

Spectrum News

The Magazine of Autism Tasmania Inc.

ISSUE: September 2013

INSIDE THIS EDITION

Delegate Emily Brake reports from the APAC Future Leaders Program

Run4Autism prepares for the Bruny Island Ultra Marathon

Health & Fitness World, Glenorchy Aerobathon

Hyper-systemizing, hyper-attention to detail and hypersensitivity - what it all means

Strategies for the Sensory-Sensitive child

Advocacy services in the Tasmanian Disability Sector



Specsavers Glenorchy tokens raising money for Autism Tasmania

Contents



1300 AUTISM (1300 288 476)
www.autismtas.org.au
 Email: autism@autismtas.org.au



HOBART
 1 Bowen Road Moonah, TAS
 PO Box 514, Moonah, TAS, 7009

LAUNCESTON
 59D Amy Road, Launceston
 PO Box 358, Newstead, TAS, 7250

Autism Tasmania Staff

Terry Burke
 Chief Executive Officer

SOUTH	Kate Wilson Consultant
Jodie Denman Autism Advisor & Early Days Coordinator	NORTH
Nella Keane Autism Advisor	Deborah Smith Autism Advisor
Robyn Davis Autism Support	Robyn Thomas Autism Support
Allison Lapham Administration	Maree Morgan Administration
NORTH WEST COAST	
Jacqui Kingsley Promotions Officer & Newsletter Editor	Rose Clark Autism Support

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor nor any member of Autism Tasmania Inc. The mention of specific companies and trademarks does not imply that they are endorsed by Autism Tasmania Inc.

The information provided herein is for informational purposes only. All medical information presented should be discussed with your healthcare professional. Remember, the failure to seek timely medical advice can have serious ramifications. We strongly urge you to discuss any current health related problems you are experiencing with a healthcare professional immediately.

This publication does not constitute or provide scientific or medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment and is distributed without warranty of any kind, either express or implied. In no event shall Autism Tasmania Inc. be liable for any damages arising from the reader's reliance upon, or use of, these materials. The reader shall be solely responsible for any interpretation or use of the material contained herein. The Editor reserves the right to make such corrections as are appropriate and in accord with established editorial practice, in material submitted for publication. Articles from Spectrum News can be reproduced with permission and acknowledgement of the source.

A message from our CEO	3
APAC and our Future Leaders Program delegate Emily Brake	4
Specsavers Glenorchy supporting Autism Tasmania	5
Run4Autism Bruny Island Ultra - register soon!	6
Aerobathon	7
Research - The Sensory World of Autism	8-10
The Sensory-sensitive Child	10-11
A Mother's Story (part5/5)	12-16
Member's Photography	17
Advocacy Services in Tasmania	18-20
Planning for Health Related Appointments	21
Social/Support Groups	22-24
Talents within our groups	24
Library News	25
Early Days	26
Social/Support Groups schedule	27

Autism Tasmania Committee Members:

President	Committee Members
Mick Clark	Mr Paul Campbell
Secretary	Mr Keiron Cornwell
Ms Anita Brunacci	Mrs Linda Murphy
Treasurer	Ms Abbey Gilbert
Mr Mike Derbyshire	



Cover image: The friendly staff at Specsavers Glenorchy helping to raise funds for Autism Tasmania. Pictured (from left to right) are:

Holly Tennant, Gemma Johnson, Terry Burke (CEO, Autism Tasmania), Deborah Barwick (Store director), Amanda Excell, Mel Molloy and Ian Slater (Optometrist director). We also thank store manager Lauren Halsey for her involvement in this initiative.





Above: Nominating MyState staff member Richard Janes, Autism Tasmania CEO Terry Burke and MyState Managing Director John Gilbert.

Welcome to the Spring edition of Spectrum News which has been delayed to provide our members with a copy of our 2013 Annual Report. It is pleasing to see your organisation is in a stronger financial position although the challenge of ongoing funding remains an issue as we transition to DisabilityCare over the next three years. We are intent on maintaining the significant progress made with delivery of early intervention therapy via the Helping Children with Autism package and to ensure the experience of Autism Advisors is not lost to families as they seek information, support and referral to services.

Our financial viability is assisted greatly by the generous support of business and individuals alike and the last quarter has been no exception. Some significant contributions have been received from the Robert Fergusson Family Foundation, Health and Fitness World Glenorchy (see article page 7) and the MyState Foundation.

The MyState Foundation, through its staff nominated Autism Tasmania as a benefactor of its most recent fundraising efforts and a cheque was presented to us in mid July. This is a great start to our fundraising for the year. We are also delighted to be chosen as the local charity to benefit from the generosity of the Specsavers Glenorchy Store promotion (see article page 5 for details).

In early August six members of the Autism Tasmania team attended the Asia and Pacific Autism Conference (APAC) True Colours in Adelaide. This was possible due to additional funding received outside the Helping Children with Autism Program provided by the Australian Government via FaHCSIA for professional development. This biannual conference allows attendees to view the latest research, innovative programs and developments in the Autism community. It also allows for some great networking

and reflection on what is out there, what could be improved and the challenges that still exist. Individually each of our participants came back with information and invigoration to look at what Autism Tasmania could adopt to improve our current service or seek to develop new programs.

Increasingly we will be looking for opportunities to engage with our members to identify key issues that are affecting the Autism community in Tasmania. I would encourage everyone to take the opportunity to provide us with their story, experience or comment either via email, our website, our Facebook page or just call us or call in to our offices. Although we cannot provide individual advocacy we can provide information, support and referral where appropriate. Your feedback allows us to gather information on systemic issues and gaps in services and raise them with the relevant authorities.

Autism Tasmania is keen to hear your experience of the DisabilityCare Tasmanian launch site for young people (15-24 age range). In addition to the contact avenues described above we have created a dedicated Facebook page to gather information on how this new agency is better responding to the needs of people living with Autism. The page is called **"Autism and DisabilityCare Tasmanian Launch Experience"**. We are excited by the prospect of this new era of support for persons living with a disability. We will use our best endeavours to inform and improve the eventual roll out of this program nationally in 2016.

We are pleased to have moved back to our original location at the 59D Amy Road Newstead and acknowledge the assistance of our landlord the **Northern Children's Network in supporting us as we strengthened our financial position.**



Above: Launceston Autism Team (Left to Right) Deborah Smith, Robyn Thomas and Maree Morgan.

Now that we are clear of the reporting season we look forward to focusing on events and activities to promote greater awareness and understanding of Autism.

Terry Burke, CEO

Asia Pacific Autism Conference

Following the first two successful biennial Asia Pacific Conferences held in Sydney and Perth, Autism SA hosted the 2013 Asia Pacific Autism Conference (APAC). It was held in August in conjunction with the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders in Adelaide.

The conference theme was to inspire us all to be bold, be brave and be brilliant as we collectively create a good life for people with an autism spectrum disorder. The aim was to encourage the acceptance of difference and celebration of diversity. The motivation is to reveal, encourage and support the collective skills, talents and abilities of all of us that are part of the autism community. People with an autism spectrum disorder can achieve great things but hopes, dreams and desires need encouraging, nurturing and vision.



Autism Tasmania was fortunate to have six of our staff attend the conference thanks to FaHCSIA funding to support professional development through the Advisory Program. It was an excellent opportunity for our support staff to hear about current developments from many prominent speakers from around the world. It was also a perfect opportunity for the various Autism associations from around Australia to network and share ideas.

The APAC conferences are held every 2 years. Despite people with an ASD being the reason for the conference, attendance rates of this most important grouping are generally less than 2% of the delegates. The Future Leaders Program was designed to increase the participation of people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at this key national gathering.

The Future Leaders Program is an initiative designed to bring together a group of young adults aged 18-30 with a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder to participate in the APAC 2013 conference and associated activities. The Young Leaders were encouraged to share their interests in small groups and large. Many Young Leaders wrote articles about their

individual journeys that were picked up by major media outlets. Over the four days, there was a free exchange of ideas and experiences amongst the 1300 conference delegates, with more than 180 Future Leaders with an ASD.

