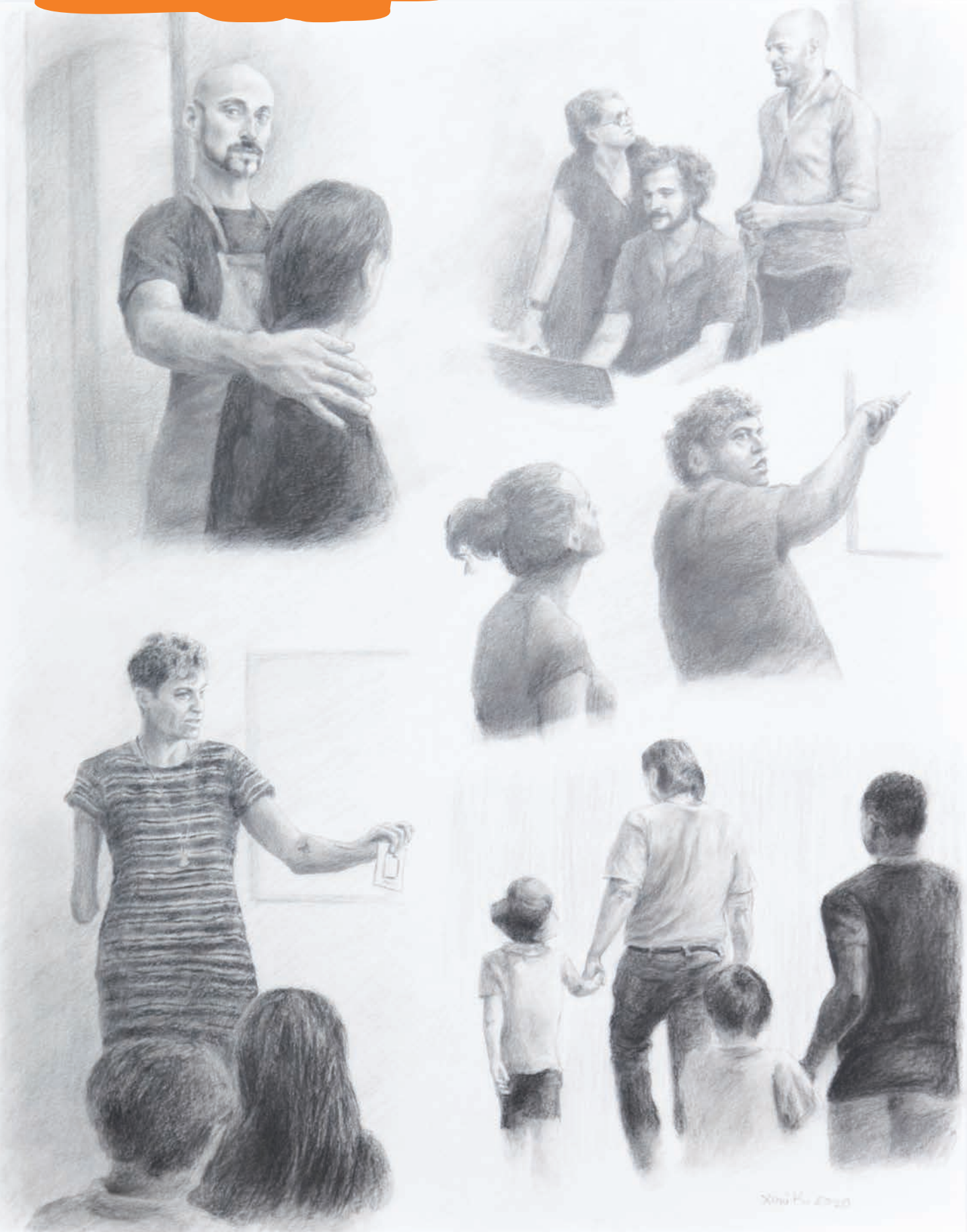


# Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

May 2020 - May 2023



## **Acknowledgment of Country**

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the traditional custodians of the many lands on which we work and live. We pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

The Aspect Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (March 2020 – March 2023) is our commitment to continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisation.

## **Cover artwork**

**Title:** 'Growing together'

This artwork was commissioned as part of the Aspect Disability Access and Inclusion Plan funded by the Elizabeth Hoyles co-production project. The artwork depicts people with visible and invisible disabilities. The montage collectively tells the story of people with disability, including autism, across Aspect and the community. This starts from early education, through to adult services and employment.

The drawing captures people from diverse groups and cultural backgrounds. No matter who we are, we can work together towards the same goals and outcomes.

## **Artist biography:**

Xeni Kusumitra is an Aspect employee, working across a number of programs including the Think Tank, ARCAP, Autism Friendly and Inclusion Projects. She is an award-winning artist, winner of the Macability Award 2019 (at Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre).

Xeni is Autistic. She currently studies on a scholarship at Julian Ashton Art School, Sydney (year 2020).

## **Language disclaimer**

Aspect knows that there are many different ways of describing autism, and as our knowledge of autism evolves, so does our vocabulary. We recognise that people on the autism spectrum use a variety of different terms to describe themselves or autism and we respect that.

In line with the Aspect Writing Style Guidelines we will use identify first language of Autistic person/people. We will also use person or people on the autism spectrum and people/person with disability throughout this document to communicate our goals and intentions.

## **Autistic Self Advocacy Network Australia and New Zealand (ASAN AUNZ)**

Aspect wishes to recognise ASAN AUNZ for their consultation, support and guidance in the development of the Aspect Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

## **Elizabeth Hoyles Fellowship co-production project**

Special thanks to members of the Elizabeth Hoyles Fellowship co-production project employed to consult with and provide the Autistic Voice of Inclusion in the development of this plan:

Yogie Wirastra  
Amy Smith  
Xeni Kusumitra  
Anonymous





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## Message from the CEO

It gives me great pleasure to present the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan for Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect).

At Aspect we are passionate about people, about being positive and about what is possible.

As a major autism-specific service provider with one of the biggest autism-specific school programs in the world, Aspect has an obligation to increase inclusion and access for all people working in or receiving services through our organisation, and an important leadership role in the communities in which we work.

Our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan provides a clear roadmap for our organisation to continue to prioritise strategic actions and align resources to break down barriers through inclusive and accessible programs, employment, and facilities.

Our partnership with Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand (ASAN AUNZ) in the development of our Plan has been critical and I thank ASAN AUNZ members for their continued support of Aspect and strategic advice that has driven us to completion of such a comprehensive Plan.

I look forward to leading Aspect as it embarks on the implementation of its Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, and through the Plan achieves better outcomes for everyone in our community.

*Jacqui Borland*

Jacqui Borland  
Aspect Chief Executive Officer









## 2. About Aspect

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is Australia's largest autism-specific service provider, with one of the biggest autism-specific school programs in the world. A not-for-profit organisation, we work in partnership with people of all ages on the autism spectrum, and their families to deliver evidence-informed solutions that are person-centred, family-focused and customer driven.

