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A Message from The Chair

As Autism Camp Australia approaches its fifth year of operations, the organisation is well resourced to expand current offerings in line with ACA's mission to create a better future for Autistic young people and their families.

Since my appointment to the role of Chairperson at ACA in June, I have heard a lot of wonderful feedback about the camps, the team and what a difference ACA makes to the families and young people that attend the camps. I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who makes this possible, whether you are a member, a family who attends camps or are a part of the ACA team. In particular I would like to recognise our CEO/Founder Rachel Rowe who is the heart and soul of ACA and pours a tremendous amount of energy and passion into the organisation, as well as Neil McBride our Operations Director who drives ACA forward on a day-to-day basis.

I have had very specific areas of focus for the organisation - ACA's financial health and the rejuvenation of our Board.

Financially, ACA has not been immune to the challenges created by changes in the broader economic climate but we have responded well. Our financial processes are sound, and a strategic review of systems and operations, in our consolidating year, has enabled fine-tuning across all departments and streamlined the way we work, enabling us to work even more efficiently going forward. This year we have invested in developing alternative revenue streams to help smooth out the unpredictability of grant and donation revenue in the current climate. Foremost amongst these is the world leading Autism & Neurodiversity MasterClass, which we believe will drive a sustainable sales revenue as well as being an excellent vehicle for improving the lives of Autistic people through broader education of the community. New programs for teens and young adults and early childhood are in development and a new camp location in our fourth State, Western Australia, is now underway.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of those who have financially contributed to ACA this year. Especially The Ingrained Foundation, the Federal Department of Social Security, Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, Anthony Costa Foundation, June Canavan Foundation, the Commonwealth Bank, the Foundation for Regional & Rural Renewal, Stan Perron Charitable Trust, Equity Trustees Wealth Services Ltd, Joblink Plus and the many individual donors who supported us this year. My confidence in our financial health is also high because of the skills of the new directors who have joined the ACA Board and who are actively looking at diversifying revenue sources.

Which brings me to my second area of focus - rejuvenating the Board. I'd like to thank the Directors who left during this financial year; Shelly Rowell who was Chair for three years finishing in December 2022 who made an extraordinary contribution in ACA's foundational years, Joe Sheeran the previous Chair to myself, and Directors Steve Reid, Sarah Kelly, Christina Keeble and Cherie Kelly. In replenishing our Board, CEO Rachel Rowe and I strategically reviewed the skills needed for the next stage of growth. An exciting new cohort of Directors have joined, all of whom are passionate about the work of ACA. I was lucky enough to experience this passion and enthusiasm at our 2023/2024 strategic planning weekend.

With such a robust Board and Executive team ACA can now focus on the growth of services and making a real difference in the lives of Autistic young people and their families.

Patrick McQuad
Chairperson
Autism Camp Australia



A Message from the CEO

The 2022/2023 financial year was a year for consolidating, reflecting, fine tuning, investing in the long term sustainability of the charity and preparing for our next stage of growth. So, of course we kicked it off with a world record attempt!

Simon Duke, and a team of dedicated trail blazers, harnessed their passion of ultramarathon running and tackled a 1200km ultrarun, securing a new world record and raising \$35,000 for ACA. The aim of the event was not only to raise much needed funds for ACA, but also to engage our Autistic community in mini events that encourage, inspire and unite. Our little mini record breakers showed off their talents from speed rubix cubing to blowing the biggest bubble gum bubble, raising another \$2000 for the charity.

We carried this record-breaking spirit into the first serious task of our year, at our ACA Board of Directors Strategic Planning Weekend in August 2022, focused on drilling down into our Constitution and the Objects of the charity to review our Purpose, the Theory of Change behind our work and reflect on lessons learnt during the first three years. Our reflecting established some key learnings including:

- ACA's innovative model didn't fit with some traditional funding criteria, so there was still a lot of advocacy work to be done on a State and Federal level to catch government departments up in their understanding of the social model of disability;
- The broad lack of understanding around Autism meant we were having to educate on the run – putting us at a competitive disadvantage but presenting an opportunity for product development around education;
- That despite these handicaps, our programs were extremely well supported and the potential for growth both in Australia and internationally was strong; and
- Our evaluation model was highly effective and was tracking extremely high outcomes for our programs against our program logic.

These lessons, along with a refresh of our Purpose and Objects then fed into a full operational systems review at HQ and across all three States, fine tuning processes to enable us to ramp up plans for expansion into a fourth State, WA. We consolidated and grew our middle management and invested in our infrastructure to set us up for significant future growth.

A highly competitive fundraising climate and indicators that we needed to do some turnaround in our fundraising income approach, informed a restructuring of our non-camp income stream. Excitingly, groundwork done in our very first year of trading was invigorated and developed into our world leading Autism and Neurodiversity MasterClass e-learning platform. The platform was recognised as a highly marketable product for global release and we invested in the final stage of development required to launch the platform in October 2023.

This year we've seen a growth in assets, a growth in beneficiaries, growth in the infrastructure of the organisation and we've invested our surplus in the development of new income streams for launch in 23/24, diversified to reduce risk and enable future international expansion.

In December 2022 we said goodbye to our longstanding Chair, Shelly Rowell, without whom it is unlikely we would have survived a global pandemic in the formative months and years as a new charity. The Chair position was held by Board member Joe Sheeran during the first part of 2023, and we welcomed incoming Director and Chair from June 2023, Patrick McQuaid. Shelly's steady hand along with ACA's Board of Directors, and the generous support of our funders, collaborators and supporters has ensured our steady growth.

2023/2024 will see a shift in leadership as I take off my CEO Australia cap and bring my focus to an exciting new role as Executive Director, Global Business Development. Operations Director Neil McBride will take up the role of CEO Australia from Jan 1st 2024. Our fifth year is looking likely to be a big one, with strong support and growth strategies, and, as always, many new exciting plans in the pipeline.

Rachel

Rachel Rowe
Chief Executive Officer/Founder
Autism Camp Australia

Spreading The Word

2022/2023 was the year to share the good news about Autism Camp Australia's work far and wide.