Autism Tasmania sponsored Emily Brake to attend the Future Leaders Program. We are pleased to hear that Emily felt she gained a lot from the experience.

Here is Emily's article:

What can I say about the Future Leaders program at APAC?

The food was nice, I learnt a lot... oh I know: it was amazing!

If I ever was looking for something to help set me on my course, to connect me with like minded people and to support me in being myself, this was certainly it. The Future Leaders combined the conference style learning of APAC itself with group orientated learning and a spirit of community.

Self-advocacy was a major theme at the conference. One of the topics focused on by the self-advocates we spoke to was the concept that decisions about those on the spectrum should be made with our input and reflect how the autism community wishes to proceed and not what is considered by others to be best for it. Hopefully as more people on the spectrum are accepted into roles where their input can be heard it will signify the continuing and growing acceptance of the community at large in finding a place for those on the spectrum in an inclusive and considerate way.

During the conference the considerations made for those on the spectrum were welcomed and included a 'chill out zone' and reserved seating.

The mentors and organisers who aided the Future Leaders were welcoming and happy to share their experience and time. Many of the Future Leaders embraced the opportunity to spend time together, sharing skills, insights and making friendships. I know I made friends that I would love to keep for the rest of my life.

The contacts I made at the Future Leaders and the experience and insights I've gained from the trip have made it a highlight of my life.

I would like to thank my sponsor, Autism Tasmania, and everyone who has helped get me to where I am today.

Emily Brake

Specsavers Glenorchy - tokens raise funds for Autism Tasmania



Above: Autism Tasmania CEO Terry Burke and Glenorchy Mayor Alderman Stuart Slade launching the Specsavers Glenorchy Community Program.

Specsavers Glenorchy has recently started a fundraising program to support two community programs. Now with every frame purchased at Specsavers Glenorchy, customers will receive a donation token which they can then drop into either The Fred Hollows Foundation donation slot, or the Autism Tasmania donation slot. (Token box and tokens pictured to the right). The store will then **make a subsequent donation on the customer's behalf** to these charities.

The initiative will see the majority of Specsavers stores across Australia donate half a million dollars to **Specsavers' national charity partner, The Fred Hollows Foundation**, along with each store's elected local organisation over the next 12 months.

Autism Tasmania is honoured to be chosen as the charity for the Glenorchy Specsavers store in Northgate.

If your glasses need updating, why not pop into the store where the friendly team at Specsavers will deck you out in the latest fashionable eyewear and you can choose to donate your tokens to Autism Tasmania to support our programs!

Raising funds for Autism Tasmania has never been easier!



Run4Autism: Bruny Island Ultra Marathon

A Marathon Effort!

In previous editions of Spectrum News, we have followed the amazing journey of Travis Saunders as he completes a staggering 12 Marathons in 12 months to raise funding and awareness for Autism.

Gabby Wilson, representing Autism Tasmania is **sharing in Travis's experience and creating her own adventure** by preparing to run her first ultra-marathon at Bruny Island later this year. Gabby had this to say **about her upcoming run: "In return for your gracious generosity, I will run the 64 km Bruny Island Ultra Marathon to raise awareness about Autism and the marathon that is a life lived with it. To say I'm scared is an understatement! Please spread the word about my cause to everyone you think might want to help, and Max and I will be forever in your debt."**

Gabby explains why she is working so hard to raise funds for Autism Tasmania:

"Autism Tasmania is the first port of call for new parents/guardians to contact in such a confusing and scary time. They were there for me when I needed to pick up the phone and get much needed guidance and I don't know what I would have done without them. Autism Tasmania provides support groups (which I found invaluable in our early years), a library of resources, events and much more for people in need. But they need our help! This is a not-for-profit organisation of amazing people who are very devoted to supporting and helping others.

Now it's my turn to give something back and I need **your help."**

If you would like to read more about their amazing efforts and support Gabby or Travis by making a donation, please check out the link below online:

<http://run4autism.gofundraise.com.au/page/connectwithme>

If you would like to participate in running (or walking) for Autism, there are details of how you can get **involved on the webpage. It's easy to join.**

Autism Tasmania is taking orders for Run4Autism singlets and shirts. See an example of the draft design below:



Front



Back

Bruny Island 64 km Ultra-Marathon course map

Ultra Tasmania Presents the 26th Annual Bruny Island Ultra and Relay: Saturday Nov 30th 2013

(Entries close 27th Nov 2013, no entries available on the day, unless by prior arrangement)



Aerobathon Fundraiser



The inaugural Aerobathon fundraiser was held on the 22nd of June at the Health and Fitness World, Glenorchy.

Our local celebrity and winner of The Biggest Loser, 2012, Robyn (pictured top-right in blue) came and joined in on the day, as did a team of Superheroes, and even the Cookie Monster!

The Health & Fitness World was packed with eager fitness fanatics sweating it out for a good cause. Autism Tasmania would like to thank the management and staff of Health and Fitness World, Glenorchy for all their hard work organising and hosting such a large and highly successful event - the first of its kind. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the huge number of people who turned up and made donations to Autism Tasmania on the day.

A staggering \$3,743 was raised to support the work we do at Autism Tasmania. The cheque was presented to our CEO Terry Burke by Jessica Xepapas, Linsey Reed and Melissa Goforth (pictured right).

We hope this year's Health & Fitness World, Glenorchy Aerobathon may be the first of many!



The Sensory World of Autism:



Hyper-systemizing, hyper-attention to detail and sensory hypersensitivity

Recent studies led by Assistant Professor of Brain and Cognitive Sciences Duje Tadin of the University of Rochester, have demonstrated that children with Autism see simple movement twice as quickly as their peers. This finding on hypersensitivity to motion builds on earlier studies on how people with Autism process visual stimuli differently.

Parents of children with autism may be all too familiar with witnessing their child's painful sensitivity to sensory stimuli such as noise and bright lights.

Tadin explains: "We think of autism as a social disorder because children with this condition often struggle with social interactions, but what we sometimes neglect is that almost everything we know about the world comes from our senses. Abnormalities in how a person sees or hears can have a profound effect on social communication."

Although previous studies have concluded that people with Autism possess enhanced visual abilities with static images, this new study is the first research to discover the heightened awareness of motion. Assistant Professor Tadin published a full report in the *Journal of Neuroscience* on the 8th of May this year with co-lead author Jennifer Foss-Feig, a post-doctoral fellow at the Child Study Center at Yale University, and colleagues at Vanderbilt University.

The studies led Foss-Feig to postulate that this **"dramatically enhanced ability to perceive motion is a hint that the brains of individuals with autism keep responding more and more as intensity increases. Although this could be considered advantageous, in most circumstances if the neural response doesn't stop at the right level it could lead to sensory overload."**

Whilst normally, the brain dampens its responses to sound, taste, touch, and other stimuli, hypersensitive perception is the result of a brain that is unable to modulate its response to the sensory information from the outside world.

For a sensory hypersensitive individual, the barrage of sensory input can be overwhelming, and even physically painful. Temple Grandin has often described her heightened sensory sensitivity in her autobiographical books about living with Autism. **For example, she writes that "overly sensitive skin can be a big problem...Shampooing actually hurt my skin...To be lightly touched appeared to make my nervous system whimper, as if the nerve ends were curling up".**

In a research paper titled "Autism and abnormal development of brain connectivity" published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, M.K.Belmonte posited that hypersensitivity "could result from a processing difference at various sensory levels including the density or sensitivity of sensory receptors, inhibitory and excitatory neurotransmitter imbalance or speed of neural processing." Other studies have suggested that the neural overconnectivity in posterior, sensory parts of the cerebral cortex is responsible for the sensory 'magnification' in individuals with Autism.

