



Government of
South Australia

South Australia (SA)

Autism Strategy 2024–2029

Easy Read version





How to use this strategy



The Government of South Australia wrote this strategy.

When you see the word 'we', it means the Government of South Australia.



We wrote this information in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 42.



This is an Easy Read summary of the full strategy.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the full strategy on our website.

www.autismstrategy.sa.gov.au



This is a long document.



You don't need to read it all at once.

You can take your time.



You can ask for help to read this strategy.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

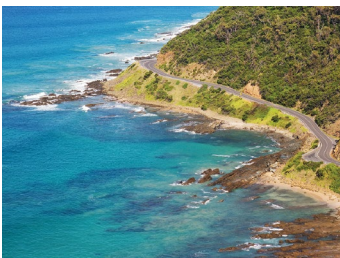


We recognise Aboriginal peoples as the traditional owners of our land – South Australia.

They were the first peoples to live on and use the:



- land

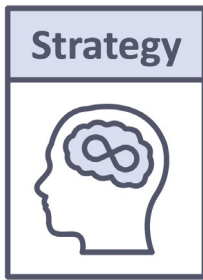


- waters.

What's in this strategy?

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About our Autism Strategy



This is South Australia's first **Autism Strategy**.

In this document we call it the Strategy.

Autism affects how you:



- think



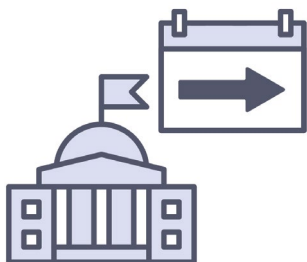
- feel



- communicate



- understand people.



And a strategy is a government plan for how to do things in the future.



We asked people in the Autistic and autism communities what words they prefer to use to talk about themselves.

Autistic and autism communities include:

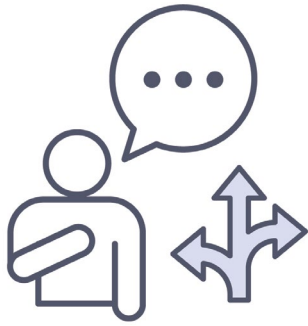


- Autistic people
- their families and carers
- professionals who support Autistic people.

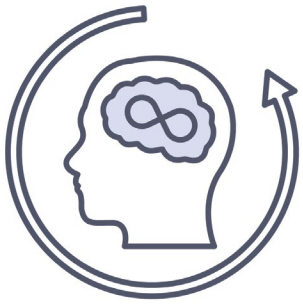


Many people told us they prefer the words 'Autistic people'.

We use these words in the Strategy.



But we understand that each person might prefer different words for themselves.

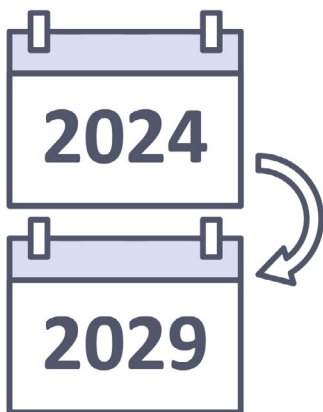


The Strategy explains how we will work towards making South Australia **inclusive** of Autistic people.



When something is inclusive, everyone:

- can take part
- feels like they belong.



We will use the Strategy from 2024 to 2029.



We will also make sure the Strategy works well with other government plans.

How we made the Strategy



We asked the community what we should include in our Strategy.



Over **1,200** people shared their ideas.

We heard from:

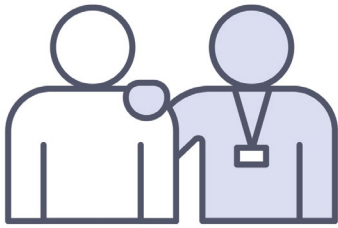


- Autistic people

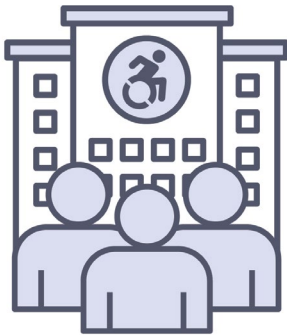


- people who support them.

