

KEY ASPECT POLICIES

The following list of policies related to clients and Aspect services provides an overview of each policy's objective. For more detailed information about each of these policies please contact the appropriate unit manager or central office at Forestville.

01.01.01: Service Entry: Outreach & Consultancy

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) recognises that people enter Outreach and Consultancy for a variety of reasons. Individuals may enter Outreach and Consultancy for one off consultations, or to undertake a block of short-term intensive intervention, or for information, advocacy or referral advice.

The focus of Outreach and Consultancy is the development of the child's and adult's skills across communication, social, academic and daily living domains with the primary goal of independent living, including participation in mainstream educational and community settings.

Because there is always a limit on the availability of resources, Aspect has to make decisions from time to time about priorities and what services can be made available. In some cases money provided through government and non-government funding can only be used in pre-determined ways. This also affects the services and why they are offered.

When parents or carers are seeking a service within Outreach and Consultancy, there must be a match between the child's needs and the capacity of Outreach and Consultancy to meet those needs and the needs of the child's family or carer.

Aspect also recognises that children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders have the right to access and equity of services regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity religion, or language. As a service provider Outreach and Consultancy will respond appropriately and sensitively to the needs of the entire community including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds within the limit of available resources.

01.01.02: Service Entry: Schools

Children with an autism spectrum disorder who require specialised educational placement in an Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) school and who meet the criteria for enrolment can access the enrolment process based on relative need and subject to the availability of a suitable placement.

Aspect recognises that children with an autism spectrum disorder have the right to access and equity of services regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity religion, or language. As a service provider Aspect will respond appropriately and sensitively to the needs of the entire community including people from indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds within the limit of available resources.

01.10.03: Service Entry: Employment and Community Participation

Adults seeking to access Autism Spectrum Australia's (Aspect's) Employment and Community Participation Service must meet the criteria of the program, based on relative need and the available resources.

Aspect recognises that people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have the right to access and equity of services regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity religion, or language. As a service provider Aspect will respond appropriately and sensitively to the needs of the entire community including people from indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

01.02.01: Service Exit: Outreach & Consultancy

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) recognises that people exit Outreach and Consultancy services for a variety of reasons. Outreach and Consultancy services vary from one off consultations to, information services, to regular consultancy, to a block of intensive intervention. Some clients receive a variety of Outreach and Consultancy services across many years.

The focus of Outreach and Consultancy is the development of the child's and adult's skills across communication, social, academic and daily living domains with the primary goal of independent living, including participation in mainstream educational and community settings, including the provision of support to families and carers.

01.02.02: Service Exit: Schools

Students exit schools for a variety of reasons. In most cases, students exit as they transition to less restrictive educational settings or graduate to a post-school program. Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) also recognises that, parents, guardians or carers may wish to exit their child to attend an alternative educational placement. In exceptional circumstances Aspect may make the decision whilst ensuring procedural fairness to exit a student when it is unable to achieve an acceptable safe working environment for students and staff. Students may also be disenrolled for the non-payment of outstanding school fees as outlined in Aspect's Fees Collection Policy.

01.02.03: Service Exit: Employment and Community Participation

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) recognises that clients will exit its adult services for different reasons. When a client chooses to leave a service every effort will be made to ensure they are making an informed choice as well as support their transition to a new service if appropriate. Where a client is required by Aspect to leave the service, every effort will be made to ensure that proper consultation and procedural fairness are observed.

02.01.01: Individual Planning and Review

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) staff develop and implement individual plans (IPs) to promote and maximise the potential of each client within their service and community.

02.01.02: Comprehensive Educational Approach

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is committed to the principle that people with autism spectrum disorders have access to educational programs and services that meet their individual needs and develop their individual strengths, including where appropriate, academic achievement. In response to this, Aspect currently uses a 'comprehensive' educational approach.

02.01.03: Visual Support

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) recognises that visual supports that aid comprehension and facilitate participation in everyday life are essential for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders in the same way that mobility aides are essential for people with impaired mobility. This is in recognition that people with autism typically have stronger visual processing skills in comparison to their auditory processing skills.

Visual supports should be utilised to augment communication and develop independence for all people with autism accessing Aspect services. Aspect is committed to staff and parent training and support in the use of visual supports across Aspect services, home environments, other services and community settings.