This same increase in neural "excitability" is seen in Epilepsy, which is strongly linked to Autism. As many as one third of individuals with Autism also have Epilepsy.

When sensory overload occurs, the cascading effect on other brain functions is believed to be the causal reason for most melt-downs and withdrawal in children with Autism.

The flip-side of sensory hypersensitivity in Autism is that research suggests it can at times be advantageous. In a study led by Simon Baron-Cohen that appeared in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of Biological Sciences*, the link between Autism and Savant talent was identified as being directly related to the hyper-systemizing, hyper-attention to detail and sensory hypersensitivity. The research team from the Autism Research Centre, Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge found that in many people with Autism, a combination of hyper-systemizing, hyper-attention to detail and Sensory Hypersensitivity predisposes the individual to show talent.

Talent in Autism comes in many forms, but a common characteristic is the recognition of repeating patterns in stimuli. This is defined as systemizing. It is the innate drive to analyse or construct systems. Below are some of the major categories of systems:

- Collectible systems (e.g. distinguishing between types of stones or wood);
- Mechanical systems (e.g. a video recorder or a window lock);
- Numerical systems (e.g. a train timetable or a calendar);
- Abstract systems (e.g. the syntax of a language or musical notation);
- Natural systems (e.g. the weather patterns or tidal wave patterns);
- Social systems (e.g. a management hierarchy or a dance routine with a dance partner); and
- Motoric systems (e.g. throwing a Frisbee or bouncing on a trampoline).

During systemizing, an individual searches for laws of the form - if a, then b. The rules are derived by **noting that 'a' and 'b' are associated with the system.** A common example of this would be that we generally assume if we flick a light switch down, the light will come on. We may also make connections and assume that there is a system, when in fact there is not. For example: if it is Friday, then we eat fish. The need for strong systemizing in individuals with Autism is seen in narrow interests; repetitive behaviour; and resistance to change/need for sameness.

There are implications for the education system's responsibility to recognise that hyper-systemizing will affect not only how individuals with Autism learn, but also how they should be assessed. Individuals with Autism will often score poorly on IQ tests, essay and **exam questions that are designed for 'neurotypical'** students - even though their specific knowledge may be extensive. What can appear as a slow processing style may in fact be a sign of a greater quantity of systemized information that is being processed. **For example, a simple question such as "What is a beetle" may not result in a simplified, summarised answer "It is an insect", but rather open a discussion about the categorisation, habitat and diet of over 350 000 species of beetles in existence.**

A man with Asperger's Syndrome involved in Baron-Cohen's study described his way of processing:

"I see all information in terms of links. All information has a link to something and I pay attention to these links. If I am asked a question in an exam I have

great difficulty in completing my answer within the allocated 45 minutes for that essay, because every fact I include has thousands of links to other facts, and I feel my answer would be incorrect if I didn't report all of the linked facts. The examiner thinks he or she has set a nice circumscribed question to answer, but for someone with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome, no topic is circumscribed. There is ever more detail with ever more interesting links between details."

Individuals with Autism tend to excel in domains that are highly systemizable. One of the best-known success stories is that of Temple Grandin, whose **unique way of "out of the box" thinking led to a** lucrative career designing humane, efficient systems for managing livestock. She has published many books about her experiences, and there is a movie **titled "Temple Grandin" based on her life with autism.**

The key is to develop an understanding of the strengths of the individual with autism so that natural talents can be utilised. If we think in terms of strengths instead of weaknesses, a whole range of educational and career opportunities become possible.

References:

"Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Participation Among College Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder" by Wei X, Yu JW, Shattuck P, McCracken M, Blackorby J. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, July 2013, Volume 43, Issue 7, pp 1539-1546.

"Study: "Hypersensitivity to motion may provide clues to fundamental cause of autism" by Duje Tadin and Jennifer Foss-Feig, *Journal of Neuroscience*, May 8, 2013.
<https://www.rochester.edu/news/show.php?id=6332>

"Talent in autism: hyper-systemizing, hyper-attention to detail and sensory hypersensitivity" by Simon Baron-Cohen, Emma Ashwin, Chris Ashwin, Teresa Tavassoli and Bhismadev Chakrabarti as published in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of Biological Sciences*.

"What aspects of autism predispose to talent?" by Francesca Happé and Pedro Vital, MRC Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London <http://m.rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/364/1522/1369.full>
"New Theories of Autism: Hyper-Systemizing and Assortative Mating" by Simon Baron-Cohen, PhD, MPhil, *Medscape Today*

"Two Case Studies of Autistic Savants: Understanding Their Systemizing Ability" by Dr Noel Chia Kok Hwee
Assistant Professor, Early Childhood & Special Needs Education
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University

"Autism and Technical Smarts: Experts explain why some people with autism are good fits for technically demanding jobs" by Martin Downs, MPH
WebMD <http://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/features/autism-technical-smarts>

<http://specialpost.com/2013/02/06/it-may-be-that-people-with-autism-naturally-think-like-scientists/>

Sensory Sensitivities

Autism Tasmania has a range of resources available for loan to members. Please check our library catalogue, and contact Autism Tasmania by email at autism@autismtas.org.au or phone 1300 288 476 to borrow from our extensive library.

Some of our library resources relating to sensory hyper-sensitivity, nurturing talent, education and career:

- **"What's Next - Preparing the Student with Autism or other developmental Disabilities for Success in the Community"** (Book) Jenison Public School
- **"Autism - The Eighth Colour of the Rainbow"** (Book) Florica Stone
- **"Managing Asperger Syndrome"** (Book) Malcolm Johnson
- Information Kit - **"Thinking and Learning in Autism"** (Booklet) ASPECT
- **"Temple Grandin"** (DVD)
- **"Asperger's on the Job"** (Book) Rudy Simone
- **"Be Different - Adventures of a Free-Range Aspergian"** (Book) John Robinson
- **"The Passionate Mind - How People with Autism Learn"** (Book) Wendy Lawson
- **"Autism and Sensing - The Unlost Instinct"** (Book) Donna Williams
- **"A Mind Apart - Understanding Children with Autism & Asperger Syndrome"** (Book) Peter Szatmari
- **"Smiling at Shadows"** (Book) Waites & Swinbourne
- **"High Functioning Individuals with Autism"** (Book) Mareno
- **"Understanding and Teaching Children with Autism"** (Book) Jordan & Powell
- **"Learning and Cognition in Autism"** (Book) Shopler & Mesibov
- **"Emergence Labelled Autistic"** (Book) Grandin & Scariano
- **"Succeeding with Autism - Hear My Voice"** (Book) Judith Cohen
- **"You're Going to Love this Kid - Teaching Students with Autism or Asperger"** (Book) Paula Kluth
- **"Living and Working with Autism"** (Book) National Autistic Society

Suggested further reading online:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/understanding-behaviour/the-sensory-world-of-autism.aspx>

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/autism_spectrum_disorder_sensory_sensitivities.html

The Sensory-sensitive child

Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can be more sensitive than usual to environmental stimuli. Other children with ASD can have lowered sensitivity. Within the one child, there can also be a combination of Hypersensitivity to some stimuli, and Hyposensitivity to others.

In sensory-rich environments such as busy public places, people who struggle with a sensory processing disorder are likely to become stressed or anxious, and possibly feel physical pain. This can result in difficult behaviour. If the child with **ASD gets sensory overload, he/she may just "shut down."**

Developing an understanding of the way your child reacts to sensory experiences can help to prevent meltdowns due to sensory overload, as well as provide a valuable insight for providing appropriate sensory stimulation.

Signs of sensory processing difficulties

Sight -

Hyposensitive:

- Magnified central object with blurred periphery
- Sharp peripheral with blurred central vision
- Objects lose some of their features/appear dark
- Poor depth perception - problems with throwing, catching; clumsiness.