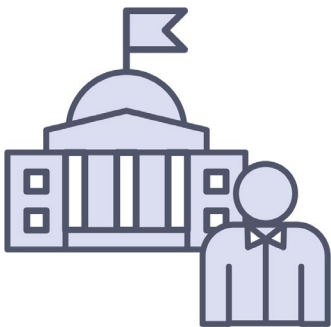
We also heard from:



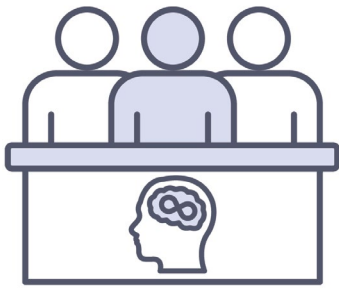
- **providers** – organisations that support people by delivering a service



- organisations that speak up for people with disability



- people who work for the government.



We also worked with the State Autism Strategy **Advisory Committee.**



An advisory committee is a group of people who give us advice.

The State Autism Strategy Advisory Committee includes:



- Autistic people



- people who support Autistic people.



We will keep working with the Autistic and autism communities to make sure the Strategy works well.

Focus areas



We heard from the Autistic and autism communities about 7 areas the Strategy should focus on.



We call them focus areas.



We explain our 7 focus areas on the following pages.

1. Getting an autism diagnosis



A **diagnosis** is when a doctor:

- checks your health
- says what health condition they think you have.



Getting an autism diagnosis is an important step.

It should happen as soon as possible.



It can help Autistic people:

- understand who they are



- feel like they belong



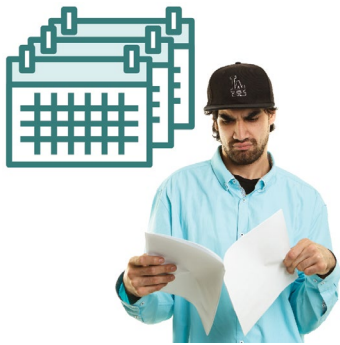
- get the support they need.



It can be hard for Autistic people to get an autism diagnosis.



This can be because it is not clear what Autistic people and their families need to do.



Getting an autism diagnosis can:

- take a long time
- include steps that are hard to follow.

It can also focus too much on what Autistic people can't do



People also told us there are not enough people with the skills to make an autism diagnosis.



Getting an autism diagnosis can also cost a lot of money.



It is also much harder for women and girls to get an autism diagnosis.



This is because some people believe autism doesn't happen to women and girls very often.

It can also be hard to get an autism diagnosis for:



- Aboriginal people



- **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)** people.



CALD people:

- come from different cultures and backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.

What we will do



We will make sure there are clear ways for people to get an autism diagnosis.



This includes making sure everyone can get an autism diagnosis in the same way.



We will also make sure people can get an autism diagnosis when they live far away from cities and towns.



We will look into ways to make sure certain groups of people can get an autism diagnosis.

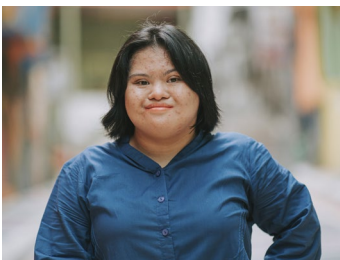
This includes Autistic:



- women and girls



- Aboriginal peoples



- CALD people.



We will do more to make sure Autistic people know how to get support after they get an autism diagnosis.



And we will make sure they can get good information about what their autism diagnosis means.

2. School and learning



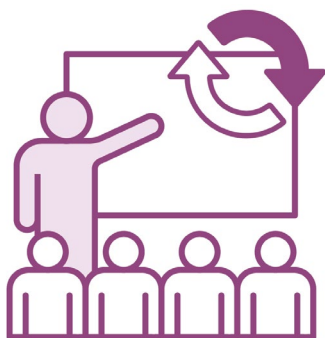
We believe that school and learning are important for making sure everyone can do well in life.



We want to make sure Autistic students of all ages can get support to learn.



This includes getting support as early as possible in life.



And support to:

- change classes each year
- move from one school to another
- finish school and start working.



Schools can be difficult for Autistic students.

Sometimes they need extra support.



This can be because people don't understand the ways Autistic students learn and behave.

This includes:



- other students



- teachers.



