work is done slowly but is of very high quality."

That same working environment in which he encountered so many problems over 30 years ago, has now changed, he said. "There is a greater recognition of the challenges presented by autism especially in the social setting and also my social skills have progressively improved over the years."

## Making up the 1%

The German software company SAP aims to have 1% of its workforce comprises people with autism within five years - adding up to about 650 people. The multinational works with Specialisterne to employ people with autism as software testers, programmers and in data quality assurance. The project was piloted in Germany, India and Ireland and later spread to North America.

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## ***New research partnership targets adults and employment***



La Trobe University's [Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre](#) partnering with Government, Industry and NGO to maximise opportunities for meaningful work for adults with [Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\)](#).

While the prevalence of ASD in Australia and elsewhere is between 1-2%, less than half of those of an employable age in Australia have work.

Now, in a world first, the University's Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC) has signed a research partnership with Hewlett Packard Australia and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to seek to understand how having a job impacts the lives of those with ASD.

The findings will help shape optimal future work opportunities.

OTARC Director Cheryl Dissanayake says people with ASD have unique skills and abilities, such as good attention to detail and interests in patterns that deserve to be recognized. Her team will monitor progress and outcomes of the new recruits.

'It is critically important to increase employment opportunities for adults with ASD. Everyone knows having a job provides a sense of wellbeing and self-efficacy. Moreover, employment reduces reliance on government funding and increases the tax base, meaning that this is a win not only for the person with ASD, but also their families, their employers and the community at large.'

The collaboration – called the Dandelion Project – involves the Danish Specialist People Foundation and its new local affiliation, Specialisterne Centre Australia who select and assess people with ASD, who are then hired by Hewlett Packard to work as software testers at DHS.

La Trobe and SPF are also signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to help establish Specialisterne Centre Australia.

Founder & Chairman of Specialist People Foundation and Specialisterne Thorkil Sonne is delighted with the collaboration with La Trobe University.

'At APAC conference in Brisbane in 2009 I mentioned it would take some years to get here. But now we are! I am excited to establish a relationship with La Trobe University to assist us in the establishment of Specialisterne Centre Australia.

Employers will in the coming years have a fantastic opportunity to get access to untapped pool of talented people with ASD. HP and DHS have seen the potential and are leading the way in Australia. The collaboration with La Trobe University will give us an opportunity to document the effect of employment, improve the scalability of job creation and further improve our approaches.'

The MOU will co-locate SPF's trainers with OTARC, giving the trainers access to latest research outcomes on successful work and transitions for adults with ASD.



Vice Chancellor Professor John Dewar and Specialist People Founder Thorkil Sonne sign Memorandum Of Understanding to co-locate Specialisterne Centre Australia at La Trobe University

Vice Chancellor Professor John Dewar has welcomed the collaboration.

'This underpins La Trobe's proud tradition of undertaking research that impacts big social issues, such as autism, disability and employment. We see this research partnership as informing game changing public policy as we transition to the NDIS.'

La Trobe is a world leader in autism research and service with the first centre dedicated to ASD research established on campus in 2008, the Victorian Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre established in 2010 and the Early Assessment Clinic for ASDs established in 2011.



### ***Longitudinal Study of School Leavers with Autism: Invitation to Participate***

The transition from school to adult life for people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families is one of the most difficult periods to traverse. Services and support are fragmented, and this stage of life for individuals with an ASD remains poorly coordinated and poorly researched. Researchers from the **Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre** the Autism Cooperative Research Centre (Autism CRC) are together conducting the longitudinal study, A unique profile of school leavers with Autism.

For this purpose, OTARC would like to invite adolescents and adults (with or without an ASD) who are in their final year of school, or first year post-school (aged 15-25), to participate in a longitudinal study. We are also inviting parents or guardians of these students to be involved.

#### **What are the aims of this study?**

The main aim of this study is to better understand the process of transitioning from school to adult life for Australian students with an ASD and their families.

We would also like to understand how students who DO NOT have an ASD transition from school to adult life, in order to understand the unique ASD profiles and issues associated with this period.

#### **Who can participate in this study?**

- 15-25 year olds who have an Autism Spectrum condition
- Students with an ASD, finishing school or in their first year post-school
- Students without an Autism Spectrum condition finishing school or in their first year post-school
- A parent/guardian of one of the above young

#### **What is involved?**

As a participant you will be asked to:

- Complete one survey when you first agree to participate, followed by two further surveys, one 12 months later and again at 24 months.
- If you are a young person, you will be asked to complete questions about yourself.
- If you are a parent of a young person, you will be asked questions about yourself and your child, including questions about your well being.
- You will not need to complete all of the survey questions at once; you will have one month from commencement date to complete the entire survey.
- The survey can be completed either on-line or as a hard copy (paper booklet).

#### **How can I participate or find out more about this study?**

You can contact Dr Mirko Uljarevic, CRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow, OTARC, [M.Uljarevic@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:M.Uljarevic@latrobe.edu.au); or Ms Ru Ying Cai, PhD Candidate, OTARC, [R.Cai@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:R.Cai@latrobe.edu.au)



## ***Cognitive empathy versus Affective empathy in autism – how Theory of Mind impacts individuals with autism spectrum disorder.***

Difficulties with social interaction skills are a core characteristic of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Social skills influence an individual's likelihood of succeeding in areas of daily living and vocational pursuits as well as their ability to form and maintain friendships and relationships (Howlin & Moss, 2012). Genuine and mutual social relationships are formed on a foundation of empathy (Bons *et al.*, 2013). Deficits in empathy have long been reported as being characteristic of ASD. But how accurate is this? This article reviews the research regarding empathy in autism.