Swinburne University of Technology Volunteer Expo, Melbourne, Victoria

In August 2022 our super trooper VIC State Manager, Sandy flew the ACA flag mighty high at Melbourne's Swinburne University of Technology Volunteer Expo. The event was designed to allow organisations to share opportunities with students wanting to develop new skills and gain professional experience, as well as discover industries they may not have considered before. It was a perfect opportunity to meet with enthusiastic students interested in taking part in the volunteer program which we run at each camp.

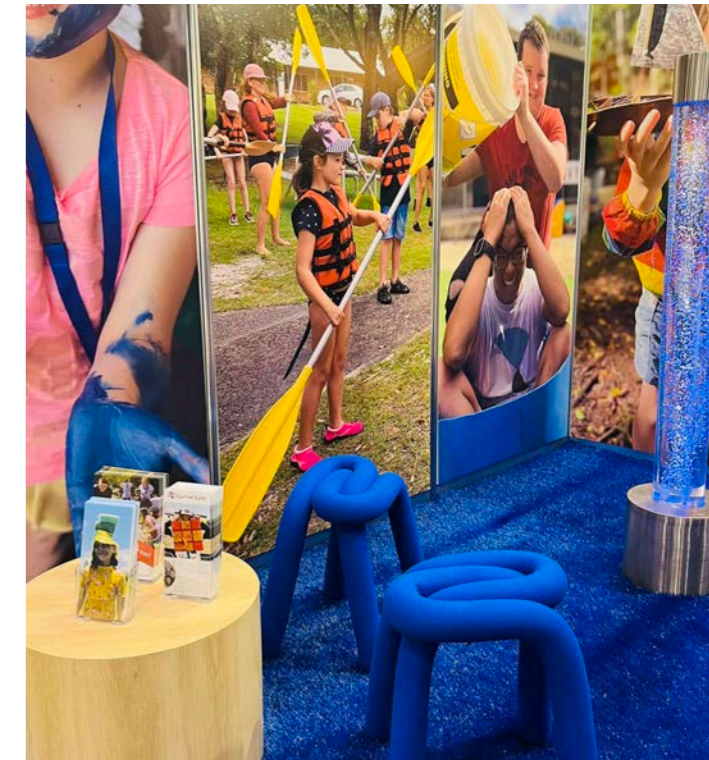
Our volunteer program supports students to expand on their current skill set, build professional development and specialised knowledge around Autism and Neurodiversity from our experienced camp management and Carer teams, as well as from the children and families who attend our camps. The volunteer positions at our camps fulfill placement requirements associated with their qualifications in social and youth work, allied health, health and disability support.

Source Kids Disability Expo, Perth, Western Australia

NSW Camp Leader Helene, QLD Co-Lead Carer Jo and CEO Rachel took ACA to the Source Kids Disability Expo at the Perth Convention Centre in Western Australia, to spread the news about our new fourth State location opening in Perth in June 2023. The expo showcases over 130 disability product and service providers under one roof for two days with all sorts of providers supporting families of children with a range of disabilities. We met with hundreds of families who were super excited about us bringing our camps to Western Australia in 2023. Much to our delight Autism Camp Australia was also awarded best medium size stand in show!

Spectrum Space Symposium, Perth, Western Australia

As part of our awareness campaign in Western Australia, local Perth ACA Board Member Ursula and NSW Camp Leader Helene were honoured to fly the ACA flag high at the Spectrum Space Symposium in the heart of the beautiful city of Perth. The event is for Autistic individuals, their family members, health professionals, educators, service providers, students, researchers and anyone with an interest in Autism. It brings the Autism community together to listen, learn and network, as well as meet with many key service providers like ACA, and we enjoyed meeting even more families and local organisations and talking to them about our camps.



How Camp Affects Families

Since November 2019 we have supported the following participants

896
Autistic Young Persons Program

411
Siblings Program

1186
Parents Program

195
Siblings outside of programs

A total of
2688
people supported

Autistic Young People

91%
agree taking part in the Autistic young person Program helped them feel calmer and happier



82%
made lots of friends on the Autistic young person Program



83%
feel better able to tackle day-to-day challenges after attending camp




87%
agree the new stuff they learnt made them feel more confident and more able to stick up for themselves at school, home and in the community



90%
feel strong, fit and full of beans




91%
feel like grown-ups listened to them



Siblings

93%
agree taking part in the Siblings Program helped them feel calmer and happier



90%
made lots of friends on the Sibling Program



77%
feel better able to support their Autistic sibling(s)



95%
had a break from looking after their Autistic sibling(s)



71%
agree the Siblings Program helped them to understand their siblings' disability



At each camp participants are requested to complete an evaluation survey. The above results are based on the quantitative data collected over the past 4 years.

Parents

89%
agree the self-care day activities helped them achieve improved capacity and resilience in emotional and behavioural functioning



82%
agree they achieved improved social and practical skills to enable them to function better day-to-day



90%
achieved a boost to confidence, self-esteem, mental and physical health and increased resilience



96%
achieved rest and recovery and temporary relief from caregiving leading to a greater ability to maintain informal supports of their Autistic young person(s)



87%
reduced their social isolation and enhanced their social networks




New South Wales Camps

“There is nothing more fulfilling than witnessing the ‘ahhhhh’ moment for families who attend our camps. Whether they are first timers or seasoned campers every family is able to experience the feeling of letting go and immersing themselves in camp culture. Our carefully curated program allows for families to create strong bonds with other families, for all children both Autistic and allistic to forge friendships and for the whole family to regroup, learn a little and laugh a lot. Our HQ and camp teams are so dedicated to making it a memorable experience, no one camp is ever the same but at every camp something magical happens.”

Helene Thompson, Camp Leader, NSW

This year was the year we settled in properly to Midginbil Eco Resort. The stunning natural setting in the foothills of the majestic Wollumbin volcano and Koonyum Ranges in the Byron/Tweed hinterland of Northern NSW, provided an exquisite backdrop for our nature-based camps. The large barn area, outdoor spaces, free-flowing creek, farm animals, and the opportunity for the children to connect with Country all helped create a unique and memorable experience. It's fair to say, we are loving our wild and rugged NSW camp home!

