



Disability Access and Inclusion Plan - Annexure 1

Autism Strategy Action Plan



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians of the lands and waters across Australia and acknowledge that the work undertaken to develop this plan was completed on the lands of the Kurna people, with input from and for the benefit of all people across the many Aboriginal Countries across South Australia.

We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise their deep spiritual connection to Country and the cultural authority that they bring.

We also acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability experience additional and intersecting barriers to access and inclusion and are an important priority group in the development and implementation of this plan.

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Annexure 1

SA Autism Strategy Action Plan: Department for Education

The SA Autism Strategy 2024-2029 (Strategy) is a strategic document that supports inclusion of Autistic people, and their families and carers in South Australia. As part of the Strategy, the Autism Strategy Action Plan (Action Plan) outlines the steps the South Australian Government will take to fulfill the commitments of the Strategy.

The Department for Education plays a critical role in shaping inclusive learning environments that enable Autistic and neurodivergent children and young people to thrive across early childhood, school and lifelong learning settings. Through this Action Plan, the department reaffirms its commitment to strengthening inclusive practices, building workforce capability, partnering with Autistic people, families and carers, and embedding strengths-based, person-centred approaches across our public education system.

This plan outlines all actions published in the Action Plan that are assigned to all South Australian Government agencies and those specifically allocated to the Department for Education, reflecting the department's commitment to implementing all 45 assigned actions.

Although the Strategy includes 7 focus areas, the Department for Education has commitments in the first 5 only, and this Action Plan reflects and reports on those actions accordingly.

The Action Plan should be read in conjunction with the Strategy on the Inclusive SA website - <https://autismstrategy.sa.gov.au/>.



Our SA Autism Strategy Action Plan Commitments

Focus Area 1: Pathways to diagnosis



Objective:

We want to create a clear and equitable approach to diagnosis in South Australia.



Our commitments within Focus Area 1:

1. Create clearer and more consistent pathways to diagnosis for Autistic people of all ages.
2. Create a consistent approach to diagnosis across the state.
3. Consider ways to reduce the occurrence of undiagnosed autism amongst girls and women and within the Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Focus Area 1: Pathways to diagnosis

Commitment 1:

Create clearer and more consistent pathways to diagnosis for Autistic people of all ages.

Target: Raise public awareness regarding diagnostic pathways and ensure all information and resources are accessible and easy to navigate.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
1.1	Develop and promote information, where appropriate, on autism to assist people and their families to access services, for example: • assessment and diagnostic services • counselling and support following a diagnosis • autism and disability specific information • supports for parents with disability, including autism.	The number of autism-related information sources developed, promoted and/or delivered to assist people and families to access autism-related services such as assessment, diagnosis, counselling, and parent supports. Sources include: Resources, online content, brochures, survey material.	Ongoing	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning: intranet and public website - Practice guides, Statewide Inclusive Education Services AIT resources

Commitment 3:

Consider ways to reduce the occurrence of undiagnosed autism amongst girls and women and within the Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Target: Provide updated resources and information for staff to better understand and support people seeking autism diagnostic services.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
1.2	Develop an updated Inclusive Advice Guide to equip site leaders and key staff with clear, culturally safe and practical guidance to support Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse families and young people navigating the autism assessment process.	Guide developed and promoted.	December 2026	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning
1.3	Review and update the Practice Guide on Autism and Girls to ensure it provides autism inclusive guidance to school staff that accurately reflects the experiences and needs of Autistic girls in preschool and school settings.	Guide developed and promoted.	December 2026	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning

Focus Area 2: Positive educational experiences



Objective:

We want the South Australian public education system to champion Autistic children and students to thrive in the educational environment, to receive the right supports for them and feel empowered to succeed.



Our commitments within Focus Area 2:

1. Improve environments to support the inclusion of Autistic children and young people in our preschools, primary and secondary school settings.
2. Improve the knowledge and understanding of autism amongst our educators, support staff and those connected to our education and care settings.
3. Identify ways to improve transition pathways between educational settings and beyond school.
4. Implement neurodiversity-affirming supports and strategies, tailored to the individual, to ensure Autistic children and students receive the right supports for them.

Focus Area 2: Positive educational experiences

Commitment 1:

Improve environments to support the inclusion of Autistic children and young people in our preschools, primary and secondary school settings.

