

Milestones



A timeline showing Autism SA's history of progress and community engagement, highlighting how we have supported and empowered autistic individuals and their families in South Australia since 1964.

1964

Founding of Autism SA

Autism SA (then the Autistic Children's Association) was established by parents due to a lack of support and education of autistic children in South Australia.

1967

First National Conference

Autism SA hosted the first national conference on 'Childhood Autism', where it was proposed that a federal body of Autistic Children's Association of Australia should be formed.

1969

New Body Formed

The Association led the way in forming a federal body of Autistic Children's Association of Australia.



1971

First office in Marion

The Association opened its first office along with a bargain centre at 67a Finniss Street, where Mrs Hilary Johnson OAM, the first Director of Programs, set up a playroom where children and families could visit for an initial diagnostic assessment.

1973

Move to Unley

The office location moved from Marion to Greenhill Road, Unley.

1974

10th Anniversary

The Association celebrated its 10th anniversary, and established South Australia's first autism specific Clinic School and outreach service.

Autism-specific school

Operated the first autism-specific school in South Australia, opening its doors to autistic students in 1974

1975

Move to Myrtle Bank

The office location moved from Unley to Fisher Street, Myrtle Bank.

1979

First Edition of Journal

First edition of 'Autism - The Journal of the Autistic Children's Association of SA (Inc)' was published.

1980

First Country Advisor appointment

First Country Advisor appointment of the first Country Advisory services and established a community based pre-school unit.



1987

Visit to Malaysia

The President of the organisation, Mrs. Lurline Tillett, visited Malaysia to provide support to autistic children, sponsored by Australian Lions Foundation International.

1990

First information leaflet

The Early Intervention team developed the first information pamphlet about autism that was widely used by families, medical centres and other agencies as a means to create awareness.

1991

First edition of The Autiser

The organisation's first edition of The Autiser (community newsletter) was published in April. The Clinic School was closed in preference of more inclusive education options, while the Outreach Service went from strength to strength.

1997

New sensory room

Through a grant given by the Licensed Clubs' Association, based on evidence based research a new sensory room was established in collaboration with Woodville Special School.

Milestones



2000

Diagnostic training

Autism SA leads and coordinates the training of other professionals in the autism diagnostic process in both regional and local health facilities.

2004

New name and logo

Autism SA's corporate identity was upgraded to include a new logo and a new name, which was well received by families, members and the wider community.



2008

Move to Netley

The office location moved from Myrtle Bank to Marion Road, Netley, where the office was located until 2021.

2009

National fundraising campaign

A national fundraising campaign Drawtism: Play Pictionary for Autism was launched, with branded Autism SA merchandise sold in support of the organisation.



2013

Asia Pacific Autism Conference Autism SA hosts True Colours

Autism SA hosts True Colours - Asia Pacific Autism Conference in August 2013, and celebrates 50 years of autism services at the Autism SA International Gala Dinner, 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'.

Future Leaders program

Initiated the first national Future Leaders program to engage autistic people as part of the 2013 Asia Pacific Autism Conference.

Training and Consultancy team formalisation

Autism SA formally established the Training and Consultancy team, offering workshops, professional development, conferences, and consultancy services to support the community.

Diagnostic training

Autism SA leads and coordinates the training of other professionals in the autism diagnostic process in both regional and local health facilities.

NDIS was introduced to South Australia

The NDIS was introduced to South Australia in July 2013 for a trial phase, with the full rollout across Australia progressively commencing from January 2016.

2014

Launch of new website

Autism SA launches a new website that enables the community to have wider access to information and resources.

iMsocial project launched

The iMsocial project was launched. This program was developed for children aged 8-12 years old with a focus on social development.

Internship program launched

Autism SA played a key role in the launch of the Hewlett-Packard and Federal Government internship program for 11 young autistic adults at HP Australia.



2015

Partnership with PsychMed

Partnership with PsychMed, delivering a range of one day workshops, extended sessions and professional workshops throughout South Australia as part of a national partnership between education and autism.

One day training conference

Autism SA delivered a one-day training conference to over 350 people, with international guest speaker Jed Baker.

Social Digital Enterprise program

Launch of The Social Digital Enterprise Program, a program that seeks to increase the social development of young autistic people who also have an interest and basic IT skills.

Early Days workshops

In partnership with Autism Queensland, Autism SA delivered free Early Days Workshops across South Australia, including rural and remote areas, to support families with young autistic children.

Autism Friendly Charter

The Autism Friendly Charter, an initiative designed to support Australian businesses and organisations to become more inclusive, is launched.



2016

Graduate education program

Autism SA worked with Flinders University to educate new graduates in a Graduate Certificate of Education (Special Education) program that provides them with a better understanding and knowledge of autism.

Online live chat

The live chat function on our website, which connects the community directly to our Infoline, was launched in March, providing greater access to the community.



2017

Autism in agriculture

Working with SunPork Farms and Autism CRC, Autism SA supported the appointment of 16 autistic job seekers into the workforce across South Australia and Queensland.

Free events program

The first of many free events at entertainment venues were held across the state, with Autism SA partnering with a variety of organisations, including Bounce, Latitude, and ARC Campbelltown.

Launch of the Autism Conference Series

The launch of Autism SA's Autism Conference Series brought internationally renowned speaker Kari Dunn-Baron to Australia, presenting to over 500 attendees in Adelaide.



