



Our Submission to the Department of Social Services on the National Autism Strategy



Contents



About this submission

Page 3



Talking to autistic people with an intellectual disability

Page 5



Restrictive practices

Page 9



Supported decision making

Page 12



Better support in the criminal justice system

Page 14



Mental health support

Page 18



What happens next?

Page 21

About this submission



This is an Easy Read version of an Inclusion Australia **submission**.



A **submission** is when we write to the Government and tell them what we think.



Our submission told the Government what we think about their plan for the **National Autism Strategy**.

The National Autism Strategy or the Strategy for short is the Australian Governments plan for supporting autistic people with things like



- Healthcare
- Education
- Employment
- Government services like Centrelink.



You can find the big version of our submission [here](#).

Talking to autistic people with an intellectual disability



We think the Strategy plan is a good start but could be better.



There are lots of important things that should be in the Strategy plan but are not.



We think it is important for the Government to listen to the stories of autistic people with an intellectual disability and their families.



Including everyone in decisions about the Strategy will make sure it works well for everyone.



This includes autistic people with an intellectual disability

- with **complex needs**
- in **closed settings**.



Complex needs is when someone needs extra help to do everyday things.



Closed settings are places like

- Group homes
- Hospitals
- Prisons.



People with an intellectual disability in closed settings often face more problems than other people.



For example they are

- More likely to be hurt or abused
- More likely to have mental health problems





- Less likely to get a say in decisions about their lives



- More likely to have **restrictive practices** used on them.

Restrictive practices are explained on the next page.

Restrictive practices



Restrictive practices control or stop a person from hurting themselves, other people or things.

For example



- Giving someone tablets or medicine to stop them hurting themselves
- Locking doors to stop someone running out onto the road.



The Australian Government says restrictive practices should only be used if they are needed.

But restrictive practices are often used on people when they should not be.



This can make the restricted person

- Feel sad and lonely
- Feel like they are not listened to
- More likely to be hurt, neglected or taken advantage of by others.



The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability** says people with disability have the right to

- Feel safe
- Make their own choices
- Live without abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation.





The Government needs to make sure the Strategy supports the human rights of autistic people with an intellectual disability.



The Government needs to do more research into restrictive practices.



The Government must listen to the experiences of autistic people with an intellectual disability and their families about restrictive practices.

Supported decision making



Autistic people with an intellectual disability have the right to make their own decisions just like everyone else.



Some people need extra support to make decisions.

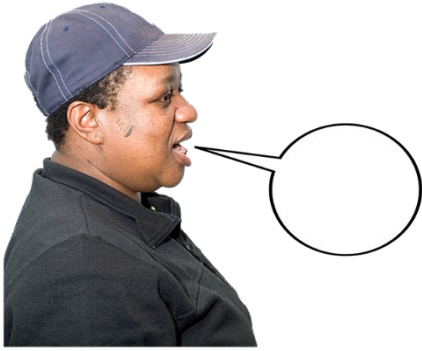
This is called supported decision making.



But the Strategy plan does not talk about supported decision making at all.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability says making your own decisions is a human right.



Supported decision making helps people with disability to

- Be independent
- Speak up for themselves.



People with an intellectual disability in closed settings are less likely to have access to supported decision making.



We think the Government needs to include supported decision making in the Strategy.



This will help protect the decision making rights of autistic people with an intellectual disability.

Better support in the criminal justice system



There are more people with complex needs in the **criminal justice system** than there should be.



The criminal justice system is when someone

- Gets charged with a crime



- Goes to court

- Is in prison



- Is a victim of a crime.



Autistic people with an intellectual disability can face a lot of problems in the criminal justice system.

For example

- Police and prison officers who do not have disability training
- Not enough justice support services.



People with complex needs in the justice system are more likely to

- be hurt or abused
- be found guilty of a crime they did not do
- have trouble fitting back into the community after leaving prison.





Autistic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with an intellectual disability in the justice system can face even more problems.



The Strategy needs to better understand the issues autistic people can face in the justice system.



The Government can do this by making sure the Strategy matches with

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- The Disability Royal Commission's recommendations about people with disability in the justice system.



There are other ways the Government can make things better for autistic people with an intellectual disability in the justice system.



For example

- Accessible information and resources about the justice system in Plain English and Easy Read
- Making sure autistic people with an intellectual disability can make complaints about the justice system if they want to
- Making sure there are support services for people who need them.



The Government needs to listen to autistic people with an intellectual disability and their families about their experiences in the justice system.

Mental health support



Autistic people with an intellectual disability are more likely to have mental health problems than most people.

Autistic people with an intellectual disability can face a lot of problems getting help for their mental health.



For example

- Bad attitudes from doctors and mental health professionals like psychologists



- Doctors and mental health professionals who do not understand autism or intellectual disability
- Not enough accessible information about mental health.



Sometimes mental health professionals do not listen to autistic people with an intellectual disability when they ask for help.



Sometimes they talk to the person's carer or family member instead of the autistic person.



They may blame the person's disability instead of looking at the person's mental health.



This can make autistic people with an intellectual disability feel unheard.



Bad mental health help can make the person's mental health worse.

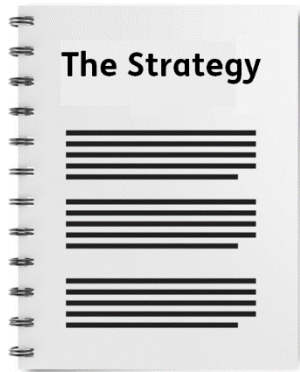


The Strategy needs to look at the problems autistic people with an intellectual disability face when getting help for mental health.



The Government needs to put money into training for mental health professionals on how to better support autistic patients with an intellectual disability.

What happens next?



The Australian Government will look at what we said and think about how to make the Strategy work for everyone.



The draft Strategy should be ready sometime in 2024.