Our stellar team continues to be ably led by State Manager Jodie, who manages all aspects of the camp team, program and facilitators. Helene - Camp Leader, Bonnie and Kimberly – Co-Lead Carers, and Emma – Sibling Lead have formed a consistent onsite crew over the last few years, and their combined passion for their roles is evident in all that they do. They bring a wealth of knowledge and insight to the team and ensure smooth running of the camp, each and every day.

Lisa stepped out of the NSW Enrolments Manager role, and after a short break, stepped into QLD, Enrolments Manager. We welcomed Klio back into the NSW Enrolments role. Their thorough preparations ensured a smooth transition for our camp families. The tireless and comprehensive support of families, behind-the-scenes, makes our Enrolments Managers one of the most critical roles at ACA, and an integral part of each camp's success so a massive shout out to these two extraordinary women, as well as all our other ACA Enrolments team members.

As with all ACA's teams, there is a very natural synergy between team members. The communication between Carers is clear and supportive and they each share their accumulated knowledge and skill set with other team members, working as a cohesive group to support the young people and families who attend our camps.

Of course, no camp would be complete without our vollies! Our big bountiful site enabled us to host a fantastic selection of volunteers from across the State this year, many earning their stripes to become fully fledged ACA team members.

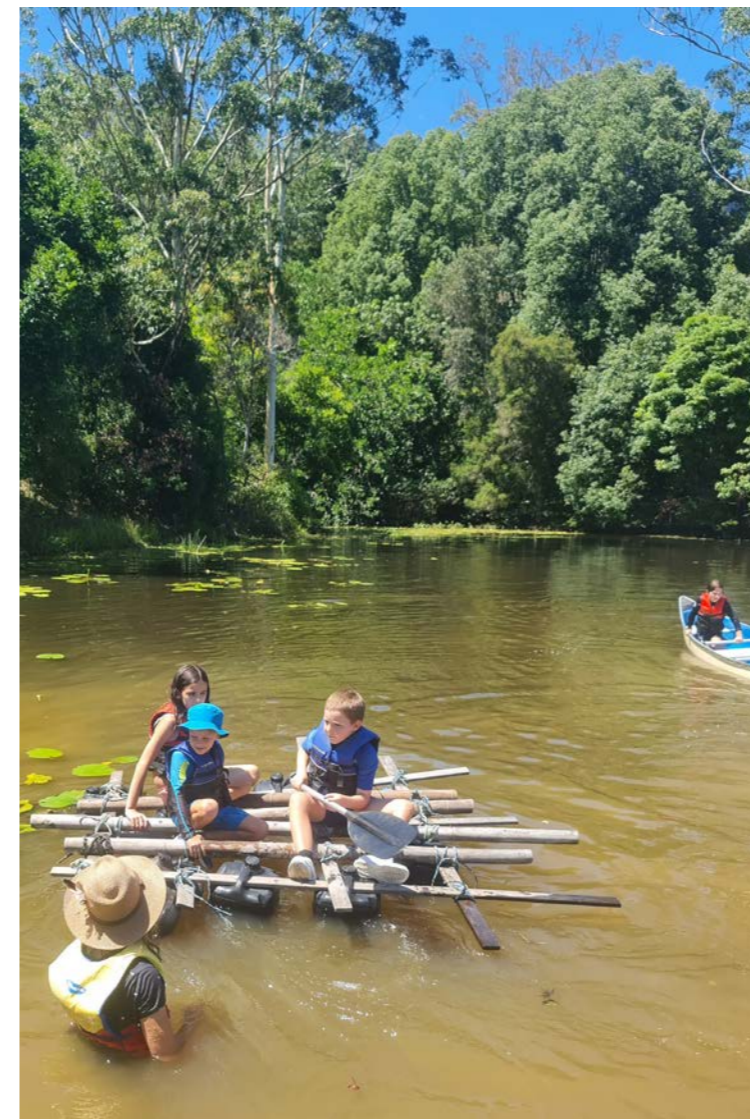
New and returning families enjoyed the extraordinary and expansive views at our site, staking out favourite vantage points from the deck of the old homestead. Steeped in history, the communal facilities of our site make mealtimes a breeze and a great space to engage socially, with families taking a break from cooking and enjoying the buffet style catering. There have been some incredible connections occurring throughout the family groups.

Santa - aka State Manager Jodie - went rogue and made a tip top entry by motorbike this year, to the delight and squeals of the families. Ned nailed David Bowie's back catalogue at the last night fiesta, Nick built a lego airplane in less than 10 minutes, and David secured top spot for the team hosting the Carer pizza night at the Barn. They're a talented lot, this lot.

Times of change are ahead in 23/24 for the NSW team, so the gorgeous shot of Emma, Helene, Kimberley and Bonnie (pages 16-17) was definitely going to make the cut for this year's NSW team report. What an outstanding contribution from them all.

“This experience is life changing, our family has been challenged to try new things and believe in ourselves so fiercely. The staff and Carers at ACA are genuinely invested in the success of our Autistic small humans and the families who support them. We leave here today stronger as a unit hopefully for our future and readying to try and book our next camp. Thank you ACA.”

Kayte Luscombe, parent



“The camp is such a supporting, loving and nurturing experience for the entire family. The friendships and connections made here are heartfelt and genuine, the staff and Carers are beyond amazing. Never in our lives have we experienced such a sense of love and support. The benefits of attending camp last a lifetime just like the memories we hold dear. ACA worked with our children to expand their social world and skills development in ways we couldn't dream of achieving otherwise.”

David Lund, parent

“The genuine care and attention shown by the entire team were truly inspiring. The passion and professionalism displayed by everyone involved made it an unforgettable experience.

The families I had the pleasure of interacting with left a lasting impact on me. Witnessing their strength, resilience, and unwavering love for their children touched my heart deeply. The camp’s inclusive and empowering atmosphere fostered an incredible sense of community and belonging. It was truly heartwarming to see the positive impact our collective efforts had on the Autistic young people and their families. I returned home after my first camp filled with joy, energy, and a renewed sense of purpose. The experience reaffirmed my vocation to serve and support Autistic young people.”

