

2022-2026

Amaze

Strategic

Plan



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Introduction from Board Chair and CEO

We are delighted to bring you our Strategic Plan for 2022-2026. We see this strategy as an evolution, not a revolution, which builds upon the foundations of Amaze's 50-year history of supporting the autism community in Victoria. The current make-up of our staff and Board reflects that we are now more part of a community than ever before and this has informed where we target our efforts.



In developing this strategy we have crafted a new Vision and Mission to reflect and communicate our renewed focus and what we want to achieve. Autism is a lifelong condition and we are here for Autistic people at all ages and stages.

Our reputation is based on our well-respected work in policy, advocacy, advice and support principally in Victoria. However, whilst we have a Victorian history and Victorian base, we need a national voice and national influence to realise our Vision.

Amaze has very successfully elevated the issues facing the Autistic community with policy makers and the wider public and this strategy builds on the work that has been done to date, in particular the work to address awareness, attitudes and understanding.

There is, however, much more work to be done. Our ambitions are significant and reflect the aspirations of our community. We don't shy away from this. Our aim is to contribute to the change our community wishes to see and it will require collaboration with others to achieve the goals we have set.

Partnership is the key to achieving our ambitions. We recognize that we are stronger with a shared voice and that working together leads to greater shared success. We will highlight the successes of all partners and shine a light on the great work being done in the sector. We will also actively promote the work of organisations breaking new ground, developing new practice and making an impact.

We aim to model behaviours and approaches that we hope others will follow and to incubate programs and initiatives that others may deliver.

In working in partnership, we know that Amaze can bring a unique contribution to the sector and the sector landscape. We are proud that Amaze is seen as a valued resource for and supporter of the autism community and autism sector more broadly. Our national Autism Connect helpline provides information to others and means that we are connected to issues affecting the autism community around the country.

This five-year strategy is situated in the reality of our times, responding to and reflecting the impact of COVID and a sense of urgency in

our actions. Now is the time to create change. While areas of focus in the strategic priorities listed in this strategy are not dramatically different, we are changing the way we focus our efforts.

Driven by the idea that the strength of a community can be measured by how it supports its most disadvantaged members, we aim to take a social justice approach to best direct our resources and support those who need our support most.

Our work will continue to be informed by best research practice and evidence. However, it is more important than ever that we continue to improve measurement of our progress and outcomes to ensure we are creating the greatest impact for our efforts.



Professor Warren Bebbington,
Chair



Jim Mullan,
CEO

Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

An Australia that embraces Autistic people and their families living their best lives.

Our Mission

To create positive change with Autistic people and their families at all life stages by advocating, influencing, innovating, mobilising efforts and opening doors. This ambition will be realised by being a trusted source of information, advice and support and a willing partner in the development of new practice and approaches.

Our Values

We recognise that our mission and vision will not be achieved by working in isolation, we are of and for the community, we will always adopt a strengths-based approach to our work, we will maintain our independence and support the work of all partners. These are the standards to which Amaze will be held accountable.



Community Centric

We were born from the autism community over 50 years ago and our Board and staff are of and for the community. We are grounded in the reality of the community we are part of and support. Lived experience is valued and prioritised in our work. The voices of Autistic people and families are heard and inform our efforts.



Collaboration and Partnership

Amaze is committed to working with all partners and stakeholders to achieve our shared objectives. Our partnerships will be hallmarked by cooperation and collaboration in the development of policy and programs, recognition of the skills and expertise of others as well as trust and openness in the management of our relationships.



Constructive and Solutions Focused

We are change makers and will take a constructive and solution-focused attitude. Our approach is to seek common ground and work with others to offer practical solutions. We will be the voice of progress and reason. We will innovate and identify successes that can be built on by ourselves or others. We will promote the work of others that has a positive impact on and for our community.



Determination and Independence

We will maintain our independence and offer a unique contribution. We will have the fortitude to have direct and honest conversations. Where we believe improvements can be made, we will offer solutions and advocate for the needs of the autism community.



Evidence Informed and Outcomes Driven

Our work and decisions will be informed by the best available research, community and practice evidence. We advocate for measures to track outcomes for Autistic people to get a clearer picture of the situation and so there is greater accountability.