Aspect's vision is to provide the best possible opportunities for people on the autism spectrum. We believe that people on the autism spectrum are a *different brilliant*®.

**a different brilliant**®  
understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests & aspirations of people on the autism spectrum

## 2.1 Statement of Commitment to Inclusion

Aspect values, respects and promotes the diversity of life experiences of our participants, students, their families and the communities in which we work. Aspect recognises that diversity is essential for creating an Aspect culture that is inclusive, respectful and equitable.

Aspect is committed to co-designing culturally appropriate, responsive and inclusive programs and activities in partnership with people on the autism spectrum. We are committed to the principles of equal opportunity and encourage a diverse and inclusive workplace, which brings out the best in our people. This includes continuous improvement on how we effectively respond to our participants, students, their families and the communities in which we work.

We commit to supporting our teams to understand the variety of needs that may come with diversity. This includes utilising interpreters, accessible information and/or alternative / augmented communication. We seek to access community



linkages relevant to individuals due to their age, ability, culture, sexual orientation, family structure, religion as well as their particular interests.

## 2.2 Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA)

Aspect uses a comprehensive organisation-wide approach to support. Aspect's Comprehensive Approach (ACA) encapsulates more than 50 years of Aspect's knowledge and experience in providing services to children, young people and adults on the autism spectrum.

Based on the continuous review of the evidence-based literature, the ACA currently includes eight elements. The elements are: Health & Wellbeing, Positive Behaviour Support, Structured Supports, Lifelong Learning, Individual Planning, Family and Community Engagement, Transition and Inclusion, Specialist Collaboration. Aspect uses an autism specific relationship based model called the Five-Point Star to help take the perspective of people on the autism spectrum and to collaborate to develop shared supports.

Five principles underpin the Aspect Comprehensive Approach:

1. It is applicable to all people on the autism spectrum.
2. Interventions support all areas of a person's development and are based on assessment of individual needs.
3. The approach is a positive and supportive model rather than a deficit approach, acknowledging a person's strengths, interests and aspirations.
4. The approach involves collaboration between people on the autism spectrum, parents/carers and professionals.
5. The approach is based on ongoing reference to research and clinical literature.

The ACA introduction to autism is written by an Autistic woman. Melanie Heyworth is an Autistic adult and parent of three Autistic children. Melanie completed the Autism Cooperative Research Centre's 'Future Leaders' program in 2018. This means that every Aspect employee will read and learn from this introduction as part of their induction to Aspect.



## 2.3 Aspect Strategic Plan - 2019-2021

In August 2018, the Aspect Board signed off on the 2019 - 2021 Strategic Plan that refers to four Core Strategies.

The Strategies place our partnership with people on the autism spectrum, in every facet of our work, as our number one priority. Aspects Core Strategies 2019 - 2021 are:

1. Partner with people on the autism spectrum in Aspect's governance, research, service planning and service delivery through the development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
2. Innovate and deliver high quality autism-specific person-centred services
3. Extend Aspect's capabilities and reach nationally through the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan, a Multicultural Engagement Plan and a LGBTQIA+ Engagement Plan.
4. Be a knowledge leader in autism practice

## 2.4 Aspect Policy

Aspect embraces differences and those differences underpin all that we do. This DAIP links with the existing Aspect policies, procedures, guidelines and statements:

- Embracing Diversity policy
- Person centred approach and recognition of valued status policy
- Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying Prevention in the Workplace guideline/procedure
- Community participation and inclusion procedure/guideline
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statement
- Code of conduct

## 3. Why are we doing this plan?

One of Aspect's most important goals is to work in partnership with people on the autism spectrum. This starts with our employees who identify as Autistic and ensuring that they are involved in all levels of Aspect governance, research, service planning and service delivery.

We recognise at Aspect that with the development and implementation of a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, this will guide us in line with best practice. We want to ensure genuine inclusion for not only the Autistic community, but also the disability community more broadly.

We recognise that Autistic individuals can have other co-occurring disabilities that need to be included in our plan, including physical disability.



As Aspect complies with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 across all disabilities, not only autism, we commit to ensuring that our policies, procedures, spaces, employees and programs are compliant with relevant legislation and exceed legislated requirements so that we can best serve the Autistic and disability community.

## 3.1 The National Disability Strategy 2010 - 2020

Disability Access and Inclusion Plans link to the National Disability Strategy (2010-2020) six-outcome areas:

### 1. Inclusive and accessible communities

People with disability live in accessible and well-designed communities with opportunity for full inclusion in social, economic, sporting and cultural life.

### 2. Economic security and employment

People with disability, their families and carers have economic security, enabling them to plan for the future and exercise choice and control over their lives.

### 3. Rights protection, justice and legislation

People with disability have their rights promoted, upheld and protected.

### 4. Personal and community support

People with disability, their families and carers have access to a range of supports to assist them to live independently and actively engage in their communities.

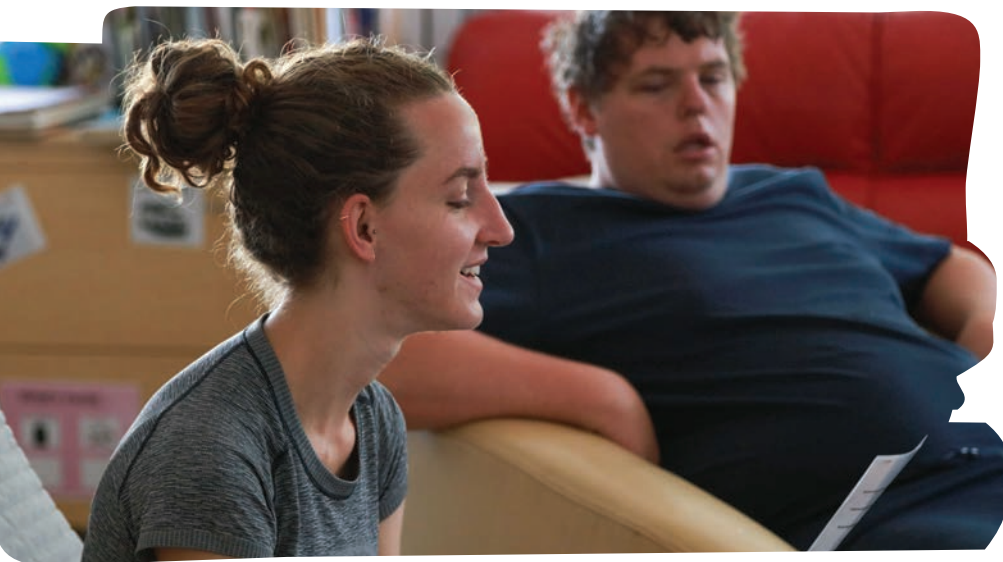
### 5. Learning and skills

People with disability achieve their full potential through their participation in an inclusive high quality education system that is responsive to their needs. People with disability have opportunities to continue learning throughout their lives.