### **Definitions**

Empathy is the ability to recognise, comprehend and connect with another person's emotional state and frame of mind (Handford, Lemon, Grimm & Vollmer-Conna, 2013; Bons *et al.*, 2013). There is a general consensus in the literature that the construct of empathy is multidimensional, comprising of *affective empathy* and *cognitive empathy* (Davis, 1980; Baron-Cohen & Belmonte, 2005; Bons *et al.*, 2013). Affective empathy involves the emotional response to another's feelings and cognitive empathy involves an intellectual understanding of those feelings. Theory of Mind (ToM) is an important component of cognitive empathy.

Theory of mind refers to the ability to recognise and comprehend the thoughts, beliefs, desires and

intentions of other people (Attwood, 2008), and is therefore an inseparable component of cognitive empathy. The term *mentalising* is synonymous with ToM. People with a well-developed ToM are able to use perceived information regarding affect and mental states to predict and make sense of the behaviour of others (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Smith, 2009). They can also recognise that the feelings, thoughts and beliefs of another person may not correspond with reality (Colle, Baron-Cohen & Hill, 2007).

### **Research**

Affective empathy and cognitive empathy cannot be easily disentangled. Many researchers discuss their findings of behavioural studies in terms of how the two dimensions of empathy interrelate. For example, Senland and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013) used results from qualitative reports to suggest that the heightened level of personal distress observed in adolescent participants may occur because they experience empathic concern, but are unable to express these feelings in socially appropriate ways (using cognitive empathy).

### **Cognitive empathy and ToM**

Simon Baron-Cohen is a psychologist who has made considerable contributions to the research literature on empathy, and ToM in particular. His seminal research with colleagues Alan Leslie and Uta Frith in 1985 was the first to suggest that children with ASD were unable to determine the beliefs of others (Baron-Cohen *et al.*, 1985). Since the publication of Baron-Cohen *et al.*'s (1985) influential paper, researchers have further explored the development of ToM in autism. There is general consensus in the extant literature that ToM deficits are a core feature of autism (see Kaland, Callesen, Møller-Nielsen, Mortensen & Smith, 2008; Yirmiya, Erel, Shaked and Solomonica-Levi, 1998).

Several behavioural studies have explored the extent to which ToM development is delayed in autism. This research suggests that individuals with ASD may use compensatory strategies to counteract their ToM deficits. For example, Kaland *et al.* (2008) suggest that individuals with ASD may rely on IQ or on more

logical reasoning skills than their neurotypical peers when attempting to understand the mental states of others.

In addition to the behavioural studies, a neurological basis for ToM impairment has been explored. Frith and Frith (2003) report that neural imaging studies conducted on adults reveal that three regions of the brain (the medial prefrontal cortex, temporal poles and superior temporal sulcus) are probably critical in ToM abilities. The amygdala and the fusiform gyrus are also indicated as being involved in inferring mental states from facial expressions, and have shown reduced activation in adolescents with ASD (Piggot *et al.*, 2004).

In summary, both behavioural and NI studies have demonstrated general ToM deficits in individuals with ASD. Some researchers have postulated that individuals may be able to employ alternative cognitive processes to compensate for innate ToM difficulties.

### **Affective Empathy**

There are several behavioural studies which report distinct findings with regards to affective empathy in autism. Personal distress and empathic concern, as indicators of affective empathy figure prominently in the literature. McDonald and Messinger (2013) report that even before diagnosis young children with ASD between 24 and 30 months exhibited less expressed concern to their parent's distress in comparison to their neurotypical peers, indicating delayed affective empathy. In a study involving adults with ASD Dziobek *et al.* (2008) stated that individuals with ASD reported higher scores on personal distress and only slightly lower empathic concern ratings than neurotypical controls. A similar pattern of findings was reported by Senland and Higgins-D'Alessandro

(2013) who conducted a study with adolescents. Thus, in terms of personal distress and empathic concern, it is possible that affective empathy improves with age, and that affective empathy is less impacted than cognitive empathy in autism.

Neural-imaging studies of empathy focus primarily on the amygdala. Mixed results have been reported. Some studies report amygdala hyper-responsivity (as noted by Smith, 2009; see also Monk *et al.*, 2010; Kleinhans *et al.*, 2009), while others report reduced activation during emotion recognition tasks (for example, Piggot *et al.*, 2004; Greimel *et al.*, 2010). These discrepancies indicate a need for careful analysis of neural imaging research and cautious application of results. It seems that further research in the area of amygdala activation and its connection to empathy in autism is also needed.

In summary, research reveals that individuals with ASD experience deficits in cognitive empathy, particularly in ToM. It also seems likely that affective empathy is relatively less impacted in autism, there may even be a surfeit of affective empathy. Neural imaging empathy studies have shown mixed results, probably as a consequence of confusion regarding the precise cognitive demands of the task being presented. Empathy skills in autism appear to improve with age. This is most likely due to the application of compensatory strategies, wherein individuals with ASD apply their strengths to help overcome areas in which they experience difficulty.

*This article is an extract from a longer paper entitled The evidence for lack of empathy and delayed or absent development of Theory of Mind in autism spectrum disorder, written by Robyn Thomas towards the postgraduate Masters of Autism Studies degree of Griffiths University. The full paper (including reference citations) is available by request.*



**EARLY BIRD REGISTRATIONS!**  
Closing Wednesday 15 July 2015. **REGISTER NOW!**

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PACIFIC AUTISM  
CONFERENCE  
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre  
9|10|11 September 2015

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## Autism Tasmania goes to Agfest!



An exciting time for Autism Tasmania was had recently when a generous invitation from Roberts resulted in us having a presence in Agfest for the first time. For those not familiar with Agfest it is one of the key highlights on the Tasmanian calendar. This year was particularly important for Roberts who are celebrating 150 years of service to the Tasmanian community.



I was fortunate to be asked to attend on Autism Tasmania's behalf and was privileged to meet up with parents, grandparents, and children who care

for or who live with someone on the autism spectrum. The setting allowed for informal valuable conversations with the opportunity to offer information to interested people.

