



MANSFIELD AUTISM STATEWIDE SERVICES

STRATEGIC PLAN
2021 – 2023

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Acknowledgements

A special thank you to all Mansfield Autism staff – it is because of their incredible support and adaptability that we could continue to provide every client with highly quality, best practice care. We would like to acknowledge and thank the Board of Management for their dedication, confidence and belief in our services and ongoing support.

We would also like acknowledge the Taungurung people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live. Taungurung people have been in this part of Victoria for thousands of years. We pay respect to the Taungurung Elders, past, present and future and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

From the Director

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services (MASS) has supported Victorian families living with autism for over 50 years. We are in the midst of a lot of change; since transitioning to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, we have purchased a farm property, have big plans for expansion and we are 'bursting at the seams'. We have also had to adjust to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have a current Strategic Plan (2018 – 2023) but given how much has changed we decided to do a mid-term review. Our mid-term report describes key achievements and the progress we have made since 2018 and can be accessed here: [2018-2020 MASS Strategic Plan Mid-term Report](#). We also decided the Strategic Plan no longer provided the right direction for navigating the next 2-3 years of all this change, so we wrote a new one.

Our 2021-2023 Strategic Plan was developed through consultation with our clients and their families, key stakeholders, our Board and our staff. It sets the direction for completion of the Therapeutic Care Farm, a bespoke, best practice centre of excellence for autistic children. This expansion will allow us to offer more support and opportunities for autistic people and their families, and reduce wait time for our services.



This is a bold step for MASS and the result of a grand vision. We need a bold plan for the next 2-3 years to make our vision become a reality. Our 2021-2023 Strategic Plan outlines our new direction and the steps we need to take to get there.

While our vision and purpose have been aligned with our new direction, our founding philosophy remains the same.

We hope you will join us on this exciting journey.

Simone Reeves
Director, Mansfield Autism Statewide Services

Our Vision

Autistic people reaching their goals and aspirations within their family and community.

Our Purpose

Improve the lives of autistic people and their families by providing individualised and integrated services from our Centre of Excellence.

Our Philosophy

“The child’s family are their most important teachers, and we aim to give them the understanding, the confidence and the determination necessary for the successful parenting of their child – that is our goal and nothing less is enough.” *Joan Curtis, Founder of Mansfield Autism*

Our Values

Mansfield Autism is staffed by people who are passionate about upholding and promoting our unique culture. We believe passionately that it is our staff who are the most important asset in our organisation. Our people are:





About Mansfield Autism Statewide Services

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services (MASS) is an independent not for profit organisation, which supports mostly young autistic people and their families. We are based in Mansfield in North East Victoria and offer a state-wide service to the whole of Victoria.

The service was started in 1968 by a parent, Dr Joan Curtis, who experienced firsthand the lack of services to families in rural Victoria. Dr Curtis dedicated herself to challenging this to create a program for autistic children and their families which acknowledges that 'the child's family are their most important teachers'.

Mansfield Autism continues to uphold this philosophy by working alongside families, education settings and service providers to offer a wide range of services. Our services have been designed as a 'wrap around' model, so that each service complements and enhances the quality of care we provide our clients. All services are underpinned by the importance of engaging families and the benefits of exercise, healthy eating, increased independence and developing good sleeping and hygiene. Our goal is to instil understanding, confidence and determination in our clients and their

families to create the best possible outcomes.

Educational therapy services are provided from a campus in Mansfield, which also offers short term intensive residential therapy, and from a day school at Dookie. In addition to this, Mansfield Autism recognises the importance of working with the family home and provide an in-home service (Mansfield Autism Practitioners) that is available across Victoria. Mansfield Autism also provides opportunities for a family camp, respite care, and outreach services. We are also committed to providing the best possible care, training and employment options for existing adult clients in the Mansfield township. More information on Mansfield Autism services is available on our website www.autismmansfield.org.au.