### 6. Health and wellbeing

People with disability attain the highest possible health and wellbeing outcomes throughout their lives.





whole school approaches, social, emotional and behaviour needs addressed, transition planning and school connectedness among other factors. These encompass clear correlations to the outcome areas of the NDS and highlight the specific actions we can work towards in the specialised schooling of our students. Additionally, it is important that we allow for students voice in their education as they identify the barriers and what works for them to access the curriculum (Autism CRC, 2016).

## 3.2 Understanding autism and disability in our workplace and programs

In 2018, Aspect revised its autism prevalence rates from 1 in 100 to an estimated 1 in 70 people in Australia on the autism spectrum. That is an estimated 40% increase or around 353,880 people (Aspect, 2018).

In 2015, the Australian Bureau Statistics (ABS) showed that 83% of people on the autism spectrum were under 25. (AIHW, 2017).

Across Western countries, labour force participation rates for adults on the autism spectrum is 34%. This is comparable to 54% people with other disability and 83% for other individuals (Scott M, Falkmer M, Girdler S, Falkmer T, 2015).

Research shows us that employing people on the autism spectrum provides many benefits to employers. This is evident when strong communication between employees and employers allows for a clear understanding of the needs of both groups (Scott, Jacob et al, 2017).

Across Aspect schools and services, education is a central focus. Particularly as transition into and out of education is such an important time for an Autistic person.

In 2016, the Autism CRC released findings into the educational needs analysis for students on the autism spectrum. It found that the critical factors for success included professional learning,

## 3.3 Aspect's Community

Aspect is an employer of 1235 people (August 2019) operating across NSW, ACT, VIC and SA in a range of programs, schools and services.

Currently we do not undertake any form of data collection into the number of Autistic employees across our organisation. We have a bi-annual Voice survey, which people can choose to answer anonymously. A focus of this DAIP is to look at how we can ensure our employees feel comfortable and confident enough to disclose their autism identity in a safe and respectful work environment.

As at October 2019, data showed 4949 Autistic people who access Aspect schools and services. A small percentage of participants and students are also diagnosed with a range of other disability and mental health related disorders e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, depression, anxiety, Cerebral Palsy, developmental delay, intellectual disability, Down's Syndrome, Epilepsy, Hearing Impairment and Language Disorder.

This data highlights the importance of Aspect employees understanding and providing specialised support to people across a range of disabilities in line with the outcome areas across the whole of the National Disability Strategy.



**4949**  
**Autistic people**  
**accessed**  
**Aspect schools**  
**and services in**  
**2019**

## 4. Case Studies and achievements

Over recent years, Aspect has delivered a number of achievements across our schools, workforce and services in providing access and inclusion for our students, participants and employees:



The Council is based on a model developed by Dimensions, a disability organisation in the UK. The model seeks to facilitate meaningful representation by including a diverse group of people with a range of experiences and perspectives in the governance structure of an organisation.

The Council have significant input as they provide an Autistic perspective into Aspect's work including the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan and Aspect's Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.



*The Aspect Advisory Council meeting at Frenchs Forest in 2019.*

### 4.1 Aspect Advisory Council

The Aspect Advisory Council, established in 2017, consists of a group of seven Autistic people who provide independent advice to the Board of Aspect and Aspect's Executive team about our governance. We value the Council for their expertise and experience, and they are now a formal part of Aspect's governance framework.

We recognise each member of the Aspect Advisory Council - Harrison Fischer, Spencer Thew, Krishna Sadhana, Jac den Houting, Tori Haar, Paul Micallef and Ainslie Robinson. We acknowledge the work of previous members Asher Scobie and John Brawley who have since stepped down

### 4.2 Think Tank

Aspect engages a group of Autistic people as paid consultants, to advise on our day-to-day practice. This group is called the Aspect Practice Think Tank. The group currently meets five times each year to review content, services, resources, research proposals,





communication materials, language guidelines and our plain English policies.

Aspect also works with this group to co-deliver presentations and workshops. Including our 'Introduction to Autism Support', 'and autism friendly consultancies'.



*Think Tank meeting at Burwood in February 2020.*

## 4.3 Autism friendly work

For an individual on the autism spectrum, accessing many public spaces can be challenging. Aspect collaborates with a number of autism consultants and organisations to work towards an autism friendly Australia, customising approaches to include options for environmental assessment, training, events, resources, evaluation and promotion.

Here are some examples of how we work to help make environments or workplaces more autism-friendly.

### Case study 1: Coles Quiet Hour

In 2017, Aspect launched Quiet Hour at Coles as a partnership between Aspect and Coles to support customers on the autism spectrum.

The partnership planning involved carefully designing a shopping experience that would decrease sensory output e.g. lighting reduced, radio off, free fruit and low sounds on scanners.

*Below: Cameron and Sarah from Aspect Macarthur School enjoying the quiet hour offered at Coles.*



### Case study 2: NSW Rail Museum

Throughout 2019, Aspect worked with the NSW Rail Museum to improve the 'Day Out With Thomas' experience for children and guests on the autism spectrum and/or with sensory processing differences and their families.

Aspect teams shared knowledge and resources to support guests at events, which included quiet spaces, sensory toys, more visuals and resources to help people on the autism spectrum and people with disability to understand what they might expect and what to do at a specific event.



*NSW Rail Museum, Day Out With Thomas - [nswrailmuseum.com.au](http://nswrailmuseum.com.au)*

The Autism Friendly team continue to work with external organisations on a number of projects.

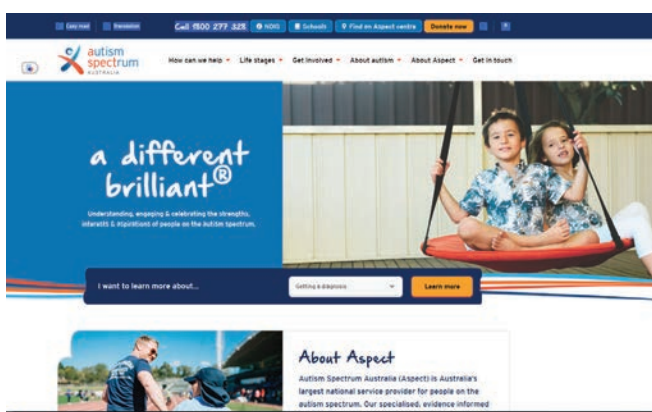
## 4.4 Website

In May 2019, Aspect launched our new website. The new site now meets our requirements for a more visually appealing, mobile-friendly website, featuring improved accessibility and importantly meeting a high "AA rated" Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0).

The development of the new website included a thorough analysis of the old site to identify our most important stakeholders, including: Aspect participants, families, adults on the autism spectrum, medical professionals, researchers, donors, government agencies, regulators, and social media audiences - and looked at how each group was interacting with the site.

