



The demand for and adequacy of Commonwealth, state and local government transition-to-study services

This short presentation is based on the La Trobe University Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC) response to the Senate Select Committee on Autism, Term of Reference E (pg. 10). You can find a full copy of the submission [here](#).

Transition from school to further study for autistic people

“When someone turns 18, they don't stop being autistic - autistic children become autistic adults and still need support?”
(Family of an autistic individual, SASLA community member)

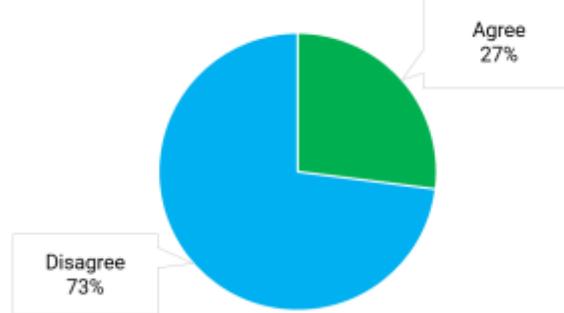
In Australia there is high demand for support for transitioning into further study after high school, with 77% of transition-aged autistic youth saying that they would have liked to receive support. However, there is little support available with only 28% saying they had received support ([SASLA](#) study).

Supporting transition to and participation in tertiary education for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

This study (funded by DHS Victoria) highlighted some of the issues with existing transition support. Focus groups of autistic students and their parents revealed that:

1. Students had difficulties choosing a course and lacked transition support
2. The social and educational needs of students were not adequately met
3. Students were not well prepared for higher education

Students' social needs were met in higher education?



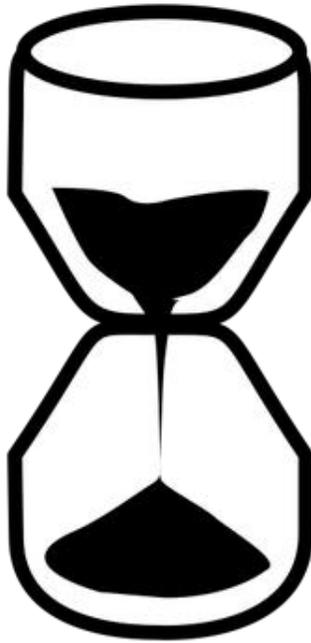
Tertiary education staff reported needing training and institutional support for working with autistic students.

Tertiary education staff and parent perspectives on the challenges of autistic students

“No matter how aware you are of autism, sometimes you can make the mistake yourself and think...damn, that's why his behaviour has changed, because you've ruined his or her routine... If you're not aware of autism...as a teacher, yeah you really can cause a lot of disruption to their lives and not be aware of it.”

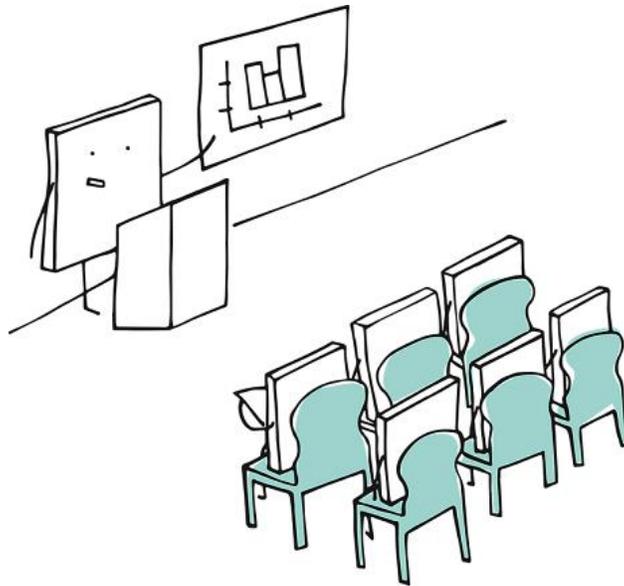


“The student was always anxious, always very literal. I said that I thought he should dictate the work to me and he was horrified and he said, “I would never presume to dictate to you.”



“My son was very poorly supported for the transition from high school to adult life and this was stressful for both of us. His mental health was severely impacted”

“In high school [my son] was depressed. It’s very important to have a counsellor to speak to. Family, even if they are close, it’s not enough.”



“It was made very clear at the start that he works to quite a rigid framework, that he needs structure. That became apparent in the first class when he advised me that at five past 10 it was five past 10 and I said there would be a break at 10 o’clock.”

The recommendations following on from this DHS study were:



1. There is a need for clarification of policies about disclosure of autism conditions on enrolment; balancing the need for privacy against the enhancement of support for affected students.
2. Standardisation of support availability for autistic students is required through the provision of guidelines for disability support staff and teaching staff in tertiary education.
3. Professional development in autism is required to increase the knowledge among both academic, support, and other staff about the characteristics of autism and associated learning and psychological disorders.
4. Resourcing for supporting autistic students in tertiary education institutions should be increased.
5. As far as possible, and while preserving the privacy of affected students, teaching staff should be made aware of students' disabilities to enable them to provide targeted support.
6. Support activities for autistic students should be based on assessment of individual needs, as these vary greatly from case to case.
7. In staffing Disability Support Units, notice should be taken of the particular nature of the support needs of autistic students.
8. Disability Support Units may require additional staff in order to provide for the specific needs of autistic students, including services such as orientation activities, social supports and mentoring.
9. There should be more extensive use of mentoring in supporting autistic students.
10. Support is needed at the secondary education level for students with disabilities as they prepare for transition to tertiary education.



Recommendations to the Select Committee

- *Equip services and develop supports to successfully transition autistic people from school into further education and employment.*
 - *Provide support for parents/carers of autistic youth transitioning from high school into further study and employment.*
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Acknowledgements

The Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre

The Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC) is Australia's first centre dedicated to autism research. It has a strong focus on research translation through the development of evidence-based tools, and collaborates with other autism research centres and institutes both in Australia and internationally.

OTARC is situated in the School of Psychology and Public Health within the College of Science, Health and Engineering (SHE) at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

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This presentation was created by [Alex Haschek](#).