



# autismWest

WE'RE BETTER TOGETHER

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019

*We see our community through a different lens where there is no box to think outside of....a world where diversity is so 'normal', it's unremarkable.*

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# ABOUT AUTISM WEST

***“Where others may ‘box’ or ‘label’ people on the spectrum, Autism West seeks equity of opportunity”***



Autism West is a bold, innovative Western Australian not-for-profit community organisation 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.

Together we engage, challenge, inform, develop and expand new skills and thinking – and create exciting opportunities for corporates and the community to join in.

We explore and celebrate people – loudly and proudly forging connections with family, community, workplaces and colleagues, tearing down social barriers for people on the spectrum.

Every partnership and donation helps Autism West open doors for people to explore and celebrate what is important to them.

# Autism West Services

Our vision is to help build a community where people with a range of interests, strengths and ambitions engage, interact and contribute at work, at home and socially. Autism West's service model aims to increase equity of opportunity by employing a strengths-based approach to autism and working to demonstrate the competence of our community through its social groups, training and awareness initiatives and events.



We operate social groups for young people with autism in four locations throughout the Perth metro area; Claremont, Fremantle, Marangaroo and Rockingham and delivered more than 16,000 hours of service delivered to participants. These groups create a supportive and engaging environment for individuals that are at risk and/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.

We coordinate the annual Autism West Symposium, the must-attend event for individuals on the autism spectrum, their family members, health professionals, educators, service providers, employers, researchers and anyone with an interest in autism. The Symposium brings lived experience together with business leaders, healthcare professionals and service providers to explore current challenges and opportunities for our community.

Our awareness training for stakeholders in our community such as corporates and educators, is co-presented by autistic adults and provides education on how to engage and work with neurodiverse individuals to achieve progress. This year saw awareness sessions delivered to over 1,500 members of our community directly.

# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Autism West's vision for a strengths based approach to working with our community continues to grow as we put into practise the principles of the National Disability Standards.

With the help of our supporters', a committed team and board, we have contributed in making positive changes to many young teenagers, adults and their family's lives. We have helped families transition into the NDIS, and understand how to get the outcomes they require.



This year we saw the development of educational resources that empower individuals with autism to understand what having autism means to them, so they can take greater ownership over their lives and decisions. We also developed employment readiness resources to enable individuals to understand their values, traits, challenges and strengths, and how they can be managed to achieve sustainable employment.

Great progress is being made as we continue to raise awareness of neurodiversity and the strengths and opportunities this offers, as society is moving away from a deficit, medical model of looking at autism. Autism West have been busy working towards this shift with all participants and their families. We are proud to report that 38% of our staff identify as neurodiverse and we intend for this to increase as we grow as an organisation. The contribution that diversity in our team has made is instrumental in creating Autism West as a community organisation committed to its vision of a strong, connected and diverse society. Not only do we advocate for it, we demonstrate it every day.

We are excited to launch - A Neurodiversity Online Audit Tool (NOAT) which has been developed and is available to all employers, in response to the need for a method to assess workplace readiness. This tool is a first step for employers to better understand how their workplace stack up, and can provide a guide to next steps, focusing on eight key aspects of building autism-friendly workplaces.

Through our social groups, services, research partnerships and community events, Autism West breaks down social barriers and works towards creating a world where autism is just part of our community's rich fabric. We look forward to next year. Together we will strive to make a difference to people's lives, as we continue to grow our groups, work with our councils, partners and our community to identify their ambitions and aspirations for a bright and happy future.

**Silvana Gaglia**

**Chairperson**

**December 2019**

# CEO REPORT

**Under the strategic direction of the Board, Autism West has laid strong foundations in establishing its training and education portfolio.**

Some of the highlights of 2019 were:

- The establishment of Autism West's 2<sup>nd</sup> council, the Autism West Women's Council, which saw the coming together of a large number of women representing the spectrum. Their work to date included submitting to WA's State Women's Plan, hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Autism West High Tea and researching peer mentoring.
- This year's Autism West Symposium saw the largest gathering yet for our flagship event which has become a regular opportunity for us to gather as a community and learn about latest developments in the field.
- Autism West delivered professional development to stakeholders working with and caring for our community. This included school students who learned about diversity and how it is OK to be different.
- Autism West delivered a two-hour workshop on executive functioning to educators in response to requests from the education sector.
- The Women's Council High Tea doubled in attendance and this year members of the Women's Council shared insights into their lives as autistic women.
- Two new social groups were opened in South Fremantle, bringing opportunities for more young people with autism as well as increasing revenue for the organisation.



