

Autism Advisory and Support Service

ANNUAL REPORT



2017-2018

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Executive Summary

Autism Advisory and Support Service (AASS) was established in 2007 by a group of parents from South Western Sydney to fill the void in the health care sector encountered by families of children with Autism.

AASS was established as a support and network/advisory service to empower children with Autism and their families through knowledge and support, and to positively impact and influence their children's social and emotional development.

AASS has the legal status as a not for profit incorporated charity. AASS relies heavily on funding grants, donations and sponsorships to meet its operational costs. Despite these financial obstacles AASS has grown in size and been able to expand its range of service delivery. Since its inception AASS has:

- ❖ opened the AASS Community house/drop in center, located in Memorial Avenue, Liverpool, complete with Autism friendly therapy playground and sensory garden.
- ❖ established, coordinated and hosted support groups in a range of languages;
- ❖ established, coordinated and hosted social group for young adults with ASD and mentors;
- ❖ established a school outreach program providing therapeutic opportunities to students in Schools for Specific Purposes and Support Units.
- ❖ Provide a range of group and individual therapies including Speech Therapy, Music Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Psychology
- ❖ established, coordinated and hosted social skills therapy group for 7-15 year olds;
- ❖ established, coordinated and host structured therapy play group for 1-6 year olds;
- ❖ established, coordinated and host Art Play via an Art Therapist.
- ❖ run a resource library and toy and resource shop
- ❖ established, coordinated and facilitated the only 24 hour Autism hotline in the southern hemisphere.
- ❖ established and expanded their AASS continues to provide these services and others as they strive to close the gaps in service provision for children and adults with autism and their families.

AASS began by supporting families in South West Sydney and now has grown as a support service to families around Sydney and in every state of Australia. It handles approximately 500 enquiries/cases per month.

Our Mission

To empower children and adults with Autism and their families through knowledge and support

Our Values

1. Innovation
2. Authenticity
3. Community
4. Passion
5. Responsiveness

Incorporation

Autism Advisory and Support Service Inc ABN 63 073 684 085 is a not for profit incorporated association. Its members are the current Committee. Its registered office is located at 88 Memorial Ave Liverpool NSW 2170.

Charitable status, tax concessions and fundraising

Autism Advisory and Support Service is a Health Promotion Charity (HPC). It is endorsed as an Income Tax Exempt Charity and receives certain other tax concessions and exemptions consistent with its status as a HPC which relate to Goods and Services and Fringe Benefits taxes. Autism Advisory and Support Service has been endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR). Autism Advisory and Support Service is registered under applicable fundraising legislation as required in NSW where it raises funds as follows: New South Wales: Registration number CFN 21161



Services

AASS relies heavily on donations, fundraising and grants to operate their service.

Our Board have a diverse set of skills and come from varied professional backgrounds, offering unique expertise to AASS. Those professions include; education, business management and politics.

In addition to the professional skill set the Executive Board members bring to AASS, some, as parents of children with Autism understand the right of the family and the individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to make decisions based on what they feel is best for their situation. Individuals on the spectrum should enjoy the same rights and opportunities as their neuro typical peers.

AASS fills the gap in service provision that exists, and does so at an affordable cost to families. This is important, as studies have shown that raising a child with a disability cost at least three times more than raising a child without a disability.

The main benefit that AASS provides is that we do can personally identify with the issues faced by parents accessing our service. We have all experienced the isolation and grief that a diagnosis brings; the frustration of searching for affordable and appropriate services; the battle to find a suitable educational environment for our children; the guilt connected with focusing on the child with the disability and not enough attention on other children; the burden of wondering what will become of our children when they are older.

So when a family comes to AASS for assistance, our empathy and understanding is real. We have learnt about ASD from life, not a textbook. We understand that ASD should not be approached with a “one size fits all” attitude. This unique approach brings families coming back to volunteer when they are more comfortable with their situation. We do not need to advertise our service, as word of mouth in particular from other service providers, keeps us very busy.