Hypersensitive:

- Distorted vision: objects and bright lights appear to bounce around
- Easier/more pleasurable to focus on detail rather than whole object.
- Fragmented images

Sound-

Hyposensitive:

- May not acknowledge particular sounds
- Sounds may be heard only in one ear, the other ear having partial hearing or none at all
- Might enjoy noise such as crowded places, banging objects

Hypersensitive:

- Difficulties concentrating with background noise - inability to focus on a particular sound

Sensory Sensitivities

and cut out incidental sounds

- Noise may seem magnified, distorted or muddled
- Reacts to very quiet or distant sounds eg: plane flying overhead

Touch-

Hyposensitive:

- Enjoys sensation of pressure eg: weighted blanket
- Has a high pain threshold
- Grips too tightly
- May self-harm

Hypersensitive:

- Difficulties brushing and washing hair/ brushing teeth because their head is sensitive
- Dislikes anything on hands or feet
- Only likes certain clothing or textures
- Touch can be uncomfortable or even painful

Taste-

Hyposensitive:

- Pica - eats everything (soil, grass, play-dough, etc)
- Likes very spicy foods

Hypersensitive:

- Certain textures cause discomfort/craving for smooth-textured foods
- Finds flavours too strong. Restricted diet

Smell-

Hyposensitive:

- Children may lick things to try to understand what they are
- May fail to notice strong odors (such as their own body odor)

Hypersensitive:

- Dislikes people with strongly scented perfumes, shampoos etc.
- Smells can be overpowering eg: avoidance of toilet smells may lead to toileting issues

Balance (vestibular)-

Hyposensitive:

- Self-stimulation - A need to rock, swing or spin

Hypersensitive:

- Motion sickness
- Difficulties stopping quickly or during an activity
- Difficulties controlling movements eg: sport, dance
- Difficulties with activities where the head is not upright or feet are off the ground

Body awareness (Proprioception)-

Hyposensitive:

- Difficulty navigating around or avoiding obstacles
- May bump into people
- Stands too close to others - difficulty measuring proximity and judging personal space

Hypersensitive:

- Moves whole body to look at something
- Fine motor skills difficulties/trouble manipulating small objects eg: buttons, zips, shoelaces

Small changes can make a big difference!

1. Be aware: Check the environment for sensory triggers. Can you improve/adapt for potential problems?
2. Be creative: Try to provide some positive sensory experiences
3. Be prepared: Let the person with an ASD know what they are likely to encounter so that they can prepare themselves for the environment.

If you are looking for solutions to common sensory problems such as picky eating, problem chewing, sleep difficulties, clothing sensitivities, poor concentration at school etc, there are many helpful blogs and websites. A few of the best are listed below.

Further tips on dealing with sensory sensitivities in the home, at school and in public are available online.

Below are a few good examples:

www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/understanding-behaviour/the-sensory-world-of-autism.aspx

<http://www.myaspergerschild.com/2012/05/making-sense-of-sensory-sensitivities.html>

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/autism_spectrum_disorder_sensory_sensitivities.html

<http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2011/12/13/26-sensory-integration-tools-for-meltdown-management/>

<http://www.sensoryprocessing.info/games/index.html>

Clothes

If anything, Matt is even less concerned about clothes than he is about shoes. However the two High Schools he attended both required students to wear the school uniform, to a greater or lesser degree. So, I bought the uniform requirements, and he wore them without much concern. I would point out, however, the very real need to maintain the labelling regime from primary school, for students like Matt who were not great personal organisers. I am sure that he managed to misplace every single item of clothing he ever wore to High School – I became a regular fixture rummaging through the Lost and Found cupboard: hats, blazers, jumpers, backpacks – unbelievable.

And having extras of most uniform bits, tucked in to the back of the wardrobe at home (maybe the next size up, or a pre-loved article) can save some anxiety in the morning when you realise that their tie/blazer/*cap didn't come home last night.*

Because it was a rule that you had to wear uniform at the High Schools Matt attended, his fixed logic meant that I could not get him out the door from home if he felt he was not in correct uniform. I found this approach to be unbelievably frustrating at times, and not terribly good for social relations either, when he pointed out to other students, in considerable detail, that they were breaking the uniform rule (as the uniform non-compliers are just the ones who would punch him out for telling them).

In Matt's last year of High School the uniform requirements were relaxed somewhat because of the cost of replacing items for a short period of use, so long as the general theme of the uniform was maintained. As Matt had outgrown his jumper for winter, I bought him a really heavy, zippered fleece. This is the one item of clothing he was ever actively positive about; he wore it every single day, and really didn't want to take it off. I suspect that it made him feel snuggled and enclosed, and therefore, safe – I wish I had bought one sooner, because it seemed to significantly reduce his school anxiety.

My Angels are three separate, individual people who have supported and assisted my son and me during *Matt's time at High School. They are treasures beyond compare, and each of them has gone way beyond* their work obligations to give us the gifts of their wisdom, friendship, courage and understanding. And the most wonderful aspect of these magical beings is that they (and all the other Angels who are out there in *our community*) *appear at your side when you ask for help. And it doesn't seem to matter who you are, or* how badly things are going, they are there to give you the support you need.

Angels in Civilian Clothes

I suspect that this chapter may be the most significant part of this story, because without the help and understanding provided to me by these Angels, there might not have been a story, or perhaps it simply would not have ended as well as it did.

My Angels are three separate, individual people who have supported and assisted my son and me during *Matt's time at High School. They are treasures beyond compare, and each of them has gone way beyond* their work obligations to give us the gifts of their wisdom, friendship, courage and understanding. And the most wonderful aspect of these magical beings is that they (and all the other Angels who are out there in our *community) appear at your side when you ask for help. And it doesn't seem to matter who you are, or how* badly things are going, they are there to give you the support you need.

My first Angel

My first Angel worked for Autism Tasmania. I got her phone number from a website, and called her when things were really dire with Matt. And this lady gave me heaps of information and advice, and made all the right soothing noises when all I could manage to do was blub down the phone at her.

She put me in touch with a parents' support group, which meets monthly, for parents whose children are on the Spectrum. When it seems to me that our life is falling apart, it's just so good to listen to other parents who may be trying to work through similar issues. Not that they will necessarily have any answers, or that their answers will necessarily work in my family situation, but simply to know that I am not alone – that *other people are battling as well. Perhaps it's because the misery gets shared, but I come away from the* support group feeling so much better than when I went. And I do learn a lot – mostly about how brave, and modest, ordinary parents are.

My first Angel was so incredibly supportive once we had obtained Matt's diagnosis, liaising things with his High School about his learning needs. This was no small feat, because the school really didn't want to know about his differences, and they were not set up to deal with his Asperger's. The school organisation recognised two separate categories of students: neurotypical kids, and children on the Severely Disabled Register. Aspies seem to fall between these categories: otherwise bright students without apparent disabilities, *who nonetheless have real difficulties in mainstream classrooms. And the school didn't know what to do* about it.

Once I had Matt's diagnosis report, I got on the Internet and researched the sort of educational assistance that had been found to be successful with other boys with Asperger's Syndrome, and began asking the school about different learning supports which might be put in place. Looking back on things now, I wonder if I may have come across as too pushy, or perhaps I was asking for the moon and the stars (and after all, Matt *hadn't proven himself to be much of a catch in the study stakes), or it may just have been that the school* staff felt somehow threatened by my requests. But I had my Angel on my side, and that made all the difference.

The last meeting I recall going to was held in the school's board room, complete with board room table. Thankfully my Angel had suggested she come along to keep me company, otherwise it would have ended-up

Cont'd....

Cont'd....

with me on one side of this enormous polished table, facing an array of five school staff (teachers and counsellors) on the other side. It was a more confronting arrangement than I had ever faced in an *employment interview; but at least with two of us on my side things weren't so grossly unbalanced. And my supporter had lots of knowledge at her fingertips, which the school staff didn't, and that also served to redress the balance a bit.*

It was really through my Angel's involvement and support that I could get the school to make any modifications for Matt's learning. That came at a time that I was feeling really guilty about Matt's disability, and completely lacked confidence in my role as his parent advocate, so if things had just been left to me, I doubt that the outcome would have been as positive as it was.

