



**Autism
Awareness
Australia**

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2024

Australia's most trusted
voice in autism support



Chair's Message



This year has been one of real momentum for Autism Awareness Australia—one where strategic advocacy, digital innovation and deep community engagement have come together to create meaningful impact.

The successful launch of **Navigating Autism: The Early Years** marked a watershed moment. This national, free online training platform, funded by Federal Government investment and co-designed with families, educators, and autistic individuals, reached thousands across Australia within months. This work - scalable, evidence-based, and community-built - exemplifies our mission in action.

Simultaneously, we expanded our advocacy reach substantially. February's **National Parent and Carer Education Survey** captured hundreds of family voices, highlighting systemic barriers facing autistic students. The response proved overwhelming—front-page coverage in *The Australian* and direct meetings with Education Ministers across NSW, VIC, ACT, TAS, WA, and SA ensured family needs reached the highest decision-making levels.

Beyond policy and programs, AAA maintained its focus on people. Whether through face-to-face conversations at Source Kids expos, community-led campaigns like Ambassadors for Autism, or our heartfelt return to the DAD documentary with a special Father's Day event, every interaction reaffirmed our belief in storytelling, connection, and authenticity.

The AAA team's ability to blend grassroots understanding with national-level influence continues setting this organisation apart. Their strategic vision and passionate commitment drive real change for autistic Australians and their families.

Sally Collins

Chair, Board of Directors

About us



Autism Awareness Australia operates with clear purpose: improving lives for all Australians on the autism spectrum and the families who love and support them.

Since 2007, we've evolved from small advocacy initiatives to **Australia's most trusted autism voice**, engaging hundreds of thousands of families, professionals, and community members nationwide. What distinguishes us is our **independence, responsiveness, and community leadership**. We receive no core government funding and deliver no direct services - instead, we create accessible, high-quality content, campaigns, and tools that **empower people with knowledge and connection**.

Our **small but mighty team** and expanding national network enable us to punch above our weight. Whether supporting families after diagnosis, informing classroom teachers, or contributing to national policy reform, we focus on what matters most: **making life better for autistic people, every step of the way**.

Our Governance



Sally Collins
Chair



Nicole Rogerson
Director



Professor Andrew Whitehouse
Director



Charlie Viola
Director



Tabitha Pearson
Director



John Maher
Director

2023 Highlights

Launching Navigating Autism – The Early Years

In 2024, we launched Navigating Autism: The Early Years, a free, evidence-based online training program designed to upskill early childhood educators across Australia in autism inclusion and support.

Funded by the Department of Social Services, this national initiative addresses the growing number of autistic children entering early learning settings and the persistent gap in accessible, practical educator training. Co-design with **educators, parents, autistic individuals**, and sector professionals ensured evidence-based content grounded in educational realities.

Eight short, engaging modules cover essential topics: autism understanding, behaviour, communication, and inclusive classroom strategies. Every program aspect prioritises accessibility and flexibility: captioned videos, downloadable tools, and resources available nationwide. Completed courses yield certificates acknowledging professional development.

Federal Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth supported the official launch, describing it as "an engaging and evidence-based program" meeting critical sector needs.

Immediate Impact

First three months results:



10,988 enrolments



3417 course completions



40K+ unique visitors



**Navigating
Autism**
THE EARLY YEARS

Navigating Autism: The Early Years represents more than training. It's a scalable, national tool ensuring every child, regardless of diagnosis, has the opportunity to thrive in early years settings.

2023 Highlights

Ambassadors for Autism – A National Celebration

Each April, during World Autism Awareness Month, we invite community participation in telling different stories—stories of pride, diversity, and connection. In 2024, our **#AmbassadorsForAutism** campaign returned with expanded colour, reach, and heart.

The campaign celebrates **autistic Australians and the people who love and support them**. Throughout the month, we featured photos and stories submitted by individuals and families nationwide, sharing what autism means in their lives and why they identify as inclusion ambassadors.

Reach for NFPs in Australia typically averages at just 1-4% of followers per post. Our campaign’s exceptional reach significantly exceeds average organic visibility, and is testament to our sizeable follower base and effective engagement strategy. With over 440k impressions, we are able to consistently demonstrate solid multi-exposure per user.

From young children to adults, parents to professionals, submissions to the campaign reflected the full spectrum of autism experience, giving our broader community powerful insights into what it means to live, love, and thrive with autism.

