



autismWest

WE'RE BETTER TOGETHER



Autism West Annual Report 2018

A community where young Western Australians with autism
are accepted, celebrated and supported.



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About Autism West

Autism West is a Western Australian not-for-profit providing unique opportunities for young people on the autism spectrum to gain skills and experience, enabling them to connect successfully with others and the world around them. Using a strengths-based approach, we facilitate a number of special interest programs within our social groups. The overall aim is to engage and motivate participants, build feelings of self-worth and increase resilience.

At Autism West, we help our members develop:

- Friendships with similar young people;
- A sense of belonging;
- Team work and project management skills including critical thinking;
- Advocacy skills;
- Feelings of self-worth and purpose; and
- Individual and team skills in their areas of special interest such as coding, film making, robotics, art, and digital media.

As part of our awareness strategy, Autism West is proud to present the annual [Autism West Symposium](#), which is a unique event for Western Australia. The annual symposium creates a space for all members of our community and their stakeholders to listen, share and grow their knowledge of current thinking in autism.

Autism West Services

Autism West's service model aims to increase mental health resilience. Individuals with autism have many strengths and there is huge potential for self-development in areas of interest, such as technology or the arts. Autism West is a niche organisation employing a strengths-based approach to autism and working to demonstrate the competence of our community.

In 2018 we operated social groups for young people with autism in three locations throughout the Perth area; Claremont, Fremantle and Marangaroo. The social groups create an environment that is supportive and engaging for individuals that are at risk or experiencing social isolation. The participants plan activities using a strengths-based approach and involving their special interests. Through this approach, the participants work towards the goals they have identified as outcomes for their participation in a social group.



Chairperson's Report

2018 has seen Autism West settle into its new home at Fremantle Hospital. We are delighted as it is a great space for our youth to call home, in a welcoming community.

We are pleased to have expanded our services into Rockingham, making Autism West's social groups available and more accessible to those living further south of the Metropolitan region. This demonstrates that Autism West is committed to ensuring services are accessible and tailored to meet specific needs.

This year saw the validation of our strengths-based approach in across our social groups with the publication of the Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre's report on "A Strengths based Program for adolescents with autism". This research has provided an evidence base for a strengths based approach as a valid intervention for our youth.

We have, through many projects, demonstrated the amazing talent and competence of our participants. Our Youth Advisory Council has grown in strength and confidence as they examine and explore issues relevant to them as young individuals with autism in today's society.

Some of the key achievements for 2018 include:

- Service establishment in Rockingham;
- Youth Advisory Council Establishment;
- The Autism West annual Cocktail Party;
- The Autism West Symposium – 'Join the Conversation' and our inaugural Employment Forum "Employment Diversity – Futureproofing the workplace";
- Autism West continued partnership with Venues West; and
- Building new partnerships and alliances, whilst nurturing existing ones.

This could not have been done without a dedicated team of staff, board members, committees, interns and volunteers, who have worked tirelessly all year. We appreciate their efforts and pass on a huge thank you for all their hard work and commitment. This year we bid a fond farewell to Alison Davis who resigned from her role as CEO, her invaluable contribution, passion and dedication helped to shape Autism West to date, she will be missed by all. I would also like to acknowledge two founding directors Mr Karl Paganin and Mr Adam Shephard and their families whose support; guidance and dedication has been instrumental in Autism West's growth to become the organisation it is today.

Louise Sheehy is our newly appointed CEO. Louise is very passionate about ensuring all people with Autism have equal opportunities to reach their full potential, exploring new and innovative practices to lead them to successful and happy lives. Welcome Louise.



Chairperson's Report

2018 also marks Autism West's 10th anniversary, which we celebrated and shared with the community at our annual Symposium in November.

Autism West is very proud of its innovative, best practice culture and what we have achieved over the past 10 years. Together with a great team and our community we will continue to strive in making a difference to people's lives. We see a bright future with many opportunities and big plans ahead. To create a community where young Western Australians with autism have a voice, are celebrated and supported. I am excited to see what we will achieve in 2019.



