

**Subject:** RE: informing the National Autism Strategy - numbers update  
**From:** "Sukkar, Michael (MP)" <Michael.Sukkar.MP@aph.gov.au>  
**Date:** 10/07/2024, 10:20 am  
**To:** "Bob Buckley (Co-convenor)" <convenor@a4.org.au>

Dear Mr Buckley

Thank you for providing Mr Sukkar with the review and update, greatly appreciated.

Kind regards  
Vincent

**Vincent Sheehy**  
**Chief of Staff**  
**Office of The Hon Michael Sukkar MP**  
**Federal Member for Deakin**  
**Shadow Minister for Social Services**  
**Shadow Minister for the NDIS**  
**Shadow Minister for Housing**  
**Shadow Minister for Homelessness**

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**From:** Bob Buckley (Co-convenor) <convenor@a4.org.au>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 20, 2024 5:32 PM  
**To:** Sukkar, Michael (MP) <Michael.Sukkar.MP@aph.gov.au>  
**Subject:** informing the National Autism Strategy - numbers update

Dear The Hon Michael Sukkar MP  
Shadow Minister for Social Services  
Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Please find attached a short review that updates reporting of the number of autistic Australians. The National Autism Strategy, currently in development, needs to be properly informed about the size and scale of the challenge that it faces but too often outdated or inaccurate figures are used.

For example, planning for the NDIS grossly underestimated the number of autistic participants who would need support from the Scheme. The Productivity Commission expected that about 9% of NDIS participants would be autistic. In 2018, senior officials claimed that they would reduce autistic participants from 28% to just 20% of participants by the full roll-out of the Scheme. But the numbers did not drop as was expected/claimed by the senior NDIA officials; instead, the number of autistic NDIS participants continued to rise and were just under 36% (four times the initially expected rate) in December 2023.

Clearly, planning for the NDIS was wrong from the outset about the number of autistic

Australians needing the NDIS. The autism sector is very disappointed that the NDIS continue to discuss autism numbers as if its initial estimates were correct; the NDIS has so far failed/refused to recognise and address the serious errors in its initial estimates. The fundamental problem is the refusal of government and the NDIS to properly understand the autism sector and Autistic Australians.

The starting point for better understanding is recognising the scale of the challenge due to autism in our community. There is little prospect for an effective National Autism Strategy emerging unless officials substantially improve their awareness and understanding of autism as a distinct disability type in conjunction with its spectrum nature (which means it needs a spectrum of solutions).

Please contact A4 if you would like any clarification or to request further information.

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*Bob Buckley*

**Co-convenor**, Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia (A4)

website: <https://a4.org.au/>

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“The first step in solving any problem is recognising there is one.” Jeff Daniels as Will McEvoy in *The Newsroom*.