Roberts featured [SpectroSpectives](#) which is a collection of short video snapshots of peoples lived experiences, parenting or caring for someone on the spectrum. This was a wonderful way to raise awareness in a setting where one might not expect to find information about autism.

**Deborah Smith**

## Hobart Family Fun Day



On April the 12<sup>th</sup> we held our family fun day at the Derwent Entertainment Centre to help raise community awareness about Autism.

We had a great turn out with around 450 people joining in all the fun throughout the day.

Fossil Rock kindly donated their time to provide the musical entertainment for the day and some of the activities we had were coloured hair, face painting, jumping castle, sports games provided by Special Olympics, arts and crafts tables and Sally Sunshine the balloon artist.

This year for the first time we had a wonderful display of Lego from the Tasmanian Brick Enthusiasts and we would also like to thank them for judging the winners of our Lego Colouring Competition.

We also have a great range of cars much to the delight of both adults and children.

A special thanks to the businesses that donated their time and goods for the day including The Lions Club of Glenorchy, Phil Robinson from Robinson's Meats Glenorchy, Sally Sunshine Children Entertainment for our lovely balloons, Cassie Xintavelonis and her React Drama class, Jess King and the Little Flames from Phoenix danze.

Thank you also to our wonderful volunteers - Maggie, Eva, Ashton, Damian and Adam Hill, Sophie James, Teresa Jones, Jess Walton for the face painting, Maegan Cross, Ben Smith and Brook for giving out the activity bags and entertaining the kids.

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

Thank you to all who came and supported the Autism Tasmania Family fun Day.

**Robyn Davis**



Hamish (aged 10) - proud winner of Lego Colouring Competition

## Burnie Family Fun Day



Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup> was a beautiful Burnie day with lots of sunshine and a breeze that refreshed the organisers as we put up gazebos and set out food, tables for slime and other activities for the children and families who rolled up in amazing numbers.

The Fun Day provided families with an array of activities for all children. The location on the Burnie Waterfront meant that the playground was utilised along with the jumping castle, a very large gymnastic mat for those who wanted to try something different and for something a little quieter there was a wonderful face painter.

'Go Blue for Autism in April' meant that there was a myriad of children and parents wearing blue as well as eating sausages from the barbecue and lots of blue food that was bought along for the picnic table.

Children, parents, siblings and extended family enjoyed a wonderful couple of hours together in the sun. It was also fantastic to see and meet 'Indi' the assistance dog featured in a story written for the [Autumn Spectrum News](#) by one of our north west families. Indi, although in working mode met another assistance dog at the Fun Day, who was also trained in Ballarat and is a relative – it was great to see them acknowledge each other.

The event was co-hosted by Autism Tasmania and the Autism Centre, known as ASELCC in Burnie. It was a great opportunity for families of young children to meet others who have travelled along the path of autism for a little longer with many stories being told and information exchanged.

**Rose Clark**

## Launceston Family Fun Day



St Catherine's Hall was a hive of activity on April 18 as around fifty families rocked up to the Family Fun Day in Launceston. There were plenty of activities to keep the children entertained. The jumping castle was a favourite of course, as was the Coffee Buzz coffee van. Children also enjoyed humming around on scooter boards and dancing in the bubbles. The diabolo, spinning discs, skipping ropes and giant parachute attracted not only the children, but tested the skill of many parents too! Inside the hall we were charmed by the beautiful singing of Abbey Billing while children had their faces painted and enjoyed some messy play in the Giant Steps sensory tubs.



We would like to offer our sincere appreciation to the staff members from Giant Steps for volunteering their time, equipment and enthusiasm, to Abbey Billing for her time and talent, to Youngs Vegie Shed for their donation of fruit, to St Leonards Primary School for lending us some play equipment, and to The Church of Latter Day Saints for enabling us to use their carpark. We look forward with excitement to the Launceston Family Fun Day in 2016!

**Robyn Thomas**

### Holidays and Transitions



I recently took a family trip to Melbourne.

The first 2 days of our holiday was a nightmare. Our 9yr old was totally overwhelmed. His behaviour was over the top at times. I soon realised he was over stimulated. Too noisy, too busy and way too many people. He struggled with being

disorientated. Not knowing where we were going, where our hotel was, what time trains or trams we were catching, where we eating. It was all too much. After finding a good map and showing him where we were staying and where popular sites were he was a lot more settled. We also had figured out where and what trams and trains we could catch. I did not give a thought to how the trip would have affected him. Next time we travel, I will be more prepared, I will draw a map of where we are staying including tram and train lines, buildings that we may visit like the Information Centre, Sea Life Melbourne Aquarium, train station, popular shops like Woollies and McDonalds etc and research the train and tram times. I will roughly set out what we will be doing and where we are going. Next time I will be prepared.

After my son's school was burnt down during bushfires we frequently sat outside the school watching it being rebuilt, talking about where we thought his classroom was and what it might look like, where the office might be, other classrooms, the library, toilets, if there would be new play equipment, what colours the inside of the classrooms might be, basically any topic he brought up. When the school was finally finished we walked along the decks peeking through the windows before it was opened. Then finally the day before school started we checked out his classroom. I feel this helped a great deal with the transition to his new school. It changed his attitude from "I'm not going to school , it's not my school any more " to a very happy boy ready to start a new year in a totally new school.

**Lee-anne Webb**

### Autism and Me - By Alice Cotterell

Imagine you're an astronaut and you've discovered a new planet, you decide to land and check for intelligent life. When you land you realise that this planet seems almost identical to your home planet BUT the people are the complete opposite. Every time you try to talk to someone they stare straight at your eyes as if they've seen a ghost, pull funny faces and answer with strange sentences that make no sense whatever. So after a whole day of trying to speak to people and avoid eye contact you decide that you should head back to your home planet. But when you get back to where you landed, you find your rocket ship getting devoured by a giant carnivorous plant the size of a house! You now have to live on this foreign planet until someone comes to find you. After a couple of years, still no one has come to get you. For the rest of your life you will misunderstand everything, this is what the rest of your life will be like.