TRADE - Tintinara Event

Autism SA partnered with TRADE (Tintinara Regional Autism Development and Education) to host an event featuring Temple Grandin, who provided insights into autism and practical inclusion strategies.

Training Chinese delegates

Autism SA trained a group of Chinese delegates who traveled to Australia with the specific goal of learning more about autism and inclusive practices in order to take their learnings back to China.

2018

New northern hub

Official opening of Autism SA's Northern Hub at Elizabeth, equipped with state-of-the-art technology including a fully integrated sensory and social space, with thanks to Variety.

Parra Wirra Conservation Park

Launch of the new inclusive space at Para Wirra Conservation Park at an autism friendly family discovery day. Working in partnership with the Park, autism friendly resources are being produced to make parks more accessible for all.



2019

Autism Conference Series - Happiness, neuroharmony, and the predictive mind

Keynote speaker Dr. Peter Vermeulen attracted 279 participants and delivered a Masterclass for Autism SA staff.

Autism Conference Series - Empowering people on the autism spectrum

Presented by Dr. Wenn Lawson, three events were held across metropolitan Adelaide, focusing on self-advocacy and empowerment.

Autism Conference Series - Using the social thinking methodology to support social learning

Featuring Michelle Garcia Winner, this event introduced the Social Thinking® framework to 389 participants, with an additional 75 staff attending a Masterclass.

Launch of The Spectrum website

Launch of The Spectrum, an online resource that provides a wide range of evidence-informed information about autism. Users can also sign up for a regular email newsletter.



Royal Adelaide Show

In partnership with the Royal Show, Autism SA enhanced access and inclusion by introducing social narratives, sensory maps, and communication boards over the following 6 years to support the Autistic and autism community.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Autism SA commenced our Reconciliation Action Plan journey.

Autism Friendly Charter App

Launch of the Autism Friendly Charter App, which helps people to find autism inclusive business across Australia.



2020

A national voice for Autism SA

Autism SA is elected as a State Committee Member for National Disability Services, giving our community a voice and helping to create change at state and national level.

First full-online Autism Conference Series - Achieving meaningful inclusion for leading productive and fulfilling lives

Hosted Dr. Stephen Shore (USA) and engaged 229 participants in Autism SA's first fully online conference.

Research project - LEGO® Robotics Therapy

In collaboration with Flinders and Griffith Universities, Autism SA explored the use of LEGO® Group therapy to support mental health and social competence in autistic adolescents.

Southern hub

Opened a state-of-the-art space at Tonsley Innovation District, featuring a gross motor room with a swing and rock climbing wall, as well as a dedicated sensory room for our clients and employees.

New logo and brand

Launch of Autism SA's refreshed logo and brand.



2021

Community communication board

Autism SA collaborated with the City of Marion to create communication boards at Hendrie Street Reserve Inclusive Playground.



2022

Accessibility partner of the Adelaide Fringe

Autism SA was proud to become an accessibility partner for the Adelaide Fringe, the largest event of its kind in the southern hemisphere.

Research Project - Game-based intervention (Minecraft®)

Investigated Minecraft® as a tool to promote social collaboration while also exploring the effectiveness of intensity and mode of interventions.

2023

Launch of mobile sensory kit

With support from a Cops for Kids grant, Autism SA introduced a transportable sensory space, offering the community a place to reset at key events like VAILO, the Adelaide Christmas Pageant, expos, and other key events across South Australia.

Drakes quiet hour

Autism SA worked with Drakes Supermarkets to implement a quiet hour, enhancing access and inclusion for autistic shoppers.

Work My Way

Autism SA launched the School Leavers Employment Support program, Work My Way, in January 2023, supporting young autistic adults in developing job-related skills.

Autism SA language position statement

Autism SA collaborated with the community to develop its first language position statement and language guide, which also informed the creation of a guide for the Labor Government.

Autistics' Guide to Adulthood

Launched a free, self-paced online resource, co-designed by autistic adults and professionals, featuring 10 life-skills modules to support autistic adults.

AUTISTICS'
GUIDE TO
ADULTHOOD

Australian Hotels Association: Pubs with Heart Project

Autism SA partnered with the Australian Hotels Association (SA) to enhance access and inclusion in pubs, clubs, and venues, supporting community participation.



2024

Celebrating 60 years

Autism SA celebrated 60 years of supporting the Autistic and autism community with a fundraising challenge. The "60 a Day" community fundraiser encouraged participants to complete 60 daily squats, lunges, push-ups, crunches, or an exercise of their choice during April, raising \$9,008.

Celebrating
60 *years*

Research Project - Alternative sedation pathways

Autism SA partnered with SA Health through funding to explore alternative sedation pathways for autistic individuals with an intellectual disability.

Communication Boards at Adelaide Zoos

Autism SA worked in partnership with Zoos South Australia to instate Communication Boards at both the Adelaide Zoo and Monarto Safari Park sites.

Strengthening Inclusive Employment Pathways project

Funded by the Department of Human Services, this initiative empowered businesses in South Australia to attract, hire, and retain autistic employees.

Autism SA constitution

Members voted to support changes to Autism SA's constitution, including the introduction of a lived experience advisory group.

2025

Torrens Foundation agreement

Securing long-term sustainability for Autism SA and creating new opportunities.

Communications boards in play spaces

In partnership with Nature Play SA, Autism SA enhanced access and inclusion by installing a Communication Board at Happy Valley Reservoir.

Neuro-inclusive Recruiting

A comprehensive online resource to support employers in attracting, hiring, and retaining neurodivergent talent was launched.

