



**Autism  
Awareness  
Australia**

# ANNUAL REPORT

**2022 – 2023**

Australia's most trusted  
voice in autism support



# Chair's Message

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This year has marked a pivotal moment for Autism Awareness Australia. While policy landscapes shift and reform discussions intensify, particularly around the NDIS Review and broader questions of disability service sustainability, our work has never felt more essential.



The standout achievement of 2022-23 was securing \$1.2 million in Federal Government funding to launch our **Autism Stages Project**. This initiative represents everything we believe about effective autism support: evidence-informed, nationally scalable, and built through genuine partnership with the community. This project doesn't just deliver resources; it transforms how families navigate critical life transitions.

What sets this work apart is its foundation in authentic co-design. At every decision point, we've placed autistic individuals, parents, carers, and professionals at the centre. The result is practical, accessible support that reflects lived experience rather than theoretical frameworks.

Our partnership with **The Ricky Stuart Foundation** to deliver the inaugural **Ride 2 Raise** demonstrated the power of strategic collaboration. These partnerships amplify our voice, extend our reach, and engage new audiences with energy and purpose.

The AAA team continues to exemplify the kind of focused, uncompromising excellence that sets this organisation apart. Their commitment to quality and refusal to accept inadequate support for families drives everything we achieve.

**Sally Collins**

*Chair, Board of Directors*

# About Us

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Since 2007, **Autism Awareness Australia** has operated with a single, unwavering purpose: to improve the lives of all Australians on the autism spectrum and the families who support them.

Today, we reach over 125,000 families nationwide, establishing ourselves as Australia's most trusted voice on autism. We remain proudly independent—not government funded, and specifically not an NDIS service provider—but rather a lean, strategic organisation with deep digital capability, delivering high-impact, freely accessible resources, events, and programs.

Our strength lies in responsive leadership. We combine lived experience, clinical expertise, and strategic advocacy to create meaningful change for autistic people and their supporters.

# Our Community



Autism affects people across every demographic and geographic boundary, and our work reflects this diversity:



**Families and Carers** seeking guidance through diagnosis, education, and long-term support



**Autistic Children and Teens** who deserve inclusive environments where they can thrive



**Autistic Adults** requiring accessible resources and authentic representation



**Educators and Professionals** pursuing practical training and evidence-based tools



**CALD Communities** through culturally responsive translation initiatives



**Policy Makers and Advocates** with trusted, non-partisan information and analysis

We prioritise reaching those most often overlooked by mainstream services, ensuring our content, training, and advocacy speak to genuine community needs.



# Our Governance

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Our Board of Directors brings together a unique mix of lived experience, clinical expertise, business leadership, and deep sector knowledge.

This strong governance underpins everything we do.



**Sally Collins**  
Chair



**Nicole Rogerson**  
Director



**Professor Andrew Whitehouse**  
Director



**Charlie Viola**  
Director



**Tabitha Pearson**  
Director



**John Maher**  
Director

# 2022–23 Achievements

## Autism Stages Project: National Scale, Local Impact



The \$1.2 million Federal Government grant supporting our Autism Stages Project represents more than funding: it validates our approach to national, evidence-informed autism support.

This initiative addresses a critical gap: families need trusted guidance at transition points, not just financial assistance.

Research consistently shows that even NDIS-supported families struggle at key moments entering early education, starting school, transitioning between educational phases, or moving to adult life. The Autism Stages Project provides the emotional, practical, and planning support that systems overlook.

Three dedicated online platforms will deliver targeted support:

| STAGE        | PLATFORM                             | FOCUS                                                                                                             | KEY AUDIENCE                                      |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Early Years  | Autism in the Early Childhood Sector | Upskilling early education with practical training for inclusive practice                                         | Educators, childcare directors and support staff  |
| School Years | Transitions in the School Years      | Supporting families as children transition from early childhood settings to school and through their school years | Parents, carers and school staff                  |
| Adulthood    | Post-School Transitions              | Guidance on education, employment, independence and future planning                                               | Parents, carers, young people and support workers |

In 2022–23, we laid the groundwork for success: forming advisory groups with representation from across Australia to co-design this project, designing the platform architecture, and bringing together some of the country’s leading autism experts and lived experience voices. These platforms will roll out in stages across 2024, and we’re excited for the profound impact they’ll have on thousands of families

### Co-Design Excellence

The Autism Stages Project exemplifies our commitment to **authentic co-design**. We established **dedicated Advisory Groups** for each life stage, ensuring lived experience shaped every decision rather than simply reviewing completed work.