Target: Improve in-classroom supports for Autistic students to support their individual needs.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
2.1	Conclude and evaluate the trial of 3 models of increasing intensity across 9 standalone secondary school sites that have Autistic students transitioning into Year 7.	Project completed and evaluated.	2026	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning
2.2	Continue to invest funding for access to an Autism Inclusion Teacher in public primary schools across South Australia.	Project closure report that demonstrates funding allocation for 2026.	2026	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning and Statewide Inclusive Education Service
2.3	Deploy School Services Officer (SSO) to improve in classroom supports and learning experiences for students. Aligned to Disability Royal Commission recommendations 7.3,7.7 and 7.8.	SSO Deployment Project completed and evaluated.	2027	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning and Statewide Inclusive Education Services

Target: Develop accessible educational settings to support student learning outcomes.

2.4	Develop a publicly available 'Good Design Guide' for the fit out of learning environments that is evidence informed. This includes retreat and sensory spaces that provide for self-regulation and privacy as well as passive supervision, fit out, equipment, lighting, mechanical services and acoustics.	Publicly Accessible Document available.	2027	Department for Housing and Urban Development and Department for Education (Infrastructure) Data source: Technical Services
2.5	Ensure ongoing review and updating of Education and Care Facilities Design Standards (ECFDS) to align with inclusive design requirements and make available on the public-facing website.	ECFDS updated and reviewed and available on website.	Ongoing	Infrastructure Data source: Technical Services
2.6	Ensure existing preschools, schools or public sites are accessible to Autistic students where minor capital works and upgrades have been implemented via the 'Just in Time' principle.	Percentage of Disability Access Provision procedure applications that have been implemented which have improved accessibility for Autistic Students.	Ongoing	Infrastructure Data source: Asset and Facility Services

Commitment 2:

Improve the knowledge and understanding of autism amongst our educators, support staff and those connected to our education and care settings.

Target: Provide autism awareness and understanding training to educators in preschool, primary and secondary school settings in South Australia.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
2.7	Develop and deliver online professional development on how to support Autistic children and young people for South Australian preservice and in-service teachers.	Number and proportion of staff that have accessed professional development.	2025	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning: plink, Autism CRC
2.8	Deliver Autism Awareness and Understanding training, information sessions, and resources provided to educators in preschool, primary and secondary school settings.	Number of training and information sessions delivered and resources developed.	Ongoing	Office for Autism (Department of the Premier and Cabinet) and Department for Education (Support and Inclusion) Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning: plink, Autism CRC

Target: Improve the training and supports provided to educators in higher education settings.

2.9	Collaborate with South Australian universities to deliver the Diverse Classroom project, preparing newly qualified teachers with training in autism awareness and understanding.	Project completed and final report with recommendations is approved.	2026	Office for Autism (Department of the Premier and Cabinet) and Department for Education (Support and Inclusion) Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning: project final report
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Commitment 3:

Identify ways to improve transition pathways between educational settings and beyond school.

Target: Embed autism inclusion into policies and procedures.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
2.10	Develop pilot resources to make neurodiversity-affirming changes in policies and processes to improve the transition between primary, secondary schools and other school environments at three public schools as part of the Autism Inclusion in Secondary Schools initiative.	Project completed and evaluated.	2025	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning
2.11	Identify and promote successful inclusive practices, policies and strategies for Autistic students in primary and secondary schools that can be adapted and implemented across public schools in South Australia.	Number of resources updated or developed and number of educators accessing internal and external website resources.	2026	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning; plink Autism CRC

Target: Develop supports for Autistic students during transition phases between school settings.

2.12	Expand the Disability Transition Program for students with a disability, including Autistic students, to increase the number of students in the program and support transition between the secondary school environment and the workplace or community.	The number of Autistic students participating in the Disability Transition Program.	Ongoing	Student Pathways and Careers Data source: Services and Programs: Disability Transition Program data
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Target: Collaborate with stakeholders to support Autistic students transition between secondary education settings and higher education.

2.13	Engage with industries to raise awareness and understanding among South Australia's key employers about providing career opportunities to Autistic students.	Number of employers attending student pathways information sessions. Number of employers receiving student pathways information packs.	2025	Student Pathways and Careers Data source: Industry Engagement and Training
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Commitment 4:

Implement neurodiversity-affirming supports and strategies, tailored to the individual, to ensure Autistic children and students receive the right supports for them.

Target: Explore strategies that are neurodiversity-affirming and focus on supporting Autistic students and their families and carers.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
2.14	Trial eligible school students to access autism assessments in public schools at no cost.	Led by the Office for Autism.	2025	Office for Autism (Department of the Premier and Cabinet) and Department for Education (Support and Inclusion)
2.15	Provide neurodiversity training for educators using a trauma informed practice lens to increase safe learning environments in preschool and primary school settings.	Number of specific neurodiversity training sessions undertaken.	2027	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning and Statewide Inclusive Education Services

Target: Collaborate with the Autistic and autism community to ensure supports are effective and responsive to the individual need of Autistic students.

