



## **2017 Chairperson's Report**

The Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders (AAB-ASD) has continued to play its role as the backbone organisation for the recently formed Australian Autism Alliance (August 2016), a new national network for organisations of people on the spectrum, parents and carers of people on the spectrum, service providers and researchers which is bound by a Memorandum of Understanding.

The intention of the Alliance is to be one strong voice for autism on the national stage by being more representative of the whole autism community than the AAB-ASD can be because of the constraints in its Constitution and was seen as an appropriate initiative by the autism community with the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

In the interests of supporting this broad and representative group of the autism community, the AAB-ASD contributed \$50,000 of funding during 2016 – 2017 to underpin the Alliance's operations during its formative first year. In the current financial year of 2017 – 2018 the AAB-ASD has contributed a further \$20,000 along with a contingency fund of up to \$10,000 to assist its operations.

The AAB-ASD also manages a separate bank account on behalf of the Alliance for the receipt of income specific to the Alliance and approves all expenditures.

The AAB-ASD is not a member of the Alliance however Member Organisations of the AAB-ASD are all Members of the Alliance in their own right.

The Alliance is a most exciting development for the autism community nationally and the AAB-ASD is delighted to play this supportive role in its establishment.

During 2016 – 2017 the AAB-ASD supported preparations for the Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2017 (APAC 17) hosted by Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) and held in Sydney at the International Convention Centre at Darling Harbour on 7 – 9 September. The AAB-ASD was represented on the Organising Committee by Terry Burke, the Treasurer and Company Secretary of the Advisory Board.

A very successful conference was held in Sydney attended by 1311 delegates from all over Australia along with a strong contingent of delegates from South East Asia and across the globe. There were 22 keynote speakers and a total of more than 300 presentations. More than eighty delegates were on the spectrum with 45 giving presentations at the conference. The feedback from delegates was very positive with strong acknowledgement particularly of contributions made by people on the spectrum and the keynote sessions by Peter Vermeulen from Belgium and Barry Prizant from the USA. Aspect was very appreciative of the support by the member organisations of the AAB-ASD and for their participation in the conference.



## Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders

The Asia Pacific Autism Award recipients for 2017 and presented at APAC 17 were Joan McKenna Kerr, Chief Executive Officer of Autism Association of Western Australia for her outstanding service to the autism community in WA over 25 years and her services to the wider disability community in Australia, Katharine Annear for her leadership of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network in Australia and her advocacy for people on the spectrum and Dr Yuebo Fan, who established the first public school in China for students on the spectrum and continues to raise awareness of autism in China through her research at the South China Normal University, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China.

In 2017 the AAB-ASD appointed the Autism Resource Centre in Singapore (ARC(S)) to be the hosted of the Asia Pacific Autism Conference 2019 (APAC 19). This is the first time an APAC conference has been held off shore. The announcement at APAC 17 by Denise Phua, President of the ARC(S)) was greeted with excitement and anticipation. The AAB-ASD is confident that this highly regarded autism organisation in South East Asia is well placed to hold a very successful conference in two years' time and carry on the tradition established in Australia since 2009. The AAB-ASD is delighted that for the first time APAC will be held in Asia.

My thanks to all members of the Board for their continuing support of the AAB-ASD and particularly my thanks to Joan McKenna Kerr, the CEO from the Autism Association of WA who has been Deputy Chairperson and Terry Burke, CEO of Autism Tasmania who has carried the joint roles of Honorary Treasurer and Company Secretary. All the work undertaken by the directors is additional to their busy full time jobs in their own organisations so their commitment is very much appreciated.

Regards

Adrian Ford  
***Chairperson***