Our **Navigating Autism** advisory and working groups brought together parents, carers, early childhood educators, school staff, clinicians, autistic adults, and subject matter experts. These contributors didn't simply validate our approach, they created it.

This collaborative foundation produces resources families and professionals recognise, trust, and use with confidence.



# 2022–23 Achievements

## AUSTism 2023: Amplifying Authentic Voices



In April, AUSTism 2023 returned as our flagship awareness event, delivering powerful in-person and virtual experiences that challenge assumptions, inform audiences, and inspire action.

This year's speakers featured a compelling lineup of speakers spanning advocacy, entertainment, professional expertise, and parenting experiences, including **Jana Pittman, Michael Theo, Al Campbell, Jo Abi**, and many others. The stories shared were funny, honest, tough, bittersweet, and utterly unforgettable. From navigating neurodiversity in public life to sharing raw experiences of parenting and identity, each speaker brought something unique to the stage. These presentations play a critical role in reshaping how all Australians see and understand autism.

### Demonstrable Reach and Impact

**Sydney and Melbourne events** hosted **310 combined attendees**, creating dynamic spaces for connection, learning, and visibility. National live-streaming ensured families, educators, and professionals across Australia could participate.

AUSTim 2023's reach extended far beyond event venues:



**Over 730,000  
social media impressions**  
(143% increase from  
previous year)



**More than 36,000  
engagements**  
(65% increase)



**Over 1,700  
video views across  
our platforms**

Our partnerships with **Hireup** and **Hey Hubble** enabled this expanded reach while keeping content accessible to all audiences.



# 2022–23 Achievements

## AUSTism 2023: Featured Speakers



**Jana Pittman**

Athlete, mum, doctor,  
author and speaker



**Andrew Pfeiffer**

Autistic adult and  
neurodiversity advocate



**Briana Blackett**

Journalist and autism parent



**Michael Theo**

Love on the Spectrum  
personality, Mr A Plus,  
autistic advocate



**Judy Singer**

Neurodiversity thought  
leader, autistic advocate,  
speaker



**Sonny Adorjan**

Co-founder of Woodism,  
autism parent



**Benison O'Reilly**

Co-author of The Australian  
Autism Handbook, autism  
parent



**Jo Abi**

Journalist, media personality  
and autism parent



**Mel Spencer**

Executive Officer and Co-  
founder of Different  
Journeys, autistic advocate  
and autism parent



**Seana Smith**

Co-author of The  
Australian Autism  
Handbook, autism parent



**Al Campbell**

Author of *The Keepers*,  
autism parent



**Shamus Hart**

Autistic advocate



**Kathrine Peereboom**

Founder & CEO of Spectrum Support  
Ltd and the Global Voluntary  
Disclosure Project (GVDP), autism  
parent

# Our Work

## Community Education



### Community education remains central to our mission.

Whether through face-to-face engagement, accessible digital content, or targeted campaigns, we deliver practical, trustworthy information to autistic people and their families throughout their journey.

### Reaching Wider Audiences: Webinars That Resonate

Through our live and on-demand webinar series, we continued to elevate real voices from within the autism community, covering topics that are often underrepresented or overlooked.

#### Mother's Day Panel



Parenting autistic children, parenting as an autistic mother and other important topics for mothers in the autism community.

Watch it now on our YouTube channel!



#### Mother's Day Panel – May 2023

[Watch here »](#)

In this honest and heartfelt panel, four mothers and advocates shared their lived experiences navigating autism, both as parents and as autistic women themselves. It was a conversation full of wisdom, humour, and insight that built genuine community connection and a powerful reminder that no two journeys are the same.

#### Men's Health Week with Autism Awareness Australia!



#### Men's Health Week Panel – June 2023.

[Watch here »](#)

Four men from across the autism community discussed health, wellbeing, relationships, and identity. Their stories sparked essential conversations about masculinity and autism in contemporary Australia.

These online events reach thousands of viewers nationwide, offering information alongside shared experience and community connection. They spotlight diverse voices, encourage respectful dialogue, and build understanding one story at a time.



