

MAJOR PARTIES NEW COMMITMENTS TO SHIFTING THE DIAL ON AUTISM

13 May 2022: The Australian Autism Alliance (Alliance) welcomes the commitment from the Coalition, Labor and the Greens to introduce a new National Autism Strategy in the next term of Parliament. The Alliance believe this will be critical in shaping the future policy agenda and help improve the life outcomes of hundreds of thousands of Autistic Australians.

The National Autism Strategy is a major step forward from the current disjointed approach that autistic people and their families face in getting the support they need and will make a considerable difference whether they are NDIS participants or accessing other support services. However, the Alliance highlights that more action is required.

Prior to the start of this year's election campaign, the Alliance asked all major parties for commitments that lead to a holistic approach to improve the life outcomes experienced by autistic Australians and their families to result in better outcomes for all. Our scorecard below reflects their responses as we enter the last two weeks of the campaign.

"The current approach to autism policy is inadequate and we need a more coordinated, government approach so that all portfolios can do better to achieve enduring outcomes for autistic Australians," said Co-Chair of the Alliance, Jenny Karavolos.

The key commitments asked for in the current election campaign by the Alliance is consistent with the findings of this year's Senate Inquiry Report into Autism that highlighted "life outcomes for autistic Australians are unacceptably poor".

We know that hundreds of thousands of autistic people in Australia continue to experience much poorer life outcomes in education, health, employment, mental health and participation in society than other Australians, including other major disability types.

"Our Shifting the Dial campaign aims to ensure that regardless of who forms the next Federal Government, they will already be aware of the areas requiring urgent improvement to fundamentally lift life outcomes for autistic individuals in Australia," said Co-Chair of the Alliance, Emma Goodall.

"COVID-19 has also presented significant additional challenges to autistic people. Ensuring we are not forgotten in the pandemic recovery plans will be vital for those of us who are already facing much worse outcomes than our fellow Australians," said autism advocate and mother to autistic children Monique Blakemore.

The Alliance has published a more detailed version and provided links to policies and/or other sources on their website <https://australianautismalliance.org.au/>.

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Scorecard: Election Commitments that Shift the Dial on Autism (@13 May 2022)

Commitment we asked for:	COALITION	LABOR PARTY	GREENS
1. Develop and fund a National Autism Strategy for the lifespan	 \$1m funding to develop	 \$1m funding to develop	 See Senate Inquiry Dissenting report
2. Convene ' Autism and COVID Summit ' in 2022 to develop autism responsive pandemic recovery initiatives including workforce shortage	 No commitment to summit	 No commitment to summit but Workforce plan will contain specific autism stream	 Support convening Summit
3. Develop a National Roadmap to improve health and mental health outcomes	 No commitment to Roadmap	 \$300k funding for initial development of a Roadmap	 Develop a Roadmap
4. Ensure an enduring and effective National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	 Partial commitment Additional funding for the NDIS through to 2025	 Fully fund the NDIS & 6 Point plan	 Fully fund the NDIS Age cap removal for NDIS eligibility
5. Medicare - lift rebates and remove the age cap for people seeking an autism assessment	 Partial commitment Initiated lifting the age cap from 13 to 25 and in implementation	 Partial commitment Match lifting of the age cap from 13 to 25 years of age	 Partial commitment Support lifting of all age caps \$4.8 billion to fully cover mental healthcare including lifting rebates
6. Other <i>(For more commitments refer detailed version on Alliance website)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional \$1.3M to Autism Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) • \$100M to access advocacy & legal support • \$1.2M resources to navigate year after diagnosis • National Autism Strategy to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - better integration of Federal and State services, - increase of community understanding, - promoting awareness of and access to services, - workforce shortages in services; and - support for greater employment of autistic people compatible with the Disability Employment Strategy. See Federal Budget funding See NDIS Reforms See Other Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional \$2M to Autism Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) • \$15M for a National Disability Research Partnership • Match additional funding for NDIS Appeals providers to cope with numbers of AAT cases • Introduce central coordination of disability • Additional \$10m over 4 years for systemic and individual Advocacy supports • A Centre of Excellence in Disability Employment to improve employment Services • Pausing the Morrison government's change to Supported Independent Living (SIL) See Better Support for People Living with Disabilities See Better Future for the NDIS See Other Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3 billion Accessible Infrastructure Funding • Extra \$30M for disability advocacy organisations over 4 years • 20% quota for full disabled employee reps in Public Service by 2030 • Increase all income support payments above the poverty line (\$88/day) • \$2.5 billion to implement national rollout of Individual Placement and Support program • Increase number of peer workers by 1,000 workers See Accessible Australia See Policies

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According to the latest research and statistics:

- 1 in 4 Australians have a family member with autism
- Autistic people are half as likely to complete Year 10 than the general population, and only half as likely to complete either VET or Uni courses than those with other disabilities,
- Autistic people are 3 times more likely to be unemployed than others with disability, and nearly 8 times the rate of people without disability,
- 50-70% of autistic people experience mental health conditions, with a suicide rate 9 times the general population.

The Australian Autism Alliance is a national network that brings together 12 partner organisations to represent people on the spectrum, their parents and carers, service providers and researchers. By creating one united and expert voice, the Alliance aims to add unique value to the lives of people on the autism spectrum, engage key decision makers and educate the community. For more information about Alliance go to:

australianautismalliance.org.au

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