Olivia Parenti,
Volunteer and then Carer, NSW



“This is our second camp with ACA and if I had to describe it in one word I’d call it a ‘success!’ My Autistic child is able to grow and socialise in a safe and fun environment which helps him develop new skills. As a parent it is a relaxed pace, you choose the activities to suit your needs and you can relate with many of the other families. Thanks again ACA!”

Gabrielle Koles, parent



“The proof is in the pudding! The kids want to come again and are sad to leave.”

Ping Pun, parent





Queensland Camps

The past year has been an eventful and transformative period for our State team, marked by significant personal and professional milestones, team expansions, and the introduction of innovative programs. Our commitment to providing a nurturing and neuro-affirming environment for all Autistic young people remained steadfast, while embracing change and growth within our team.

The year commenced with Co-Lead Carer Bec welcoming a new member to her family, a joyous moment that was followed by her transition into a role within our HQ team. Our Western Australian wonder Jo came on board as Co-Lead Carer in training for the launch of our new WA location, bringing her own unique strengths and perspectives to the team. We said farewell to Laura, another Co-Lead Carer, towards the end of the year, and excitedly welcomed Nina to the leadership team, whose fresh ideas and dedication continue to enrich our camps. Rach P moved on to new opportunities, and Lisa slipped easily from NSW Enrolments into the Qld Enrolments Manager role.

The Carer team expanded throughout the year. We welcomed new Carers from diverse backgrounds, including those from our valued volunteer program. This infusion of fresh talent and perspectives has been instrumental in furthering our mission and deepening our impact within the Autistic community.

In an effort to further enhance the services offered to our Autistic young people at camp, we welcomed the dynamic team from Sally Cuthbert Art Therapy. Their exceptional contributions during camps have been invaluable, fostering a creative and therapeutic space for all participants.

A highlight of the year was the opening of the \$1.5 million 'Aerial Adventures' high ropes course at our camp location - the Sunshine Coast Recreation Centre. We'd all been waiting so long for it to open, and it didn't disappoint. This activity supported our Autistic young people, siblings and even some Carers to push through their fear of heights and challenge themselves on the 16-metre-high course. The impact was profound, and we witnessed participants progress from initial hesitation with safety harnesses to conquering the challenging course. Notably, our very own 'Spider-Man' (Carer Ash in full costume!) is a regular surprise appearance to the course, adding an element of fun and excitement to the experience. One Autistic young person still believes they actually met Spider-Man!

Somewhere in amongst all of that Harry turned 21 at camp and his Autistic young person had his birthday on the very same day, we spotted whales breaching close to shore during beach games, Wyatt found five four-leaf clovers in one day and we attempted to break the record for the biggest bubble gum bubble and Alec blew a bubble bigger than his head!

In the midst of these accomplishments and changes, the most rewarding part remains the impact on the families we serve. As one participant aptly expressed, the joy of watching families bond, share contact information, and plan future camp reunions encapsulates the essence of our camps.

The year has been a testament to our team's resilience, adaptability, and unwavering dedication to fostering a supportive and inclusive space for all. As we reflect on the past year's accomplishments, we look forward to further growth, innovative developments, and the continued impact we strive to make in the lives of the young people we support.

"The confidence boost camp gives our children is massive. They get to do so many things that as a family we wouldn't be able to do. Each camp they make many friends and they absolutely love camp."

Monique Hamann, parent

"One of the many remarkable aspects of being a part of ACA is the opportunity to belong to an incredibly inclusive and supportive team. Whether collaborating with the HQ team, spread across the nation, or contributing to the camp team at any of our sites, it's genuinely inspiring to witness and be embraced by such a welcoming and supportive approach."

Neil McBride, State Manager, QLD





"I would recommend this camp to anyone and everyone. The confidence, resilience and growth it builds is truly amazing in such a short period of time. Seeing my son smile again and get back the spark inside him was amazing. I am truly grateful for you helping him see the good in himself again."

Melissa Giuliani, parent



"ACA is a safe and supportive camp where kids have tons of fun and make lasting friendships while meeting personal goals. I'm honoured to be a part of this life changing organisation!"

Marcie Millerick, Co-Lead Carer, QLD



"A highlight for me is the remarkable dynamics within our team. The staff's enthusiasm, creativity, and dedication create an incredibly interesting and vibrant work environment.

Their collaborative spirit significantly contributes to our overall success. Their diverse professional and personal lives, along with their neurodivergent lived experience, bring a level of care and support to each other, the Autistic young persons and the families. The team crafts a unique ambiance, fostering joy, warmth, and support throughout every camp. The inspiration from spending time together lingers well beyond the camp's conclusion, leaving a lasting and positive impact for everyone involved."

Neil McBride, State Manager, QLD



"Camp has been a life-changing experience for our family and we can't wait to come back!"

Megan Illmer, parent





Victoria Camps

“The camp was amazing. It created a safe community for my daughter to be herself and her brothers to feel they were important too. I found friends who understand and truly get it. I want to come back to all of them! Every family should go to at least one camp – you won’t regret it.”

Christina Chambers, parent

Despite being a relatively new location, the Victorian leadership team has remained largely intact since launch until recently, when Sandy, the State Manager, moved into a HQ role and Tina Martin picked up where Sandy left off in May 2023 and Alisha departing as Enrolments Manager at the end of the summer.

It’s been a year of ACA babies - Bronte, our Camp Leader, expanded her family with not one but two new littlies and waved farewell to the team. Bec, previously Co-Lead Carer in Queensland, joined us in January 2023 after having her third child, and two of longest serving Carers, Jess and Brandon moved north to have their first baby! Our Co-Lead Carers, Jessie and Nick, and Sibling Lead Millie held it all together for us as we navigated the changes.

Our first winter camps were a massive success, including a magical experience for ACA’s largest camp so far with 13 families and 19 Autistic young people! Marshmallows by the fire and evening sand dune walks by torch light were a hit and welcome distraction from the chilly nights.

The sun was shining again by the time our September camps came around. Lovely evenings on the beach with families enjoying the sunsets and each other’s company. The volleyball net, basketball hoop and famous Gaga pit remained firm favourites and were put through their paces.

Christmas featured big in the December camps, with a first sighting of Santa - aka Co-Lead Carer Nick - who has also been known to turn up as his alter ego Batman! The Victoria final night dance party solidified its reputation as the hottest ticket in town with next level dress ups, dance offs, performances, requests and always the nut bush or macarena!