Every child who has Autism is different. Some yell a lot, some are quiet and don't like to be near large groups of people. Along with behaviour there are many other things you may come across in a person with Autism, like a VERY large vocabulary (sometimes you might notice they have a favourite topic that they may go on and on and on about it until you interrupt them).

I have high functioning Autism. I am quiet (sometimes so quiet I'm invisible). I have a large vocabulary but I don't use it that much. I can never be still for long. I find it almost IMPOSSIBLE to pay attention. I have hyper-sensitive hearing which means loud noises such as an applauding crowd doesn't just irritate me but it actually hurts me.

The sensitive hearing isn't always a curse, in fact I've learnt how to use it to my advantage.

And last but not least is my memory, I could go on and on about how extraordinary my memory is but that will take up 5 pages so instead I will just recommend next time you see me ask me how to spell "antidisestablishmentarianism" or "pharmaceutical".

But I think that is just about it and if you EVER have any questions about my Autism just come and ask me and I will be happy to help.

## “Insights about the Spectrum”

Spectrum News is the quarterly magazine of Autism Tasmania. We would like to include a regular segment that focuses on tips, suggestions and advice from individuals on the spectrum of all ages and their parents and care givers.

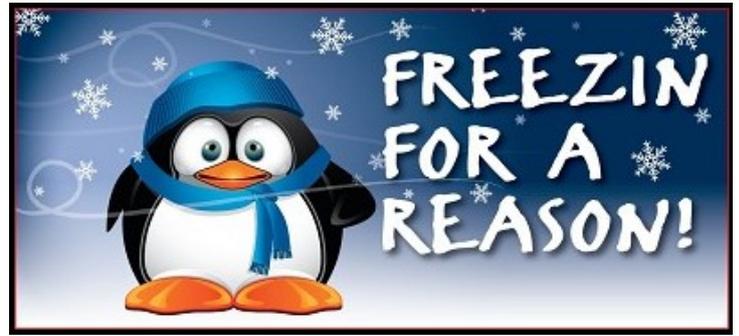
Currently we are seeking your input on the following topics:

- 1) Life’s transitions. These might include starting school, moving to high school, leaving school, moving out of home, starting a new job, moving house, welcoming a new baby into the family ... What helps to make big changes in life a manageable and positive experience
- 2) Holidays. Do you have advice on how to plan and enjoy trips away or holidays at home?

What works? What doesn’t work? Do you have tips or experiences you’d like to share? Please email your suggestions and articles to [autism@autismtas.org.au](mailto:autism@autismtas.org.au) for consideration of publication in Spectrum News. We look forward to hearing from you!

### *Disclaimer:*

*Articles are published at the full discretion of Autism Tasmania Inc and will be acknowledged accordingly.*



The Lions Club of Hobart Town’s major (and coolest!) event of the year.

Get into fancy dress, join a bunch of other brave people and take a mid-winter paddle or dip in the Derwent River.

### WHEN & WHERE

**9 August 2015**

**Long Beach, Sandy Bay, Tas,**

**Check in from 10:00 am**

**Event at 11:00 am sharp**

You must [register](#) for the day.

Go to [www.mycause.com.au/events/freezinforareason](http://www.mycause.com.au/events/freezinforareason) and nominate Autism Tasmania as your charitable organisation



**Lions Club of Hobart Town Inc**  
District 201T1 Tasmania Australia

## **Siblings and Autism**

The experience of siblings of young people with Autism is an important one. For a brother or sister of someone with Autism, life can be complicated and sometimes confusing. A sibling of a young person with Autism may feel a range of mixed emotions.

They may feel protective of their brother or sister with Autism, but at the same time may experience feelings of embarrassment in the way Autism can manifest itself. Siblings can experience loneliness and resentment towards their brother or sister with Autism for taking up their parent or carer's time and energy.

All of these feelings are valid and often overlay the normal range of feelings any sibling can feel towards another even in a typically developing family. As parents and carers it is important to validate these feelings but also put protective measures in place to decrease a siblings vulnerability to stress and depression.

Research (McHale et al., 1986; Hastings, 2003) indicates that the following factors can improve the resilience and overall well being of the sibling of a young person with Autism.

- Parent and carer self care. Taking care of your own emotional and physical health putting strategies in place to avoid carer fatigue.
- Harmonious family relationships – respectful and amicable communication between parents and carers.
- Strategies in place to minimise any perceived favouritism, parents and carers set aside time to spend exclusively with siblings.
- Open and positive information to support the sibling to understand their brother or sister's Autism.
- Safeguards in place for the future care of the young person with Autism.
- Inclusive community attitudes and opportunities for the family to engage in shared activities.
- Opportunities to express their feelings and experience peer and professional support.

With support, many siblings go on to reflect on the personal benefit of growing up with a sibling with additional needs or autism. They consider themselves

to have become more compassionate and accepting of other people with differences from the experience. Many have found personal inspiration from their brother or sister and for other this has gone on to influence their choice of professional career (Dewey, 2001; Brereton, 2011).

According to the Raising Children's Website, here are some ways in which a parent or carer can help a sibling understand their brother or sister's Autism:

- Talk openly about their brother or sister's Autism from an early age and give clear factual answers appropriate to their level of understanding
- Explain the differences but also the similarities – acknowledge the challenges but also point out the strengths of the child with autism.
- Access good books and resources (a list of some available in the Autism Tasmania library follows).