Strengths Based

We take a strengths-based rather than a deficit-based approach. We believe in demonstrating and promoting the contribution Autistic people can make, as well as the value of and benefits to society when Autistic people participate and are included.

Strategic Priorities

Our Strategic Priorities reflect the areas that we believe will have the greatest opportunity for impact for the community. Cross cutting these priorities are the ongoing supports we provide to all Autistic people and their families at all ages, including those parts of our community who have complex needs or who may experience multiple forms of challenges or disadvantage. Different parts of the community have differing needs and levels of engagement. We will take a social justice approach to ensure the greatest effort is focused on those with the greatest need.



Autism Assessment and Diagnosis

Having an autism diagnosis helps Autistic people to build self-understanding, identity, community connections and well-being. We want all Autistic people to have access to timely and affordable diagnosis. An accurate diagnosis enables adjustments to be put in place so Autistic people can do their best at school, at work and in life.

We will focus our work on:

- Increasing access to timely, affordable and accurate assessment and diagnosis
- Working with partners on innovations to build systems capability
- Advocacy to remove the age cap for Medicare rebates for autism assessment



Education and Training

A good education is the foundation for a good life. We want to see our early learning, schools, vocational and higher education sectors enabling Autistic people to thrive.

We will focus our work on:

- Informing and monitoring implementation of Victoria's autism education strategy and school disability inclusion reforms
- Improving autism inclusion in vocational education and training (in particular TAFE) as a major destination for many in our community and a critical pathway to employment
- Equipping our community with information and advice to enable self-advocacy in education systems



Employment

We know that Autistic people overwhelmingly want to work and are an asset to the Australian workforce. We want Autistic people's needs and value to be recognised and supported by government, employers and employment service providers.

We will focus our work on:

- Partnering with employers, employment service providers and governments to adopt an autism positive employment approach
- Connecting with other autism organisations to complement their existing efforts in autism employment
- Strengthening our systemic advocacy for policy settings that markedly improve employment outcomes for the autistic population



NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides life-changing supports. Ensuring it works well for Autistic people, the largest participant group in the NDIS (around a third), will deliver significant benefits to the Autistic and broader Australian community.

We will focus our work on:

- Keeping governments and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) informed about how the NDIS is working for our community and providing advice on improvements
- Equipping our community with information and advice to build confidence in accessing and navigating the NDIS
- Supporting those in our community experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage to access and use the Scheme



Health and Mental Health

Supporting the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the Autistic community is critical as it impacts upon every aspect of life. We consider health from a holistic standpoint, recognising that there are many social factors such as income, nutrition, housing, physical activity and social inclusion that influence health outcomes.

We will focus our work on:

- Promoting Autistic health and wellbeing through information, advice and connections
- Supporting health and community services to build autism accessibility
- Advocating for autism-informed mental health policy and programs, in particular the redesign of Victoria's mental health system following the Royal Commission into Mental Health.

Measuring our impact and outcomes

We want to contribute to real change and 'move the dial' in each of our Strategic Priority areas. To understand the difference we are making we need to measure what the impact is for the community.

Our aim is to integrate evaluation in all the work that we do. Ensuring every action we take, every project we roll out is having the intended consequences and that we learn from the results.

We know others' great work will also lead to changes, but we also want to learn from what we do, how we might do it better, and how we can effectively reach more people. With increased demand for our services, it is even more important we can measure and monitor impact and build transparency and honesty about our performance. We want to know and demonstrate that we are living up to our values.

One of the ways we will do this is through tracking outcomes for the Autistic community and broader community attitudes through our Autism Inclusion Monitor and community attitudes surveys.

Our goal is to deliver outcomes that create a positive future and picture of hope for all Autistic people and their families.

Amaze Inc.

678 Victoria Street,
Richmond VIC 3121

Phone: 03 9657 1600

Email: info@amaze.org.au

www.amaze.org.au

Autism Connect: 1300 308 699

 /AmazeAutismAU

 @AmazeAutismAU

 @AmazeAutism

 /AmazeAutism

