



Media Release

Disability Minister's office disappoints on autism

The response from Disability Minister Christian Porter MP's office on increasing autism diagnoses is very disappointing according to Bob Buckley, A4 Convenor. *Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia* or A4 is the national grass-roots advocacy group for autism spectrum disorder.

Recently, A4 obtained data from Government and [reported](#) that the number of children diagnoses with autism continues to increase at a significant rate, as it has for several decades. In June 2016, there were 73,166 (>2.4%) Australian children aged 5-15 years inclusive who had their formal autism diagnosis registered with the Commonwealth Government. For this age group, autism is now more common than intellectual disability.

This is a 9.4% increase in diagnosed cases in just 12 months from June 2015 to 2016.

But a spokesperson from the Minister's office dismissed concern about increasing autism diagnoses saying (see <http://a4.org.au/node/1342>)

... higher than expected proportion of NDIS participants with ASD reflected the fact that people currently being identified as having the condition were previously classified as having a different primary disability.

"Importantly, increases in the number of Australians being diagnosed with ASD ... do not equate to an increase in the number of people eligible for the NDIS," the spokesperson said.

Mr Buckley [wrote to the Minister](#) explaining that diagnostic substitution (where an autism diagnosis replaces another diagnosis) accounts for just part of the increase ... it is not a "fact" in all cases.

Apparently government is unconcerned that rising ASD diagnoses have a potential to increase the number of NDIS participants. While [government fails to recognise](#) ASD-specific needs and develop services and supports for autistic people, the real needs of the growing numbers of autistic people will not be met.

The cost of unmet disability services and support needs is high for autistic people and for the community as a whole.

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