For parents and carers waiting for a formal assessment and diagnosis, looking for the right intervention and joining the long waiting lists can be extremely overwhelming, confusing and frustrating. AASS provides unbiased advice, encouragement, guidance and support.



Presidents Report

As the NDIS has continued its rollout across the region, AASS has continued to represent the sector interests. This includes both advocating for individuals and educating all sides of the political spectrum on the opportunities for improvement in scheme structure and service supports.

AASS has continued to successfully reshape its business streams to respond to the market driven disability services focus introduced by NDIS, while maintaining its commitment to empowering and supporting individuals and carers and families with ASD.

While the year has presented unique challenges, the AASS team of dedicated professionals has helped navigate the organisation through these times, and we look forward to continuing that great work.

Nadia Napoletano

President



CEO's Report

The past year saw the complete roll out of the NDIS in NSW. The waiting times for planning meetings as well as gaps and cuts to NDIS and ECEI plans has seen our team struggle with the number of families who are referred to us for therapy with no source of funding. We continue to fundraise and apply for grants to try and help us fill this void. AASS hope that the scheme will continue to change so it will serve our families in the meaningful and positive way it was promised to.

Our partnership with various schools and organizations has seen many positive outcomes with more parents finding support and information, and more children gaining access to therapies and social skills that will ensure a more successful life path for them.

This year we have seen a dramatic rise in referrals from medical and educational professionals for children and adults who have complex and severe conditions. My team leave no stone unturned in ensuring each individual is offered the correct supports and interventions for their needs.

Our advocacy work remains unfunded yet higher in demand than ever before. Our aim is to secure Government funding to expand our service to meet local demands.

There is an increase in requests for professional development from all sectors of the community which our team continue to deliver with enthusiastic and glowing feedback.

My team and I look forward to another year of growth while serving our community with passion and dedication. I look forward to sharing our progress with you.

Grace Fava CLO MAICD JP
CEO



Treasurers Report

On behalf of the Board of Autism Advisory and Support Service, I would like to present the Financial Report for the year ended 30 June, 2018.

The organisation has continued to undergo its transformation during the past year, with the continued rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in South West Sydney and indeed Australia wide. It has seen AASS consolidate its services and staff and further develop its new service model from a predominantly “block funded” organisation to a “Fee for Service” business model. This has not been without significant challenge given the continued systemic issues encountered by the National Disability Insurance Scheme rollout.

Throughout the 2018 financial year the organization has faced the challenges brought about by the NDIS and continued to build necessary processes to facilitate and support our service model and to ensure the highest possible quality of service and support for our clients.

As the focus has been on consolidating our service model, fundraising efforts have yielded less than in prior years, however we have been successful in applying for various grants to fund various capital expenditure and to subsidize important group based services which are in high demand in our sector. The Toy Store continues to thrive and supply affordable resources to families and frontline workers.

As anticipated, the organization experienced a deficit for this financial year. This deficit was budgeted for and AASS continued to keep administration and other costs down and actively seeking funding assistance for unfunded projects at AASS. Moving into 2018/19, this will continue, along with a renewed focus on fundraising. AASS will continue to look for ways to diversify income sources to ensure the financial stability and viability of our service.

For further information about the organisation’s financial performance, please refer to the Financial Statements and accompanying notes.

Dominic Pelle

Treasurer

The AASS Executive Committee

Grace Fava CLO, JP

Founder and CEO

Certificate IV Frontline Management, Adjunct Fellow Faculty of Health Sciences at University of Western Sydney, Board Member with Catholic Cemeteries Trust. Grace has worked in many diverse fields including Pharmacy, Office Administration and Accounts receivable for various organizations.

Her passion for Autism was ignited when searching for services for her two boys who both regressed with Autism and Global Developmental Delay. Grace is responsible for the day to day running of AASS and overseeing all aspects of the organization.

Nadia Napoletano

President

Nadia Napoletano has a background in legal and governance matters. Nadia has leadership experience across the public and private sectors in executive management positions in legal services, governance, procurement, business planning and strategy, work health & safety, risk management, policy and regulation.