### Connecting in Person: Source Kids Expos

Our presence at **Source Kids Expos** in **Adelaide (February)** and **Sydney (March)** provided invaluable opportunities for face-to-face family engagement. Australia's leading disability expos for children, teens, and young adults offered the perfect environment for personalised peer support.

For many attendees, we served as their *first trusted contact* following diagnosis, or as a sounding board for new challenges. These direct connections reinforce our commitment to community presence beyond digital platforms.

# Our Work

## Education and Training



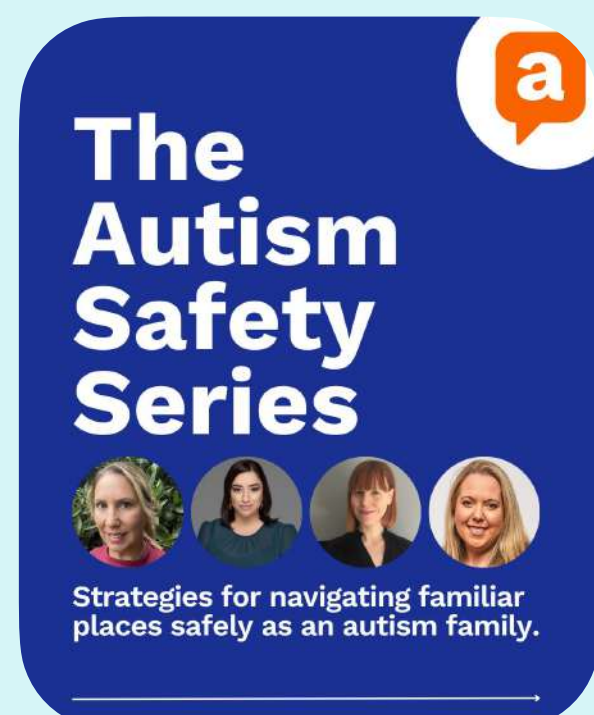
**At Autism Awareness Australia, we believe education is one of the most powerful tools for inclusion.**

That's why training remains a key pillar of our work, helping educators, professionals, and families develop the knowledge and confidence to better support autistic individuals in their care, communities and workplaces.

### Schools, Early Childhood and Allied Professionals

Throughout the year, we delivered tailored training to schools, early childhood centres, and allied professionals across the country. From foundational autism understanding to practical tools for inclusion, our sessions are evidence-based, accessible, and informed by lived experience. Whether through webinars, workshops or on-site consulting, we continue to bridge the gap between theory and the real-world needs of autistic children, teens and adults.

#### Community Education: The Autism Safety Series



Safety concerns affect many autism families, particularly those with children who are non-speaking or have co-occurring conditions. Our *Autism Safety Series* provided practical advice and emotional insight across multiple safety contexts.

Through parent-led storytelling, the series addressed critical topics including wandering and elopement, travel and public spaces, school safety, and emergency preparedness. This deeply personal, highly practical content achieved wide sharing while reinforcing our commitment to community-driven resources that inform, empower, and protect.

### Professional Development and Sector Training

We expanded our training footprint into new sectors this year, partnering with organisations committed to building inclusive workplaces and support systems:



#### **Plan Partners Webinar – "Autism and the NDIS"**

This collaboration provided service providers and support coordinators with practical guidance on NDIS complexities through an autism lens, improving support for autistic participants and their families.



#### **SA Water & John Holland: Neurodiversity in the Workplace**

Our customised workplace training, created and facilitated by our team for SA Water and John Holland staff, focused on creating inclusive, psychologically safe environments, improving awareness, and identifying strategies to support neurodivergent employees and colleagues.



#### **McDonald's: Individualised Inclusion Consulting**

Direct consulting developed tailored workplace accommodations and support strategies for a specific autistic employee. Our work resulted in tangible inclusion improvements and demonstrates how personalised support transforms lives.

# Our Work

## Advocacy and Policy



While resources and education are essential, advocacy drives systemic change. Autism Awareness Australia continued to play a significant role in shaping autism policy and amplifying family voices across Australia.

Our participation in key state and national initiatives ensured autistic individuals and their families remained central to reform conversations and brought lived experience, evidence-informed insight and policy fluency to the table.