2.16	Develop and update, where relevant, resources in collaboration with the Autistic community to enable Autistic and neurodivergent students to communicate their support needs.	Engagement with Autistic secondary students to provide advice on government policies.	Ongoing	Department for Education (Support and Inclusion) and TAFE SA Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning: roundtable reports
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Focus Area 3: Thriving in the workplace



Objective:

We want a diverse, inclusive and welcoming South Australian workforce where the strengths and skills of Autistic people flourish.



Our commitments within Focus Area 3:

1. Improve knowledge, understanding and awareness of autism across the workforce.
2. Create an accessible, inclusive and welcoming public sector where Autistic people can thrive.
3. Increase opportunities for Autistic people to gain meaningful and lasting employment.
4. Consider alternative employment initiatives when transitioning from education to employment.

Focus Area 3: Thriving in the workplace

Commitment 1:

Improve knowledge, understanding and awareness of autism across the workforce.

Target: Ensure public sector employees undertake Autism Awareness and Understanding training.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
3.1	Ensure in-person and online Autism Awareness and Understanding training is completed across public sector workforce.	The number of staff who undertook Autism Awareness and Understanding Training: - online - in-person.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Capability, Plink course completion data Support and Inclusion Data source: Statewide Inclusive Education Services: AIT specific training numbers

Target: Increase awareness of autism across the public sector workforce and the strengths and benefits of employing Autistic people.

3.2	Outline the initiatives completed to promote autism inclusion in the workplace.	The number of initiatives completed to promote autism inclusion in the workplace. Initiatives include: events, days of significance, internal staff communications/newsletters, social media. Note: This action aligns with State Disability Inclusion Plan Measure 1.2.1 - Total number of initiatives undertaken to promote disability inclusion and improve community attitudes towards people with disability in the community.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Capability
3.3	Engage Autistic employees and employees with disability to provide advice and inform inclusion activities, including to assist in promoting days of significance.	The number and proportion of lived experience staff engaged to inform inclusion activities. Note: This action aligns with State Disability Inclusion Plan Measure 1.2.1 - Total number of initiatives undertaken to promote disability inclusion and improve community attitudes towards people with disability in the community.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Capability: Disability Inclusion Network member and engagement data

Commitment 2:

Create an accessible, inclusive and welcoming public sector where Autistic people can thrive.

Target: Embed autism inclusion into workplace policies and practices.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
3.4	Review recruitment policies and processes to ensure they support reasonable adjustments and are responsive to the alternative ways Autistic employees can engage throughout the recruitment and training processes.	The number and proportion of recruitment and training policies and processes that are reviewed to ensure they support Autistic and/or neurodivergent staff. Note: This action aligns with State Disability Inclusion Plan Measure 2.4.3 - The number of organisational changes adopted to improve inclusive recruitment for people with disability.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Management and People and Culture Operations
3.5	Review and implement reasonable adjustments procedures and flexible workplace arrangements that support all staff, including Autistic employees and parents and carers of Autistic people.	The number and proportion of reasonable adjustment and flexible workplaces arrangement procedures to support staff, including Autistic staff, that are: • reviewed • implemented. Note: This action aligns with State Disability Inclusion Plan Measure 2.5.1 - The number of workplace practices implemented to support people with disability to have equal opportunities for growth and success, including support to remain in employment.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Capability and Workforce Management
3.6	Review and update, where applicable, new starter forms to include an opportunity to identify as Autistic and/or neurodivergent to enable more accurate reporting and awareness in the public sector workforce.	The number of onboarding forms used to identify Autistic and/or neurodivergent staff that are reviewed and updated.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: People and Culture Operations and Workforce Capability

Target: Develop strategies to improve the overall health and wellbeing of Autistic public sector employees.

3.7	Identify appropriate mechanisms, including clear confidentiality, to ensure Autistic employees feel safe, supported and confident to disclose that they are Autistic at the commencement of employment and through the employment lifecycle.	The number of support mechanisms available to ensure Autistic and/or neurodivergent staff can disclose confidentially. Support mechanisms include: secure IT systems, privacy principles.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: People and Culture Operations
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Commitment 3:

Increase opportunities for Autistic people to gain meaningful and lasting employment.