Mansfield Autism staff and volunteers are passionate about making a difference and improving the hopes and lives of autistic people. Our staff come from varied backgrounds, but work as a team to identify and deliver services to meet the goals of the autistic person and their vital supports – family and community. We aim to deliver innovative and person-centred educational and training programs and

supports. We also learn from our clients and from others who are leading research and practice in autism and disability services.

The success of Mansfield Autism programs and supports have been acknowledged in the *Victorian State Inquiry into Autism* and in 2017 they recommended “The Victorian Government fund the expansion of the MASS model, including the travelling teacher scheme (now MAPs), across regional Victoria”.

Despite this recommendation, the expansion has not occurred and waiting lists for services have grown, even more so due to the restrictions from COVID-19. Meanwhile, Mansfield Autism embarked on an ambitious plan to develop a centre of excellence for autism services delivered from a Therapeutic Care Farm. The value of farm settings and experiencing nature

are beneficial to reducing anxieties, enabling better learning and increasing engagement in meaningful activities.

The ideal 40 hectare property for the Mansfield Therapeutic Care Farm on the outskirts of Mansfield was purchased by us in 2019. A master plan for the property was developed that embraced decades of experience into building designs and open spaces that consider safety, resilience and low sensory environments. **Operation Gamechanger** was then launched to target funds through grants, donations and Mansfield Autism equity to undertake the capital works.

Operation Gamechanger will involve the development of a bespoke, best practice centre of excellence for autistic children in the context of a Therapeutic Care Farm in Mansfield. There are four projects within Operation Gamechanger:



1. Project Education

New term school facilities with unique professional development design features such as one-way windows for non-invasive peer observation.

2. Project Residence

Accommodation for term placements, respite and crisis care.

3. Project Retreat

Twelve disability friendly self-contained family cabins with a conference and training centre for activities, presentations and dining

facilities supported by a commercial kitchen.

4. Project Recreation

Equine facilitated learning arena, swimming pool, hard court play area, walking paths and sensory garden.

The total budget is estimated at \$30 million and partial funding has been granted from state and federal programs and further proposals are currently under consideration.

Operation Gamechanger is a once in life-time opportunity for Mansfield Autism to create our long held vision.

