



Mr Roger Law
Secretary
Action for Tasmanian Autistic Children

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Dear Mr Law

Thank you for your letter requesting the Labor Party's policy position, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Labor Party and encourage all candidates to also pass on their thoughts.

Autism Support

Labor is committed to continue providing a range of high quality integrated services for all children with Autism. The Government has delivered these services through programs run by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Education (DoE).

TASDAS

A Labor Government established the Tasmanian Autism Spectrum Diagnostic Assessment Service (TASDAS) in 2009. It is jointly funded by DoE and DHHS to conduct comprehensive autism diagnostic assessments for children up to 18 years of age across the state, working with complex and subtle presentations.

TASDAS in collaboration with paediatricians, psychiatrists, allied health professionals and educators contribute to providing a comprehensive diagnostic assessment and individualised recommendations for children and families.

The assessment process usually commences with a play based or social assessment and generally uses the Autism Diagnostic Assessment Schedule.

The service is committed to working in partnerships with families throughout the diagnostic process. Feedback from families about the service are extremely positive regarding the professionalism, pre-diagnostic support and process, diagnostic process and the services efficiency in confirming diagnostic results and receiving the diagnostic report.

This valuable service is funded at approximately \$400 000 per year.

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DHHS

People with Autism are eligible to access services through the specialist disability service system. Last year 479 clients with a primary disability type of Autism accessed specialist disability services.

The Labor Government has funded St Giles in the North and the South of the state to provide therapy services for children 0 to 18. In the North-West this service is provided by the Tasmanian Health Organisation- NW

We believe the accepted approach is to provide individualised programs designed to suit individual needs. Therapeutic services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder including behaviour programs are integrated and delivered as part of a continuum of childhood services working in partnership with families and listening to their needs.

Services typically provided to people with autism through Disability and Community Services range from the provision of centre-based and in-home respite for people with autism and their families, accommodation and day support services, therapy services, local area coordination through the Gateway Services and intervention through the Disability Assessment and Advisory Team.

People with autism also access individual support packages (ISPs). These recurrent packages of personal support are tailored to meet the needs of people and their primary carers.

Disability and Community Services also provides training and support for staff to assist with the management of challenging behaviour for young people with Autism. The model of behaviour intervention used is based on the work of the Institute of Applied Behaviour Analysis.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services with DHHS provide some assistance with therapeutic intervention for children with ASD where there are associated mental health issues.

Autism Tasmania

Labor believes in the importance of working collaboratively with the Community Sector to provide support and vital services to individuals and families. Therefore we fund Autism Tasmania \$203 632 per annum for the provision of information and referral services

Autism Tasmania is funded as a statewide Information and Referral Service to provide accessible information to people with disability, their carers and families and related professionals. This service promotes the development of community awareness.

The funded activities include:

- providing information to families, consumers, community groups, professionals, employers and carers about Autism Spectrum Disorder via trained educators, libraries, information booklets, articles and newsletters

- providing activities and group programs that provide information on Autism Spectrum Disorder
- providing information about Autism Spectrum Disorder and its management to the general public and to the medical and para-medical professional community in order to foster understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder and of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and
- promote community awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder issues and awareness relevant services for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Education

Labor is committed to an inclusive and equitable education for all students based on the belief that every learner is able to learn, develop and be successful. We are committed to the provision of a quality state education that gives high priority to identifying and addressing individual learning needs and has the capacity for flexible use of resources, structures and processes to enable the appropriate response to those individual learning needs.

We do not have a separate policy for students with autism spectrum disorder just as we do not have a separate policy for students with Down Syndrome, vision or hearing impairment, or any other disability.

Michael Ferguson has stated that the Liberals "will review all the definitions for disability and how to best provide supports". A state review at this stage would be a pointless waste of money when we are already moving towards a nationally consistent approach to identifying and funding students with disability. The nationally consistent collection of data for students with disabilities will ensure that schools in all jurisdictions are using the same definitions and processed to identify and record students with disabilities.

Once the national review is complete, we will be better placed to consider any changes that might need to be made at a state level in relation to educational provision for students with disability.

Thank you again for your correspondence.

Yours sincerely



Lara Giddings MP
Premier