She has experience in leading and establishing governance frameworks in public sector environments, as well as leading and undertaking business transformation projects.

Fiona Zammit B Ed

Vice President

Fiona Zammit is a founding member of AASS. She is currently holding the position of Vice President on the Executive Board.

Fiona has a Bachelor of Education and is currently employed by the Department of Education as a Learning and Support Teacher. She is passionate about providing inclusive educational opportunities for students with additional needs.

Fiona is married with 2 children. She credits her son, who has Autism, as the inspiration behind what she does.



Dominic Pelle**Treasurer**

Registered Tax Agent and Accountant Principle, Dominic Pelle is a fellow of the Institute of Public Accountants (FIPA) since 1999. Dominic has a Bachelor of Business degree with a major in Accounting completed at the University of Western Sydney and has also completed an Advanced Diploma in Accounting.

Dominic is also a registered agent with the Australian Securities & Investment Commission (ASIC) and is a member of the National Tax and Accountants Association (NTAA).

Bassema Ghaznavi**Secretary**

Cert IV in Employment Services (Disabilities)

Diploma in Disability

Diploma in Case Management

Currently in the final stage of completing a Bachelor of Social Science (Social Welfare) degree

Bassema is a founding board member of AASS. She has 4 years' experience working as a disability employment consultant within Disability Employment Services using a holistic approach in identifying and working with individuals to remove barriers from empowerment and enable job readiness. The role included marketing appropriate employers, resume building, job placements, vocational training, mentoring, and on the job support for both clients and employers.

She is currently a volunteer operator for the 24hr Autism Hotline taking calls from carers, professionals, and people on the Autism spectrum that are in need of assistance, advice and support.

Laurie Ferguson

Laurie Ferguson has lived in the western Sydney suburbs of Guildford and Granville his entire life. He has a MA (History) and a BEc from Sydney University. Laurie served as a member of NSW State Parliament from 1984 to 1990 and represented the federal electorates of Reid and Werriwa from 1990 to 2016. His contact with AASS stems from his time in Werriwa from 2010 to 2016.

Anne Marie Elias

Anne-Marie Elias is a collaborative Alchemist | Change Strategist | International Speaker & Facilitator.

Anne-Marie advises government, business and NGOs on leveraging the innovation ecosystem to solve problems.

She preaches the gospel of disrupting the status quo and re-purposes methods used in tech, start up, entrepreneurship and design to innovate responses to tipping point problems.

Collaboration is her calling card and she brings together cross sector efforts to support social change initiatives.