This can make it hard for Autistic students to take part in school and learning.



Schools are also more likely to stop Autistic students from going to school.



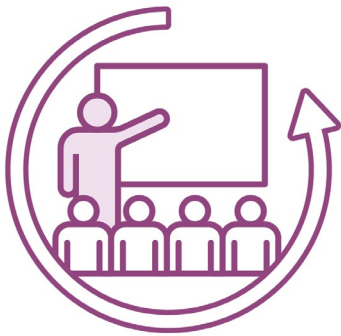
This can happen when the school:

- thinks an Autistic student is behaving badly
- doesn't understand autism.



It's important for Autistic students to get the right support when they need it.

What we will do



We will make schools more inclusive of Autistic people.

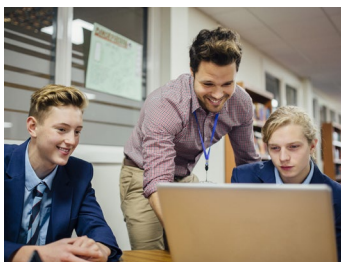
This includes:



- preschools



- primary schools



- secondary schools.



We will also support school staff to understand autism better.



This includes:

- teachers
- support staff.



We will look at ways to support Autistic students when they leave school.

For example, to get a job or go to university.

We will also make sure each Autistic person can get supports that:



- understand the different ways people can experience autism



- are right for them and what they need.

3. Working and earning money

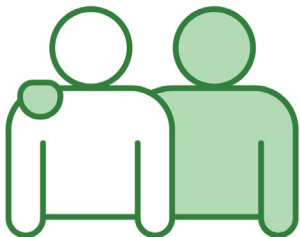
Working and earning money can help
Autistic people:



- improve their mental health



- take part in the community



- feel like they belong.



It can also help Autistic people to:

- control their own decisions
- live their life how they want
- use their skills.



Many Autistic people want to find and keep a job.
But it can be harder for them than other people.
Including people with other disabilities.



This can be because many **employers** don't understand autism.



An employer is a person who hires other people to work for them.



Some Autistic people need support to:

- move from school to work
- do their jobs well.



Employers need to help Autistic people feel comfortable at their jobs.

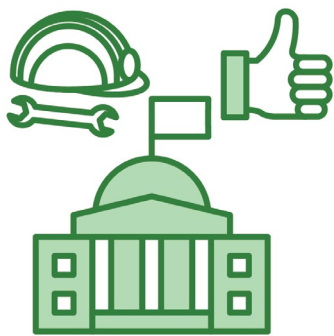


It can also be harder for someone to keep a job when they care for an Autistic person who needs a lot of support.

What we will do



We will support people that work for the government to understand more about autism.



We will also make sure the government is a good place for Autistic people to work.



We will make sure Autistic people can find and keep a job with us.



We will find different ways to support Autistic people to find a job when they finish school.

4. Finding and using services



There are many services that support Autistic people.



But these services can be hard to find and use.



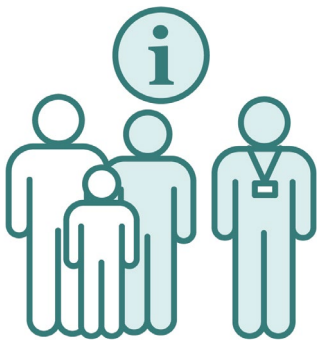
Information about autism and supports can be hard to understand.



This can make it hard for people when they first get an autism diagnosis.



This means Autistic people might have to wait a long time to get the support they need.

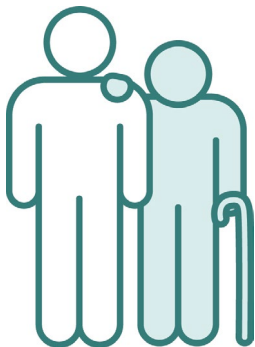


Families and carers also need support and information.



Families and carers can feel stressed.

They might feel like they need to speak up for and support the Autistic people in their lives.



They might also worry about getting too old to care for an Autistic person who needs a lot of support.

For example, a friend or family member.



Services should also think about the different ways Autistic people communicate.



And they should support Autistic people to communicate in the ways that work best for them.

What we will do



We will collect information about supports and services for autism into one place.