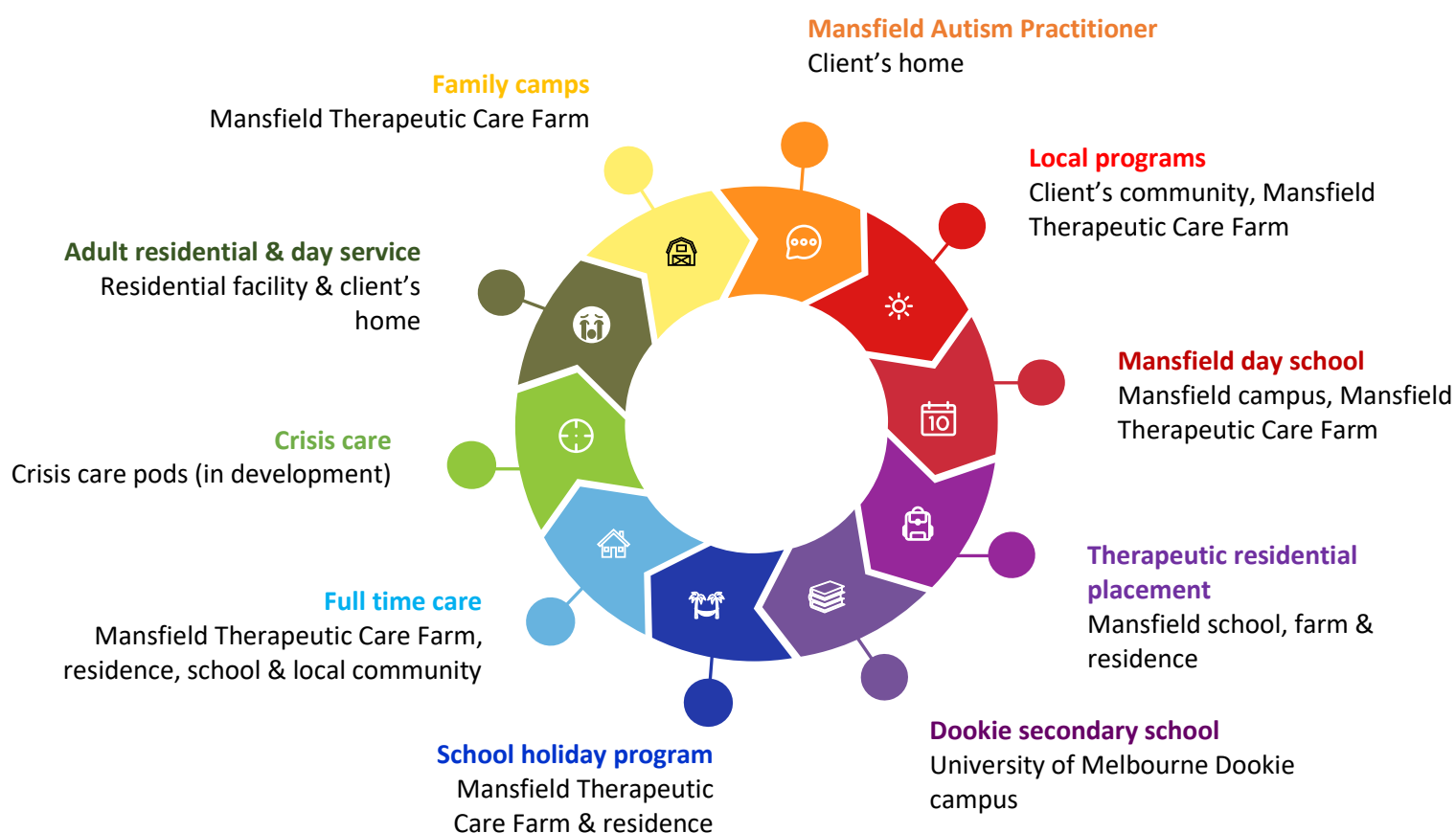
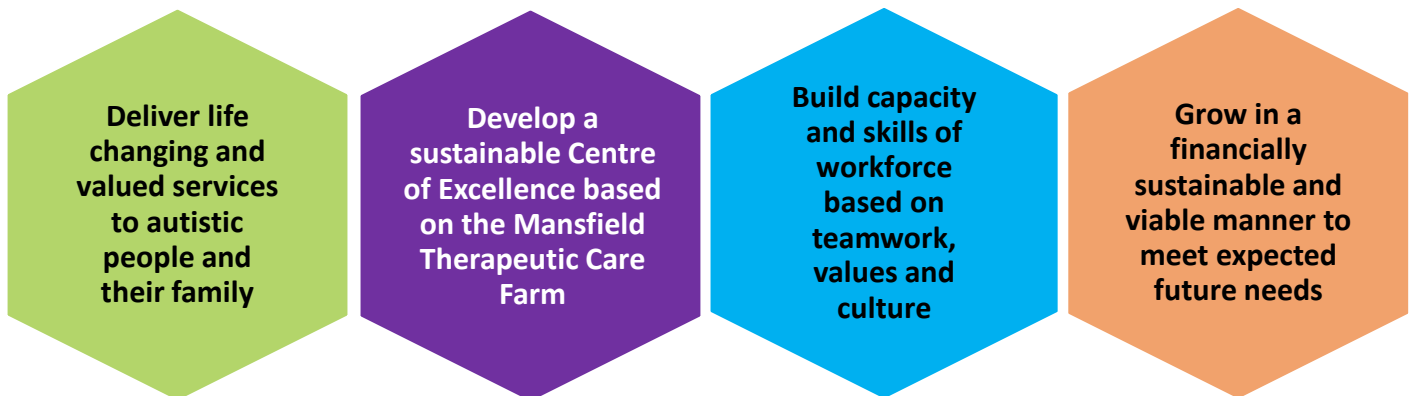


