



Media Release

Government rejects call to help autism

The Government rejected the latest call from the community to help people with autism, their families and carers in their efforts to inform and influence policy that affects them.

Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia (known as A4) wrote to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs asking for Government help for a national secretariat for people with autism spectrum disorders. Senator McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, wrote back saying “there are no funds available to support funding to additional peaks”.

Bob Buckley, A4’s Convenor, says “the cost of a national secretariat for autism spectrum disorders is quite modest. Surely the Government could include it in the next budget”.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported that autism was second highest burden of disease and injury for boys in 2003, and eighth highest for girls (4 times as many males are diagnosed with autism compare to females). The number of people diagnosed with autism has more than doubled since 2003. The Government must recognise there are enormous skill and capacity shortages in early intervention, education support, employment support and supported accommodation.

“The Government need to understand that autism is a major disability. The AIHW reports that 87% of people diagnosed with autism have severe or profound disability. The number of children with autism is growing rapidly: in 2010, FaHCSIA reported that over 1% of Australian children aged 5 years of age are now diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. The Government must recognise now that autism is a serious issue” he said.

The Government has a National Secretariat Program for disability that helps other disability groups contribute to government policy. The scheme even funds two distinct groups for people with hearing impairment.

Mr Buckley says “it is disappointing that people with autism are shut out yet again.”

“A4 has written back to the Government putting the case again and asking for explanations. Persistence is one of our best features” he said.

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Related documents are available at <http://a4.org.au/a4/node/317>