My second Angel

As happened with my first wonderful support person, meeting my second Angel was also a matter of luck. *When the 'school for kids who won't go to school' programme that Matt had been attending, closed, I had to make decisions about trying to get Matt re-engaged with his secondary schooling. Returning to the High School where he had started Grade 7 really wasn't a viable option: they didn't want to have him back, and he most definitely didn't want to go back there. Again, I started on the research trail – hunting down comments about schools posted on the Internet and talking to people at the Parents' Support Group about their views on different High Schools.*

As it happened, I heard really positive reports about a government High School, located in a country area about 45 minutes from our home. It sounded as though the school was making a concerted effort to support their students on the Spectrum, with a dedicated teaching team and withdrawal areas specifically provided for these students. So I called the Principal and asked her advice about Matt and our situation. *The Principal was so kind to me on the phone, but was also frankly honest: we didn't reside in the school's catchment area, and their support resources were stretched to breaking, so she couldn't see her way clear to even talking about a place for Matt. Just before our conversation closed, she gave me the name and phone number of an Education Department advisor – who became my Second Angel.*

When I had finished blubbing that time, I called, and began a real friendship with a woman who just knew exactly what Matt and I were going through. She explained that most government High Schools in our region were not well set up for students on the Spectrum, but that our local High School was as good as any other – and she knew the positives and negatives of the system from visiting the different schools. And even though she was tremendously overworked in her position, and was really supposed to be advising on an organisational level, she always made herself available for a phone call, or even a visit.

It was my Second Angel who explained to me, as well as to the High School staff, just how exhausting High School is for students with autism: the noise overload of yelling and lockers and sirens; sensory issues with

processing issues in taking down notes from the whiteboard; the encyclopedia of informal rules; people communicating using metaphors and similes. And unlike neurotypical kids, for whom these issues might provide the background experience of High School, students on the Spectrum are just drained by the environment that is High School. As a consequence, they might not be able to manage whole days at school, or may need some extra time during the week to recharge their energies.

I have the most awful admission to make at this point. Even after getting Matt's diagnosis, I really didn't understand how difficult he found the world of school. There were times when I couldn't wake Matt up to get him to school, and others when he would come home and go to sleep until dinnertime. And I thought he was simply being lazy, so I would berate him and lecture him and really get on his case. And knowing what I know now, there probably were times when he was just being an idle teenager, but there were also times when he absolutely needed that sleep to maintain some sort of equilibrium.

None of the books that I had read or videos I had watched had ever explained about the exhaustion issues faced by High School students on the Spectrum – I am incredibly thankful that my Second Angel did, *because it was the key to Matt's being able to maintain some engagement with High School.*

My Third Angel

This angel was camouflaged as Matt's cookery teacher during his Years 9 and 10 at High School. It was beneficial that Matt really enjoyed this teacher's subject, and that the teacher herself was very likable and approachable, but she really went beyond the steps that I would normally expect of a busy teacher dealing with hundreds of students each week.

This angel made time in a really busy teaching schedule to come to meetings I had with school administrators – no other subject teacher had ever done that before. When I was at a loss as to how I could *overcome Matt's reluctance to attend school, she would ring our home (on the mornings that he had cookery) and explain what was planned for the class, any visitors that they were expecting, exactly what Matt would be doing, and how much she hoped that he would be there to share in the learning.* When Matt passed certain workplace certificates – and was justifiably proud of himself – she called me and told me, with real delight in her voice. On the mornings when Matt got himself all tied into knots because there had *been a change of classrooms, she didn't mind me calling to find out exactly where he needed to go.*

This teacher was like a lighthouse in the middle of a stormy sea. Without her assistance and kindness, I'm not at all sure how Matt's High School years may have ended up.

Cont'd...

A Mother's Journey (part 5 of 5) by Alison Trimble

The magic ingredient is to ask for help

There have been some very dark and low times during Matt's High School years, for him and for me, but we have really been blessed with our contact with these people. They all shared an understanding of the challenges that we were facing, and offered us help which went way beyond any job description. But we would not have gained their assistance if I hadn't asked for help.

I am absolutely no expert on autism, but I do know that having a child on the Spectrum, especially a child facing the traumas of High School, is beyond the resources of any parent or set of parents. I have always been a fiercely private and independent person, and earlier in my life I would rather have gnawed off my arm than seek help for my personal problems. But this was no longer just about me, and I had to come to terms with asking for assistance. And the magical thing was that the help appeared.

So, if you feel a bit overcome by worry about what's going to happen to your child, or frustrated and powerless to bring about the changes needed for your child's learning, take a breath and ask for help – your angels will appear too.

Autism Tasmania would like to thank Alison Trimble for the contribution of her story

Share Your Story



Autism Tasmania's magazine provides relevant information about Autism services across Tasmania, current research and resources of interest to families of children. Spectrum News magazine also provides an opportunity for parents/carers of children with Autism, professionals working in the field of Autism, or adults living with an ASD to share their experiences with others by writing personal stories for publication.

If you are interested in sharing your story, please contact Autism Tasmania on 1300 288 476
or email autism@autismtas.org.au

Member's photography



Above: A stunning series of photographs taken by a member of one of our Adult Aspergers Groups. While the photographer wishes to remain anonymous, we would like to acknowledge their incredible talent!

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is about ensuring that people are able to promote and defend their rights, and participate in decisions that directly affect them.

The provision of advocacy services in Tasmania is an important mechanism for protecting the rights of people with disability. These rights stem from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and also provide the basis of principles and standards contained in the Tasmanian Disability Services Act.

An initiative of the Council of Australian Government (COAG), the National Disability Strategy has set out a 10 year national plan for improving the lives of Australians with disability, their families and carers.

The Strategy identifies the value of advocacy services in enabling and supporting people to overcome barriers.

The Tasmanian Government provides funding to Tasmanian advocacy services through Disability, Housing and Community Services within the Department of Health and Human Services. The Australian Government also funds advocacy services for people with disability.

There are two main forms of advocacy - individual and systemic.

Individual advocacy focuses on the specific needs and rights of individuals. The aim is to provide support for the individual to assert their rights, challenge decisions and actions that restrict their opportunities. In circumstances where the individual is not capable of speaking on their own behalf, the advocate may **assist by voicing the individual's concerns for them.**

Systemic advocacy responds to systems that may be adversely affecting people with disability such as government laws and policies, departmental procedures, generic community and disability service practices.

In Tasmania, we have four advocacy services:

- Advocacy Tasmania Inc.
- Association for Children with Disability (Tas) Inc.
- Citizen Advocacy
- Speak Out Association of Tasmania

Advocacy Tasmania Inc.

Advocacy Tasmania Inc. (ATI) is an independent, community based advocacy service.

ATI has five Advocacy Programs:

1. Disability
2. Mental Health
3. Home and Community Care (HACC)
4. Aged Care
5. Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs (ATOD)

ATI also runs two special projects:

- The Mental Health Tribunal Representation Scheme - for people appearing in Mental Health Tribunal Hearings. The Scheme provides free, competent trained volunteers to represent people at hearings where their mental health orders are being reviewed.
- The Dementia Rights Advocacy Project - for people with dementia with priority given to people in the early stages of dementia who have no family or friends to support them and advocate on their behalf.
- ATI is also involved in systemic advocacy.
- Work on unmet need for services, particularly individual support packages and supported accommodation
- Prevention and responses to abuse of people with disability
- Representation at Area Advisory Groups in each region, providing comment to the disability working groups and supporting persons and family members to have their say via their website and BLOG at www.yoursay.org.au

ATI also conducts education and group work. **ATI was involved in running residents' groups in both government and non-government run facilities and workers' groups in business services and day option services.**

FREECALL: 1800 005 131

Website: www.advocacytasmania.org.au

Association for Children with Disability (Tas.) Inc.