We partnered with **Springfree Trampoline**, who generously supported the campaign by donating a trampoline and installation as giveaway prize, helping us reach new audiences and celebrate our community with joy and generosity.



120 Personal stories submitted



440,434 Social media impressions



229,159 Audience reach



Eddie
#AmbassadorsForAutism



Jackson
#AmbassadorsForAutism



Tommy
#AmbassadorsForAutism



Raffie
#AmbassadorsForAutism

Ambassadors for Autism extends beyond social media – it's a platform for storytelling, community pride, and visibility. Each shared story steps towards a more understanding, inclusive Australia.

Our Work

Community Education:

Webinar Series: Practical Tools, Real Conversations

Our commitment to delivering trusted, evidence-informed information to families and professionals continued expanding through our free **webinar program** in 2023-24. These sessions meet families where they are, offering accessible, practical guidance on common (and often challenging) aspects of raising and supporting autistic children.

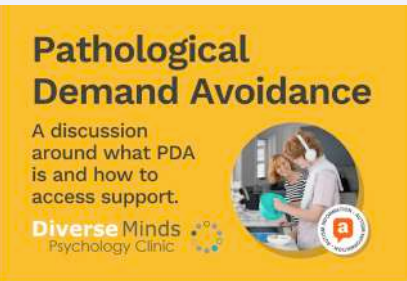
We collaborated with expert partners to present three standout sessions:



Fussy Eating – Partnering with **Autism Partnership**, this webinar offered parents and carers practical strategies supporting autistic children aged 0-6 experiencing eating challenges. Strong clinical foundation and lived experience insights made this session one of our most highly attended and appreciated.



Toilet Training – Also in collaboration with **Autism Partnership**, this webinar broke down the often daunting process of toilet training for autistic children. Presenters shared evidence-based techniques and step-by-step tools to help families navigate this milestone with more confidence and reduced stress.



Understanding Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) – Presented with colleagues at **Diverse Minds**, this webinar explored the complex, emerging PDA profile. Clinical insight and practical takeaways helped families and professionals better understand and support autistic individuals experiencing high anxiety and demand-related challenges



Celebrating Autism Dads: DAD Film Breakfast Event

In September, we hosted a special morning at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art celebrating the often-underrepresented voices of **dads and carers in the autism community**.

The event centred on screening our powerful 2019 documentary, **DAD: A film about autism and fatherhood**, created by the AAA team to spotlight love, challenges, and quiet strength of fathers raising autistic children. This provided wonderful opportunity to share the film with **new autism dad audiences**, many seeing it for the first time—and many reporting how deeply it resonated with their own experiences.

Screening was followed by heartfelt panel discussion featuring **Ian Rogerson, Dale Hurley, Tommy Trout, and Ryan Gomes**, who shared personal stories, reflections, and advice. The honesty, humour, and emotional depth created powerful connection throughout the room.

We're grateful to our event partner **WeFlex** for their support in making this gathering possible. Moments like these are a reminder that storytelling builds community and that dads, too, need space to be seen, heard, and supported.

Our Work

Community Education:

Connecting in person: Source Kids Expo

In 2023-24, we expanded community engagement by exhibiting at four **Source Kids Expos**—Australia's leading disability events for children, teens, and young adults.

These expos provided opportunities to meet families **face-to-face**, listen to their stories, and provide real-time support and resources. For many, we represented **first contact after diagnosis** and a trusted, welcoming presence during often overwhelming times.

These personal connections powerfully remind us why we do this work. While our digital platforms reach hundreds of thousands, these in-person conversations keep us grounded and reinforce the value of showing up in real communities at critical moments.



Melbourne (July 2023)

Perth (October 2023)

Adelaide (February 2024)

Sydney (March 2024)



Our Work

Training Educators and Professionals:

This year, we delivered evidence-based training workshops to groups ranging from 25 to 150 participants, equipping early childhood educators and employers with practical strategies in inclusive education and supporting autistic students in school settings.

Training Focus Areas:

-  Designing sensory-friendly learning environments
-  Implementing proactive behaviour-support plans
-  Fostering social and communication skills
-  Neurodiversity in workplace settings
-  Building strengths-based cultures valuing diverse thinking styles
-  Promoting employee wellbeing

Key Training Partners:



Fair Work Commission
Comprehensive Training Delivery



Keyword Studios
Training and Consulting Services



Hills Grammar
School-specific Program Development



All Saints Anglican School
Inclusive Education Strategies



Our Work

Advocacy and Policy:

Advocacy in Action: National Parent and Carer Education Survey

In February 2024, we launched our **National Parent and Carer Education Survey** to better understand the real-world experiences of autistic students and their families in Australia’s education system.