The web developers spoke to several stakeholders to understand how they navigated the site and what

we could do to improve accessibility. We tested the final design and wireframe with Aspect stakeholders, including adults on the autism spectrum. This testing helped to refine some of the navigation tools and provided valuable insights into our stakeholder needs.



Home page for the new Aspect website, launched in 2019.

## 4.5 Writing Style Guidelines

In 2018, Aspect undertook a project to create a “Written Style Guide” for our employees. Language is an important and powerful tool and how we write about ourselves and our work reflects who we are as an organisation and what we stand for. The writing style guidelines was created to help Aspect employees to write clearly, concisely and consistently. It includes guidelines for talking about autism, disability, culture and sexual and gender diversity. We consulted Aspect’s Think Tank in this process and they provided input on the initial draft document.

Importantly the Writing Style Guidelines is a living document that is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.



Front cover of the Aspect Writing Style Guidelines

## 4.6 Aspect Research Centre for Autism Practice (ARCAP)

Aspect Research Centre for Autism Practice (ARCAP) is committed to conducting research that is relevant to the autism community. Since 2015, the ARCAP team has employed team members who are on the autism spectrum as co-production researchers.

The co-production researchers bring a level of understanding to the project of the issues that concern the autism community. This knowledge helps shape research programs, priorities and procedures. They influence the development of the research projects especially through the methodology, language used and the questions that are asked.

ARCAP also seeks advice and comment on projects from the wider autism community through the Aspect Practice Think Tank, other Autistic employees, Aspect employees who have family members on the autism spectrum, as well as those who have other strong connections supporting Autistic people.

In 2019, ARCAP was recognised for its authentic engagement and acknowledgement of co-production researchers with the Autism Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), Research Co-production Partner award. Some examples of co-produced research projects include Police interactions in Australia, Exceptional abilities in school students and the Autism Cooperative Research Centre Models of practice project.



Aspect Research Centre for Autism Practice (ARCAP) team, February 2020.

### Aspect Education

Aspect has nine schools operating across New South Wales and South Australia. Here are a collection of stories to highlight the voice of students in their education, examples of Autistic employment and mentorship and positive examples of working in partnership with families.





## 4.7 Education - Individual Planning process

In 2019, Aspect Education conducted a review of the individual planning (IP) process and documentation. A working party came together to review current literature and practice. We agreed on a new process, which focused on involving students in the development of their Individual Plan (IP) in a meaningful way.

The team met with the Aspect Think Tank to discuss ways all students can actively participate in the IP process. Professional development (PD) on Quality of Life and supporting students who have twice-exceptional abilities will be delivered in 2020.

## 4.8 Education - Transition Planning for high school students

Aspect Education recently established a working party to review programs running in Aspect high schools to support students in preparing for life after high school. The working party met to share practice across schools and review the current curriculum programs in Work Education for Years 9-12 students. This includes practical work experience and opportunities for students to authentically influence their programs and develop self-determination skills that are key to transition success.

## 4.9 Education - Autism Consultants

Aspect Outreach and Aspect schools are increasingly including Autism Consultants in the delivery of professional development courses about autism delivered to both Aspect schools and external schools.



Edward Lee (Autism Consultant for Northern Rivers and the Mid North Coast reflected,

“The opportunity to provide a personal perspective to social situations, working in the classroom and overall behaviour to Aspect teaching staff has been

a great privilege. Teaching staff have commented on how having an autism consultant in their professional development, has greatly benefited them in their work.”

Aspect Outreach now includes an Autism Consultant in the delivery of our Diagnosis Disclosure service. The Autism Consultant role is in the process of being formalised into a casual position. Aspect Outreach aims to have Autism Consultants available to work with each of our schools.

## 4.10 Aspect Hunter School - mentor program

Tyran Bunt is an Autistic person working as a Teacher's Aide with both Primary and High School students at Aspect Hunter School since April 2018. To support Tyran in the role, school staff conducted an intensive induction program that covered everything he needs to know regarding the school and how best to support students.

Tyran has successfully tailored the running of the social group sessions with students using his interest and skills in music and Dungeons and Dragons. Students look forward to their weekly sessions with Tyran learning new games and developing their social skills. Tyran has brought an understanding that all of our students have different needs, ways of thinking, expectations and ways of communicating.

Tyran's reflection on his time with us at Aspect is below:

"I mainly meet with the kids on a Friday afternoon and I give them a break from schoolwork and let their imaginations run wild in a game of Dungeons & Dragons. Through playing, I coach them in social skills, problem solving, communication, and math skills all while playing make believe as Elves and Dwarves and Wizards and Fighters, and defeating Goblins, Ogres, and evil villains. I got this job through a happy accident and I couldn't be any happier working with Aspect. The staff are some of the most caring loving people and the kids bring the biggest smile on my face when they show excitement and engagement to our games.'



*Dungeons and Dragons social skill-building program*

## 4.11 Aspect South Coast School - Family Support Worker

Aspect South Coast School have employed a Family Support Worker for a number of years. This role is integral in fostering links and rapport between school, families, and the community.

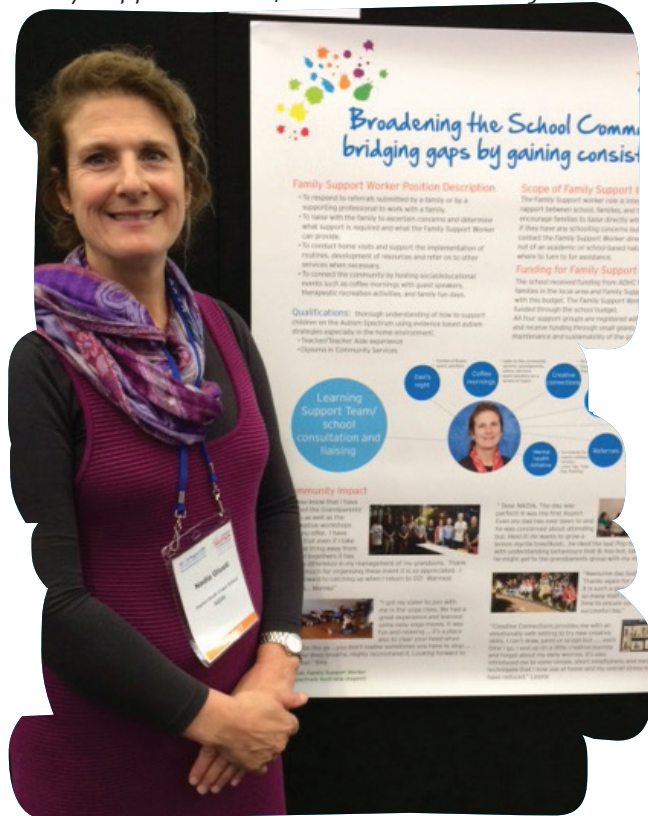
We carefully align responsibilities, activities and events with the Aspect Comprehensive Approach. This includes responding to referrals, supporting the implementation of strategies such as routines, transitions and resource development both in classrooms and through home visits, running of support and social groups, family events, art

classes, wellbeing activities, dad's nights, community engagement and information sessions.