Figure 1: Mansfield Autism services and current facilities

Goals and objectives



- 1. Deliver life changing and valued services to autistic people and their families**
 - a. Grow the capacity and reach of services that are provided in the family's home or community: MAPs, local programs (including young adults) and family camps
 - b. Maintain educational program and capacity at Dookie campus and expand educational programs and capacity at Mansfield campus
 - c. Maintain and/or expand residential based services
 - d. Regular improvement to quality of service
- 2. Develop a sustainable Centre of Excellence based on the Mansfield Therapeutic Care Farm**
 - a. Create the vision and requirements of a Centre of Excellence: leadership, best practice service delivery, research and training.
 - b. Create the structure and environment for the Therapeutic Care Farm
 - c. Transition the current multi-site structure to a model that incorporates the Therapeutic Care Farm
- 3. Build capacity and skills of workforce based on teamwork, values and culture**
 - a. Recruitment and retention strategy to support expected workforce growth and skills required
 - b. Train current staff and foster continued learning and development
 - c. Ensure the safety of workforce and adherence to our codes of conduct
 - d. Support staff to uphold and promote our unique values-based culture
- 4. Grow in a financially sustainable and viable manner to meet expected future needs**
 - a. Effective governance and leadership by the Board, Director and senior managers
 - b. Ensure financial capability, stability and viability
 - c. Ensure that technology supports the needs of the organization and supports the expansion to the farm
 - d. Maintain a quality and compliance focus
 - e. Strengthen stakeholder relations

Goal 1 Deliver life changing and valued services to autistic people and their families

Objectives	Activities	Resources	Results/deliverables	Timeframe	Desired Outcomes
Grow the capacity and reach of services that are provided in the family's home or community: MAPs, local programs (including young adults) and family camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase capacity of MAP service • Provide more family camps • Increase capacity of local programs • Expand and diversify services for young adults (non-residential) • Build partnerships with local organisations such as Mansfield High School, Steiner School and employment services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources • NDIS income • Facilities and equipment • Vehicles • Physical infrastructure: farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 additional families supported by MAP services by 2023 • Reduced wait time for MAP service • 10 family camps held per year once facilities are completed • Local program grown to meet demand by 2023 • Established local partnerships 	2021-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved quality of life for clients and families • Increased independence for clients • Increased community participation • Increased client participation in work
Maintain educational program and capacity at Dookie campus and expand educational programs and capacity at Mansfield campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain student numbers at Dookie • Maintain student numbers at Mansfield until Project Education completed • Plan for expansion as part of Project Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources • Physical infrastructure: farm • Classroom facilities and equipment • Funds for equipment • Vehicles • Professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Mansfield student numbers of 20 students per term until 2023 • Maintain 12 day students at Dookie campus 	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved quality of life for clients and families • Increased independence for clients • Increased participation in community, work and mainstream education
Maintain and/or expand residential based services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand therapeutic care placement program • Expand respite & school holiday program • Expand crisis accommodation • Maintain support for adult clients • Maintain permanent care • Provide safe and supportive residential care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources • Physical infrastructure: farm • Equipment and furniture • Vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand to 40 therapeutic placements per year • Maintain 2 clients in permanent care • Build & maintain 3 crisis accommodation pods • Build & maintain three 10 bed residential blocks • 4,000+ respite nights 	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved quality of life for clients and families • Increased independence for clients • Increased community participation
Regular improvement to quality of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop performance framework • Partnership with researchers and other experts • Collect and report on performance and outcome data • Improve quality of services based on data: build into staff training and service review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Relationship with researchers • Funding and staff time for data collection • Funding and time for staff training • Design and printing costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established performance framework • Established research partnership/s • Regular reporting on performance • Improvement in service evaluation feedback 	2022 Annual 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity of staff to deliver quality service • Improved quality of service for clients • Foundations for Centre of Excellence in autism • Become provider of choice

Goal 2 Develop a Centre of Excellence through the Mansfield Therapeutic Care Farm

