



Autism State Plan – Update – February 2008

Partnership

Autism Victoria continues to work in partnership with the Victorian State Government Departments to develop the Autism State Plan. It's been a positive learning experience for us and for the various Government departments and there will be short and long-term benefits as Government departments gain a greater understanding of autism spectrum disorders, the issues confronting our community and build capacity to work across different areas of government.

Opportunity

Thank you for contributing to the first phase of consultation. Autism Victoria is there to represent the Autism Community's view especially when we come to discussing priorities from the issues you have raised. We passionately and vigorously present the vast Victorian Autism Community's many and varied views at each meeting.

As many of you are aware, a range of issues across sectors and life stages have been presented by parents for a number of years and the development of the autism state plan is our community's once in a life-time chance to present the many issues in a cohesive manner to the Victorian State Government.

Having committed to developing an Autism State Plan, the presentation of the draft plan later this year will give the Victorian State government an opportunity to respond in a comprehensive state-wide strategic way to address the issues across the life span.

Analysing Feedback

Development of the autism state plan is now in full swing as we reach the half way mark. The first stage of consultation is now complete. We anticipate making the summary of findings from consultation available on the website in March.

Extensive consultation took place with 23 forums being held across the state including many rural and regional areas as well as metropolitan forums. Written submissions were also invited. In total about 700 people have been involved in telling us about the issues and possible solutions to move forward with as well as examples of current good practice already occurring.

Consultation forums and written submissions have contributed significantly to informing the autism state plan working group about key issues and has yielded a large amount of information. A systematic process has been undertaken to examine this information to make sure that the experiences, ideas and examples of good practice contributed by people who participated in the consultation forums and sent in responses to the consultation paper have been considered.

The extensive notes from the 23 forums have been collated and analysed. The major issues and key themes that emerged were discussed and agreed by all members of the Autism State Plan Working Group who participated at the forums. The 250 written submissions that were received have been registered, coded, read and analysed. The submissions have been categorised in terms of major groupings like, Family/Carer, Individual with an ASD, Service Provider and Organisation, so we will be able to understand a bit more about the perspective of particular groups, as well as the group as a whole.

There are two main types of information from the consultation: numerical information eg: the number of people who agreed with a proposal in the Consultation Paper, and textual information eg people explaining why they agree with a proposal in the Consultation Paper or informing us of other issues, actions or examples of good practice to be considered. The analysis process distils the major issues and key ideas from the consultation which can then be used to inform the development of the Plan together with other evidence sources eg international/national research and policy.

Work behind the scenes

In addition to what we have heard from you, the process is being informed by gathering current international and national research, using a life stages framework and a contemporary understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This will ensure the plan is cognisant of an evidence based practice and emerging potential “next practice” service continuum to improve outcomes for people with an ASD, and their families and carers.

Clarifying Federal Government initiative

The Federal Government commitment of \$190m is independent of the Victorian State Government commitment to develop an Autism State plan. The Federal Government has already called for tenders which closed recently and we wait with much anticipation as to the successful bidders and the details of their Federal Government funded programs which are anticipated to roll out from July 1 2008.

Autism State Plan

Government Ministers Involved

Lead Minister : Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Senior Victorians Lisa Neville

Other Ministers

Minister for Education – Bronwyn Pike,

Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development and Minister for Women's Affairs – Maxine Morand

Minister for Health – Daniel Andrews

The Autism State Plan Working Group

The working group comprises representatives of the three partner organisations:

- Autism Victoria
- Department of Human Services (Strategic Projects Branch, Disability Services and Mental Health Branch)
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (incorporating Office for Children)

and a representative of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Autism Victoria Reps

Meredith Ward (Manager – Autism State Plan), Alison Byrne (CEO Autism Vic), Rosemary Malone (CEO Gateways Support Services), Tracel Devereux (CEO Alpha Autism) & Judy Brewer (Honorary Advisor)

Updates

Visit the autism state plan website for updates as work proceeds over the coming months. <http://autismstateplan.dhs.vic.gov.au>