"I got my sister to join with me in the yoga class. We had a great experience and learned some easy yoga moves. It was fun and relaxing ... it's a place to clear your head when you're on the go ...you don't realise sometimes you have to stop ..., and take deep breaths. Highly recommend it. Looking forward to next year."

Rita (parent - South Coast School)

*Family Support Worker, Nadia Giusti's Talking Poster*



*at the Autism in Education conference in Brisbane 2018.*

### Aspect Therapy

Our Aspect Therapy team engages in a number of projects seeking to ensure all people can access the therapy they require.

## 4.12 Allied Health



## Assistant, Norfolk Island

In 2018, the NDIS rolled out in the small community of Norfolk Island (900km off the coast of NSW). Aspect recruited its first local Norfolk resident as an Allied Health Assistant, which has been wonderful for the community to support families with regular therapy sessions at home and at school. Strong relationships have developed on the Island. It is a testament to the commitment to driving a new and innovative service that in 2020 we can multiply to four new locations across the nation.



### 4.13 Aspect Therapy - Autism tele-therapy for remote locations

Since 2015, Aspect has been researching the delivery of autism services into regional, rural and remote locations of Australia via tele-therapy. Families of children on the autism spectrum in these locations report experiencing long waiting lists, extensive travel times and difficulty recruiting and retaining suitable professionals. Technology delivered intervention, also known as e-health, tele-health or tele-therapy, has been used successfully in the Australian disability sector for service delivery and training.

In 2018, Aspect completed the second stage of the Building Connections project, which aimed to develop, trial and evaluate:

- An online platform to deliver interactive group webinars and individualised support sessions to a range of disability workers in rural and remote communities across New South Wales.
- A collaborative autism-specific tele-therapy service using videoconferencing to deliver autism services to clients in rural and remote communities.

Aspect Therapy began offering tele-therapy services in July 2018, and these services have now reached clients and service providers in the Northern Territory, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.

*Therapist, participants and parent working together via the tele-therapy program.*

### 4.14 Positive Partnerships - employees on the autism spectrum

Positive Partnerships have employed a number of Delivery Team Members on the autism spectrum from a range of education and disability backgrounds from across Australia. The employees are supported by state Team Leaders through coaching, review and reflection procedures.

In 2017, Positive Partnerships engaged with and recruited members for an Autism Reference Group that changed names in 2020 to the Autistic Advisory Group. The Autistic Advisory Group provide feedback on workshop content and resources, and is involved in the delivery of a number of sessions across Australia at workshops as part of the delivery team. Members also contribute to the development of resources including social media posts, video recordings and information sheets. In addition, in 2020, Positive Partnerships' employment process for their National Content and Resources Coordinator, resulted in the employment of an Autistic person.

## 5. Consultation

The development process of the Aspect DAIP has involved a number of stages of consultation with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network Australia and New Zealand (ASAN AUNZ), Aspect employees across all Business Units, the Elizabeth Hoyles co-production project and external advisors. The following table details the consultation time line and outcomes.

## 5.1 Employee priorities

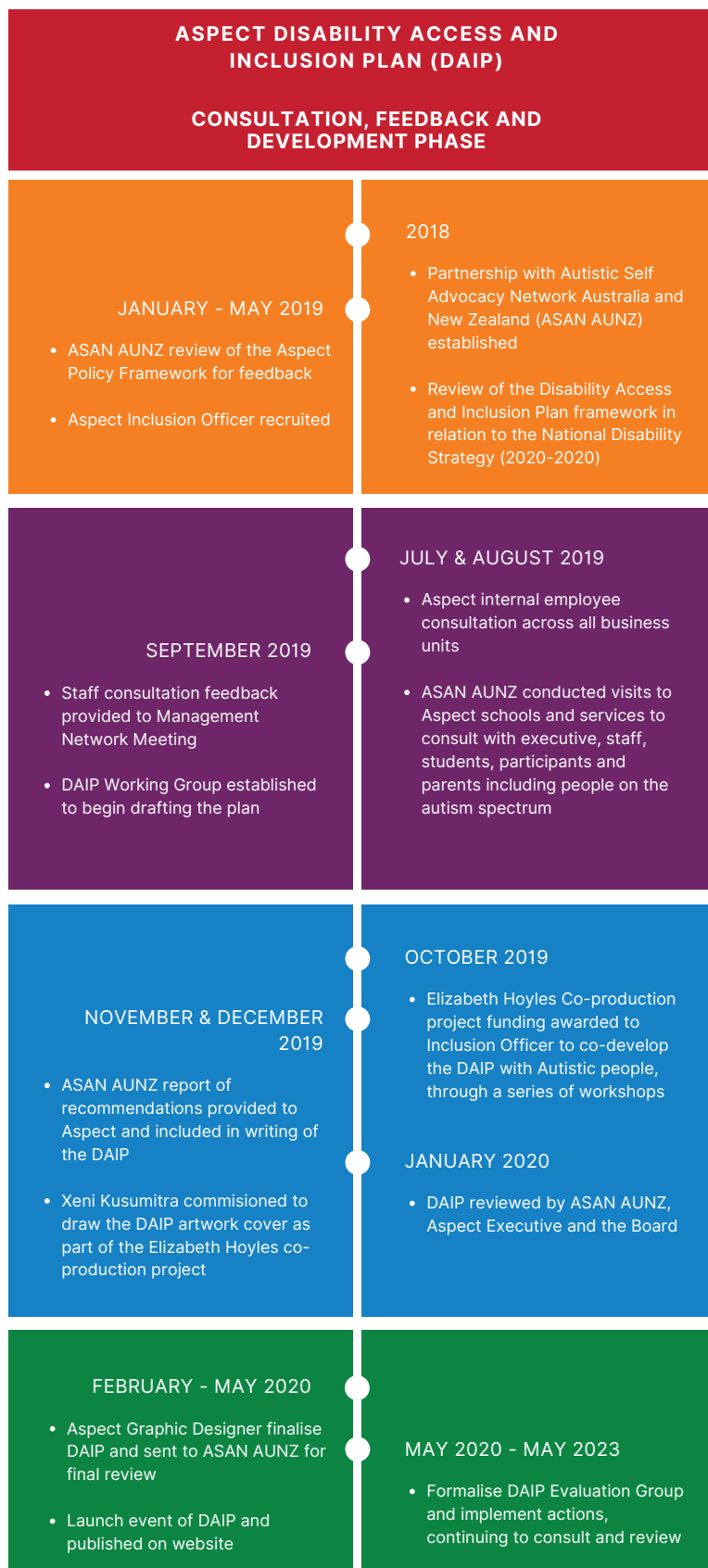
The following points below identify the common priorities Aspect employees addressed in the consultation phase of the DAIP:

- Focus on recruitment and retainment processes and procedures
- Employee training across all disability
- Increased access to the employees wellbeing program with a focus on employees with disability
- Internal peer networks and supervision and mentoring programs
- Internal autism friendly review of Aspect
- Increased collaboration with Think Tank across all teams.