Target: Develop programs and resources that support Autistic people transition into meaningful employment in the public sector.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
3.8	Continue to promote and provide EAP services that are inclusive, culturally appropriate, neurodiversity-affirming and in a range of modes and formats to support the diverse communication styles of Autistic employees.	Are Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services being promoted? Y/N	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Relations and Safety
3.9	Deliver programs that target diversity and inclusion for Autistic people to gain practical workplace experience while undertaking higher education to support them into employment long term.	The number of programs that target diversity and inclusion for Autistic and/or neurodivergent people to gain practical workplace experience while undertaking higher education.	2029	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Management and People and Culture Operations
3.10	Review and implement opportunities for supported transition into employment programs for Autistic people transitioning into employment in the public sector to receive tailored supports, ensuring that Autistic people are supported initially and ongoing.	The number of employment transition programs that support Autistic and/or neurodivergent people that are reviewed. The number of Autistic and/or neurodivergent people who access those programs.	2029	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Management and People and Culture Operations

Target: Provide alternative workplace training and volunteer options that support Autistic people entering the public sector workforce.

3.11	Review and implement alternative and accessible workplace training options to support Autistic employees, including in a range of accessible formats and learning styles.	The number of alternative and accessible workplace training options available to support Autistic and/or neurodivergent staff.	2029	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Capability, Learning and Development and Orbis
3.12	Identify volunteering opportunities for Autistic people across all state government agencies.	The number of volunteering opportunities for Autistic people.	Ongoing	Support and Inclusion Data source: Engagement and Wellbeing
3.13	Review existing peer support or mentoring programs to ensure they are inclusive of Autistic employees.	The total number of peer support and/or mentoring programs and, of those, the proportion reviewed to ensure they are inclusive of Autistic staff.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Capability - Learning and Development and Workforce Relations and Safety: Peer Support Program for Site Leaders

Commitment 4:

Consider alternative employment initiatives when transitioning from education to employment.

Target: Develop programs or supported pathways for Autistic students transitioning from education settings to employment across the public sector.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
3.14	Review existing graduate programs to expand pathways for Autistic graduates from education settings to employment.	The number of expanded pathways for Autistic graduates engaging in graduate programs.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Management and Workforce Capability: Orbis (Start Strong, ECT programs)
3.15	Ensure the VET for School Students policy is inclusive of Autistic students. Aligned to Disability Royal Commission recommendation 7.5	The number of RTOs attending professional development sessions on supporting students with diverse needs including Autistic students.	Ongoing	Student Pathways and Careers Data source: Industry Engagement and Training
3.16	Expand the Career Education and Pathways Strategy – Disability Transition Program to increase employment outcomes for Autistic students.	The number of Autistic students participating in the Disability Transition Program. The number of employment outcomes for Autistic students in the Disability Transition Program.	Ongoing	Student Pathways and Careers Data source: Services and Programs: Disability Transition Program data



Focus Area 4: Access to supports and services



Objective:

We want a clearer, more consistent and accessible service system where Autistic people and their families and carers can access the support they need, when they need it.



Our commitments within Focus Area 4:

1. Develop a centralised state information system to support access and navigation of available supports and services.
2. Improve the knowledge and understanding of autism amongst professional staff.
3. Work with organisations to ensure evidence and research on autism can be effectively and efficiently translated into practice.
4. Ensure neurodiversity-affirming and culturally appropriate services and supports are available.

Focus Area 4: Access to supports and services

Commitment 1:

Develop a centralised state information system to support access and navigation of available supports and services.

Target: Ensure resources and information about supports and services are updated, easily accessible and autism inclusive.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
4.1	Deliver or review initiatives, platforms and systems to connect Autistic people with information in various accessible formats across Government of South Australia supports and services.	The number of initiatives, platforms and systems made to connect Autistic people with information in various accessible formats. Initiatives, platforms and systems include: website content, accessible formats (e.g. Easy Read).	Ongoing	Strategy and Performance Data source: Online Communications Unit

Commitment 2:

Improve the knowledge and understanding of autism amongst professional staff.

Target: Involve the Autistic and autism community in feedback processes to inform the direction of supports and services.

4.2	In collaboration with Office for Autism, develop and promote information about working with the Autistic and autism community during induction training, processes and onboarding.	The number and type of information sources developed and how they are promoted.	2026	Department for Education (People and Culture) and Office for Autism (Department of the Premier and Cabinet) Data source: Workforce Capability - Learning and Development
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Commitment 3:

Work with organisations to ensure evidence and research on autism can be effectively and efficiently translated into practice.