We will make sure the information is easy to:

- find
- use.



We will also support staff to understand more about autism.



We will work with organisations to use research about autism to make their services better.

We will make sure Autistic people can find and use services that understand how they:



- think
- feel
- communicate
- understand people.

We will also make sure Autistic people can find and use services that understand their:



- ways of thinking



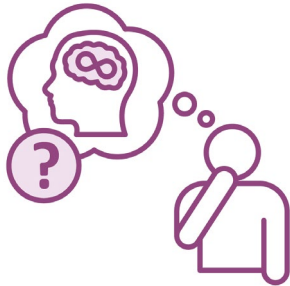
- **culture.**

Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.

5. Taking part in the community



Many people have heard about autism.

But they don't always understand what it means to be an Autistic person.



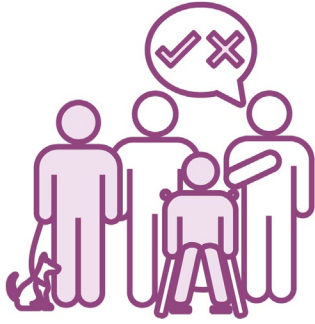
Autistic people live their lives just like any other person.

They have interests and dreams just like anyone else.

But some Autistic people might feel stressed in places that are:



- loud
- busy
- bright.



If these spaces are inclusive of Autistic people, they can have more control about how they take part in the community.



For example:

- quiet spaces
- rooms with low light.



This can help Autistic people:

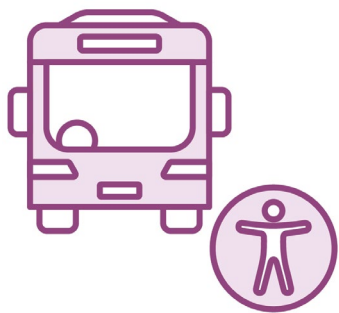
- be social in the community
- feel like they belong
- be healthy.

What we will do



We will think about how public spaces can affect Autistic people.

And how we can make these spaces more inclusive.

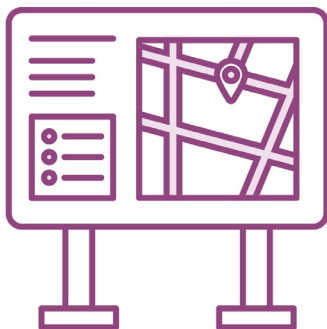


We will find new ways to make transport **accessible**.



When transport is accessible, it is easy to:

- find and use
- move around.



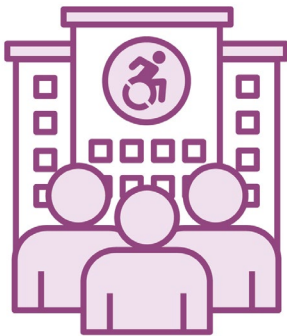
This includes how we design:

- signs
- information about how to find a place.



We will work with groups in the community to do more to support Autistic people to take part in their activities.

These groups include:



- organisations



- sports clubs



- local councils



- services.

6. Health and mental health services



Some Autistic people can have:

- other health conditions
- issues with their mental health.



It is important for health and mental health care services to:

- understand autism
- work together to give good support
- have supports for adults and children.



But it can still be hard for Autistic people to get the care they need.



This can also mean some Autistic people get the wrong support.



This can happen because people don't understand:

- what autism is
- the way Autistic people communicate.



It can also put Autistic people at risk in an emergency.



An emergency:

- is a dangerous situation
- is a thing we don't expect to happen
- can put our health and safety at risk.

For example, if the staff in a hospital's emergency department don't understand autism, they might:



- take a long time to understand what care an Autistic person needs



- give an Autistic person the wrong health care.

What we will do



We will work with health professionals to make sure they understand more about autism.



This includes:

- doctors
- hospital staff
- ambulance drivers.



We will make it easier for Autistic people to use health and mental health care services.



We will also make health and mental health care services more accessible.

This includes in places far away from cities and towns.