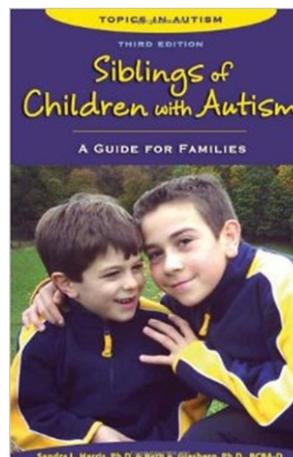
### **For further information:**

Raising Children's Network  
<http://raisingchildren.net.au>

Siblings Australia  
<http://siblingsaustralia.org.au>

### **An example of books about sibling experience in Autism Tasmania's Library available to all Members**

What About Me – An Autism Survival Guide for Kids (Anthanasia Koutsis, Gerda De Clercq, Richard Galbraith)



Siblings of Children With Autism: A Guide for Families (Sandra L. Harris)



**TASCARE and Edmund Rice Camps Tasmania  
are partnering up to coordinate  
Weekend and School Holiday  
Siblings Camps  
For ages 8-15**

Contact Michele and discuss your needs or further information.

Young people can join current Eddie Rice weekend camps and holiday camps, if we get numbers up to 10, we plan to have specific Siblings Camps during the July and Sept/Oct holidays. All accommodation, transport, meals and activities are provided for by Tascare and Edmund Rice Camps.

The cost per child depends on duration of camp,

- \$10 for day camp on weekend or during holidays
- \$30 for 3 day school holiday camp.

Each participant is paired up with a young adult leader (1:1) promoting positive interaction, as well as the opportunity for the development of friendship and trust. Participants and leaders come away from our programs feeling motivated, having learnt a little about themselves, about people and about life.

The Edmund Rice Camps are fully supervised by Edmund Rice volunteers and staff. Some of the past camp activities have included kayaking, bushwalking, games & sports, visits to Woody's and Zoo Doo - they specialise in providing fun for children who attend the camps.

**If you are interested in registering for this wonderful opportunity please contact Michele Foley on 03 62728265 or Email: [eo@tascare.org.au](mailto:eo@tascare.org.au)**

The next overnighter  
planned with GYC  
student leadership on the  
26/27 June,  
@ the PCYC in Huonville  
Call now if interested in  
attending!!!



# Launchpad

leaving school and leading your own life



The [Launchpad](http://www.autismlaunchpad.org.au) site ([www.autismlaunchpad.org.au](http://www.autismlaunchpad.org.au)) is a wonderful new venue for young people over the age of 16 and their families and carers to access a wide variety of information. The site includes the areas full of valuable content such as [Study](#), [Work](#), [Social Life](#), [Becoming Independent](#), [Health](#), [Advocacy & Disclosure](#) and [Funding & Legal](#).

Each topic area has printed material, real life stories, up-to-date data as well as video clips to view various situations – this is the case in the Social Life section where you can view how to inter-act with people, including going out on a date.

The Health section includes information on personal hygiene, health living, sexual health, mental health and medical matters. Healthy living has facts on food – fruit and vegetables, health snacks, variety in diet and exercise.

The site has areas for both the young person and separate sections for parents with ideas of how to support and coach.

The information is well set-out, detailed and targeted in such a way to appeal to people on the autism spectrum.

# 2015 ASIA PACIFIC AUTISM CONFERENCE

Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

9|10|11 September 2015

[www.apac15.org.au](http://www.apac15.org.au)



## “Nothing about us without us” – how to include people with autism in research

**How researchers can become more inclusive in their research practices will be detailed at the fourth Asia Pacific Autism Conference, APAC15, to be held in Brisbane from 9 to 11 September 2015.**

Professor Sylvia Rodger AM, Director of Research and Education at the Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Autism CRC) in Brisbane, will provide concrete examples of how researchers can include people on the autism spectrum, and their families, in research.

“We know that listening and valuing the perspective of the lived experience of autism throughout the research process will lead to higher quality research practices and outcomes that will truly benefit people on the spectrum,” Professor Rodger said.

“However, there is limited practical understanding about how to move beyond tokenism towards peer research. This will ensure that researchers work with people on the spectrum to not only set the research agenda, but take part in all aspects of the research process.”

Researchers at Autism CRC have worked with adults on the spectrum to develop a Statement on Inclusive Research Practice as well as a series of Inclusive Research Practice Guides and Checklists.

“A key aim of Autism CRC is to assist researchers to more effectively and meaningfully engage with individuals on the spectrum at different stages of the research process.”

The next step for Autism CRC is graduating the first cohort of peer research ready adults on the spectrum through our Research Academy. The Academy, the first of its kind in Australia, will also provide experienced researchers with the skills to work together as peers undertaking research.

“This implies mutual respect and value for each other’s skills and expertise, as well as a shared understanding about how they might work together in partnership,” said Professor Rodger. “Putting people with the lived experience at the centre of our research will ensure our outcomes bring practical benefits to those living with autism.”

Professor Sylvia Rodger AM will present *Incorporating Inclusive Research Practices and Building Research Capacity within the Australian Autism and Research Communities* as part of the morning plenary starting at 8:30am on Thursday 10 September 2015.

Early bird registrations close on Wednesday 15 July 2015 with concession rates available for people on the spectrum, parents/siblings/grandparents/foster carers and students as well as concession card holders.

To view the full program and for more information on exhibiting, sponsoring the event or booking a delegate place at the conference visit the event website [www.apac15.org.au](http://www.apac15.org.au)



### Bathing

Even in the case where a child with autism is motivated by water, specific preferences and sensitivities can mean that having a bath when asked may be problematic.

Here are some tips on ways to make bathing easier.