## 5.2 ASAN AUNZ recommendations

In 2018, ASAN AUNZ project workers were engaged to provide consultation and recommendations towards our DAIP development.

The strengths identified from this consultation are that many people across Aspect feel we are heading in a positive direction as we seek to partner with and learn about autism and disability from the lived experience of people.





What Aspect still needs to better in is developing and implementing a comprehensive training program for all employees. In addition, we must look at how we provide support, accommodations and appropriate communication across the organisation.

The recommendations across the six-outcome areas of the National Disability Standards were:

#### **Inclusive and accessible environment:**

- An audit of physical access to buildings
- All new buildings acquired are accessible for people with physical and sensory disability
- Autistic people have input into the design of their physical environments.

#### **Rights, Protection, Justice and Legislation:**

- Employees, students and participants are aware of the right to choice and control for people with disability
- Privacy upheld via secure storage and display of vital behaviour and health information
- Investigate zero restrictive practice goal
- Establish a DAIP evaluation group inclusive of people with disability

#### **Economic Security and Employment:**

- Employees with disability are made aware of their employment rights

- Employment roles for people with disability are meaningful, ongoing and flexible
- Securely collect data about employees with disability, including support needs
- Appropriate supervision and support pathways made clear to all staff including those with identified disability.

#### **Personal and Community Support:**

- Undertake an audit of the 'Choose and Connect' program to ensure supports meet contemporary standards for safety, access, inclusion and choice and control
- Involve Autistic people in the design of community supports
- Actively promote choice and control in community settings.

#### **Learning and Skills:**

- Investigate ways in which Aspect education can integrate more effectively into mainstream sites
- All participants and students have access to developmentally appropriate information about autism
- All employees undertake disability awareness training
- Provide more training and decision-making support for the Aspect comprehensive Approach



(ACA) (including the Five-Point Star), and audits its implementation in practice.

### **Health and Wellbeing:**

- Promote the We Matter employee Wellbeing program to all employees and ensure it is accessible to employees with disability
- Employees are trained where necessary in other types of impairments impacting on students and participants.



## **5.3 Elizabeth Hoyles co-production project**

As part of the Elizabeth Hoyles co-production project, we consulted with four individuals on the autism spectrum to co-produce this plan and provide feedback at each stage of the plan development. This included one member commissioned to draw the cover artwork of this publication.

The findings from the project highlight the following as important to consider in the development and implementation of these plans:

Job application and interview process:

- Respect and choice in diagnosis disclosure
- Job descriptions clearly written with no ambiguous or compounding questions
- Ensure screening questionnaire are in line with the position descriptions

- Have a statement in the job description that includes people on the autism spectrum, and people with other disabilities, multicultural and LGBTQIA+ community
- People need to see themselves in the organisation to know it is safe for them
- During interviews suggest conducting with a few questions then time spent placed in the workplace and asked to complete tasks so people can demonstrate skills.

### **In the workplace:**

- Explore options for job sharing roles considering a person centred approach to employing people on the autism spectrum
- Consider the layout of the office environment with breakout spaces for employees to access
- Focus on universal design of buildings for accessibility and mobility issues
- Set up organised environments, with signs and subtle hints that communicates expectations.

### **Aspect schools and services:**

- A stronger focus on the transition side of school
- Increased support in schools and classrooms to integrate into mainstream
- Additional training to implement the Five-point star effectively.

## **5.4 Aspect DAIP Evaluation Group**

The employee consultation process resulted in a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Working Group who supported the development of this Plan.

One of our goals of this Plan is to establish a formal DAIP Evaluation Group consisting of members representing employees, people with disability, the Board and the Executive. This group will set a clear Terms of Reference and work towards implementing and evaluating the DAIP each year.

The Evaluation Group currently consists of the following members:

- Renee Christie: Inclusion Officer Aspect Practice



- Katherine Santiago: Teacher South East Sydney School
- Matt Oastler: Autism Friendly Project Officer Aspect Practice
- Megan Lloyd: Deputy Principal Hunter School
- Vanessa Alexander: Coordinator Positive Partnerships
- Glenn Burwood: Teacher Central Coast School
- Karen Dunbar: Senior Human Resources Business Partner
- Emma Goodall: Coordinator Positive Partnerships
- Meghan Williams: ACA Manager
- Karen Dhu: Manager Quality and Compliance
- Tom Tutton: Executive Manager Aspect Practice
- Rebecca Keane: Manager Aspect Therapy
- Katrina Hall: Accountant Finance
- Everett Leeson: Senior Consultant Fundraising

- Lauren Rolfe: ACA Coordinator
- Ben James - Community Engagement & Operations Manager Choose & Connect

## 6. References

Australian Autism Educational Needs Analysis - What are the needs of schools, parents and students on the autism spectrum? Autism CRC, 2016.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), People with disability in Australia, 2019

Autism prevalence rate up by an estimated 40% to 1 in 70 people. Autism Spectrum Australia, 2018

Employers' perception of the costs and the benefits of hiring individuals with autism spectrum disorder in open employment in Australia. Scott, Jacob et al, 2017.

Viewpoints on Factors for Successful Employment for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Scott M, Falkmer M, Girdler S, Falkmer T (2015)



# Action Plan

Note: specific practices and actions that align or link to the Aspect Business Plan 2020 are referenced in brackets

## 1. Inclusive and Accessible Communities

Aspect is committed to providing accessible and well-designed buildings and environments for people on the autism spectrum and people with other disabilities. We will engage and collaborate with our colleagues on the autism spectrum and/or people with disability, to review current school, program and office facilities. This includes the development of new facilities as opportunities arise.



### Current practices

- The Aspect Advisory Council continues to provide independent advice to the Board of Aspect and the Executive team on Aspect's governance which includes the management of strategy and the company's corporate risks based on the council members' insights and experiences. (S1)
- The Aspect Think Tank continues to provide advice and consultation to Aspect teams on Aspect operations and practice.