02.01.04: Student Attendance: Schools

The schools of Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) will monitor the daily attendance and absence of students by maintaining a daily register for each class of students.

02.01.05: Discipline: Schools

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) considers that the behaviour of children with autism spectrum disorders requires support and understanding. Challenging behaviours are best understood and responded to by applying a positive approach as outlined in Aspect's Positive Approach to Challenging Behaviour Policy.

02.01.06: Safe & Supportive Environment: Schools

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) endeavours to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students in their schools.

03.01.01: Contributing to Decision Making

Family members/carers/guardians can contribute to decision making in Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) in regard to (i) the services Aspect provides to the person in their family with an autism spectrum disorder and (ii) decisions that affect Aspect as a whole. Aspect also encourages adolescent and adult service users to participate as much as possible in decisions that affect the service they receive.

04.01.01: Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) respects every person's right to, privacy, dignity, and confidentiality in all aspects of their life. Aspect will ensure that appropriate standards are maintained to protect the privacy of the data contained within its record systems including in particular:

- client information systems
- donor and marketing information systems
- financial/business and human resources information systems

04.02.01: Access to Information

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) aims to ensure that the appropriate standards are maintained to protect the privacy of the data contained within its client information systems.

04.03.01 : Death of a Client

Staff of Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) will have a clear understanding of the relevant documentation and notification procedures that need to be completed in the event of the death of a client.

05.01.01: Community Access

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is committed to a policy of integration for people with autism spectrum disorder. Every effort will be made to enable the person with autism to pursue positive activities within their local community, both where they live, work, or attend school.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary to engage in a range of community visits or Community access in either groups or with individuals. Staffing ratios are determined by the Unit Manager according to the activity and the clients involved but may, in certain circumstances, involve a ratio of up to two staff to one client.

06.01.01: Recognition of Valued Status for Adult Clients

Adult clients of Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) have the opportunity to choose to develop and maintain skills and lifestyles and to participate in activities that enable them to achieve valued roles in the community.

Aspect's practices recognise and promote the value and contribution of individuals by

- respecting rights and choices
- ensuring that documentation and promotional material reflects the skills, value and contribution of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- encouraging and supporting individuals to make informed decisions and lifestyle choices
- providing support to develop skills and lifestyles that are valued in the community.

07.01.01: Complaints by People with Autism Spectrum Disorders and/or their Families

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) treats complaints seriously, sensitively and in a timely manner, having due regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality, and privacy. Aspect is committed to resolving the matter for the particular person or people concerned. As part of its continuous improvement strategy, Aspect will learn from such experiences and accordingly will further develop and refine its practices.

08.01.01: Communication Protocol

The purpose of this policy is to provide best practice guidelines for all communications in Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect).

08.01.02: Code of Conduct

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) expects people who have a role within Aspect to accept they have certain obligations related to behaviour and conduct that are based in Aspect's Values. These obligations demonstrate a duty of care and responsibility to each other, clients and the general public, and apply to all staff, that is, all employees and all volunteers.

The standards expected of all staff acknowledge both legislative and funding requirements, stakeholder expectations, and general principles expected within the public benevolent institution/not for profit sector.

08.02.01: Structure & Function of Aspect's Board of Directors

Autism Spectrum Australia's Board of Directors accepts its responsibility as the governing body of Aspect as detailed by the Constitution and Regulations of Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect).

08.02.02: Registration and Accreditation Procedures: Schools

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is the proprietor of the organisation's schools. Aspect is a company limited by guarantee approved by the NSW Minister for Education & Training to be the proprietor of Aspect's schools. The principals of the Aspect's schools, supported by the Director, Education & Research, shall ensure that the legislative requirements for the registration and accreditation of non-government schools listed below are carried out.

08.03.01: Aspect's Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Approach (CCIA)

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is committed to establishing and maintaining its Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Approach (CCIA) and adopting the twelve principles of practice.

08.03.02: Corporate & Business Planning Process

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is committed to the development, implementation and review of its triennial Corporate Plan and its annual Business Plan. Together they provide the strategic direction for Aspect. The aim of the planning process is that Aspect is continuously improving and developing as it moves forward.

08.03.03: Policy Framework

Decision making in Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is based on an agreed policy framework identified as Aspect's Policies, Guidelines & Procedures. The policy framework is continuously improving and evolving as Aspect learns from its own experience and as it responds to external demands and requirements to undertake its business.