The Association for Children with Disability (ACD) is a state-wide organisation providing advocacy, case management, information, training and support for families with a child or children with disability. ACD began as a support group for parents of children with disability, and has grown to become a service provider organisation.

ACD staff work to a Family Empowerment Model, a social model that focuses on strategies by which families use assistance to identify and achieve self-defined goals.

The guiding principles of ACD are choice of, access to, and equity of all services for all Tasmanian children, irrespective of their disability and regardless of where they live.

The organisation provides:

Information

- Via the telephone **FREECALL: 1800 244 742**
- Via the website: www.acdtas.com.au
- Through its magazine PEPTalk
- By conducting or facilitating information forums on issues concerning family and their child/children
- Through a family services directory titled **'Finding Your Way'** - a comprehensive guide to benefits and services for families of children with disability
- Through their resource library with books, toys and games

Advocacy

- Assisting parents/carers of children with disability to develop skills and knowledge to make informed decisions; exercise their rights and advocate on their own behalf
- Family Advocates assess and respond to each situation individually
- Where appropriate, Family Advocates can act on behalf of families/carers of children with a disability
- ACD provides systemic advocacy where there is policy or systemic barriers affecting or likely to affect service provision.

Support

- Listening
- Attending meetings with parents/carers
- Facilitating support groups
- Assisting families/carers to determine needs
- Ensuring that families/carers are supported to access the services they require
- Developing informal networks among parents/carers
- Talking with service providers and government about issues of concern

Training

ACD provides a fee for service 'Working with Families' training and information package for anyone who works with families/carers who have children with disability, ensuring parent perspective input into professional development and training sessions.

ACD also provides training in the use of the **'Participation Model'** as a tool for identifying how a child or young person is participating in any environment on the following four levels:

- Integration
- Social
- Academic (education based)
- Independence

Citizen Advocacy

A federally funded community group which provides support services for individuals within the Launceston area which are provided by suitably skilled advocates.

Citizen Advocacy supports people with disability, who are homeless, institutionalised or have reduced capacity to represent themselves and therefore require assistance to have their needs met.

The types of support provided include, but is not limited to:

- Emotional and material support
- Individual advocacy
- Companionship
- Budgeting
- Accommodation
- Housing
- Transport

Citizen Advocacy may also take on formal roles/relationships such as Guardian or nominee for Centrelink payments. (**Launceston only**) Ph 6331 2177

Speak Out Association of Tasmania

Speak Out provides advocacy support to people with disability.

Speak Out aims to support people with disability to:

- develop the confidence and skills to self advocate for their own interests and rights
- create an awareness of the individual and systemic needs of people with disability
- educate the community on issues relating to people with disability

This is achieved through one-to-one support, self advocacy skills development and community education.

Speak Out offers support for:

- Employment committees
- **Resident's committees**
- Day Service committees
- individuals on Boards of Management
- training and education for people with disability (e.g. Assertiveness training)
- interest groups that meet monthly in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie
- an annual conference
- Information and resource centre (videos, books, posters, pamphlets, training manuals etc)
- Networking with other services.

Individual advocacy is provided when a person with disability feels that their needs are not being met, that **they have been treated unfairly or when the person's** supports have broken down and the individual is at risk.

Speak Out provides opportunities to facilitate effective community consultation with people with disability and/or their family on the issues that affect them.

**Information for this article was taken from the booklet "The Role of Advocacy Services in the Tasmanian Disability Sector" produced by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).*

Advocacy Contact Details:

Advocacy Tasmania

Website: www.advocacytasmania.org.au
(South)

Telephone: 03 6224 2240
1800 005 131

Facsimile: 03 6224 2411

Email: advocacy@advocacytasmania.org.au

(North)

Telephone: 03 6331 0740

Facsimile: 03 6331 0740

Email: advocacynorth@advocacytasmania.org.au

(North West)

Telephone: 03 6441 0201

Facsimile: 03 6423 1900

Email: advocacynw@advocacytasmania.org.au

Association for Children with Disability

Website: www.acdtas.com.au

Email: admin@acdtas.com.au

(Hobart Office)

Telephone: 03 6231 2466

Facsimile: 03 6231 0833

For Family Advocacy inquiries and/or assistance state-wide please call: (FREECALL) 1800 244 742

Citizen Advocacy (Launceston only)

Telephone: 03 6331 2177

Facsimile: 03 6334 3571

Email: ca.lton@bigpond.net.au

Speak Out Association of Tasmania

(South)

Telephone: 03 6231 2344

Facsimile: 03 6231 2207

Email: admin@speakoutadvocacy.org

(North)

Telephone: 03 6343 2022

Facsimile: 03 6343 7090

Email: launceston@speakoutadvocacy.org

(North West)

Telephone: 03 6431 9333

Facsimile: 03 6431 8333

Email: burnie@speakoutadvocacy.org

Planning for health related appointments

I thought it was time I contributed to Spectrum News not as an advisor, but as a parent wishing to share some ideas about how to manage certain challenges that can come our way whilst parenting or caring for a child or person on the autism spectrum. I know our community has a rich and vast network with people who might be willing to share their ideas or comments in future newsletter editions. I thought I would kick off the process with a topic that I hope you find useful.

If you are the parent or carer of a child or person who has an autism spectrum disorder, the everyday experience of attending a medical appointment can bring with it multiple challenges and valid concerns. It is my hope to share some ideas that as a parent I have found helpful when taking my son Austin to medical appointments. Austin is sixteen, totally **non-verbal and like most teenagers doesn't fancy spending** too much time with health professionals. He relies heavily on gestures and visual aids and can quickly shift from being calm to irritable or frightened, but with good preparation, his anxiety can be greatly reduced. At this stage I must stress the point that these are simply suggestions, which *may* be useful in helping with appointments; your own plan would be **tailored to suit your family member's needs**.

As most parents know our loved ones can be extremely sensitive to noises, sights and smells for example and there is no singular approach that will work to reduce or resolve the issue for all people. However, the use of visual supports may prove valuable when preparing for an appointment. Our family has been fortunate to have some wonderful health professionals who have welcomed an initial appointment, which has essentially been a reconnaissance visit; a chance for Austin to meet the doctor, dentist, optometrist etc. without any procedures being attempted. With permission from the service provider, we take photos for his Ipad, which allows us to revisit the appointment at home, and assists us in preparing for follow-up visits. This **allows him to 'check out' his surrounds in a way that**

is non-threatening resulting in an observable reduction in his anxiety. This greatly assists us to ensure that subsequent visits have a foundation of trust to build upon.

Other strategies we use involve practicing at home before attending a health care appointment. For example we know that the blood pressure cuff can be scary for Austin with the loud sounds of the Velcro and the feeling of the cuff being inflated. Practising at home without the tension or fuss meant that we could gradually progress from one stage to the next; he is now able to have his blood pressure taken with less apprehension.

Hospital visits can be especially daunting and in particular emergency situations that do not allow time for rehearsing or practicing a procedure. In this case you can play a vital role in relaying information to the health care professionals involved.