CEO Report

Under the strategic direction of the Board, Autism West was successful in a year which saw significant milestones being reached.

I would like to thank the leadership skills of the Board, in particular, Chairperson Silvana Gaglia, who was a key support this year to the operations team which continues to grow. I would like to thank our committed and passionate staff and volunteers who have worked hard to continue to develop and invest in our promising and incredible community of participants who make Autism West what it is. I would like to note the invaluable contribution students on placements make to Autism West bringing enthusiasm and a fresh approach to the organisation.

This year saw the consolidation of our strengths-based approach in Autism West's social groups as we expanded the range of special interests projects. We opened services in Rockingham early 2018 and projects completed by participants included the filming of a short film "Knock Knock" written and shot by our filmmakers in collaboration with WAS TV. The introduction of group projects, such as our recycling project - aim to connect the groups from our various locations.

Some of the highlights for 2018 were:

- The Autism West Youth Advisory Council, as well as other individuals with autism being showcased at the annual symposium. Their voice is an essential ingredient and gives delegates insight into how the community think and feel.
- This year's Employment Forum on diversity was well received by the business community here in Western Australia. Autism West is committed to looking at the key issues around getting individuals with autism working and contributing for their own wellbeing, to drive innovation in business and for Australia's future economic wealth.
- Autism West delivered professional development to stakeholders working with and caring for our community. Autism West's approach involves giving insight to attendees into the lived experience.
- The publication of research by Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre validating the strengths based approach used by Autism West. This was as a result of several years of developing and offering special interest projects to our participants to increase their feelings of self-determination.
- A successful partnership with Be My Koorda, a local aboriginal disability group to address a dearth of services for indigenous individuals with autism.
- Fundraising events such as HBF Run for a Reason and the annual Autism West Cocktail Party which aims to bring the community together and raised much needed funds.



CEO Report

Organisational Key Performance Indicators

Revenue	17% decline overall 48% increase in direct services revenue
Programs and services	28% increase (from 10 to 14 groups)
Enrolment Capacity	78%
Membership	10% Growth since 2017
Social Media Growth	Twitter: 31% Instagram: 24% Linked In: 97% Facebook: 29%

This year, we have been working on cementing our role as a community organization and ensuring that Autism West has strong foundations with our participants and that they are firmly centered in decisions. We are strengthening their voice and this will be a growing element for 2019 which will support the mounting acknowledgement of the importance of their participation in research and work in autism. Autism West has grown and developed through the deliberate inclusion of the autistic community at all decision making levels and I am excited to see where our journey will bring us in 2019.



Highlights

Strengths Based Approach Research Publication

In September 2018 the Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre published its research report “A Strengths Based Program – for adolescents with autism”. Autism West was a research partner in the report and the framework reflects Autism West’s emphasis on how strengths and interests can be used to motivate and engage and build self-determination. This validates our service delivery model as an evidence based intervention. The report is available [here](#).





Highlights

Employability Focus

The Youth Advisory Council identified employment and employability as a key issues for them as a young community. Along with the obvious benefits for the individuals, their families, business organisations and the community, employment for the neurodiverse which includes autism is also a matter of Australian economic security. Australia cannot sustain a welfare approach to disability of which autism is a large cohort. By 2099 welfare will not be sustainable for our community and already 42% of the disability community live on or below the poverty line. Australia ranks as one of the lowest in terms of how we treat this group in the OECD.

The community does not want welfare, the community wants to work, participate and contribute. This right to participate as a functioning member of society, to work, to contribute and to be valued is enshrined in the National Disability Standards. Autism West through the Flack Foundation have turned their attention to exploring this topic using a strengths based approach. The Tate Foundation has also enabled Autism West to explore social enterprise which compliments the creative nature of the autistic approach to interests and their exploration. This is also a key focus area for 2019 for our Youth Advisory Council.