### Key Strategic Advisory Roles and Consultations

We joined several influential working groups and policy processes, including:

- **South Australia Autism Education Advisory Group** – contributing to improved educational outcomes and inclusion across SA schools.
- **Transport for NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan** – providing community insight into making public transport more accessible and responsive.
- **National Guideline for Autism Assessment and Diagnosis Reference Group** – convened by Autism CRC, focused on aligning diagnostic practices across Australia.
- **NDIS Review Board** – invited to contribute to high-level discussions at the **official NDIS Review Board roundtable in November 2022**, helping shape the future direction of the scheme.
- **Senate Inquiry into the Capability and Culture of the NDIA** – provided written and verbal submissions in February 2023, advocating for more transparency, equity, and accountability within the agency.

### Public Advocacy: Speaking Up and Speaking Out

As part of our commitment to public advocacy, members of the AAA team were invited to speak at key conferences and community events:

- **Nicole Rogerson** presented at the **WA Spectrum Space Autism Conference** in **October 2022**, focusing on national policy reform and lived experience advocacy.
- **Elizabeth Bogharian** delivered a practical session on understanding autism at the **Sydney Family Expo** in **August 2022**, connecting with hundreds of families and service providers.
- **Nicole Hurley** joined forces with Plan Partners for an **NDIS-focused session** in **September 2022**, helping families better navigate the system with confidence and clarity.



Our policy engagement consistently grounds lived experience in evidence-informed advocacy for fair, inclusive systems that work in practice, not just on paper.

# Our Impact and Reach



During 2022-23, Autism Awareness Australia expanded reach, deepened engagement, and delivered measurable outcomes to families, professionals, and autistic individuals nationwide.

Our focus on *scale with integrity* means reaching more people without compromising quality or accessibility.



## Website Views



Autism Awareness Australia:  
895,421



Autism: What Next?:  
298,159



**Video Engagement** (Dad Doco)  
197,980 views



**Community Enquiries**  
(personalised email enquiries answered)  
~750



**Webinar Registrations**  
1,330



**Newsletter Subscribers**  
21,273



**Social Media Followers**  
134,900



**Fundraising Impact**  
\$137,337  
raised through **399 supporters**  
via Ride2Raise and other events

## Workshops & Advisory Sessions



**Early Years:**  
15 advisors



**School Years:**  
15 advisors



**Adult Years:**  
12 advisors

Every metric represents real people: families accessing guidance, educators developing skills, autistic voices being heard, and donors joining us in building a more informed, inclusive Australia.

From our core digital platforms to our in-person events, our community continues to grow and engage at scale. And we'll continue to meet them there, with free, evidence-informed content that empowers, connects, and supports.



# Our Partners and Supporters



**We know that meaningful change is never achieved alone.**

Our work succeeds through the support of our generous partners, sponsors, and community champions who share our commitment to improving the lives of autistic Australians.

## Ride2Raise 2022: A National Effort for Autism

Our headline fundraising and awareness initiative, **Ride2Raise 2022**, co-hosted with **The Ricky Stuart Foundation** and **Rapha**, represented AAA's first national fundraising event, bringing people together from across Australia in support of autistic individuals and their families.

Participants chose from three challenges:

- 220-kilometre ride in their own city
- 22-kilometre gym ride
- **2-hour ride** in local parks with friends and family

Results demonstrated powerful community commitment: **90+ riders** raised **\$63,000 in donations**, with additional **\$77,750 secured through sponsorships**.