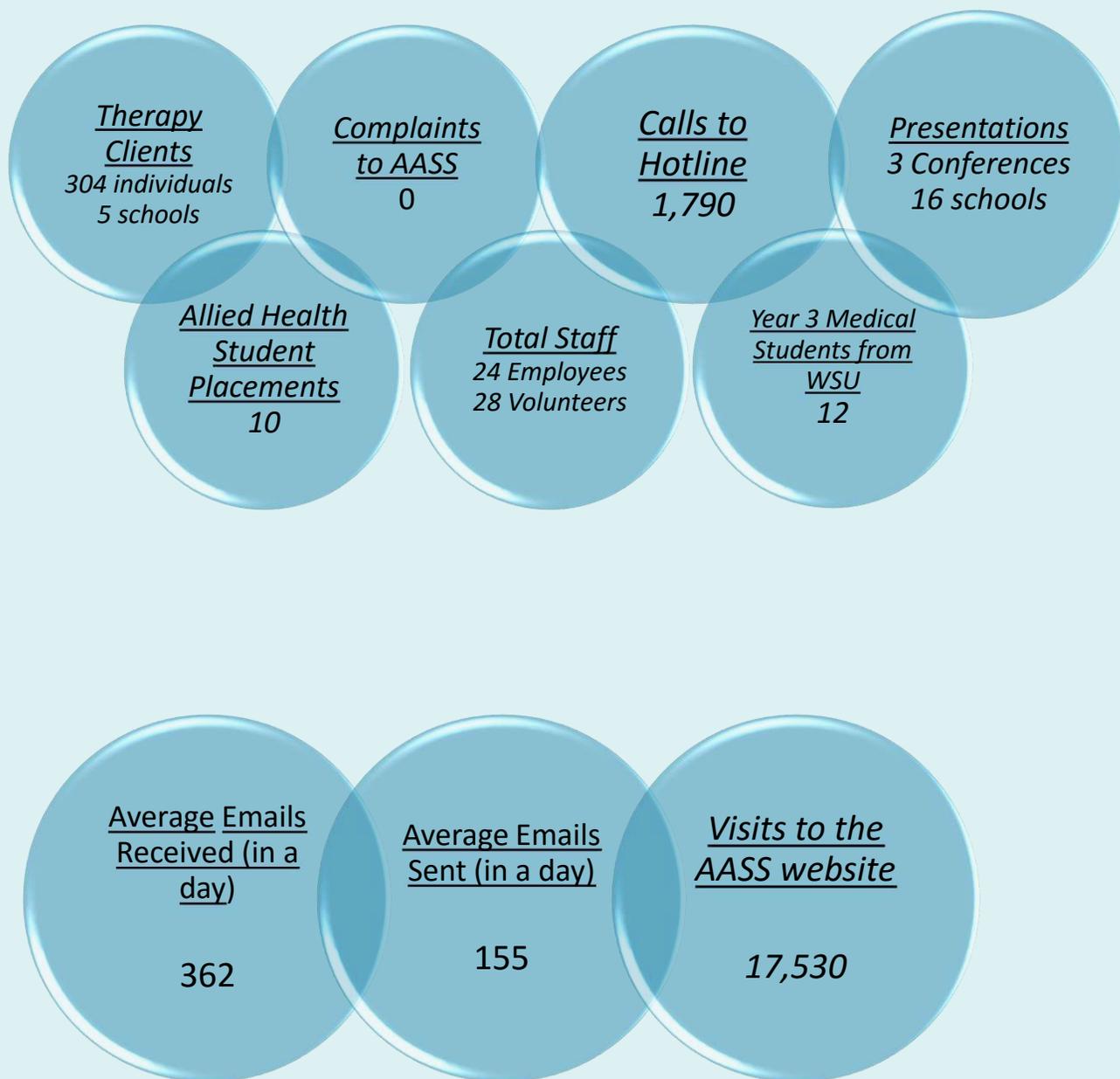
Anne-Marie is on the board of VibeWire, Western Sydney Women and the Autism Advisory and Support Service Board

Ms Susan Dinkha**BA, Dip Law (SAB)**

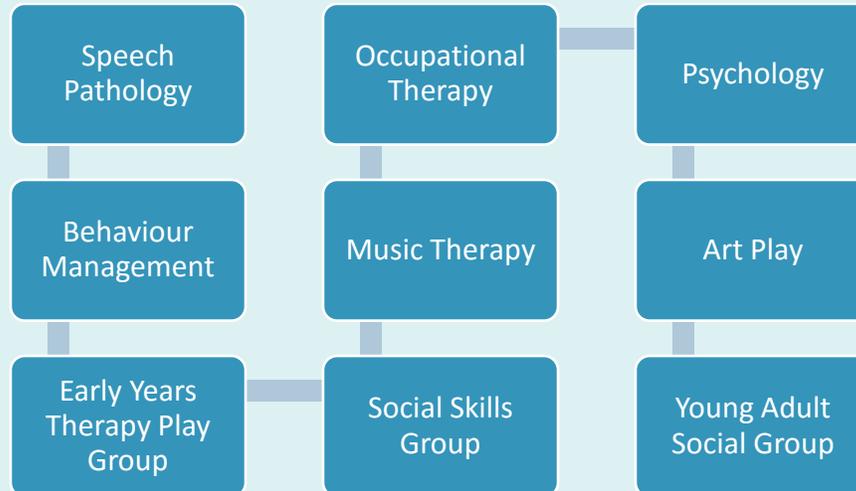
Susan is a lawyer with extensive commercial experience gained in both corporate and private practice. She has worked for public companies as legal counsel and in legal and compliance management roles. She has provided consultancy services to public companies and not-for-profit organisations. She holds a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma in Law.