Interstate Carers from NSW and QLD joined the team during our Summer and Spring camps as part of ACA’s Interstate Carer Professional Development Program. It was wonderful to welcome Carers from other camps and for them to experience a different location.

A new Equine Partner joining our program in April - the lovely Josie from Paddock Talk and Andrea from The Horses Heartbeat, and a new offsite sessions at the stunning Paddock Talk property in Wallington. Andy and her team from Makai Yoga Collective continued to provide incredible self-care sessions for the parents and guardians in their own private teepee’s. Natasha Lane joined the parents workshop program with a very popular session on Neuro-affirming Nutrition. Nikki Karapeles introduced another refresher for the parent program with her supportive session on Self Judgement to Self-Compassion, Becoming your own Champion.

If there’s one thing this team really knows how to do it’s have a giggle, whatever the weather. Amongst this year’s antics Funda, Jessie and Beth got completely buried in the sand by Dash and Toby, Alissa was painted green from head to toe, Megan blocked out any type of sensory overload to have straw stuffed inside her clothes, and the whole Carer team became experts at passing infinite slime around daily de-brief meetings! Such is their commitment to the cause!



“A highlight for me during camp is undoubtedly the final night party, when we invite all of our beautiful families to close an epic week by joining our team on the D floor! On the surface it’s nothing more than music and a costume box, but the magic of witnessing a brand new community be together and celebrate each other is hard to describe. Everyone feels safe and free to be who they are. It’s a moment truly earned and it feels phenomenal. For me, this is ACA in a nutshell.”

Nick, Co-Lead Carer, VIC

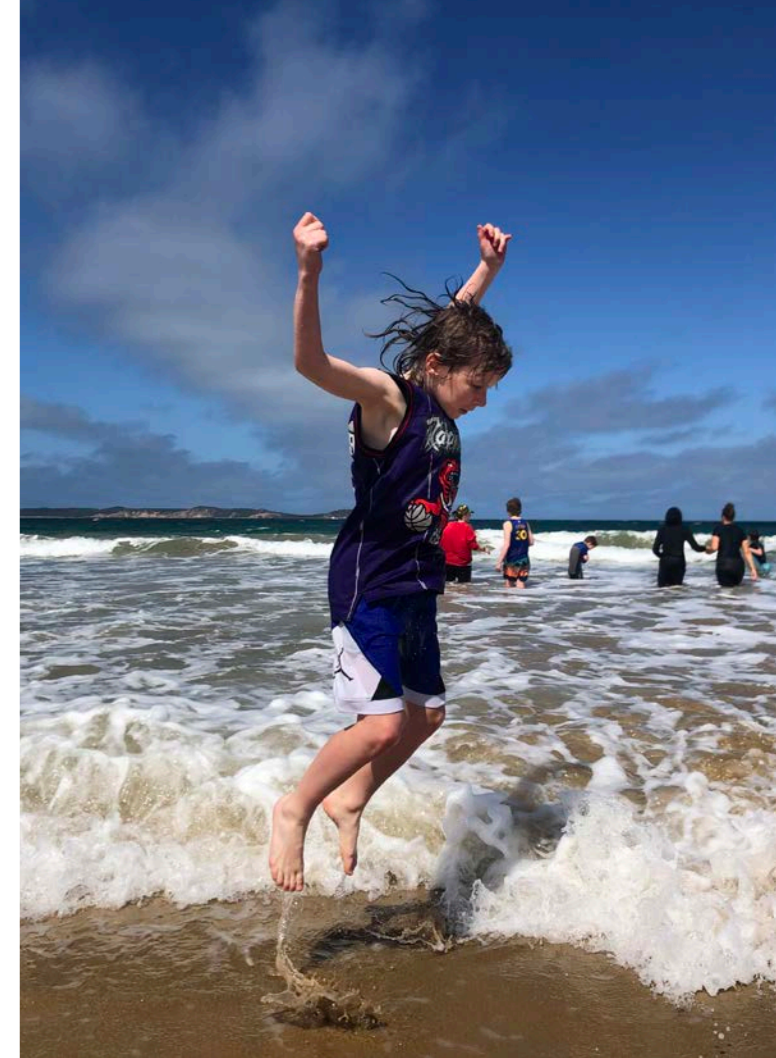
“There are so many elements that create the magic that is Autism Camp Australia - from our team members to the incredible suppliers and providers we partner with. All of these amazing, generous and inspiring people contribute to creating an environment where Autistic young people and their families thrive. I am so grateful and proud to be able to work at ACA.”

Sandy Palmer, State Manager, VIC



“Autism Camp Australia’s camp was the most beneficial program our family has ever done, not only supporting our Autistic daughter but her brother and us, as parents. We all grew from the experience and feel better equipped to deal with life’s challenges. We met a lot of other parents who were friendly and supportive and willing to share info and experiences which is something that is priceless. We feel so grateful to have been able to attend the camp.”

Elizabeth Coventry, parent



“We approached our first camp with a combination of excitement and trepidation. As primary carer and advocate, handing over the reins was difficult. As it turns out we had nothing to worry about. Over the 5 days of camp I watched my lonely/anxious little man form a beautiful bond with his amazing/compassionate carer and form new bonds and friendships with kids that ‘got him’. As a mum all I want is to see my son happy, thriving and accepted. I have watched him experience all of these things at camp. I can’t begin to find the right words to thank this amazing team for such an impactful experience. We are both heading home feeling seen, heard, validated and understood. We cannot wait for our next camp and the adventures that await us!”

Emily McMullan, parent



“We feel like the luckiest family in Australia every time we go on Autism Camp. My daughter has blossomed over the four camps we’ve been on. She’s built her confidence, tried new experiences and met new friends.”

Simone Ryan, parent





Western Australia Camps

“This has been an amazing opportunity not only for our young one, but her siblings as well. The activities provided on the program helped with creating lasting bonding friendships, social connections and pushing boundaries within a safe secure environment. The program has also supported my personal growth - I now have the tools to better enable me to guide, understand and advocate for my children.”