With the recent NDIS Review recommending state and territory governments take greater responsibility for supporting young people with disability, we identified urgent need to gather family voices navigating the school system daily. Hundreds of parents and carers across Australia shared their stories, and their responses proved both overwhelming and deeply revealing.

[Download the report here.](#)

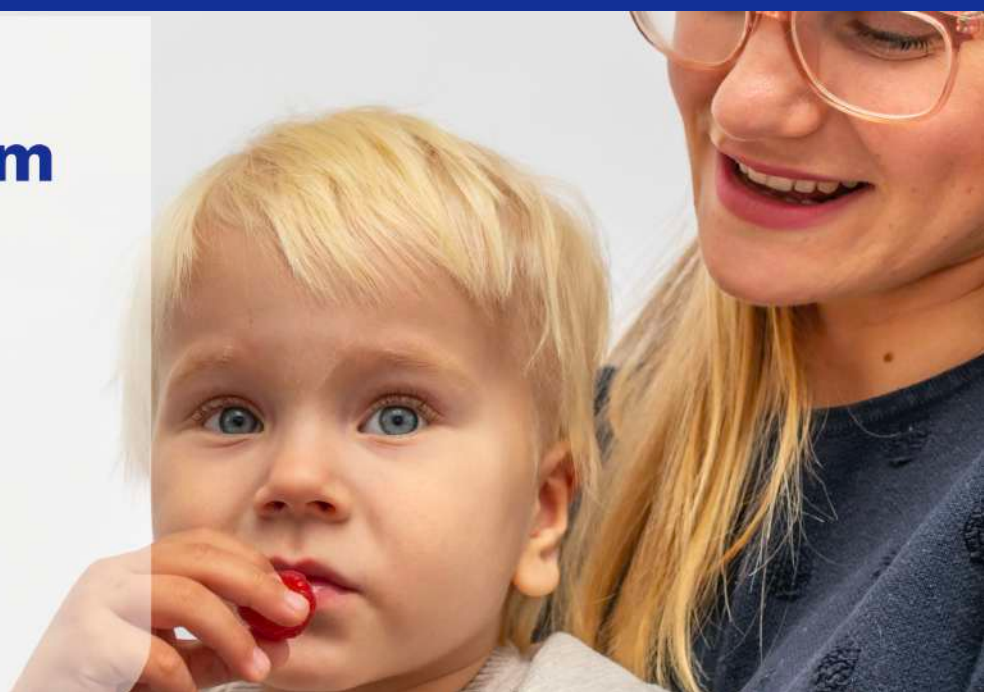
Direct Policy Engagement

Importantly, we didn’t stop at publishing the data - we took it directly to decision-makers who can drive change. Throughout April and May, we met personally with **Education Ministers in NSW, VIC, ACT, TAS, WA, and SA**, presenting findings, sharing real family stories, and advocating for stronger, more inclusive classroom practices nationwide.

The full report was released during April **Autism Awareness Month**, and we continue sharing key insights through media, stakeholder briefings, and social media campaigns, ensuring family voices remain central to national education equity and inclusion conversations.

These findings resonated far beyond the autism community. The report generated **significant national media coverage**, with findings featured on **the front page of *The Australian*** on 1 April 2024, highlighting urgent reform needs and better inclusion practices across all educational settings.

National Autism Parent/Carer Survey 2025 Report



What We Heard: Key Survey Findings

-  **35%** of families reported being discouraged or refused enrolment for their autistic child
Of these **50%** experienced this in the **public school system**
-  **45%** reported their child's school was **reluctant to offer accommodations** or outright unwelcoming
-  **16%** of autistic children were described as **very unhappy** at school
-  **59%** of parents had considered or used **alternatives to traditional schooling**, including homeschooling and distance learning
-  **ONLY 16%** of parents felt confident in how schools managed funding to support their child
-  **83%** of surveyed children were NDIS participants, yet systemic educational support remained inconsistent
-  **89%** of parents believed they should have the right to choose the most appropriate educational setting - whether mainstream or specialised - for their child

Our Impact and Reach

Real Faces, Real Stories: Our Photoshoots

At Autism Awareness Australia, we believe representation matters - and we take that seriously.