I would like to thank the leadership skills of the Board, in particular, Chairperson Silvana Gaglia, who as always provides guidance and counsel as Autism West grows.

I 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. Our Advisory Councils have also demonstrated incredible commitment as they take an increasingly more active role in Autism West's evolution as a community organisation

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Louise Sheehy'.

**Louise Sheehy**  
**CEO**  
**December 2019**

## Autism West Key Performance Indicators

Revenue	\$680,006
Programs and services	16,000 service hours delivered to individuals
Enrolment Capacity	78%
Membership	5% Growth since 2018
Social Media Growth	Twitter: 5% Instagram: 17% Linked In: 45% Facebook: 20%
Training	1,500 + individuals attended awareness sessions

This year, we have been working on cementing our role as a community organisation to ensure Autism West has strong foundations with our participants and that they are at the heart of all decisions. We are strengthening the voice of our community. This will also be a key focus area for 2019 which will support the growing acknowledgement of the importance of their participation in research and work in autism.

Autism West is defined by the deliberate inclusion of the autistic community in all levels of decision making and I am excited to see where our journey will take us in 2020.



# HIGHLIGHTS

## WOMEN'S COUNCIL

The Women's Council was established in early 2019. The Women's Council focuses on empowering women through a strength-based approach by forming friendship and raising the profile of women. As a council of women, we are guided by respect, equality, and appreciating diversity. Our council aims to make a change for the better in how women are perceived and bring out the strengths within us.

In June, the Women's Council submitted a consultation report to the W.A. Department of Communities – Women's Interests regarding the department's 10 Year Women's Plan. In September the Women's Council held a successful High Tea, which was family orientated, at The Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club. The next project planned is for the Women's Council to mentor younger people.



## YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL



With the support of Autism West, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, our Youth Advisory Council (YAC) attended the fourth annual YACtivate Camp. This camp was hosted by the City of Busselton, at Camp Geographe giving our YAC an opportunity to meet up with other Youth Advisory Councils from across Western Australia. The Camp allowed our AWYAC to build a broader network with people from the other YAC's who have started contacting them to spread their autism awareness programs to other communities.

Since the end of last year, our YAC are being approached by schools to spread Autism Awareness during their assembly. During their assembly speeches, our council members talk about the notion that it is OK to be different. They also provide personal experiences that have inspired many students and captured the hearts of the staff in the school. Through the talk, council members emphasised on looking at strengths, ways to provide support and group selection in class. Our Youth Advisory Council would like to thank the following schools, Christ Church Grammar, Scotch College, St Patrick's Primary School, University of Western Australia, Fremantle Primary School and Curtin University for having given them this opportunity. This opportunity provided allowed them to recognise that they are making a difference and are an active team player in the society.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Autism West addressed the growing need for autism awareness training across many key stakeholder groups within the community. Autism West secured a grant to develop an autism awareness course for autistic individuals who have an interest in learning more about themselves and their community. As an employer that now has 38% employment representation of autistic individuals within our team, Autism West is committed to developing appropriate training for neurodiverse staff and volunteers.



Key stakeholders include educators, youth workers and disability support workers, as well as the corporate sector in response to the increasing interest in neurodiversity in the workforce and its benefits.

## NEURODIVERSITY IN EMPLOYMENT

**IS YOUR  
WORKPLACE**  
autismFriendly?

take the neurodiversity online assessment  
[www.autismwest.org.au/quiz/noat](http://www.autismwest.org.au/quiz/noat)



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TALENT SOLUTIONS

Neurodiversity in the workplace has been a fast emerging trend in industry as it drives innovation and creates a unique competitive advantage for organisations. Autism West seeks to work with businesses to leverage the strengths and talents of neurodiverse individuals through awareness education and specialised industry partnerships. The Neurodiversity Online Audit Tool (NOAT) was developed in response to the need for a method to assess workplace readiness and focuses on eight key aspects of building autism-friendly workplaces.

# FUNDRAISING

## TEAM SPRINT CUP

The Team Sprint Cup ran for its 11th year and was a great success. It was a wonderful community event enabling some of our supporters and some of our participants to interact in an afternoon of competition and fun.