Highlights

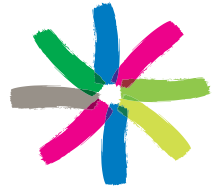
2018 Autism West Symposium

The Autism West Symposium is the flagship event held by Autism West each year, aiming to educate and raise awareness of the range of thinking in autism within the community. This year we invited delegates to “Join the Conversation” and we were very fortunate to host a number of interesting and inspirational presenters representing the research and professional sectors as well as a rich array of presentations from those with lived experience:

- Michael John Carley – Schools consultant and professional public speaker
- Liz Pellicano – Professor of Educational Studies at Macquarie University in Sydney
- Nicole Rogerson – CEO of Autism Awareness Australia
- Tom Tutton – National Manager of Aspect Practice and Clinical Lead of Positive Behaviour Support
- Autism West’s Youth Advisory Council and their experiences in finding a voice



Silvana Gaglia – Autism West Chairperson, Hon Stephen Dawson MLC – Minister for Environment; Disability services; Electoral Affairs and Autism West Ambassador and Autism West Ambassador Professor Lyn Beazley, AO FTSE at the recent Autism West Symposium.



Highlights

2018 Employment Forum - Future Proofing the Workplace

There is a growing momentum in interest from the business community in how a diverse workforce drives creativity and innovation. There is also a growing body of evidence attesting the benefits from both research and employer experiences. Inspired by the current climate, Autism West hosted our first employer forum aimed at the Western Australian business community and harnessing the growing realisation in business that diversity in employment drives innovation. A panel comprising of Bankwest, Optika Solutions as well as Curtin University mediated by K&L Gates partner Eric Fethers provided insight into the benefits and strategies needed to harness this resources in an ever competitive world of business development.



Fundraising

Autism West ran for a reason this year with staff, volunteers, participants and their families joining together at the annual HBF Run for a Reason in May 2018. There was a real sense of unity and celebration as we ran, walked and laughed our way to the finishing line in a staggered formation depending on fitness and stamina but we all made it and raised over \$15,000 for Autism West in the process.

June saw the Autism West Cocktail Party, another flagship event for Autism West which took place at Stackwood in Fremantle. The event was very well attended with auction items including pieces of art from artists on the spectrum. The audience heard from Ana Palacios on her own lived experience as a woman on the spectrum who is now a valuable member of staff working closely with the Youth Advisory Council. The event was generously supported by Autism West sponsors.

In the Media

Autism West, our events and programs garnered considerable exposure throughout 2018, including:

- Robin Steward was a speaker for a [Talk Series](#) event hosted by Autism West
- Autism West [celebrates](#) its 10th birthday with a fundraising cocktail party and live auction
- Why parents of children with autism are opting for [home-schooling](#)
- Guest Opinion [Article](#) in the Medical Forum magazine on Strength and Diversity





Our Community

Autism West receives no Government operational funding, relying on community support to deliver its services

It is because of the grants, sponsorship and donations we received from our generous supporters in 2018 we have been allowed to:

- Launch more social groups in response to need
- Introduce employability skill development sessions into our social groups
- Continue to provide special interest projects in social groups
- Continue to grow our successful Telethon Holiday Makers Program
- Provide gainful employment to people with autism doing things they love, while providing inspirational role models to our young participants
- Facilitate a Youth as Participatory Action Researchers project mentored by our Youth Advisory Council into employment and careers

Our major supporters throughout the year were:

- Act-Belong-Commit
- Ashurst Foundation
- Autism CRC
- Azure Capital
- Carcione Foundation
- Community Broadcasting Foundation
- Department of Education – NGCS
- Flack Foundation
- Gerard Daniels
- Ian Potter Foundation
- Lake Karrinyup Golf Club
- Lotterywest
- Mr Murray Cox
- Rapenaro Family
- Sisters of Charity
- Tate Foundation
- Telethon
- VenuesWest

Our research partner is Curtin University.