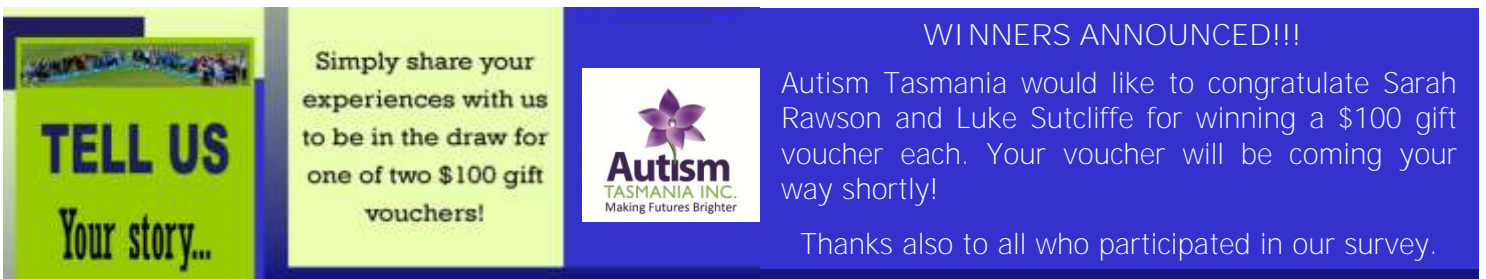
Keeping updated medical information is one way to assist with both planned and unplanned visits to a clinic or hospital. Using the situation of a hospital visit, it is very likely staff may not know your loved one and will need to find out quickly and concisely, as much relevant medical information as possible. Having a file which has test results, current medications, known allergies, specialist reports and any future appointments can assist the process and save you having to rely on your memory at a difficult time. We use a brightly coloured folder which has clear sleeves containing copies of medical information it is kept in a spot where it can be retrieved quickly by ourselves, family members or any carers who may be working with our son. The file accompanies Austin whenever there is an appointment or in the case of an emergency.

As mentioned earlier if we can pool our ideas and share our experiences there may be someone who **can benefit, and doesn't have to reinvent the wheel**.

If you have an idea you think would help, why not send in your suggestions to Spectrum News.

All the best for now,

Deborah Smith.



TELL US
Your story...

Simply share your experiences with us to be in the draw for one of two \$100 gift vouchers!



Autism
TASMANIA INC.
Making Futures Brighter

WINNERS ANNOUNCED!!!

Autism Tasmania would like to congratulate Sarah Rawson and Luke Sutcliffe for winning a \$100 gift voucher each. Your voucher will be coming your way shortly!

Thanks also to all who participated in our survey.

Social/Support Groups

Launceston School Holiday Group



During a recent get-together at Launceston City Council's Road Safety Centre (the bike centre), sausages sizzled as children (and some parents!) whizzed on bikes and scooters.

Parents and carers enjoyed an informal chat. Thirty-five adults and children enjoyed a wonderful day!



The Zone North



These photos were taken at our first meeting for the current block of The Zone (North) on August 24. Eight children and their parents enjoyed a Scenic cruise on the Tamar River followed by a walk to Royal Park for a play on the equipment and at the river's edge. We are all looking forward to getting to know each other over the next few months.

Dunalley Support Group

At our meeting in June, we hosted a guest speaker Barbara McMullen from Family Planning Tasmania. The topics for discussion were puberty and adolescence, family planning, relationships, behavioural issues, sexual health and safety, social and sexual development in relation to ASD.

There were a series of informative activities that made some of the sensitive topics much easier to cover. The education and resources presented at the meeting was aimed at providing parents and carers with resources and strategies to effectively address the relationships and sexuality needs of people with ASD. It is always rewarding.

Dunalley House kindly covered all the costs. We thank them for their generosity.



Social/Support Groups

Southern Adult Asperger group

An EIGHTH birthday for this group was celebrated on July 28th with 16 people attending and enjoying a great afternoon tea and a chat. There were also some tales of the first meetings at Tascare and the **development of the group over the time they've been together**. Many of the people who still attend are original members while others continue to join as time passes.

During the time the group have been meeting they have produced some great information sheets including, **What the Community Needs to Know about Asperger's Syndrome, Transition Ideas and Strategies** and **What Employers Need to Understand about Asperger's Syndrome**.

Our afternoon teas often feature a variety of chocolate however this is sometimes supplemented by wonderful food cooked by Lisa. There were many condiments and **'sides' to go with the great soup in the large pot!!**



Each get together usually has a focus or a topic however as the people that come along settle in, they are very happy to just sit around and have a chat – **something that didn't happen for the first couple of years**.

As the group enters its ninth year I can only wonder at the bravery of those who have continued to attend given the difficulty of walking into a room where you know **no-one, where talking to people you don't know** presents challenges and where the people that come along are always the same.

Inspirational is a word I'd use to describe the group – they have all achieved a great deal and continue to do so and are always very welcoming to newcomers.

For those interested the group usually meet on the last Sunday in the month at the Autism Tasmania offices. The only reason the day is changed is if it

falls on a public holiday or in a recognised holiday period such as Easter or Christmas. New people are very welcome to attend along with a friend, partner, a family member or support person.

North-West Parent Support Groups

The winter months certainly challenged attendance at the various parent groups around the north-west and west coast with torrential rains, icy cold winds, landslides and snow!!! Despite the hazards our winter meetings have been very well attended – a testament to the importance of getting together through a common interest.

All groups have met a number of times with focus being different for each get together and each group. The topics have been varied and have include, the NDIS, Occupational Therapy for people on the autism spectrum, iPads, and appropriate, interesting apps recommended by the user – the children who use them regularly!

The Burnie group met during the height of winter and **decided to have a 'show and tell' session** – this time about themselves not their children. Many bought along handiwork to show and tell about, a couple using their spare time to produce in bulk to sell at stalls and on-line!!



The Devonport group are currently in recess however the newly formed Ulverstone group will meet once a month of an evening and will alternate with the Devonport group. This will mean that parents in Devonport/Ulverstone area have an opportunity to meet monthly, one month in Devonport at the Community Health Centre and the next month in Ulverstone.

STAY TUNED for dates!

North West Asperger Group

A group of adults with Asperger Syndrome has been meeting in Burnie for the last 12 months. These get-togethers happen on the second Saturday of the month in the Burnie CBD. The group, in the throes of establishment have found a permanent home in a church owned premises in the city however it is hoped that we can alternate meetings between Burnie and Ulverstone as some attendees find it difficult to travel to the venues due to limited public transport.

If you are interested in attending one of our groups, please see contact details on page 27.

Talents within our groups

Many of those attending the adult Asperger groups have hidden talents! We have talented musicians – vocal and instrumental who regularly perform with their various choirs, orchestras and bush bands. There is also a wonderful guitarist who plays solo flamenco style music on a twelve string guitar! While we would like to be able to show you these talents in Spectrum News unfortunately we can't.....yet.



One of the people in the southern group has a 'certified' companion dog that visits elderly people in various homes and also people who are recovering in hospital. This lovely animal came to one of the Hobart get-togethers and stole the show.

In our group, we have a number of skilled photographers – something we look forward to sharing with you in future editions.

We also have a recognised author in the southern group who is a world expert on jelly fish and who has recently returned from a 30 city book launch tour in the US. Lisa currently works part-time for the CSIRO in Hobart and while involved in that work discovered a new jellyfish which she has named!

Lisa's book is titled '*Stung!* On Jellyfish and the Future of the Ocean'. Please read Lisa's author statement (right).

Book Review

The following description comes from the press release:

Stung! came about through my own journey. As a marine biologist, an ecologist, and a conservationist, I **thought I 'got it'...but what** going on with our oceans is beyond what just about any of us could have imagined. It is more complex, and interwoven and bigger than any one stressor, or one place, or one species.

Stung! is the story of what we've done to the oceans, and what that means to us. It's the story of what to expect and why. Not hundreds of years from now, not in some faraway place but now and tomorrow. In five years or ten, where you are and where I am, where our kids will only read about because the coral reefs and the Antarctic penguins and the Sushi Train and pristine beaches will only be shadows of their former selves.