### DAIP Actions - 2020

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
1.1 The Aspect Advisory Council will meet through face-to-face, Zoom meetings and participation in key strategy meetings. The Council will attend at least one Board and Executive meeting and conduct at least one site visit each year and will link with Aspect's student representative councils. It will present an annual report at Aspect's Annual General Meeting	December 2020	CEO
1.2 The Aspect Think Tank will meet six times in 2020 to work in partnership with Aspect teams to reflect on operations and practice, and will be fully established as an ongoing practice across the whole of the organisation (S1/2020/2)	December 2020	CEO
1.3 Research co-production guidelines will be reviewed by Aspect Practice and the Think Tank, to be generalised into service co-production guidelines (S1/2022/2.1)	July 2020	Aspect Practice
1.4 As part of the Autism Friendly Environments project, complete an internal review of the accessibility and inclusivity of Aspect's sites for Autistic people S3/2022/1.3	December 2020	Aspect Practice
1.5 Prioritise input by Autistic employees, participants and students into the design of the physical environment e.g. layout, lighting, furniture and sensory rooms (S1/2022/1.6)	December 2020	Aspect Practice
1.6 Develop a plan to include best practice design principles to all new Aspect facilities based on research-driven criteria (S1/2022/1.6)	July 2020	Property
1.7 Publish Easy English and accessible publications of the DAIP	December 2020	Inclusion Officer

### DAIP Future Actions - 2021/2022

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
1.8 Investigate opportunities to engage Autistic Board members e.g. recruitment from Advisory Council, Autism CRC programs, external leadership programs	2021	CEO and Aspect Board



1.9 Continue to complete internal reviews of the accessibility and inclusivity of Aspect offices and sites for employees and participants with disability (S3/2020/1.3)	2022	Aspect Practice, Education and Individual & Community Services
1.10 Using existing audit tool/condition audit that meet National Standards, develop an audit tool that meets the needs of people with disability that can be implemented across existing Aspect properties (S3/2022/6.6)	2021	Property and WHS
1.11 Develop an Aspect wide strategy for review of accessibility of existing properties or for any future properties (S3/2022/6.6)	2021	Property and WHS
1.12 Develop guidelines to ensure accessibility for people with disability for all external events planned at Aspect	2021	WHS

## 2. Rights Protection, Justice and Legislation

Aspect is committed to ensuring fair treatment, access to choice and control, and privacy of employees, participants and students on the autism spectrum and/or with disability. We will ensure that clear processes and policies identify anti-discrimination measures and complaints protocols to ensure all people are safe from exploitation and neglect.



### Current practices

- Aspect's Positive Behaviour Support and Restrictive Practice Governance committee maintains an approach to the elimination and reduction of unnecessary restrictive practice (RP) that recognises that we can create environments in which restrictive practice is minimised
- We reaffirm our commitment to the National Framework for Reducing and Eliminating the Use of Restrictive Practices in the Disability Service Sector
- We will continue to review and/or audit each Aspect site to monitor privacy practices and develop a uniform and applicable method of storing and accessing private information to ensure privacy of behaviour and health information is upheld
- Our Safeguarding committee continues to oversee safeguarding and complaints procedures, and employees are supported by management with the knowledge and resources to receive and respond to complaints from people with disability
- Aspect adheres to good practice and all state and national reporting requirements in relation to Restrictive Practices including the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission for NDIS services
- Aspect participates in government reviews, inquiries and Royal Commissions and incorporates learnings into its safeguarding framework

### DAIP Actions - 2020

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
2.1 Review and update information on the Aspect website that defines Restrictive Practice	December 2020	Restrictive Practice Governance Committee
2.2 Aspect's Positive Behaviour Support and Restrictive Practice Governance committee will include a person on the autism spectrum and a parent and will continue to use data and evidence based strategies to reduce and eliminate unnecessary RPs across the organisation	December 2020	Restrictive Practice Governance Committee

2.3 Review resources provided to employees and adult participants accessing the NDIS, about their right to choice and control (S3/2022/3)	December 2020	Inclusion Officer, Human Resources and Individual & Community Services
2.4 Implement Student Representative Councils at all Aspect schools	December 2020	Education
2.5 Establish a DAIP Evaluation Group inclusive of people with disability, employees, executive and Board members to oversee the implementation and review of the Aspect DAIP (S1/2020/1.2)	June 2020	Inclusion Officer and CEO

### DAIP Future Actions - 2021/2022

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
2.6 In partnership with people with disability, deliver training to Aspect employees about Restrictive Practice awareness so that they are making informed decisions. (E.g. utilising the NDS resources, is there another way? Is there a better way?)	2021	Individual & Community Services and Education
2.7 Develop a process to identify and address any knowledge gaps for employees and adult participants, about NDIS participants' right to choice and control	2021	Inclusion Officer, Quality, Human Resources and Individual & Community Services
2.8 Develop a planned approach within Aspect schools that addresses understanding by students, families and staff about rights for students with disabilities	2021	Education
2.9 Produce Easy Read resources communicating the rights of people with disability. Investigate Production of videos on this subject for employees, participants and students	2021	Aspect Practice, Education, Quality, Human Resources, Communications and Think Tank
2.10 Explore opportunities to seek student and participant feedback in ways that are accessible to all people	2022	Education and Individual & Community Services
2.11 Aspect's Safeguarding committee will focus on ensuring that the work completed on promoting complaints is implemented well across Aspect in 2020, and new focus areas are chosen for implementation in 2021 & 2022	2022	Safeguarding Committee

### 3. Economic Security

Aspect is committed to implementing inclusive hiring practices that are accessible for people on the autism spectrum and people with disability. We are committed to a workforce where all people have equal opportunities throughout their employment. Within our schools and services, we are committed to facilitating opportunities for students and participants to be best equipped for accessing security and independence in their future.





### Current practices

- Aspect will continue to provide opportunities for our students and participants to access paid employment opportunities through Aspect Capable, the school curriculum, mentoring programs and community connections
- We will continue to employ ARCAP team members who are on the autism spectrum
- We will continue to employ people on the autism spectrum as consultants for autism friendly consultations, workshops and other opportunities

### DAIP Actions - 2020

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
3.1 Establish an Autistic Employee Network to assist with supporting a positive working experience for all employees on the autism spectrum who work for Aspect (S1/2022/1.4)	June 2020	Human Resources
3.2 Undertake consultation with Managers and the Autistic Employee Network on how Aspect can best support employees to feel confident to identify to Aspect that they are Autistic (S1/2022/1.5)	December 2020	Management Network
3.3 In consultation with Aspect services, develop a plan that supports Aspect's recruitment and retention of its Autistic workforce as part of the HR Workforce strategy (S1/2022/1.7)	December 2020	Human Resources, Learning & Development and Aspect Capable
3.4 Establish one or two part-time Autistic secretariat positions at Aspect, that support activities of the Advisory Council, Think Tank, and with the potential to support on behalf of Aspect, activities of the Australian Autism Alliance (S1/2022/1.1)	May 2020	Human Resources and CEO
3.5 Aspect Education will engage at least two people on the autism spectrum in a range of roles within each school (administration, teachers, teacher aides, non-teaching roles, autism consultants, internships) (S1/2022/1.2)	July 2020	Education
3.6 Introduce a protocol across all teams to establish any accommodations or preferences before meetings commence, and review effectiveness after meetings	July 2020	Inclusion Officer