Objectives	Activities	Resources	Results/deliverables	Timeframe	Desired Outcomes
Create the vision and requirements of a Centre of Excellence: leadership, best practice service delivery, research and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop to define Centre of Excellence and autism services • Develop a plan to deliver and measure the key tenants of centre of excellence • Establish evaluation framework to enable benchmarking • Share our story and promote our centre of excellence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop to define Centre of Excellence (staff time) • Staff time: document farm journey and share story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly articulated vision and measurable characteristics for the Centre of Excellence 	Centre of Excellence defined 2021	Clear vision and shared understanding of Centre of Excellence
Create the structure and environment for the Therapeutic Care Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop funding proposals and plans for the four project areas – Education, Residence, Retreat and Recreation • Lobby government & philanthropic representatives • Develop, commission & maintain civil & building infrastructure • Manage, acquit and report on funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time: strategic projects • Staff time: Project Delivery • Contractors, consultants & suppliers • Finance / administrative support for grant acquittal and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds required: \$14.6m for Project Education \$6.5 m for Project Residence \$11m for Project Retreat \$2.5m for Project Recreation \$2m for external works e.g. power, wastewater, roads • MASS contributes remaining funds • Compliant with grant/funding requirements and contracts 	<p>Full funds secured by 2026</p> <p>Commence construction by 2022</p>	<p>Funds secured</p> <p>Farm partially complete and operational 2023</p> <p>Farm fully complete and operational 2029</p>
Transition the current multi-site structure to a model that incorporates the Therapeutic Care Farm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan how to use current structures for respite, administration, training etc • Plan for contingencies • Asset renewal, repurposing & disposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time: strategic projects • Staff time: infrastructure management • Contractors & consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition plan • Farm operational • Relinquished sites / assets no longer required 	Ongoing	<p>75% of farm project complete and operational 2023</p> <p>Assets fit for purpose & operating at capacity</p>

Goal 3 Build capacity and skills of workforce based on teamwork, values and culture

Objectives	Activities	Resources	Results/deliverables	Timeframe	Desired Outcomes
Recruitment and retention of skilled staff to support expected increased workforce requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop staff recruitment and retention plan • Career pathways and succession plans • Performance management and professional development of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time: HR manager and trainee • Staff time: to support and train new staff • Funding to advertise jobs and seek recruitment opportunities • Physical space for additional staff: in office and at the farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% increase on 2020 staff numbers by 2023 • High retention of staff • Clear career pathways • Succession plans 	2022 2023	A workforce that can deliver the desired quality and quantity of services
Train staff and foster continued learning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction program and resources • Develop professional development & training framework • Identify essential staff training requirements • Develop individual performance plans and identify training opportunities • Include learning, reflective practice and development in everyday work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time: to develop induction package • Staff time: to participate in reflective practice sessions and training • Staff time: HR manager and supervisors to support career pathway discussions • Training packages • Funding for training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff complete induction program • Staff complete compulsory training • Staff improve skills and knowledge related to their role and performance plan/goals 	Ongoing 2022	A workforce that can deliver the desired quality and quantity of services
Ensure the safety of workers and adherence to our codes of conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued review and updating Policies and Procedures related to staff safety and code of conduct and communicate to staff and volunteers • Appoint and support OH&S officers to conduct regular work place risk assessments and implement actions • Provide staff with education on workplace health and safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time: to participate in reflective practice sessions and training • Staff time: to upskill team leaders • Training packages • Funding for training • OH&S safety committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced rate and severity of incidents involving staff • Reduced rate and severity of incidents involving clients • Compliant with NDIS Quality & Safeguards framework • Safe working environment 	Ongoing	<p>Proactive safety and quality culture</p> <p>A safe and supported workforce that delivers quality and safe services</p>
Support staff to uphold and promote our unique values-based culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular staff training & team meetings • Good supervision and leadership by team leaders • Open, regular internal communication and collaboration • Maintain a supportive, equitable and flexible working environment • Team building activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time: to participate in reflective practice sessions and training • Staff time: upskill team leaders • Staff time: internal communication • Staff time: coordinate team building activities • Funding for team building activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values-based culture • Good supervision and support structures • Regular team building activities • Supportive, equitable and flexible working environment 	Ongoing	Workforce is passionate, flexible, connected, resilient and authentic