AASS Snapshot from 1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018



Therapy in Action



In one of our social skills therapy groups, we have been working on making new friends, joining in on and maintaining conversations, changing topics, feigning interest and assertiveness. In Term 3 we saw a pivotal change in their social skills. The clients began to initiate and lead the sessions on their own. They also began to monitor their own and each other's non-verbal communication. They demonstrated the ability to immediately change their social communication style in response to indirect feedback. The greatest achievement is that they have initiated and urged their parents to help them maintain these relationships outside of the group.

Thanh – Speech Pathologist and Adrienne – Occupational Therapist

Therapy in Action



“I have been working with RA since the beginning of the year. We focused on establishing joint attention, increasing his social skills and imitating words or Key Word Sign (KWS) to request/comment. It was very difficult to engage RA because of his sensory seeking behaviours. RA was offered combined Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy sessions in the OT room. Prior to this it was extremely difficult to keep him engaged in a therapy room. RA is now able to reference between objects to his communication partners, participate in some table-top activities and has started using KWS independently to communicate his wants and needs. RA enjoys coming to therapy and waits in front of the OT room. His level of engagement has definitely improved and he is now able to stay in the room for the full session. “

Laura – Speech Pathologist

Therapy in Action



Music Therapy sessions with O have produced some remarkable improvements in recent months. When O began sessions he was very uncoordinated and lacked activities he could enjoy and be good at. O is now using the drumkit, keyboard, and is singing. He is enjoying these activities is and showing enthusiasm. O is beginning to gain a real understanding of reciprocal activity and turn-taking within musical parameters. With continued therapy this will positively affect O's understanding of turn-taking and social interactions generally.

Matthew – Music Therapist

Carers Group

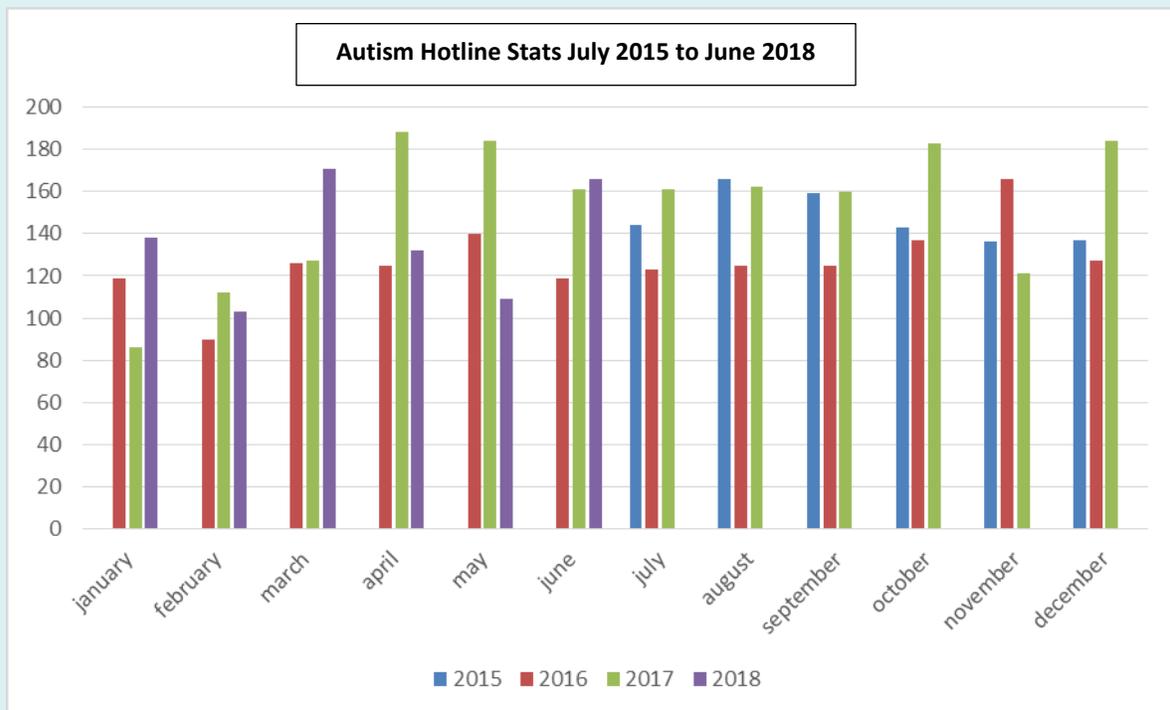
“My Arabic speaking families feel isolated because most of them have none or limited English. They have little awareness or understanding about Autism and how important therapy is for their child. My main aim is to support and encourage friendships between families. It has been great seeing friendships forming between each other and sharing their Autism experiences and ideas.”