Every image on our website, in our videos, or across our resources features **real families from our AAA community**. No stock photography. No staged models. Just authentic, diverse, beautiful faces of autistic people and those who love and support them.

This year, we invested in two major photography and video shoots ensuring our **digital platforms and educational materials** genuinely reflect the community we serve.

These photoshoots extend beyond visuals—they reflect our values. **By showcasing real people, real environments, and real stories**, we honour community trust and help foster deeper understanding, connection, and visibility across all platforms.



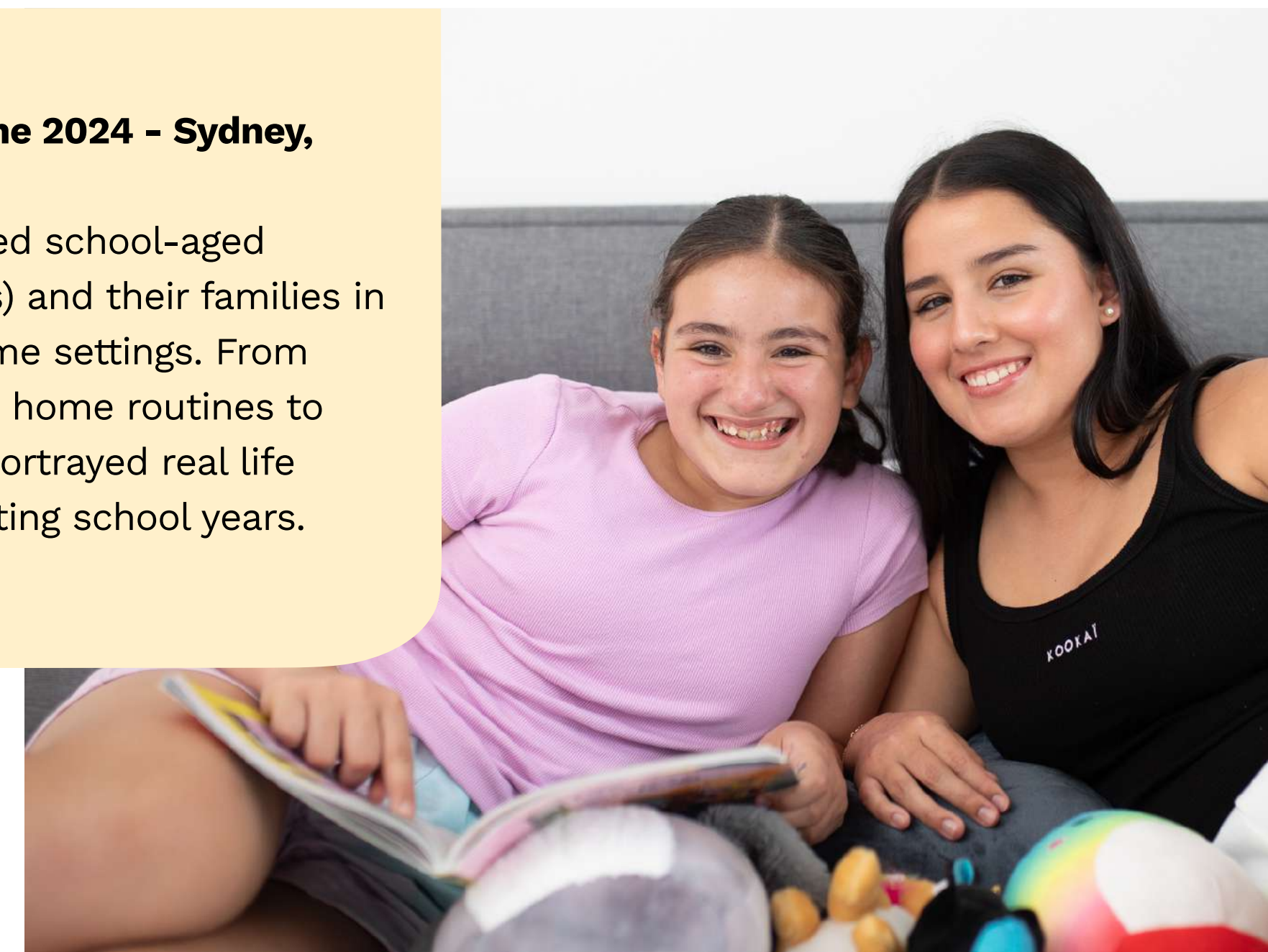
Early Years (August 2023 - Sydney & Melbourne)

We captured joy, curiosity, and everyday moments of autistic children under 5 in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and early intervention services. We featured educators and support workers in action—creating inclusive, supportive environments for young learners. Wonderful autistic adults also participated in our photoshoots.