### DAIP Future Actions - 2021/2022

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
3.7 Reach the target of 6% of Aspect's total workforce comprising people on the autism spectrum, working in a range of roles, supported through initiatives such as paid internships, Aspect Capable at the Autistic Employee Network (S1/2022/1)	2022	All Business Units
3.8 Implement metrics that can be used to measure and report on Aspect's ongoing performance against the target of employing 6% of people on the autism spectrum and establish baseline data	2022	Human Resources
3.9 In partnership with people on the autism spectrum, investigate an approach for introducing paid internship programs for Autistic people	2021	Human Resources

3.10	Consult with current employees with disability about their understanding of, and access to, their employment rights, and plan to address any gaps through new resources and pathways of support	2022	Human Resources
3.11	Consult with employees with disability about the meaningfulness, security and flexibility of their roles. Feedback will be used to plan future approaches	2022	Human Resources
3.12	Review the transition procedures and practices for school leavers and identify opportunities for providing increased support	2021	Education
3.13	Review supervision and support pathways for Aspect employees to ensure they meet the needs of employees with disability	2021	Management Network
3.14	Explore options to create internal coaching and/or mentoring programs. (e.g. across business units, matching employees strategically for skill development or interest area and/or utilising Think Tank members)	2022	Management Network
3.15	Aspect teams will explore opportunities for all employees to develop personalised Five-Point Star and/or one page profiles to communicate their work preferences	2021	Management Network

#### 4. Personal and Community support

Aspect is committed to a sustainable person-centred approach to inclusion and participation in our workplace, our schools and programs and in the community, which is responsive to Autistic people. We will work in partnership with Autistic people to develop a range of supports to assist independent living and active engagement in the community.



##### Current practices

- School students and adult participants contribute to their individual plans and/or the design of their service
- Aspect Individual & Community Services deliver therapy and programs that meet the needs and motivations of participants, are designed and developed collaboratively utilising contemporary practices, promote participants' choice and control, and are delivered in a safe and accessible environment of choice
- Aspect Education will continue to engage and support Parent & Friends (P&F) committees across Aspect schools

##### DAIP Actions - 2020

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
4.1 Review Aspect Individual & Community Services and develop an improvement plan within the DAIP framework (including Aspect Choose & Connect, Aspect Therapy and Aspect Capable)	December 2020	Individual & Community Services

##### DAIP Future Actions - 2021/2022

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
4.2 Investigate approaches that support people with disability in the design of their workplace, school and community support programs and environments	2021	Human Resources, Individual & Community Services, WHS, and Education



4.3 Improve opportunities for Individual Planning processes for NDIS participants and students to co-design their own programs	2021	Education , Aspect Individual & Community Services
4.4 Review family engagement strategies in schools and programs (e.g. school events, program implementation, social media)	December 2021	Education and Individual & Community Services

## 5. Learning and Skills

Aspect is committed to inclusive, responsive, high quality, universally designed educational programs that enable people on the autism spectrum and people with disability to reach their full potential. We commit to improving pathways for participants and students from school to further education, employment and lifelong learning. We will ensure all teams are provided with opportunities to learn about disability, and that all employees, including people with disability, can access career and leadership development.



### Current practices

- Aspect partners with people on the autism spectrum in the delivery of relevant training for Aspect employees
- The ARCAP Research to Practice Model provides employees with the capacity to partner with research to improve service delivery, and continues to identify new evidence-informed practice that can be incorporated into the continued development of the Aspect Comprehensive Approach (ACA).

### DAIP Actions - 2020

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
5.1 Deliver awareness training for Aspect employees to better work with Autistic colleagues (S1/2022/1.3)	December 2020	Inclusion Officer
5.2 Identify existing disability awareness training and resources that are available for all employees	June 2020	Inclusion Officer and Learning & Development
5.3 Share relevant AcadeMe online modules with managers who can introduce, and/or implement with their teams	September 2020	Inclusion Officer, Learning & Development and all teams
5.4 Complete the ACA documentation, chapter reviews, checklists, guidelines and internal website to fully implement and make accessible across Aspect business units including the Five-Point Star. Plan to maintain and update content with ARCAP (S2/2021/1)	December 2020	ACA Committee
5.5 Establish and develop a learning, development and professional practice program for the ACA and implement across all sites and report on ACA website utilisation (S2/2021/2)	December 2020	ACA Committee

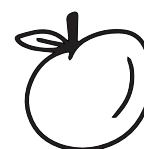
### DAIP Future Actions - 2021/2022

Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
5.1 Implement appropriate disability awareness training across all Aspect teams	2021	Aspect Practice and Learning & Development
5.2 Include people with disability in Aspect's LEAD program	2021	Learning & Development

5.3 Establish the professional practice program and practice review process for the ACA (S2/2021/2 and S2/2021/3)	2021	Aspect Practice
5.4 Review relationships between Aspect satellite classes and host schools to explore opportunities to engage more in shared spaces, events and activities	2021	Education
5.5 Review current practices for delivery of developmentally appropriate information about autism (e.g. diagnosis disclosure programs) in Aspect schools. Investigate the development of an Aspect-wide strategy	2022	Education and Individual and Community Services

## 6. Health and Well-Being

Aspect is committed to timely and effective services for people on the autism spectrum. This means our students, participants and their families are provided with options that are fundamental to their wellbeing, (i.e. that include choice and control and social participation). All Aspect employees will have access to our We Matter program that focuses on well-being in the workplace.



### Current practices

- Promotion of the Aspect Wellbeing Program (We Matter) via the We Matter committee across all teams
- Promotion of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) across all teams
- Aspect continues to review and update its Writing Style Guidelines for up to date and appropriate language use

### DAIP Actions - 2020

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
6.1 In consultation with the Aspect Advisory Council, develop a communications consultation and sign-off procedure (S1/2022/3.1)	May 2020	Communications
6.2 Explore opportunities to share stories of inclusion success more proactively across Aspect (e.g. showcase, pre-recorded webinars, employee newsletters, Yammer etc.)	November 2020	Inclusion Officer and Communications

### DAIP Future Actions - 2021/2022

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
6.3 Identify requirements for additional training for teams across Aspect where they are supporting students and participants who are at risk of mental health concerns, or have co-morbid conditions	2021	Individual & Community Services and Education
6.4 In partnership with employees with disability, review the We Matter program for accessibility for all employees	2021	We Matter Committee
6.5 Complete a literature review into health, wellbeing and employee burnout with a focus on employees with disability	2021	Aspect Practice
6.6 Develop a bank of resources and a targeted approach for communication to all employees about wellbeing in the workplace (e.g. through leadership, coaching/mentoring, podcasts, articles, Employee Assistance Program (EAP))	2021	We Matter Committee



## **Feedback and contact**

**We welcome any comments or feedback from the community.**

**Please contact our Inclusion Officer:  
DAIP@autismspectrum.org.au**



*a different brilliant*<sup>®</sup>

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strengths, interests & aspirations  
of people on the autism spectrum



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