## GIBB RIVER ROAD

*"It was certainly the toughest one yet; hottest, windiest, driest and bumpiest. The Gibb River Road reminded us of her venom with some of the most brutal sections of corrugation and thigh burning soft sands that we've seen for a decade. It was like The Gibb of old"* - Gibb River Organiser

While the Gibb is a challenge and not a race, put six guys in lycra together and try to stop them. Team Autism West exceeded all expectations and was placed in the top few teams each day, which gave them the all-important first pick of the camping sites. **In total our team raised \$91,405 for Autism West** which far surpassed our original target.

A huge thank you to everyone who donated and specifically our "Diamond Sponsor" **RJV**, our Gold and Silver Sponsors **Brown-Neaves Investment, Argonaut, Mak Water, the Bunning and Hovell families, the Carcione Foundation, Okeland Communities, Cooper Grace Ward, Botanix Pharmaceuticals, ACS Consulting, LWP, Robert Days, Sceales Lawyers**, and others who prefer to remain anonymous.



## WOMENS COUNCIL HIGH TEA



On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019, over 100 generous people attended our second annual High Tea to celebrate and support the work being done by the Autism West Women's Council. The attendees heard from a number of council members on their personal lived experiences and how they aim to make a difference for the next generation. A huge thank you to the Marketing Committee and the Women's Council for their huge efforts to make the day a memorable one, and that is was. Thank you to the community for your support for their work.

# OUR COMMUNITY

We actively seek to

- make a difference in the lives of more and more people in our community by expanding our reach;
- drive a cultural shift in how the wider community perceives autism through training and education in partnership with employers, government agencies, educational institutions and community groups; and
- seek partnerships with local and national research institutions to validate our service approaches and use evidence-based practice.



Through support, sponsorship and donations received from our generous community in 2019 we have been able to:

- launch more social groups in response to need;
- introduce autism awareness education courses for autistic individuals;
- impact student peers and students through our Advisory Council assembly addresses;
- continue to grow our successful Telethon Holiday Makers Program; and
- provide gainful employment to people with autism doing things they love while providing inspirational role models to our young participants. We now have 38% employment vertical representation throughout our organisation.

Our major supporters throughout the year were:

- Act-Belong-Commit
- Autism CRC
- Department of Communities
- Flack Foundation
- Harrier Talent Solutions
- Gerard Daniels
- Lake Karrinyup Country Club
- Lotterywest
- NDIA
- NGCS – Department of Education
- Okeland Communities
- Sisters of Charity Foundation
- Tate Foundation
- Telethon
- VenuesWest
- Wesfarmers

Our research partner is Curtin University

# OUR TEAM

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

- Louise Sheehy , Chief Executive Officer
- Trudi-Anne Gribble, Operations Manager
- Helene Hansen, Relationship and Events Manager
- Scott Sadler, IT and Document Controller
- Jarrad Chew, Office Administrator
- Philip Sheeden, Projects Officer
- Ana Palacios, Projects Officer
- Sandyha Subramaniam, Projects Officer
- Ella MacNish, Projects Officer
- Chris Howarth, Projects Officer

We are also fortunate to have an incredible team of casual staff facilitating our social groups, as well as an enthusiastic and committed team of volunteers and interns.

## **Our Board**

The Autism West Board consists of:

- Silvana Gaglia (Chairperson)
- Mark Di Silvio (Treasurer)
- Stephen Morris
- Victoria Larkins
- Rachael Watson
- Jacinta Reynolds
- Rikki Stewart
- Judi Block