Our Team

Autism West Team

The Autism West Team grew in 2018, and now includes:

- Louise Sheehy – Chief Executive Officer
- Mandy Orso – Financial and Family Liaison Officer
- Scott Sadler – IT and Document Controller
- Trudi-Anne Gribble – Service Compliance Officer
- Anthony Rendell – Service Officer
- Helene Hansen – Events Coordinator
- Chris Howarth – Grants Project Officer
- Ana Palacios – Projects Officer
- Sandyha Subramaniam – Projects Officer
- Olivia Costarella – Projects Officer

Autism West Board

The Autism West Board consists of:

- Silvana Gaglia (Chairperson)
- Mark Di Silvio (Treasurer)
- Nicole Kerr
- Stephen Morris
- Andrea Jones
- Rachael Watson
- Lois Keay-Smith
- Vicki Larkins

We thank you for your continued support and dedication to Autism West.

Autism West Ambassadors

We thank our wonderful Autism West Ambassadors:

- Michael Malone
- Professor Lyn Beazley
- Regina Ledo
- Christina Holly
- Wayne and Belinda Owston
- Scott Sadler



2017 - 2018 Financial Information

There was a decline in overall revenue of 17%, however Autism West continued its operational growth with service revenue delivering \$162,000, an increase of 48% from the previous financial year. Autism West is a quality organisation that has seen a significant uptake in its service offering again in 2018, Autism West has managed modest cost growth, primarily associated with the additional education programs. This year shows a net deficit from ordinary activities of \$73,870 compared to a net profit of \$96,125 in the previous year. The primary driver for this change is due to a lower revenue base of circa \$130,000 and a 5% cost base increase on the previous year. The majority of NFP organisations are consistently challenged in strengthening income from fundraising and Autism West is not immune to that challenge.

Operating Results

	2017-2018	2016-2017
Revenue	\$656,197	\$788,665
Expenses	\$730,067	\$692,540
Surplus/ Deficit	\$-73,870	\$96,125

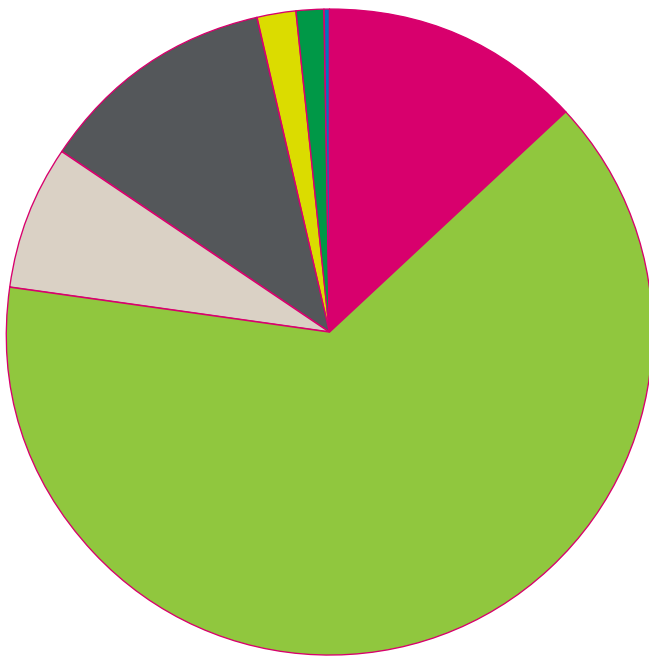
Working Capital

	2017-2018	2016-2017
Total Assets (Current and non-current)	\$472,213	\$510,865
Total Liabilities	\$92,058	\$56,840
Equity	\$380,155	\$454,026