Virginnia Gilham, parent

2022-2023 was the year we launched our fourth State in Western Australia, setting up and welcoming local and interstate families to our first winter Perth camp. It had been nearly 9 months of preparations to find our accommodation partner, camp management team, Carers, providers and suppliers, but what a welcome we were able to give to our WA camp families! Conveniently located 20 minutes from Perth's CBD, our WA camp is perched above the tranquil, sapphire Swan River, set amongst the Point Walter reserve and showcases uninterrupted views of the Perth City skyline.

The Swan River is approximately 170 metres from the centre and hosts our paddling and raft building programs. The natural sandbar allows participants to venture a fair distance from the shore and still be in a safe and accessible environment. It really does tick all the boxes!

We leaned into this natural beauty and built a program that offers our Autistic Young People and Siblings lots of opportunities to be in nature, engaging in activities in the native bushland, along the riverbank and on the beautiful grounds of our camp. Reflecting on the significance the site has to the local Whadjuk Noongar Aboriginal people, we also included Noongar weaving and storytelling into the program. Our workshop providers were also carefully picked, offering parents and guardians genuine insight and support that comes from having a personal connection to Autism and neurodivergence.

New and veteran ACA staff helped form the WA Team. State Manager Annie Brooks, Enrolments Manager (and camp mum!), Emma Whiteley and Sibling Leader, Zak Robertson, were joined by experienced new location manager Sandy Palmer, Jo Cook (trained in our Victoria and Queensland camps but a born and bred Margaret River local) and David Weale (New South Wales) as the two Co-Lead Carers. With Sandy's enthusiasm and dedication setting the tone, the Camp Team bonded quickly and stepped up to support each other. A diverse team, hired under the guidance of CEO Rachel Rowe, all offered different lived and working experiences and knowledge that was openly and kindly shared.

Our first WA camp was a success and we really couldn't have hoped for it to go any better! Although a wet camp, most of the rain held off to the evenings so our programmed activities could continue with gusto. One exception was during hut building when the Autistic Young People were making waterproof shelters, but in this case it simply became a test of how waterproof the shelters actually were! We received fantastic feedback from each family in attendance and had the absolute honour of watching our Autistic Young People flourish and budding friendships develop between families over the week. Seeing families share contact details at the end of camp was the cherry on top!



“Our sixth camp! It really is such a great place.”

Donna Edsall, parent



“After months of hard work behind the scenes, it was truly magical seeing the first WA camp launch into action. I had heard the stories – the transformational nature of ACA camps, but never did I expect to see an example of this, first-hand at our first ever camp. It was so powerful witnessing an uncertain and isolated Autistic Young Person at the start of camp, transform into someone bursting with enthusiasm and joy, giving anything and everything a go with the support of incredibly patient and kind Carers. What an absolute honour for a brand new State Manager, which I will never forget.”

Annie Brooks, State Manager, WA



“Being the Sibling Leader, my absolute highlight would have to be seeing the siblings let their hair down and just be kids for a couple of days. Often the burden can be heavy on them at home but at camp they get to be themselves around other young people in a similar position to them.”

Zak Robertson, Sibling Leader, WA



“It is so refreshing to be surrounded by like-minded people. Not having to mask but being heard and seen and understood. Great friendships have been made.”

Rachael McKay, parent



“I had a powerful moment of realisation walking down to breakfast on the first morning of the first WA camp in July. Here I was, overlooking the breathtaking view of Perth and the Swan River from our amazing new camp venue. My dream of bringing the ACA experience to WA was actually happening! I’m feeling so privileged and proud of our team and the unique family camp experience we’re providing. Here’s to more WA families being able to join us in the future.”

Jo Cook, Co-Lead Carer, WA





Randell's Record Breakers

In July, our tip-top Randell's Record Breakers fundraising campaign, involving the most awesome bunch of everyday people attempting to break all sorts of records - was an outstanding success. Randell's Record Breakers aim was not only to raise much needed funds to allow young Autistic people and their families to access the services provided by Autism Camp Australia, but also to engage our Autistic community in mini events that encourage, inspire and unite. To show that records are there for the breaking and that goals, no matter the height, can be achieved. And boy, did you do yourselves proud.

Who is Randell and what was it all about?

We all have a passion for something. It could be gaming, music, collecting rocks, maybe you're passionate about the environment or activities like surfing or gardening?

For Simon Duke and a bunch of dedicated trail blazers, their passion is ultramarathon running! (that's running a VERY long way). Earlier this year Simon, Marcus, Roo and Dan approached Autism Camp Australia. They had been training for the Heysen Trail- an ultrarun that covers a distance of 1200km on Australia's longest marked walking trail. And they didn't just want to complete it, they wanted to set a new fastest known time! Driving their passion was the desire to honour their friend running compadre Randell Taylor, who was tragically killed in a cycling accident in November 2021. Randell was a larger-than-life figure who was passionate about his dearly loved family including his Autistic son. And that's where we came in. Simon and the team decided that the best way to honour Randell and his family, would be to dedicate their record-breaking attempt to Randell with the aim of raising money for Autism Camp Australia.

Setting a new world record

Setting a NEW fastest known time on the Heysen Trail in the South Australian outback is no mean feat. Imagine running back-to-back ultra marathons for almost two weeks AND climbing the heights worth of not one but TWO Mt Everest's on the trail! Simon, Marcus, Roo and Dan set a new world record on the Heysen Trail, and raised \$35,000 for ACA!





Our Mini Record Breakers

Randell's Record Breakers fundraiser was all about giving it a go, reaching for the stars and achieving something not just on a personal level but somewhere much deeper. Just like our incredible four runners. And of course, Randell's Record Breakers was not just about the Heysen Trail record breaking attempt. We were blown away by the awesome record breaking attempts all our mini record breakers took on. Our whopping fundraising campaign included nearly \$2000 raised by our mini-record breakers. Here's just a few of the highlights.

Wesley and his mum jet set across the country raising funds in support of Randell's Record Breakers. Wes is a super talented speed cube champion. While some of us would be lucky to even complete a rubix cube Wes here can do 2x2 in 7 sec and 3x3 in 34 sec! You can see his incredible abilities at this recent speed cube comp - his happy face is just priceless.