- Collect data - What does your child currently prefer? Consider time of day, products used, what toys are available, whether the general environment is supportive of sensory considerations.
- Establish and keep a routine about bathing or showering and represent these visually on a daily schedule.
- Show and keep to sequence – Use a sequence strip and consistent language to teach the child a pattern for washing their body.
- Be specific – explain to your child exactly what to do in small steps. Counting can be used to give a time frame and to help the job get done enough to clean the child, eg. "Rub soap on leg 1-2-3-4-5".
- Gradually increase time and reward efforts. If your child does not want to stay in the bath/shower start with a shorter time frame and build up to success.
- Use a timer or a countdown warning – 'getting out of the shower in 1-2-3-4-5' using the fingers of your hand as the visual cue.
- Use of motivators and specific praise – what could you introduce into bath/shower time to encourage your child to get into the water? Could it be floating rubber ducks, coloured crayon soap, bubbles? Keep these items as special bath/shower toys. Praise your child clearly and consistently for what they are doing well.
- Consider smells– the smell and feel of particular products and the smell of what you clean the bathroom in, the perfumes and deodorants etc of others that have been in the bathroom may impact on your child.
- Think about noise – bathrooms can often be noisy places as acoustics are amplified, so sound sensitive children may not enjoy this space. Choose a quieter time of day and minimise background noise can help.
- Consider the temperature. A warmer bath is more calming whereas a colder bath is more alerting. Some children may prefer the pressure of a shower than the experience of the bath.
- Aid visual processing. Getting into the bath may be a shock for children with visual processing challenges, as they cannot see the water level. Having some toys floating in the water or using one of the commercially available products that colour the water can assist with this.
- Think about the sensory demands of equipment. A soft face washer might be preferred over a loofah or sponge. Fabric softener can make towels less scratchy.
- Teach your child some strategies to cope such as singing a song or counting while washing. Water play can be a great distracter.
- Warn of sudden noises such as the water going down the plug hole. If your child is afraid of the water going down the plug take them out of the bath before pulling the plug.
- Use social stories to explain concepts on the importance of bathing.
- Teach some of the small skills used in washing before the task. Play games where the child needs to close their eyes, cover your ears etc. so that the child can do them when required.
- Use bathroom aids such as a shampoo face guard (if the child will tolerate it).
- Share your plan with anyone else who will bath and shower your child – consistency is important.





## Friends with Autism might:

Sometimes want to play with you but may need your help

**Play with toys in a different way**

Not like loud noises, certain smells or bright lights

Have a great memory

Need help staying calm

**Communicate with you but not always by talking**

**Be a loyal friend**

Like to teach you about a topic they know a lot about

Giggle and smile a lot, or make other noises

Like to rock back and forth, flap their arms or dance

Find it hard understanding facial expressions

**Be very honest and trustworthy**

Be interested in what you are saying, but not look you in the eye

Need extra time to respond when someone speaks to them

Have one-of-a-kind ideas

**Not like to be touched**

**Do their best when following a routine**

friends



All people are different. We all have our own likes and dislikes. We all have our own strengths.

Just like everyone, a person with Autism needs to feel safe, accepted and loved. There are many ways to be a good friend to a person with Autism.

You may like to talk about ways to be a good friend to someone with Autism at home with your family or at school with your teacher.

*For more information go to:*

<http://www.autismtas.org.au>



### MEGAN PASANEN Speech Pathologist

Megan is the Speech Pathologist at the Children's Therapy Centre in Bellerive. She works at the therapy centre with an Occupational Therapist (Heidi Smit) and Physiotherapist (Stephanie Bodak from All Care Physiotherapy). Megan recently registered as a service provider under the Helping Children with Autism and Better Start Initiatives through the DSS.

Megan is an evidenced based practitioner who is passionate about her work. She enjoys working with children to support the development of their communication skills, and has a special interest in working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families.

Megan aims to support children to develop functional communication skills, including extending speech, language, and social interaction skills. She also provides support in conjunction with an occupational therapist and dietician, around mealtime management for picky eaters and problem feeders.

Megan's professional experience has involved the provision of speech pathology services within multidisciplinary autism assessment and therapy teams, and in ASD specialist positions in the United Kingdom providing support and guidance to other speech pathologists, school staff, and families of children with an ASD. She has worked in and around Hobart at St Giles Children's Therapy Service, and at the Department of Education - in schools and at Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS).

Megan is available for individual consultations, including joint consults with other health professionals (i.e. joint OT and SP sessions), and small group sessions. Megan can provide speech pathology services at the Children's Therapy Centre in Bellerive, at the family home, at school, and/or early education settings.

Megan can be contacted on her mobile 0439 348 876, at the clinic on 6245 9232, or via email [megan.pasanen@gmail.com](mailto:megan.pasanen@gmail.com).

### ***A forum for child care educators hosted by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer Program***

On April 23rd Autism Tasmania attended the Building Greater Community Awareness forum hosted by The Early Days and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer programs. The focus of this gathering was on enhancing the autism related knowledge and skills of people who work with indigenous children in early childhood education and care settings in Tasmania and Victoria. We discussed the Early Days workshops and the early intervention funding available for young children under the Helping Children With Autism program. Participants were also eager to learn about diagnostic pathways and helpful ways in which to support families whose children are showing signs consistent with autism. Valuable time was spent discussing the many and varied needs of families, and we were inspired by the insights and contributions made by participants in this regard. Autism Tasmania looks forward to building on and strengthening the local relationships established at this forum and to continuing our partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer program.





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## EARLY DAYS PARENT/CARER WORKSHOPS

Autism Tasmania are proudly supporting families by providing workshops for mothers, fathers and other family carers of children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder or who are going through the assessment and diagnostic process.