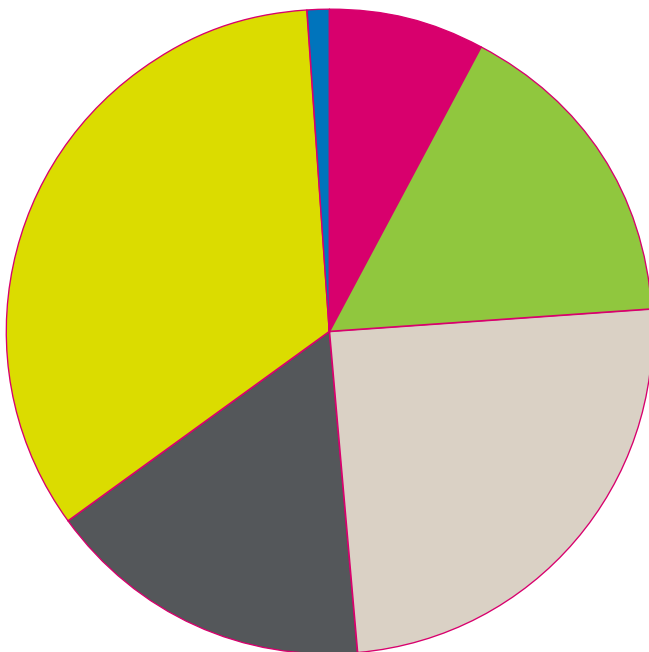
2017 - 2018 Financial Information

Expenses



- Office and Operating Expenses (13%)
\$95,936
- Employee Expense Benefits (64%)
\$468,257
- Fundraising Expenses (7%)
\$52,432
- Programs (12%)
\$87,751
- Depreciation (2%)
\$15,454
- Assets Written Off (1%)
\$9,023
- Finance Costs (0%)
\$820
- Other (0%)
\$394

Revenue



- Conferences and Seminars (8%)
\$51,775
- Donations (16%)
\$106,804
- Social Group Income (25%)
\$162,131
- Fundraising (16%)
\$105,909
- Grants Received (34%)
\$223,315
- Other (1%)
\$6,263



2018 - 2021 Strategic Plan

Autism West social groups continue to grow and alongside our commitment to taking direction from our participants, we are introducing opportunities for participants to learn life skills within groups. The Youth Advisory Council in its role as a vehicle to ensure the voice of the participants at organisational decisions has identified employment as a key area.

The development of these programs coupled with the strategic objective of creating a vibrant and visible community will see Autism West continue to grow its profile as an organisation committed to awareness raising for those living, working and employing our community throughout 2019.

2019 is also a period where Autism West will continue to review and improve operational processes to improve efficiencies around service delivery and customer service. Grant applications will focus on the continual development of the strengths based approach, now validated through research as well as targeting resources around Autism West's flagship fundraisers to ensure their enduring place in Western Australian not for profit calendar.





2018 - 2021 Strategic Plan

Vision, Mission and Strategy 2018 - 2021

Vision

A community where youth and young adults on the autism spectrum are celebrated, supported and empowered.

Mission

To deliver quality services and support to young Western Australians on the autism spectrum to enable them to engage successfully with others in the world around them.

Innovative, Quality Services

- Increase the number and locations of our social groups, and ensure groups at capacity, to assist more young people.
- Enhance social groups by incorporating life and work skills training and engaging activities into the groups.
- Continually improve services informed by regular feedback from participants and external evaluations.
- Meet all NDIS requirements to ensure young people can access Autism West social groups with government support.

Visible, Vibrant Community

- Build committed, qualified and valued team of staff and volunteers.
- Increase brand profile to drive growth and raise awareness about autism.
- Present world class conference to educate, inspire and connect families, educators and health professionals.
- Develop and maintain community partnerships to increase impact by leveraging off external resources and expertise.
- Provide representation and leadership opportunities to participants through the Youth Advisory Council.

Financially Sustainable

- Drive revenue growth across diverse sources of income.
- Develop and maintain a sustainable model of service delivery.
- Improve efficiencies through implementation of systems.



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Thank You.