08.03.04 : Corporate Risk Management

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) identifies and manages risks that impact on the whole organisation through Corporate Risk Management. Improved risk management helps drive continuous improvement in the organisation.

08.03.05: Conducting Research at Aspect

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) promotes research into autism spectrum disorders (ASD) to improve the outcomes for people with an ASD, their families and for the benefit of the wider community.

08.03.06: Research: Access to Aspect Clients for Research Purposes

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) has an obligation to ensure that the privacy and rights of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families who may be the subjects of research undertaken or auspiced, are protected by Aspect.

08.06.03: Working with Children Check

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) believes that children and young people have a right to be safe from abuse. Therefore Aspect's workplace is in accordance with the child protection legislation, which requires that anyone seeking employment with Aspect must sign a Prohibited Employment Declaration Form and undergo a Working with Children Check before his/her employment is confirmed. Aspect works with the approved screening agency, the NSW Commission for Children & Young People, to obtain this clearance.

08.11.01: Occupational Health & Safety

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) will take all practical steps to safeguard staff, volunteers, clients and the public from accidents and will maintain an effective safety program that complies with our legal responsibility under Occupational Health & Safety Legislation.

We recognise that management has a "duty of care" responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for staff, volunteers, clients and visitors. Accidents resulting in personal injury or damage represent needless personal suffering and financial loss.

It is imperative that all managers and supervisors recognise their responsibility for safety at their site(s). Their performance in this area of responsibility will be assessed along with their overall performance.

All staff are also expected to follow sound, professional safety practices, and play their part in protecting the health and safety of themselves, their fellow staff, volunteers, clients and the public. This responsibility is shared with management, but cannot be delegated, avoided, or transferred.

Staff are encouraged to report unsafe conditions or practices, and to make suggestions to improve the safety of Aspect to their manager.

08.11.03: Emergency Procedures

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) will take all practical steps to establish arrangements that in the event of an emergency will provide for the safe and rapid evacuation of clients, staff and volunteers; the introduction of emergency communications; and the appropriate medical treatment of any injured persons.

08.11. 05: Infectious Diseases

- Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) has a statutory obligation to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all its staff, clients and visitors.
- Aspect is committed to preventing or minimising infectious diseases within the workplace.
- Occupational groups within Aspect which are identified as being at risk of contact with persons who may have an infectious disease are to be offered screening and Hepatitis B immunisation.
- The identification or confirmation of an infectious disease and the decisions on control measures to be implemented are to be made on advice from the treating medical practitioner.
- Staff, clients and visitors to Aspect premises are required to follow safe work practices, to wear protective equipment provided, and to follow instructions with regard to the prevention and control of infectious diseases within the workplace, as appropriate.
- Staff, clients and visitors who contract an infectious disease are to notify the relevant Unit Manager.
- In the case of a notifiable disease the Unit manager will contact the relevant statutory authority/agency for guidance.

08.11.06: Occupational Health & Safety Risk Management

Managing occupational health and safety risk within Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is not a theoretical technique. It is a practical, common sense approach to dealing with hazards and risks that exist in the workplace. This policy provides our approach on how to conduct risk assessments for typical occupational health and safety risks, and covering most public liability exposures where there is a risk of injury to third parties such as members of the public, contractors and site visitors.

The Occupational Health & Safety risk management process is a three-step process of:

- Risk Identification;
- Risk Assessment; and
- Risk Control.

The process should be completed with a clear action plan; and evaluation and monitoring of results, and repeated if the controls fail to be effective. The process should also be documented and this documentation signed off.

08.11.08: Incidents and Critical Incidents

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) will take all appropriate steps to safeguard staff, clients, families, volunteers and the public from incidents in the workplace and will maintain an effective risk-management program that complies with our legal responsibility under occupational health & safety legislation in order to minimise the impact of an incident or critical incident.

Aspect recognises that there will be occasions when a staff member or client could be involved in an incident or accident at work, and has the expectation that where necessary all such incidents and accidents will be investigated whether or not an injury has been sustained.