School Years (February-June 2024 - Sydney, Brisbane & Gold Coast)

We photographed and filmed school-aged autistic children (5-18 years) and their families in real-world learning and home settings. From playgrounds to classrooms, home routines to connection moments, we portrayed real life rhythms for families navigating school years.



Our Impact and Reach

Community Voice: Brand Strategy Insights

This year, we sought to better understand how our community perceives us—and how they want us to communicate with them. Through a dedicated **brand strategy survey**, we asked our audience to describe, in their own words, what Autism Awareness Australia means to them.

What we heard proved both humbling and affirming. The top four descriptive words:

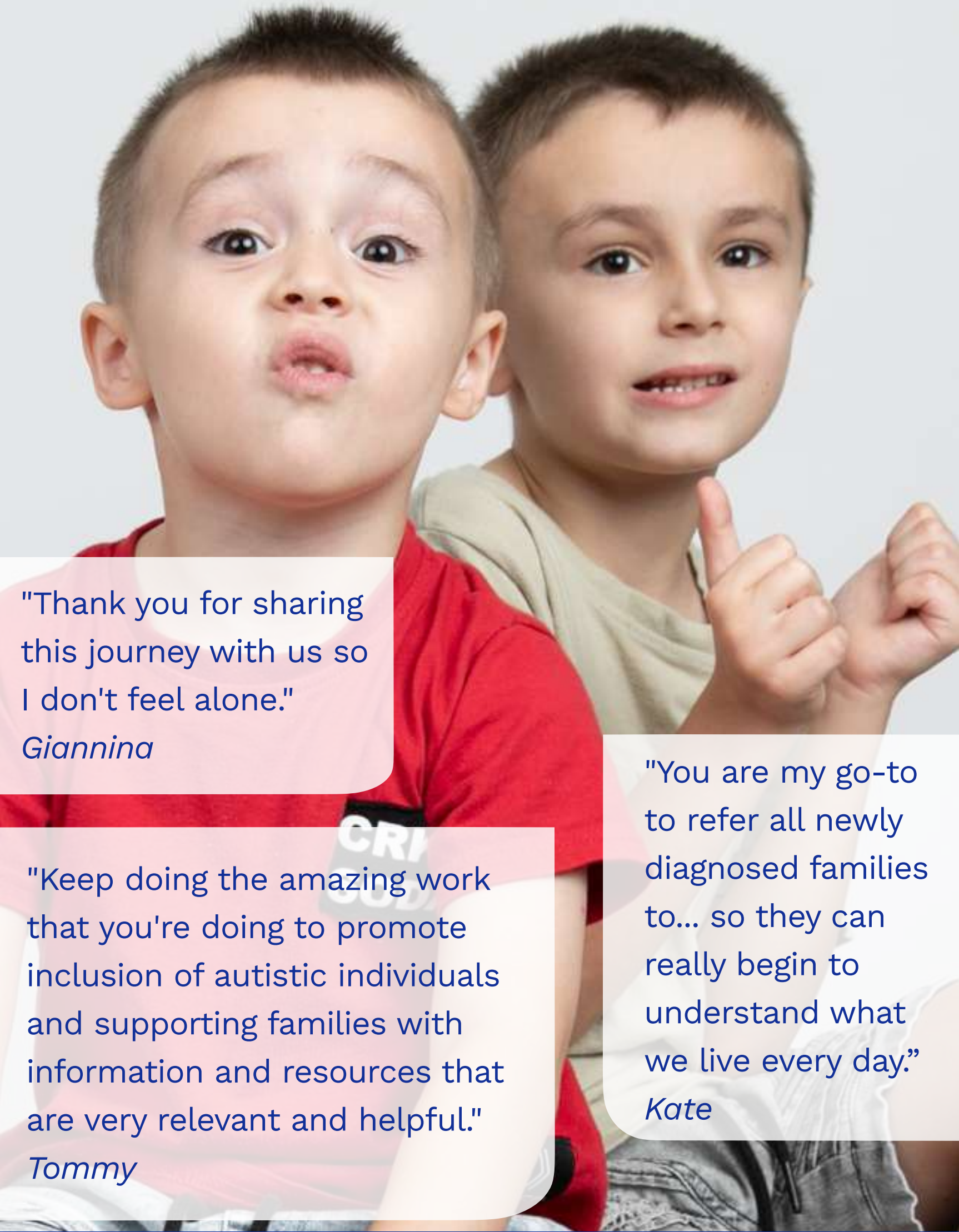
-  informative
-  supportive
-  trustworthy
-  inclusive