**We thank our event partners and sponsors:**



PALLAS  
CAPITAL



MARSHALL  
INVESTMENTS



Canberra  
BMW

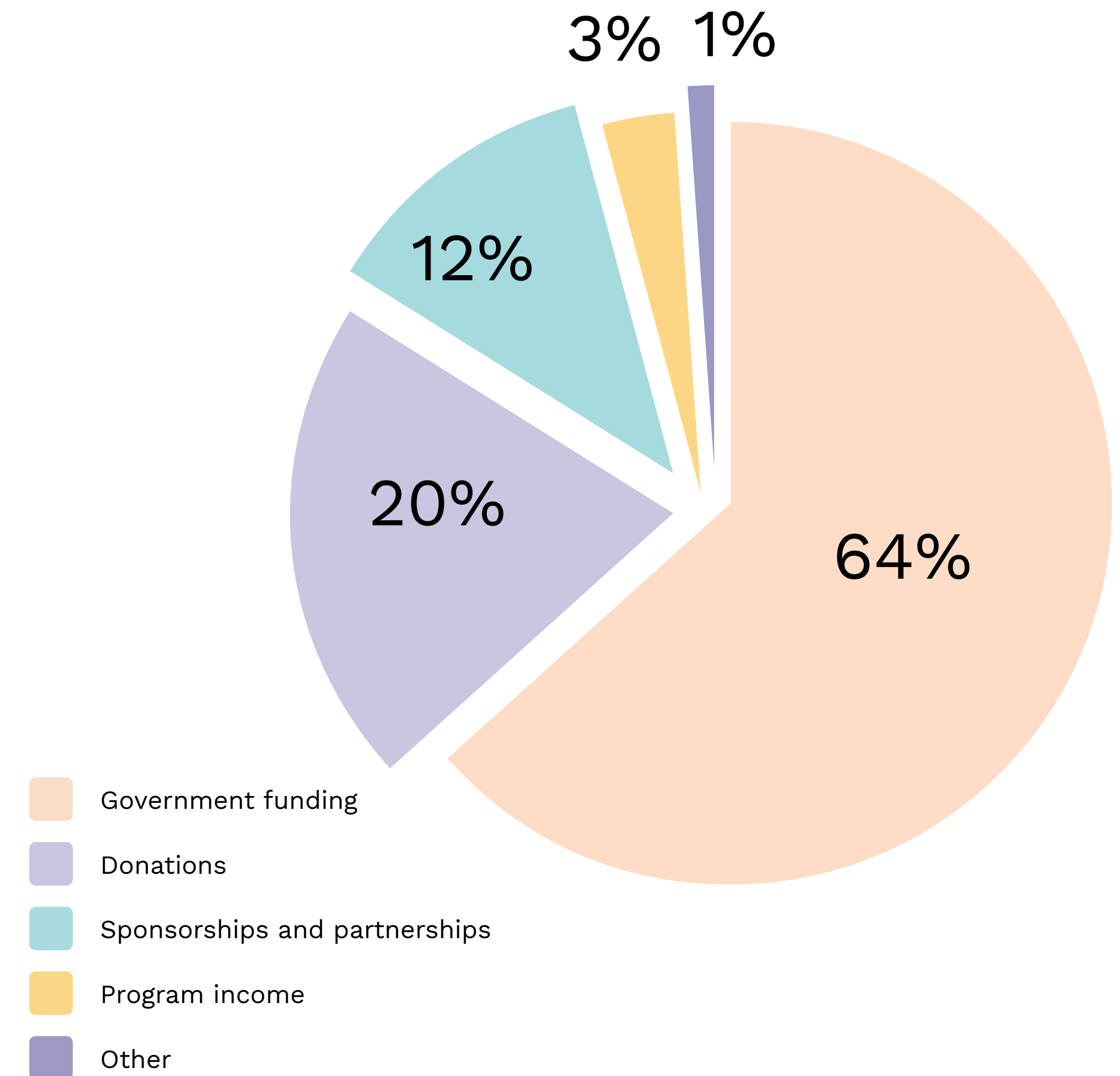
Together, you've helped us extend reach, amplify autistic voices, and ensure more families receive needed support when they need it most.

# Finance

## 2023 Financials



| REVENUE                       |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Donations                     | \$190,647        |
| Government funding            | \$600,000        |
| Sponsorships and partnerships | \$111,510        |
| Program income                | \$23,821         |
| Other                         | \$5,673          |
|                               | <b>\$931,652</b> |
| EXPENSES                      |                  |
| Program expenses              | \$64,056         |
| Employee expenses             | \$404,523        |
| Administration expenses       | \$139,769        |
| Marketing expenses            | \$4,615          |
|                               | <b>\$612,963</b> |
| PROFIT                        |                  |
|                               | <b>\$318,689</b> |



# Looking forward



The foundations established in 2022-23 position Autism Awareness Australia for significant impact expansion.

The Autism Stages Project's 2024 rollout will reach thousands of families with precisely targeted support. Our strengthened partnerships, enhanced digital capabilities, and deepened community connections create the platform for sustained, meaningful change.

We remain committed to our founding purpose: improving lives for all Australians on the autism spectrum and the families who love them.

**The work continues.**



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This report reflects our commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in service to the Australian autism community.