08.13.02: Management of Facilities & Premises: Schools

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) endeavours to make its schools safe for educational purposes with reference to the following standards:

- relevant council requirements
- relevant government legislation and requirements
- OH&S legislation and subordinate legislation
- environmental and land use guidelines
- Building Code of Australia (BCA)

08.14.02: Fees Collection

Although Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) receives the majority of its income from Government funding, this is insufficient to cover all costs. Therefore, it is necessary to charge fees to continue to provide services. It is critical the payment is received in full and promptly. This policy outlines the steps involved in managing the collection of such payments.

08.14.03: Fee Reduction

Families who pay a fee for service to Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) can apply for a fee reduction if exceptional personal/financial circumstances arise.

08.14.07: School Fees

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) sets school fees based on the following formula: 60% of the total of the particular Australian government family allowances where there is a child with a disability, that is the Carer Allowance, the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A, for the first child aged under 18 years, and the Family Tax Benefit Part A Supplement. These fees are indexed annually as at 1 August based on any changes to the amount paid to families by the government that have occurred in the year up to 1 August. Families will be informed of any change as at 1 August and changes to school fees will apply from the beginning of Term 4.

09.01.01: Working with Families

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) works to have collaborative relationships with family and/or carers and this underpins activities undertaken with Aspect's clients.

10.01.01: Advocacy

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) acknowledges, respects and commits itself to working with advocates whether they be independent advocates, family members, guardians or friends as they and Aspect work to address the best interests of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Aspect also has a role as a systemic advocate on behalf of the community of people affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders in raising issues faced by this community with governments and the community at large through its specialist knowledge and experience gained in working with people with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families.

10.02.01: Duty of Care & Dignity of Risk

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) accepts the responsibility to ensure that staff understand and act in accordance with the principles of Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk at all times. Aspect will meet its duty of care to clients while recognising their rights to make informed choices and take calculated risks.

10.02.02: Positive Approach to Challenging Behaviour

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) adopts a positive behaviour support (PBS) approach when working with clients. PBS is a practical and a proactive model that places emphasis upon analysing the function of challenging behaviour, determining the central issues and motivations and then adapting the environment to better accommodate the individual client which may include teaching the client new functional skills

10.02.03: Sunsmart

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) strongly encourages all clients and staff to protect themselves from skin damage caused by the harmful ultra-violet rays of the sun, throughout the year.

10.02.04: Swimming

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) considers swimming as a recreational and/or exercise option as an important activity for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Swimming can be a high-risk activity and as such additional levels of care and support should be considered.

10.02.05: Client Finances

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) aims to ensure the effective and prudent management of client funds and that clients are not subject to financial mismanagement or abuse.

10.02.06: Missing Clients

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) staff are required to assess the risk of clients going missing from a service location or program activity. The purpose of the assessment is to reduce the risk of clients going missing and so work to prevent such instances from arising as much as possible. If the occasion arises that a particular client cannot be located, then staff must implement the appropriate response for that client in an effort to locate him/her.

10.02.07: Sexuality

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) has a positive attitude towards sexuality and supports people with autism spectrum disorders to develop and maintain positive friendships and relationships.

10.02.08: Prohibited and Restricted Practices

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) recognises that certain behaviour change practices are prohibited or otherwise are severely restricted in their use.

10.03.01: How to Use the Guardianship Tribunal

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) will endeavor to ensure that clients who are 16 years or older, their families, and staff understand the role of the Guardianship Tribunal and situations that may require an application to the Tribunal. Aspect will meet its obligations when an application is made to the Tribunal and when a guardian or financial manager is appointed.

10.04.01 Nutrition

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is committed to promoting practices, which supports clients to achieve and maintain optimum nutrition as related to health and well-being.

10.05.01: Managing health of clients in Aspect services

All clients of Aspect who have health support needs will be assisted when required by the provision of first aid (including emergency care), the provision of temporary care when clients become unwell, the administration of prescribed medications and the development of individual health care plans.

10.06.01: Child Care and Protection

All staff in Aspect working with children have a legal obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Community Services (DoCS) according to the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. [Ref: *2000 Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention*, NSW Government.]

10.06.02: Prevention of Harm to Adults

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) will work to prevent incidents to its clients of abuse, injury, and neglect. In the event of any incident, Aspect will follow appropriate procedures that will report incidents, record available information, ensure appropriate treatments are available to clients, and use the information to improve its treatment and response procedures. Aspect's procedures will be transparent and confidential.