When asked what people valued most about AAA, five top themes emerged:

1. Informative and Educational Content
2. A Supportive and Safe Community
3. Accessible and Relevant Resources
4. Inclusive and Empowering Messaging
5. Reliability and Trustworthiness

Most powerfully, **over 85% of respondents said they would recommend AAA to others**, underscoring the trust and credibility we've built within the autism community.

We received dozens of testimonials—words reminding us why we do this work



"Thank you for sharing this journey with us so I don't feel alone."
Giannina

"Keep doing the amazing work that you're doing to promote inclusion of autistic individuals and supporting families with information and resources that are very relevant and helpful."
Tommy

"You are my go-to to refer all newly diagnosed families to... so they can really begin to understand what we live every day."
Kate

This feedback guides our next brand strategy phase, ensuring we continue showing up as **credible, human, and community-first** in everything we do.

Our Impact and Reach

In 2023–24, Autism Awareness Australia continued to grow our national footprint – **connecting with more people, responding to more questions, and delivering more practical resources than ever before**. As a digital-first organisation, our ability to scale impact without compromising on quality remains one of our greatest strengths.

Website Views



Autism Awareness Australia:
980,422



Autism: What Next?:
311,862



Fundraising Impact
\$69,055
raised through **273 supporters**



Video Engagement (Dad Doco)
218,503 views



Email Enquiries
750+



Webinar Registrations
3,447



Newsletter Subscribers
33,211



Social Media Followers
146,651

Navigating Autism – Early Years Impact

Our launch of *Navigating Autism: The Early Years* demonstrated a compelling appetite for accessible, high-quality training in the early childhood sector. In just the first three months:



10,988
enrolments



3417
course
completions



40K+
unique
visitors

The platform attracted users from across all Australian states and territories, with significant uptake in both metro and regional areas. This early momentum reflects the sector’s demand for practical, inclusive training and validates our digital delivery model.

Deepening Engagement Through Advisory and Co-Design

We continued embedding lived and professional expertise across every *Navigating Autism* program stage. Beyond maintaining three dedicated advisory panels (Early Years, School Years, and Adulthood), we hosted two additional consultation rounds in 2023-24.

Participants included:

- Parents and carers
- Educators (early childhood, primary and secondary)
- Autistic adults
- Clinicians and allied health professionals
- Sector subject matter experts

These sessions involved **beta testing and UX feedback**, ensuring our resources are both **authentic and user-friendly**.

Media Presence and Recognition

Selected media coverage 2023–24

Autism Awareness Australia continues to lead the charge in advocating for the autism community, through all media outlets and communication channels.



[ABC News: Four Corners investigation](#)



[West Australian](#)
Hope for a better future



[ABC Radio](#)
New approach to autism care



[The Project](#) - NDIS overhaul



[SBS Review](#) - disability sector too reliant on NDIS



[SMH](#)
Beautiful Minds



[AFR](#) - NDIS alternatives not enough to stop scheme growth



[SMH](#) - Reshaping Australia's education system



[SMH](#)
Why autism rates are rising



[The Australian](#) - Expanding supports concerns



[SMH](#) - Better treatment for Australia's autistic people



[Today Show](#) with Shamus Hart



[The Daily Aus Podcast](#)
How to provide better support



[Mainstream Australian classrooms 'not prepared'](#)