Nedd and Leonie immersed themselves in nature making a record number of magical wands and wreaths and selling them at local markets on their Big Little Trip of Australia this year. Both Nedd and Leonie are loud and proud Autistic superstars and they love hanging in nature - rivers, oceans or climbing mountains so their challenge is a win win! Seen here with the rest of their awesome fambam on their Big Little Trip.

Bridget's world record attempt was to blow the biggest gum bubble. Her bubble started small but quickly grew! The families and carers at our Sunshine Coast camp also got an opportunity to attempt this record, where we saw some amazing efforts!

The ACA NSW June Camp Siblings team gave it their all in an attempt to smash the current crate stack record. There was much laughter, shrieking, tumbling and flying through the air, until they eventually reached the reigning record number of 13 crates! And along the way they proved that flying can be just as much, if not more, fun than the climbing! They also learnt that perseverance and showing is half the battle, and just how much you can achieve when you work together.

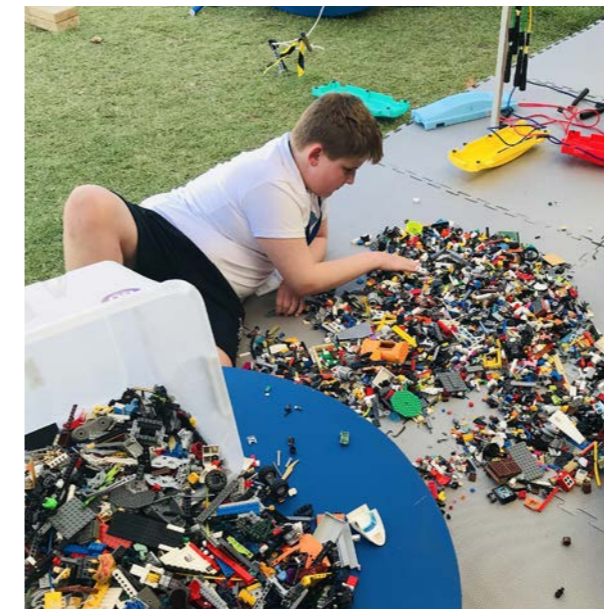


Watch Wesley's video
[youtube.com/shorts/BevclufjyN4](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/BevclufjyN4)

What were the funds spent on?

The money raised from Randell's Record Breakers enabled ACA to buy much of the equipment needed for a Rock & Roll Space at our new Western Australia location. The Rock & Roll space is an important part of the camp facilities. The Space helps Autistic young people to inhibit and/or modulate sensory information, using sensory and proprioceptive tools. Autistic young people are empowered by testing tactile, vestibular, and proprioceptive sensory stimulation in a safe environment - supporting self-reliance, independence, social connection and community inclusion. Parents/carers and siblings are equipped to support Autistic young people at home and in mainstream environments. The Rock & Roll Space creates awareness and educates about sensory needs, facilitating increased health literacy.

A massive thank you to all the donors who contributed to Randell's Record Breakers.





Auditor's Report

We have audited the financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Autism Camp Australia Limited, comprising the statement of financial position and statement of changes in equity as at 30 June 2023, statement of profit & loss and other comprehensive income and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the financial report of Autism Camp Australia Limited has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, including:

- giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its performance for the year ended on that date; and
- complying with Australian Accounting Standards defined in note 2 to the financial statements, and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the entity in accordance with the independence requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

NFPAS

Adelaide, 26 September, 2023

Treasurer's Report

I am delighted to share that Autism Camp Australia ('ACA') has navigated through 2023 in a stable financial position, benefiting from the easing of COVID-19 restrictions across Australia. Despite constraints, CEO Rachel Rowe and the team have skilfully managed to both maintain and expand on operations during the pandemic, ensuring that costs are controlled and that camps have run seamlessly, bringing joy and invaluable experiences to our participants once again.

The accounts have been audited and the auditor's report is attached with a detailed statement of profit and loss and other comprehensive income, and statement of financial position. Noting that there are no qualified or unqualified opinions of the auditor in respect to the same.

The 2023 financial year has been a successful year for ACA with another year of continued growth. Total income of \$2,969,171 was received in the 2023 financial year. Compared to 2022 year, this is an increase in revenue of \$ 1,030,298 (+53%) and is predominately due to an increase in revenue from the NDIS as the number of families attending camps increases, representing 77% of this growth over the period.

The total expenditure for the year was \$3,207,435 an increase compared to last year of \$1,174,491. The largest contributors to this movement were direct camp costs which increased by \$717,346 and salaries & wages which increased by \$322,699. The increases are driven by the volume in camp attendance necessitating higher direct camp costs and salary & wages relating to the same. The expense represents around 108% of total revenue this year, with last year being 105% of total revenue. Overall, a net deficit of \$237,264 was achieved.

The Balance Sheet is showing a more modest position, with net assets of \$9,284; down from \$247,548, consisting of total assets of \$641,794 and a total liability of \$632,510. The total assets of \$641,794 includes \$372,929 in cash and cash equivalents. The total liability of \$632,510 includes trade & other payables of \$275,791 and other liabilities comprised of deferred revenues and other liabilities of \$316,837. This position is not unexpected given the growth experienced during the 2023 financial year and significant investment in new programs and products launching in 2023/2024, including expansion into our fourth state; Western Australia, opening in early July, and the design and build of the world leading Autism & Neurodiversity MasterClass e-learning platform, launching in October.

ACA has prepared and maintains a detailed budget which is provided to all board members. This budget was further refined and updated during the 2023 year and predicts an increase in turnover during the year ended 30 June 2024.