Target: Collaborate with subject matter experts when developing and implementing supports and services for Autistic people.

4.3	Collaborate with autism-specific organisations, where relevant, when developing and implementing policies, supports and services for Autistic people.	The number of autism-specific organisations engaged when developing and implementing policies, support and services for Autistic people.	Ongoing	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning
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Target: Collaborate with the Autistic and autism community throughout the planning, development and implementation phases to ensure services are neurodiversity-affirming and are effectively meeting the needs of Autistic people.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
4.4	Consult with reference groups and lived experience groups, where relevant, on autism-related matters to provide insights and guidance on identifying and addressing barriers to accessing services provided by the Government of South Australia.	The number of reference and/or lived experience groups engaged to identify and address barriers to accessing services on autism-related matters.	Ongoing	Support and Inclusion Data source: Inclusive teaching and Learning

Commitment 4:

Ensure neurodiversity-affirming and culturally appropriate services and supports are available.

Target: Improve existing services to ensure they are streamlined, effective and efficient to meet the individual needs of Autistic people.

4.5	Review and update, where relevant, the customer service areas and experiences to ensure Autistic people feel supported when accessing services.	The number of customer service areas reviewed and updated to ensure Autistic and/or neurodivergent people are supported when accessing services.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: People and Culture Operations ICT Data source: Support Services, ICT Service Delivery
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Target: Ensure a wide range of neurodiversity-affirming and culturally appropriate services and supports are available, including to Autistic people who do not yet have an autism diagnosis.

4.6	In the development of new strategies and initiatives, the State Autism Strategy and/or Autism Charter will be linked and referenced, where appropriate.	The number of references made to the State Autism Strategy and/or the Autism Inclusion Charter in new strategies and initiatives.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data Source: Workforce Capability Support and Inclusion Data Source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning
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Target: Improve data capturing strategies of diverse cohorts of people accessing state government services and supports.

4.7	When consulting to inform the development of new strategies and initiatives, personal identifying data will be collected where appropriate, to capture and consider the specific perspectives of the Autistic community.	Are you capturing personal identifying data including Autistic and/or neurodivergent people during consultation on the development of new strategies and initiatives? Y/N	Ongoing	People and Culture Data Source: Workforce Strategy Support and Inclusion Data Source: Inclusive Teaching and Learning student roundtables
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Focus Area 5: Participation in the community



Objective:

We want a truly inclusive South Australia where Autistic people can meaningfully participate in the community without restriction.



Our commitments within Focus Area 5:

1. Consider how the built environment may impact Autistic people and identify opportunities for improvement across current and future infrastructure projects.
3. Partner with organisations, sporting clubs, local councils and community services to support inclusive initiatives for Autistic people of all ages.

Focus Area 5: Participation in the community

Commitment 1:

Consider how the built environment may impact Autistic people and identify opportunities for improvement across current and future infrastructure projects.

Target: Ensure that accessibility and inclusion is considered from the very beginning of the planning process.

Action number	Action	Measure	Target date	Responsibility and data source
5.1	Review the Security Design Standards to incorporate viable solutions for alarms in buildings where people may have sensory needs.	Security Design Standards review completed (in alignment with DIT review).	2026	Infrastructure Data source: Security and Emergency Management
5.2	Continually review and update the Education and Care Facilities Design Standards (ECFDS) to ensure alignment with inclusive design requirements. Aligned to Disability Royal Commission recommendations 7.4 and 7.15	ECFDS updated following any changes to inclusive design requirements.	Ongoing	Infrastructure Data source: Technical Services

Commitment 3:

Partner with organisations, sporting clubs, local councils and community services to support inclusive initiatives for Autistic people of all ages.

Target: Collaborate with the Autistic and autism community to ensure activities and services are autism inclusive.

5.3	Consult with the Autistic and autism community, where appropriate, when planning and organising events to ensure they are autism inclusive, such as the inclusion of breakout or sensory spaces.	The number and proportion of lived experience people engaged to inform planning and organising of events. Note: This action relates to State Disability Inclusion Plan Measure 1.1.2 - The number of inclusive and accessible events, both internal and external, with 50+ people following best practice event management principles.	Ongoing	People and Culture Data source: Workforce Capability
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Contact details

This Autism Strategy Action Plan is available on the Department for Education website **education.sa.gov.au**.

If you require a copy in an alternative format, such as a fully accessible word version, please contact:

education.daip@sa.gov.au

Workforce Strategy
Department for Education
GPO Box 1152
Adelaide SA 5001