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

## **Our Ambassadors**

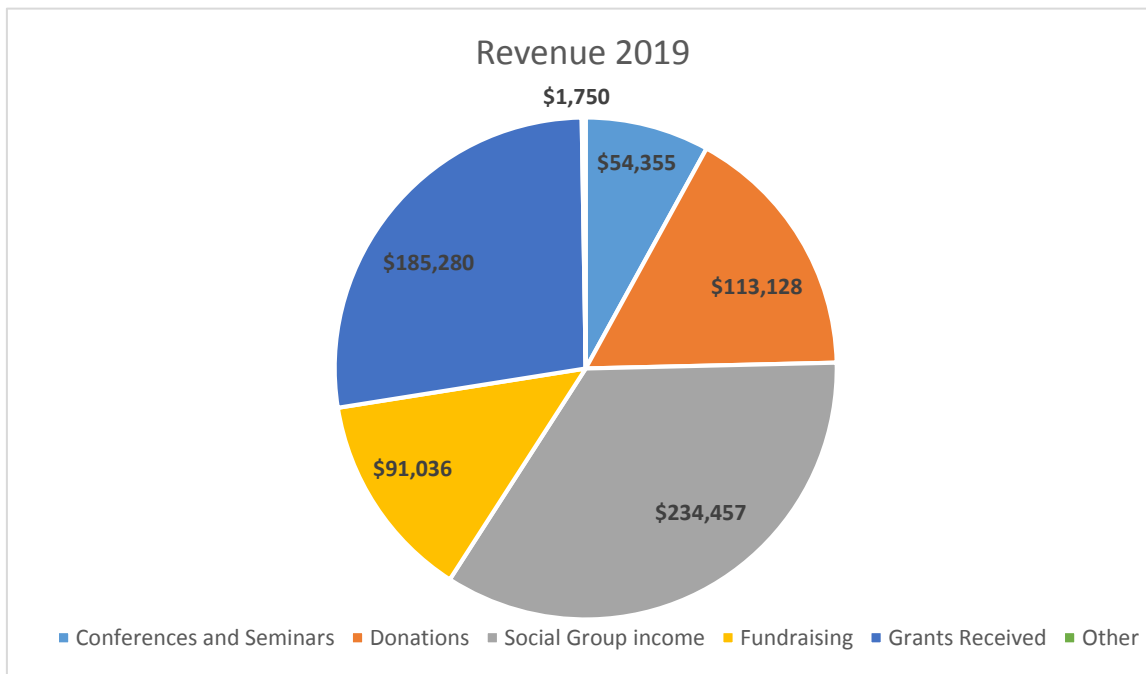
We thank our wonderful Autism West Ambassadors:

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

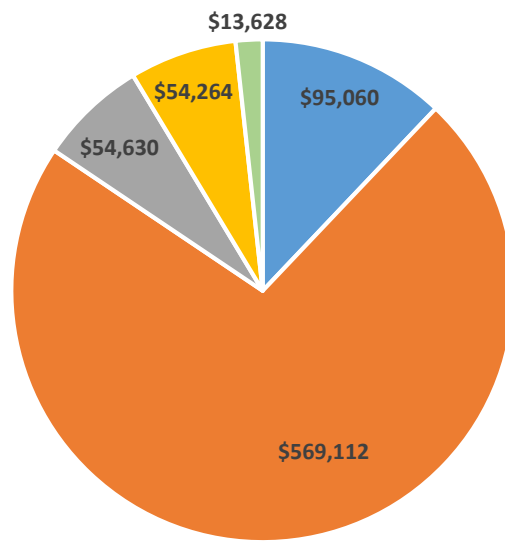
## 2018-2019 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The below data provides an overview of the revenue generated and expenses incurred for the 2018/19 financial year, resulting in a deficit of \$106,688.

Operating Results	2018-2019	2017-2018
Revenue	\$680,006	\$656,197
Expenses	\$786,694	\$730,067
Surplus/Deficit	-\$106,688	\$-73,870



### Expenses 2019



■ Office and Operating Expenses ■ Employee Expense Benefits ■ Fundraising Expenses ■ Programs ■ Other

Working Capital	2018-2019	2017-2018
Total Assets (Current and non-current)	\$535,419	\$472,213
Total Liabilities	\$261,952	\$92,058
Equity	\$273,467	\$380,155



# 2018 – 2020 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 and 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

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is an important, forward thinking policy, perhaps the most proactive for people living with disability in Australian society to date. Autism West is proud to be a registered NDIS provider. The NDIS has potential to realise equity of opportunity for diverse communities such as ours. Autism West is established in promoting the use of strengths and providing support for our community which reflects the principles of the National disability Standards which underpins the NDIS.

Our 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 Western Australia.

**We envisage a world where diversity is so ‘normal’, it’s unremarkable.**



#### Contact:

Louise Sheehy | Chief Executive Officer  
Phone 08 9431 2111 | 0404 999 653  
[lsheehy@autismwest.org.au](mailto:lsheehy@autismwest.org.au)

#### Autism West Support Inc.

2 Alma Street, Fremantle, WA 6160  
PO Box 255, South Fremantle WA 6162 | Phone 08 9431 2111  
[info@autismwest.org.au](mailto:info@autismwest.org.au) | [autismwest.org.au](http://autismwest.org.au) | ABN : 38 262 080 944