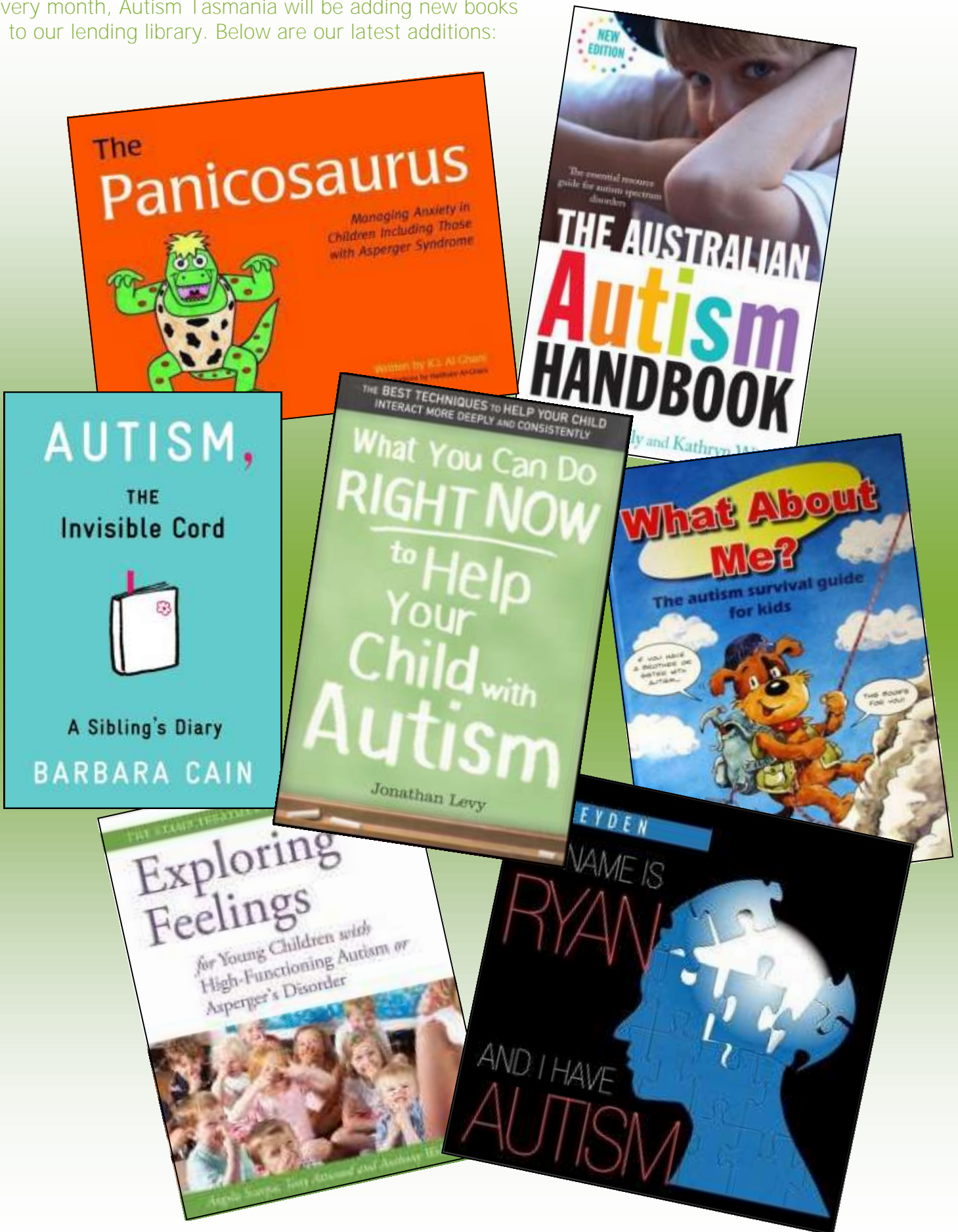
Stung! is not a romance, it is not Sci Fi. It is a raw and honest look at the effect of our actions, and who wins and who loses. It is well supported by cutting edge science from the best researchers in the world. The references are there, so anyone can judge it for themselves and take their own journey. It's all there. The one thing missing, however, is the 'everything is going to be okay' ending. It's up to us how fast we are willing to travel the trajectory that we have put ourselves onto. It's up to us. You and me.



"Stung" by Dr Lisa Ann Gershwin

Library News

Every month, Autism Tasmania will be adding new books to our lending library. Below are our latest additions:



To view the complete Borrowing Library Catalogue, look under "Services" - "Library" on our website.
www.autismtas.org.au



Helping my Child Cope with Change

14th of November

Change is challenging for all children on the autism spectrum.

Length: 2.5 hours

Outcomes:

- Identify why change is challenging and how it impacts on the behaviour of young children.
- Strategies to prepare my child for the changes of everyday life.

This workshop will focus on changes within the family structure such as moving house, going to childcare and celebrations such as Christmas and birthdays.

Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder workshop

17th of October

Length: 4.5 hours

Outcomes:

- Understanding ASD and what it means for your family.
- Practical strategies to assist the child with ASD and your family.
- How to select and maximize an intervention service.

Understanding Behaviour workshop

7th of November

Length: 4.5 hours

Outcomes:

- **Understand your child's behaviour.**
- Devise strategies to teach your child appropriate behaviour.
- Develop techniques to promote positive behaviours.

Progression to School

28th of November

Length: 2.5 hours

Outcomes:

- Understanding how to successfully prepare your child with the keys to succeed at school.
- Funding options for children over 7 years.

Interested in setting up an ASD Social/Support Group in your area?

Contact Autism Tasmania to see how we can help.

Ph 1300 288 476
or email autism@autismtas.org.au



Support/Social Groups

Southern Tasmania

New Norfolk

Ptunarra Derwent Valley Child & Family Centre
Second Thursday morning in the month – 10:30 – 11:30am.

Contact Robyn Davis 0408 376 838

Dunalley

Dunalley Community Neighbourhood Centre,
Arthur Highway
First Thursday morning in the month – 10am – Midday

Contact: Amity Deans 03 6253 5579

Hobart- **Asperger's Syndrome Adult** Support Group

Autism Tasmania office, 1 Bowen Rd, Moonah
Last Sunday in the month 2.00 – 4.00pm.

Contact: Rose Clark 0407 320 048

North West Coast

Burnie

Burnie Community House, 24 Wiseman St, Burnie
Third Thursday in the month - 10.30am - midday.

Circular Head

Smithton District Hospital's meeting room

Third Friday in the month – 10.30am - midday.

Devonport/Ulverstone

Devonport Community Health Centre, Cnr MacFie &
Steele Sts Devonport (alternates with Ulverstone)
Third Monday in the month - 7.30pm - 9.30pm

Burnie—**Asperger's Syndrome Adult** Support Group

152 Wilson Street, Burnie
Second Saturday in the month 1.30pm - 3.30pm

Contact: Rose Clark 0407 320 048

Northern Tasmania

Launceston

Northern Children's Network, Amy Road, Newstead
Coffee mornings - Fourth Tuesday in the month from 10am
Bike Centre family get togethers in school holidays

Scottsdale

Dorset Community House
Second Tuesday in the month 11am—12:30pm

Contact: Robyn Thomas 0458 375 604

Launceston

Asperger's Syndrome Adult Support Group
Aspire Building, 190 Charles Street, Launceston
First Saturday in the month 1.30 – 3.30pm.

Contact: Rose Clark 0407 320 048

Regular visits are made to Campbell Town and George Town.
Please contact our office for details.

Evening information sessions at Northern Children's Network,
Amy Road, Newstead are conducted regularly. Please contact
our office for details.

West Coast

Meetings on the first Thursday in every month on a
rotational basis—Rosebery, Queenstown, and Strahan
10.30am -midday. Please contact Rose Clark for details of
upcoming venue.

East Coast

Monthly meetings organised by Karen Rawnsley

Phone 6372 5077 or 0418 375 450



For more information please call: 1300 288 476
or
email autism@autismtas.org.au



Autism
TASMANIA INC.
Making Futures Brighter

ABN: 90 215 494 454

Hobart

1 Bowen Road, Moonah
PO Box 514, Moonah 7009
Ph: (03) 6278 9985

Launceston

59D Amy Road, Newstead
PO Box 358, Newstead 7250
Ph: (03) 6344 1212

Ph: 1300 288 476
Email: autism@autismtas.org.au



or our website
www.autismtas.org.au