[A Current Affair](#) - Calls for more government support

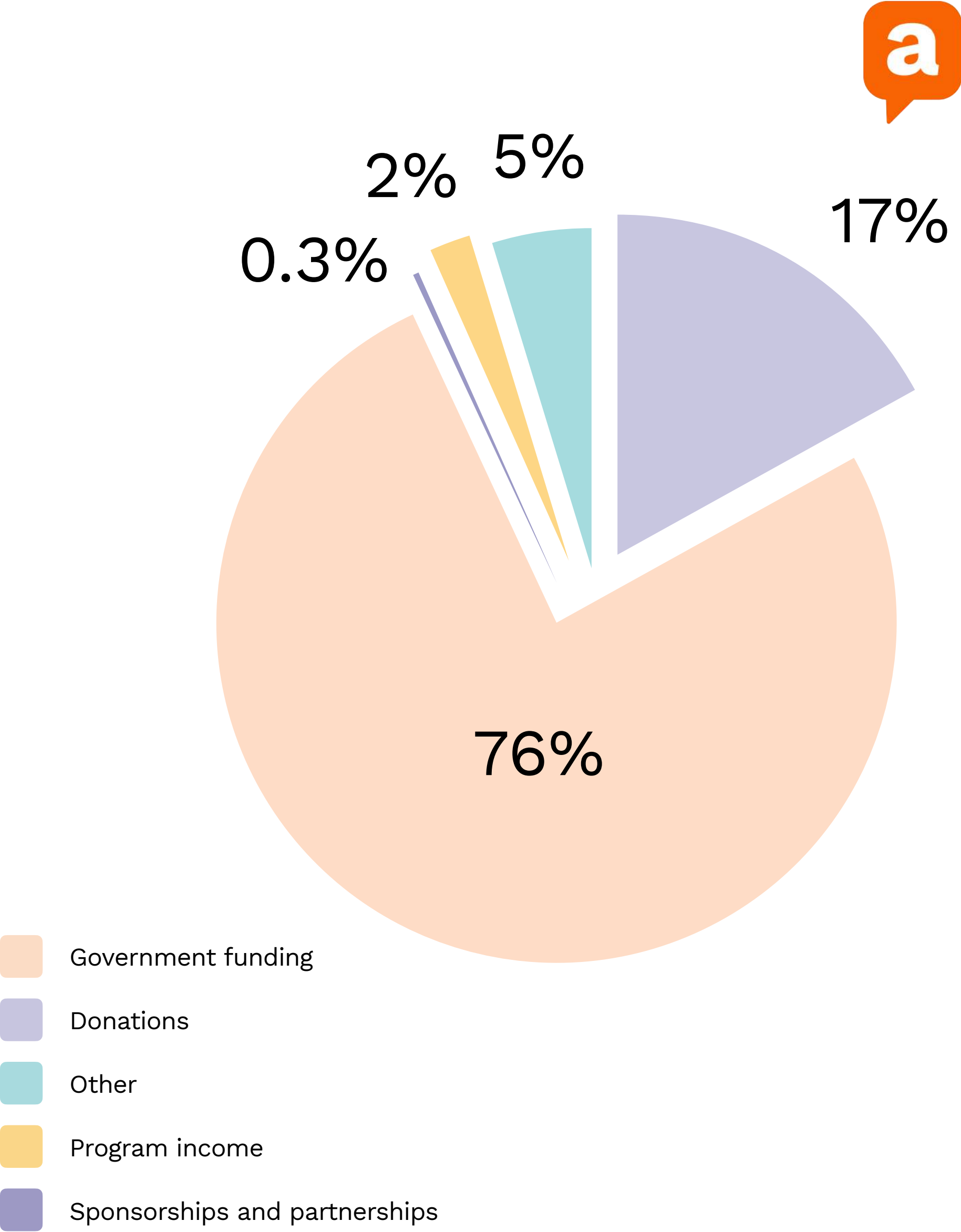


[ABC News](#)
National autism strategy



Financials

REVENUE	
Donations	\$139,640
Government funding	\$624,900
Sponsorships and partnerships	\$2,000
Program income	\$15,888
Other	\$37,651
	\$820,079
EXPENSES	
Program expenses	\$29,711
Employee expenses	\$475,878
Administration expenses	\$252,302
Marketing expenses	\$13,757
	\$771,648
PROFIT	
	\$48,431



Looking forward

The foundations established in 2023-24 position Autism Awareness Australia for expanded impact.

Our successful *Navigating Autism: The Early Years* platform demonstrates the appetite for evidence-based, accessible training. The National Parent and Carer Education Survey established us as a powerful voice in education policy reform. Strengthened partnerships, enhanced digital capabilities, and deepened community connections create the platform for sustained, meaningful change.

The work ahead includes completing the Autism Stages Project platform suite, expanding our training offerings, and continuing to amplify family voices in policy discussions. We remain focused on our founding purpose: improving lives for all Australians on the autism spectrum and the families who love them.

The momentum continues.



This report demonstrates our commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in service to Autistic Australians and the people who love them.



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