Lina – Arabic Support Worker

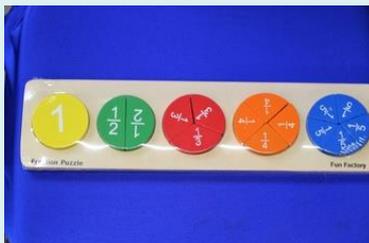


24 Hour Autism Hotline Report

The 24 Hour Australia Wide Autism Hotline remains an integral part of the Autism world. It is a valuable source of information, support and relief from social isolation. It still remains paid for by donations and fundraising events. Our roster of volunteer parents offer guidance and encouragement to a range of callers such as individuals with Autism, parents and carers, siblings and friends, Health professionals, Doctors, Teachers and First Responders. These callers contact AASS from around Australia, where we listen, support and guide through the maze of services. For many, the hotline is their only connection to the outside world.



Sensory Toy and Resource Store

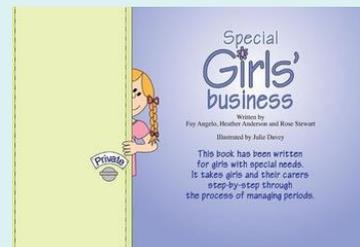


Over 4000 units sold
(*Does not include sales at events.)*

The AASS sensory toy and resource store continues to grow, with sales around the country exceeding all expectations.

We are continually asked to showcase our items at a range of school and community events. Each year sees our range grow in line with requests from therapists and families.

Lisa - Administration



*320 lines in our catalogue
(not including special orders not usually stocked.)*



Special Thanks

AASS wish to thank the following families and organisations for their support:

Novella Events	Rotary Liverpool Greenway	Domenic Leonello
East Hills Public School	Greg Hastings	Judith Banks
Waste Contractors	Brandster Services	Tyres 4U
Shannon Watson	Horsley Park Public School	Liverpool Mens Shed
Vicky Guilfoyle	Bernadette Holland	Inspire Church
Father Atanasio Gonelli Charitable Fund	Bonnyrigg Heights Public School	Joe Ayoub
Livebetter	Draybi Group	Guise Public School
Antonia Leonello	Dalmeny Public School	Nic Sallustio
Stephen Pham	Yoanza	Fava Family
Adrian Mendoza	Hollard Insurance	First National Casula
T and W Greenhouse	Cabravale Diggers	Megan Sellars
Cars Under The Stars	Campbelltown Computer Repairs	Lee Watt Graphic Design
Simons Seconds	Event Cinemas	St George Foundation
Elite Stone Masons	Lionheart Lawyers	Holsworthy Childcare
Imperial Corp Pty Ltd	Make Your Mark	I C Form
Boulos Haykel	Alison Trewin	Leonello Family
Chiovo Family	Pina Pisano	Fiona Zammit
Blackmores	Mounties Group	Moorebank Sports Club