Goal 4 Grow in a financially sustainable and viable manner to meet future needs

Objectives	Activities	Resources	Results/deliverables	Timeframe	Desired Outcomes
Effective governance and leadership by the Board, Director and senior managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in strategic, business and financial planning Undertake regular internal audits Continued risk and emergency management Business continuity review Build capability of the Board Increase engagement of Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time: strategic, business and financial planning Printing and design: strategic plan Staff time: internal audits Training and development for Board members Board secretariat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed Strategic Plan 2021-23 Business plans developed for 2021, 2022 and 2023 Regular internal audits Engaged and supported Board 	End of each year As per annual schedule	Better and more effective organisational governance Maintain quality of service delivery
Ensure financial capability, stability and viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure continuity of existing funding Investigate new funding options Develop annual budgets and review monthly Improve process for managing expenditure Costs vs revenue analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time: managing finances and expenditure Training for staff Funding for workforce growth and ongoing business maintenance New or improved systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued funding Annual budget for 2021, 2022, 2023 approved by Board Monthly budget reviews by relevant groups Improved expenditure process Costs vs revenue analysis 	2021 2021 2022 2022 2023	Improved cashflow Improved financial control & oversight Financial viability Increased staff understanding of financial management
Ensure that technology supports the needs of the organization and supports the expansion to the farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT and IM Plan, Policy and Procedure Develop new website Improve internet and network connectivity Improved client management and staff management system Review finance, payroll and cybersecurity systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time and license fees: IT and database development New website Sufficient infrastructure for expanding workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT and IM policy New website New client management and staff management system Safe and secure systems Network system that supports new and future staff 	2023	Secure, capable IT systems and databases User-friendly network and systems Increased efficiencies
Maintain a quality and compliance focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Framework: regular review and improvement of policies and procedures Compliance with NDIS, VRQA and other auditing body requirements Compliance with cybersecurity standards in Cybersecurity Act 2019 Incident monitoring and reporting to inform service and facility improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time: reviewing policies and procedures Staff time: supporting external audits Staff time: incident monitoring Training for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Framework Audit compliance Incident monitoring Performance framework Improvement cycle / process 	Ongoing	Comprehensive quality and performance frameworks that support quality service delivery Continual improvement ethos embedded in organisation
Strengthen stakeholder relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop stakeholder relations plan Develop marketing & communication resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time: stakeholder relations plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established relationships with range of stakeholders 	Ongoing	Additional funding

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share learnings / create an Autism Community of Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time: create marketing resources • Website • Social media • Printing & design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date and relevant suite of marketing materials • Concept for autism community of practice 		Increased awareness of Mansfield Autism among stakeholders
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Risks

The operating environment for Mansfield Autism has changed considerably in the past two years, with the transition to NDIS funding, plans for significant expansion to a Centre of Excellence based on the Mansfield Therapeutic Care Farm and a pandemic.

Risk management is a key activity to ensure the viability and sustainability of our organisation to provide life changing services to autistic people and their families. Mansfield Autism undertakes a regular, individualised process of risk identification, assessment, management and reporting.

Mansfield Autism is impacted by political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental risks, as well as internal service delivery risks.

Key risks for Mansfield Autism to manage include:

- potential changes to NDIS funding and overall scheme
- implications of State and Federal plans, policies and inquiries

- rapid organisational growth
- new and increased volume of research findings that have implications for service delivery
- increased competition between providers
- finite pool of potential employees given the regional location
- increased diagnosis of autism and increased demand for services
- increased litigation and environmental risks such as bushfires, climate change and floods

New risks in 2021 include adapting to the pandemic by staff working from home and delivering services remotely.

Mansfield Autism proactively identifies and manages risks. Some of our risk management strategies throughout the duration of this Strategic Plan and into the next one involve updating our policies and procedures, improving our financial systems, staff training and implementing an annual business plan.

Contact us

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