

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

2 April 2024

### **Revised autism guidelines will reduce access**

The Australian Association of Psychologists (AAPi) is extremely disappointed that following a review, the Autism CRC guidelines largely remain unchanged, restricting lead diagnosis to only three Areas of Practice Endorsement in psychology.

AAPi Executive Director Tegan Carrison said the restriction would reduce access and health equity, a fact already acknowledged by Autism CRC.

“Psychologists who have adequate training, supervision, and experience in assessing autism should be able to provide these lead clinician diagnoses,” she said.

“Restricting diagnosis to those with only clinical psychology, clinical neuropsychology, or educational and developmental psychology Areas of Practice Endorsement is not appropriate when there are so many psychologists who have advanced qualifications, experience and appropriate training to perform these kinds of assessments.”

Ms Carrison said AAPi would continue to call for change in this area to challenge ongoing misperceptions about the competencies of psychologists.

“Autism CRC has created more barriers for clients of psychologists with these guidelines. It means the autistic community will be restricted in accessing affordable diagnostic services and treatment.”

AAPi Director and psychologist Carly Dober said best practice stated that psychologists are experts in mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions - so all psychologists should be able to provide an autism diagnosis.

“It appears psychologists have been deliberately excluded in these guidelines, and the NDIS has made no progress in acknowledging them,” she said.

“In addition, early intervention is crucial in order to give autistic children the best chance of living full lives and teaching them skills from a young age, so early NDIS packages should be considered best practice.”

### **About AAPi**

*AAPi is a not-for-profit peak body for psychologists that aims to preserve the rich diversity of psychological practice in Australia. Formed in 2010 by a group of passionate grassroots psychologists, AAPi's primary goal is to address inequality in the profession and represent all psychologists and their clients equally to government and funding bodies. Its primary mission is to lobby for equitable access for the Australian public to professional psychological services such as Medicare Better Access Scheme and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.*

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