Jakob WK Gray
Treasurer
Autism Camp Australia

Statement of Comprehensive Income

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Camp Income	2,533,402	1,738,340
Grant Income	365,696	155,653
Donations	40,885	13,553
COVID Government Assistance	1,249	18,070
Other Income	27,939	13,257
TOTAL INCOME	2,969,171	1,938,873
EXPENDITURE		
Direct Camp Costs	1,923,902	1,206,556
Other Expenses	350,664	219,244
Salaries & Wages	917,600	594,901
Depreciation	15,269	12,243
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	3,207,435	2,032,944
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	(238,264)	(94,071)
Other Comprehensive Income	-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	(238,264)	(94,071)

Statement of Financial Position

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash & Cash Equivalents	372,929	600,677
Trade & Other Receivables	112,798	163,782
Inventory	20,200	11,739
Prepaid Expenses & Deposits Paid	93,986	14,548
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	599,913	790,746
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, Plant & Equipment	41,881	43,286
TOTAL ASSETS	641,794	834,032
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade & Other Payables	275,791	186,042
Annual Leave Provision	39,882	34,136
Deferred Income	316,837	366,306
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	632,510	586,484
TOTAL LIABILITIES	632,510	586,484
NET ASSETS	9,284	247,548
EQUITY	9,284	247,548

Statement of Cash Flows

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from Customers & Donors	2,505,065	1,694,147
Receipts from Grants	464,373	278,319
Receipts from Government Assistance	1,249	18,070
Payments to Suppliers & Employees	(3,184,570)	(1,817,880)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	(213,883)	172,656
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Acquisition of Property, Plant & Equipment	(13,865)	(33,859)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES	(13,865)	(33,859)
NET (DECREASE)/INCREASE IN CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS	(227,748)	138,797
CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR	600,677	461,880
CASH & CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE YEAR	372,929	600,677



Funding Partners

Autism Camp Australia would not be the successful organisation it is today without our partners, allies and supporters. It has been deeply satisfying in our fourth year to continue to be acknowledged and supported by our Federal Government, partners, philanthropists and corporates, and we sincerely thank them for their generosity and ongoing support.



Team ACA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson
Shelly Rowell
Joseph Sheeran
Patrick McQuaid

Vice Chairperson
Travis Saunders

Treasurer
Sarah Kelly

Secretary
Ursula Stevens

Board Members

Annie Crowe
Cherie Kelly
Christina Keeble
Hailey Rivera
Ruth Durrant
Steve Reid

**Board Member/
Founder**
Rachel Rowe

**HQ TEAM
CEO**
Rachel Rowe

**Executive Assistant
to CEO**
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Neil McBride

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Michelle McQuaid

Graphic Design
EnoughTomFoolery

**Autism &
Neurodiversity
MasterClass Build
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Kory Sherland
Lydia Zahra
Sohni Ali
Sonny Jane Wise

**CAMP TEAMS
State Managers**

Annie Brooks
Jodie Rees
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Sandy Palmer
Tina Martin

Enrolment Managers

Alisha Fowler
Emma Whiteley
Klio Norris
Lisa Evans
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Camp Leaders

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Brandon Vanee
David Weale
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Jo Cook
Kimberly Sowers
Laura Dodds
Nicholas Butler
Nina McElhone
Rebecca Stanley

Sibling Leads

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Emma Kane
Emma Rankin
Millie Ashton
Sarah El Hassan
Zak Robertson
Agata Dobrzynska
Alec Purdon
Alexis Leonhardt
Alissa Holmes
Alix Basham
Amanda McGrath
Amber Smith
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David Weale
Deb Ireland
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Di Tatlock
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Madieson O'Mara

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Alix Basham
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Anneke De Graaf
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Sarah Warner
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Sienna Dyett
Slaviana McClaren
Sophie Logan
Tara Hogan
Teagan Menhenett
Vanessa van der Mast
Yan Yacong
Zachary Monaghan

Thank You

Thank you to all the wonderful people who have contributed to Autism Camp Australia's success this year.

On behalf of the whole team, we would like to thank the Autistic young people, and their families, who continued to put their faith in us and seek out our services during these difficult Covid times. We are truly humbled to share these experiences with you.

It has been deeply satisfying in our fourth year to continue to be acknowledged and supported by our Federal Government, partners, philanthropists and corporates, and we sincerely thank them for their generosity and ongoing support.

Anthony Costa Foundation
Commonwealth Bank
The Department of Social Security
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Joblink Plus
June Canavan Foundations
Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation
Stan Perron Charitable Trust
Keeley's Cause
Safe on Social

We also acknowledge the generosity of individual donors

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Aaron Dyk
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Adric Callaghan
AJ Wood
Alex Haig
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Alex Sahhar
Alex Schulkin
Alexander Lee
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Amanda Bethell
Andi Doerr
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Andrew Edwards
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Todd Kenny
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Tom Porter
Tony Shuman
Tristan Avella-O'Brien
Tyson Morris
Vilma Hysenaj
William Loughron
Wubishet Murphy

We especially want to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the ACA camp teams, whose energy and enthusiasm for the work they do is integral to the service we offer. Their knowledge, skill, joy, patience and enthusiasm for what they do is second to none.

Finally, our sincere thanks to Shelly Rowell and the ACA Board of Director's, in guiding our vision and strategy. ACA's Board bring a broad knowledge base and experience which has been integral to the success of the charity.

ACA was launched to fill a critical gap in services to Autistic young people and their families. At camp, we celebrate neurodiversity, embrace difference and nurture individuality. We want our young people to develop confidence and independence, increase their social connection and develop new and lasting friendships. We recognise neurodiversity as a way of thinking that supports our young people to grow into confident and happy adults and celebrate our Autistic community.

Something you all clearly appreciate.

Thank you.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There are several ways you can get involved with Autism Camp Australia

- **Give a donation**
- **Sign up for workplace giving**
- **Leave a gift in your Will**
- **Major Gifts and Philanthropy**

Your donation gives Autism Camp Australia financial stability, enabling us to focus on developing experiential camp programs in new locations, extending our reach across Australia. You can help us create authentic inclusive camp experiences for families of Autistic young people all around Australia.

Autism Camp Australia Ltd is registered as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) so all donations are considered tax-deductible.

If you would like to make a donation to Autism Camp Australia please contact Sandy Palmer, Grants and Partnerships Manager on 0447 157 769



Autism Camp Australia respectfully acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation, the traditional custodians and guardians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders past, present and future on all these lands, but especially on Wadawurrung, Gubbi Gubbi and Widjabul Country, the lands on which our camps take place.

AutismCampAustralia.org

+61 2 6684 9304

Registered Address:

Unit 5, 1 Sands Street, Tweed Heads, NSW 2485

Australia