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

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### ***NORTHERN WORKSHOPS***

#### **Introduction to Autism**

Thursday 30 July 2015

9:30 am — 12:00pm

***Venue:***

Dorset Community House  
3 Cameron Street, Scottsdale

#### **Introduction to Autism**

Friday 14 August 2015

9:30 am - 2:00pm

Tuesday 20 October 2015

9:30 am - 2:00pm

#### **Understanding Behaviour**

Friday 18 September 2015

9:30 am - 2:30pm

#### **Progression to School**

Thursday 5 November 2015

9:30 am - 12:00pm

#### **Helping My Child Cope with Change**

Monday 1 December 2015

9:30 am - 12:00pm

***Venue:***

Northern Children's Network  
59D Amy Road, Newstead

***Facilitator: Robyn Thomas***

**E:** robynt@autismtas.org.au

**P:** 6344 1212 or 0458 375 604

### ***NORTH-WEST WORKSHOPS***

#### **Helping My Child Cope with Change**

Thursday 30 July 2015

10:00am - 12:30pm

#### **Tips for Everyday Skills**

Thursday 27 August 2015

10:00am - 12:30pm

***Venue:***

Devonport Community Health Centre  
Cnr Steele & McFie Streets

***Facilitator: Rose Clark***

**E:** rose@autismtas.org.au

**P:** 0407 320 048

*To register and to obtain further details on the content of any of the individual workshops please contact your local Early Days facilitator*

### Smithton Awareness session

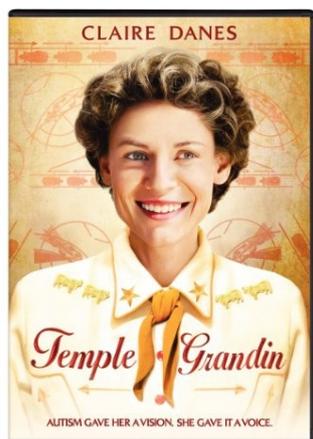
On April 24<sup>th</sup> a number of new and regular community members, including grandparents, attended an information session about Autism Spectrum Disorder which was held at the Smithton Hospital's Community Meeting Room. The discussion included aspects from parents of children on the autism spectrum and the added experiences of extended family gave the afternoon session a wide variety of perspectives. Those who came along took the opportunity to take home printed handouts as well as information about respected authors and books on the subject.

### Wynyard Film night

On the evening of April 24<sup>th</sup> the parent group in Wynyard organised a film night for parents, carers and family member to see the Temple Grandin movie.

The Wynyard Cricket Club supported the evening with the use of their very comfortable premises and an expansive supper was also provided with everyone 'bringing a plate'.

On a cool misty evening 25 people enjoyed the night with many family members saying they'd learned a lot about autism from the movie – an excellent production starring Claire Danes playing the role of Temple Grandin.



### Autism Awareness in Devonport:

Each year the Devonport Community Health Centre has allotted its front window to Autism Tasmania for a display for Autism Awareness. This year the entire window was given to us for a fortnight. As the Devonport Community



Health Centre is well utilised by the community, the display drew many people to look at and read information about autism. Again this meant that a

number of people contacted us to enquire about information and meeting times for parents and carers. We really appreciate the space given each year by a supportive community organisation.

### Fundraising for Autism Awareness



The Devonport Christian School have for over 6 years participated in activities to raise Autism awareness with their students. This is due to the school principal, Mrs Melanie Woods (pictured above with Rose Clark, Grace & Letesha) and the support teacher, Mrs Melanie Sargison.

## Volunteer Vacancies

**Are you a parent with a child on the autism spectrum in the New Norfolk region?**

**Would you like to co-ordinate a social/support group for parents of children on the autism spectrum?**

**Are you interested in co-ordinating a Social/Support group in your area for parents with older children/adults?**

**Contact us at [autism@autismtas.org.au](mailto:autism@autismtas.org.au) for further details or to register your interest**

## Southern Tasmania

### Dunalley

#### **Dunalley Community Neighbourhood Centre, Arthur Highway**

First Thursday morning in the month

11:30am - 2:30pm

Contact: Amity - 6253 5579

### Hobart

Fortnightly on Mondays 10:30am - 12:30pm

Venue may vary each fortnight, contact us for current location

Contact: Robyn on 1300 288 476 or robyn@autismtas.org.au

### Hobart Adult Asperger's Group

Last Sunday in the month 2.00 - 4.00pm

Contact: Rose Clark 0407 320 048 for venue details

Regular visits are made to **Bridgewater, Clarence Plains, Geeveston** and **New Norfolk**. Please contact our office for details.

## North West Coast

**Autism information sessions** are conducted quarterly at:

- Burnie
- Circular Head
- Devonport
- Wynyard

For details please contact Rose Clark 0407 320 048

### Circular Head Focus Group

Third Friday in the month 10.30 - Midday

Community Meeting Room

Smithton District Hospital

Contact: Rose Clark 0407 320 048

### North West Asperger's Group

Second Saturday in the month 1.00 - 3.00pm

Contact: Stephen - stj08@gmail.com or Allison 1300 288 476 for venue details

### North West Parent and Carer Focus Group

Third Thursday in the month 10.30 - Midday

Burnie Neighbourhood House

24 Wiseman Street, Burnie

Contact: Kym 0487 493 188

## Northern Tasmania

### Launceston

**Autism information sessions** are conducted regularly at:

Northern Children's Network, Amy Road, Newstead.

Please contact our office for details

**Bike Centre** family get togethers in school holidays

Contact: Robyn Thomas 0458 375 604

### Adult Asperger Group—Launceston

First Saturday in the month 1.30 - 3.30pm.

Contact: Rose Clark 0407 320 048 for venue details

Regular visits are made to **Scottsdale, Campbell Town** and **George Town**. Please contact our office for details.

