



Neurodevelopmental and Behavioural
Paediatric Society of Australasia

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MEDIA RELEASE

National Guideline for the Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Australia

Over 10,000 children under 12 years of age were newly diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder across Australia in 2015. Paediatricians assessed and diagnosed 97 per cent of these children.

The Neurodevelopmental and Behavioural Paediatric Society of Australasia (NBPSA) comprises a majority of paediatricians with specialist clinical expertise in neurodevelopmental and behavioural concerns in children and young adults. As key experts in this field, the NBPSA supports continued efforts to improve consistency in neurodevelopmental and behavioural assessment for children.

“The new National Guideline is a great first step as it describes a process to follow in order to understand the level of functioning, care needs and potential diagnoses for an individual with neurodevelopmental and behavioural challenges.” said Associate Professor Gehan Roberts, President of the NBPSA.

“To maximise the effectiveness of the Guideline it will now be important that clinicians have the right level of knowledge and understanding for implementation, and agreement is reached on the criteria for access to support services being used by NDIS planners and by funders across health, education and disability services.” Professor Roberts said.

The New Guideline:

- Emphasises the need to undertake any assessment of Autism concerns within the context of a broader neurodevelopmental and behavioural assessment.
- Supports a more consistent approach to neurodevelopmental and behavioural assessment.
- Supports assessment of neurodevelopmental and behavioural problems on the basis of fairness, equity, and respect for individual needs and variations as well as a strengths-based approach and partnerships with the individual, parents, and other professionals.
- Clarifies that functional and care needs of a child, not a diagnosis, should be the primary determining factor for gaining access to support services.

It is important that further action is now taken to ensure the Guidelines can achieve real benefits for children and young people.

The Society is keen to contribute to achieving these benefits and to supporting an implementation evaluation strategy that will build evidence on the effectiveness of the Guideline. This will be essential given that the Guideline is informed by consensus-based recommendations, rather than empirical evidence.

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