7. The justice system

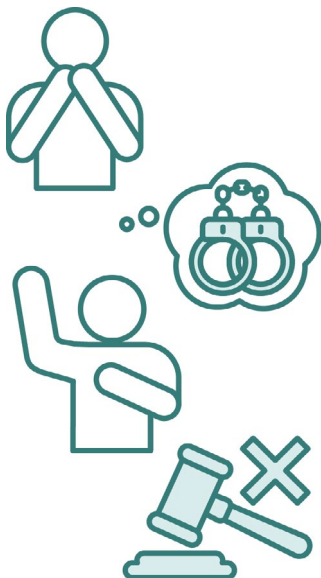


The **justice system** includes:

- prisons
- the courts
- police
- the law.

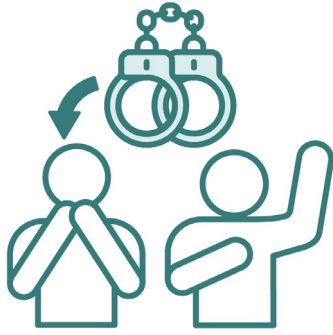


Autistic people are more likely to have contact with the justice system than other people.



This includes:

- as victims of crime
- as people who know about a crime
- as someone who might have committed a crime
- as someone who broke the law.



But Autistic people are more likely to be a victim of crime than to commit a crime.



It can be hard for Autistic people to understand how the justice system works.



And people in the justice system often don't understand how Autistic people:

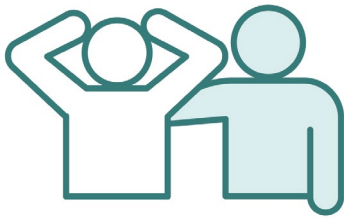
- behave
- communicate.



This can mean they are unfair to Autistic people.



Some Autistic people might need support when they go to court.



This might include support if they feel:

- stressed
- uncomfortable.

What we will do



We will support people who work in the justice system to understand more about autism.



We will also make sure services in the justice system can support Autistic people in the ways they need.



We will create inclusive spaces for Autistic people in parts of the justice system.

For example, in prisons.

How we will use the Strategy



We will make a plan for each of our 7 focus areas.

These plans will explain what we will do to reach our goals.



We will think about what we need to do in each focus area.

This includes thinking about new ways to support Autistic people.



We will decide how we will make each focus area better.



Then we will make sure everyone knows what to do in each focus area.

And we will support them to do their work.



We will keep working with the Autistic and autism communities to make sure the Strategy works well.



We will also make sure the Strategy works with other government plans to support people with disability.



The Department of Human Services will write a report each year that explains how we:

- used the Strategy
- achieved the goals in the Strategy.

More information



You can contact us if you'd like more information about the Strategy.



You can send us an email.

SAutismstrategy@sa.gov.au

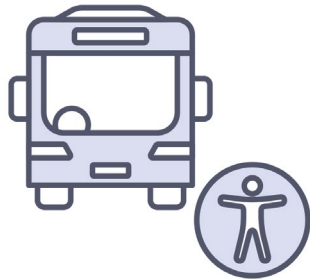


You can visit our website.

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Word list

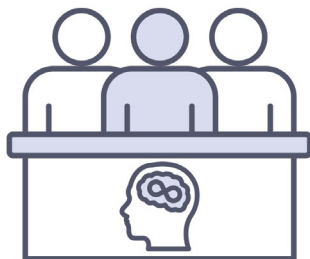
This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Accessible

When transport is accessible, it is easy to:

- find and use
- move around.



Advisory committee

An advisory committee is a group of people who give us advice about the community.



Autism

Autism affects how you:

- think
- feel
- communicate
- understand people.



Autism diagnosis

An autism diagnosis is when a doctor:

- checks your health
- says if they think you have autism.



Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)

CALD people:

- come from different cultures and backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.

Culture

Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.



Employer

An employer is a person who hires other people to work for them.



Inclusive

When something is inclusive, everyone:

- can take part
- feels like they belong.

Justice system



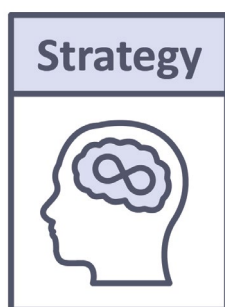
The justice system includes:

- prisons
- the courts
- police
- the law.



Providers

Providers are organisations that support people by delivering a service.



Strategy

A strategy is a government plan for how to do things in the future.



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**Government of
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