### ASD Tasmanian Midlands

#### **Kindergarten Room - Campbell Town District High School**

Every third Monday in the month

9.00am - 11.00am

Contact: Sarah - 0410 093 704

## West Coast

### West Coast Focus Group

#### **The Linc Library—Queenstown**

Every second Thursday in the month

10.30am - midday

Contact: Sharon - 0429 117 413

**For more information please call:**

**1300 288 476**

**or email [autism@autismtas.org.au](mailto:autism@autismtas.org.au)**

## Expressions of Interest

**Seeking parents with daughters on the autism spectrum for a social/support group in the southern region with a view to also establishing a girls social/support group.**

**Contact us at [autism@autismtas.org.au](mailto:autism@autismtas.org.au) to register your interest**

# x + y

In 2006, a film maker named Matthew Morgan produced a documentary named *Beautiful Young Minds* which was released in the UK via the BBC.

*Beautiful Young Minds* investigated the selection process and training of a group of young people heading to compete in the International Mathematical Olympiad.

When Morgan encountered members of the team who are on the autism spectrum, he felt that another story needed to be told. X+Y is that story.

Part fact, part fiction, X+Y uses the backdrop of the



International Mathematical Olympiad to explore the experience of a young adolescent with autism through the character of Nathan, also known as "Nate". Nate is "twice exceptional". He has both extraordinary giftedness as well as the neurological differences of Autism. Nate has also

undergone trauma in his life, being involved as a young child in a car accident which took the life of his father.

Nate is high functioning, verbal and attends a mainstream school where he has been paired with Mr Humphrey's, an unconventional mathematics teacher who is also dealing with coming to terms with a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis.

Nate struggles with relationships and communication. He remarks early in the film that because he is quiet that other people think he doesn't have a lot to say when, in fact, he has a lot to say but just doesn't know how to say it.

Under Mr Humphrey's mentoring, and the unwavering support of his mother Julie for whom Nate is often a mystery, Nate blossoms in confidence and skill. Nate not only is able to fly overseas to Taiwan, he embraces the change of culture and language. Nate

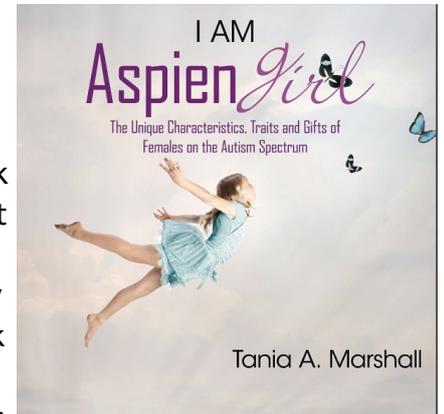
also connects with another young mathematician and experiences his first attraction.

Through this encounter, the metaphorical journey of the film gently shifts from one about a young man with autism and his success in mathematics to one of healing, accepting difference and making sense of love. As such, X+Y is ultimately an exploration and celebration of what it is to be human. Coupled with powerful performances by both leading and supporting actors, it is a remarkable film – both challenging and heartwarming.

**Amy Jansen**

### **Book Review** **I am Aspiengirl**

I waited very patiently for this book to be published and it didn't fail my high expectations. I highly recommend this book not only for parents but for family, friends and educators or for anyone else wanting information on the gifts and traits of girls/women on the autism spectrum and an insight into how their brains work.



The information and checklists provided at the back are an invaluable resource and something hard to find for parents of little girls on the spectrum. They provide reassurance on diagnosis but also would be great if you were a parent with a suspicion that your daughter may be on the spectrum and wanted some clear and accurate information.

This book has been very insightful, its positive outlook and focus on super powers of aspien girls is delightful to read – It has really helped me to see my daughters potential and how I, as her mother, can really help to empower her, guide her and help her reach her full potential, but I imagine that it would also have the same effect on the aspien girl herself to feel more positive, hopeful and proud of herself.

I look forward to reading the other books in this series when they become available.

**Jessica**



**UNSW**  
A U S T R A L I A

## Are you 25 years or older and have autism/Asperger Syndrome?

If you are, we need your help for a study.

### What is the study about?

We want to know what life is like for people with autism as they get older.

We want to know about:

- Your health
- How you feel
- What you do
- Your sleep
- What services you use

We hope this study will help to make better services and supports for adults with Autism in the future.

### What would I have to do?

- Answer questions on paper or on the computer OR let your helper, friend or family answer questions for you
- Complete more questions about yourself two years later, if you want to.

### How long would it take?

- It might take 2 or 3 hours to finish but does not have to be done all at once.

### Can I change my mind?

- Yes! You can stop being a part of the study at anytime
- It is your choice to be part of this study or not!

### How can I be in the study?

Who:



Jane, Kitty and Julian

Phone:



(02) 9385 0620

Email:



[autismcrc@unsw.edu.au](mailto:autismcrc@unsw.edu.au)



ABN: 90 215 494 454

## Hobart

1 Bowen Road, Moonah

PO Box 514, Moonah 7009

Ph: (03) 6278 9985

## Launceston

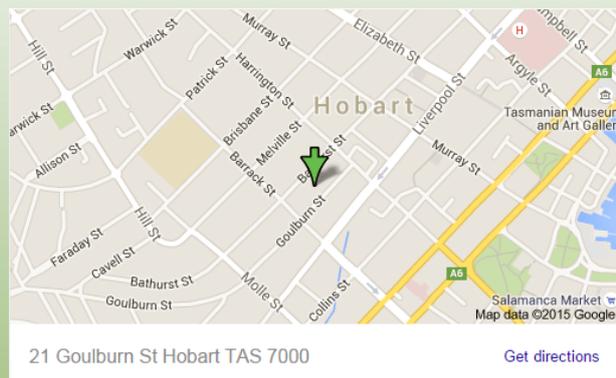
59D Amy Road, Newstead

PO Box 358, Newstead 7250

Ph: (03) 6344 1212

**From mid-July**

**21 Goulburn Street, Hobart, 7000**



Phone: 1300 288 476

Fax: (03) 6278 3020

Email: [autism@autismtas.org.au](mailto:autism@autismtas.org.au)

[www.autismtas.org.au](http://www.autismtas.org.au)

