



# Mansfield Autism Statewide Services

Strategic Plan  
Mid-term Report  
2018-2020

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# Introduction

## About Mansfield Autism Statewide Services

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services (MASS) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that supports autistic people and their families. Mansfield Autism is based in Mansfield in North Eastern Victoria but offer a state-wide service to the whole of Victoria. We believe that our service is unique and that 'we change people's lives'. We are committed to providing the best possible care, support and opportunities for all our clients.

While Mansfield Autism has a current Strategic Plan (2018 to 2023), there have been significant changes in our operating environment, including transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the purchase of a farm property and the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of these changes, we chose to do a mid-term review of our Strategic Plan. This report describes progress made from 2018 to 2020 and lists key achievements.

## Our Vision

We will continue to be a unique, highly-regarded, independent, not-for-profit organisation that delivers innovative positive behavioural support, educational and training programs for autistic people between infancy and adulthood.

We will empower the individual and their families to live an independent, inclusive and productive life through the provision of individually tailored programs.



## Our Values

Our services seek to transform the lives of autistic people through the provision of education, consultancy and support in homes, schools and community organisations. Mansfield Autism exists to provide expertise, education and empowerment to autistic people, their families and other service providers. Through our 'whole of family' focus, all services and business practices will be delivered in a manner that exceeds industry standards and legislative requirements.

Our staff are pivotal to the quality of our work – they will be supported to ensure we deliver a safe and rewarding workplace.

## Our Staff

Mansfield Autism is staffed by a group of professionals who are passionate about upholding and promoting the unique culture which is MASS. We believe passionately that it is our staff who are the most important asset in our organisation. We are committed to providing training and support so that they feel confident in the services they are delivering to our clients.

## Our Services

We offer a wide range of services which are designed to offer a 'wrap around' service to people with a diagnosis of autism. These include:

Service	Description
<b>Mansfield Autism Practitioners (MAPs)</b>	A group of dedicated behaviour support professionals who visit families who are supporting young autistic people across all of Victoria.
<b>Therapeutic Residential Placement</b>	Open to Victorian young people with a diagnosis of autism. The Therapeutic Residential Placement takes place in Mansfield and students attend a nine week residential placement.
<b>Mansfield Campus Day School</b>	Support for local students who have a diagnosis of autism.
<b>Dookie Campus Secondary School</b>	Support for students who have a diagnosis of autism and average or above average IQ.
<b>Family Camps</b>	A five-night holiday camp for the whole family.
<b>School Holiday Program</b>	A three to four night stay in Mansfield with activities during the day.
<b>Adult Residential and Day Service</b>	A small number of adult clients based in Mansfield.
<b>Outreach</b>	A small service for local autistic people.
<b>Professional Development and Training</b>	Available throughout the state to any organisation who works with or supports autistic people.

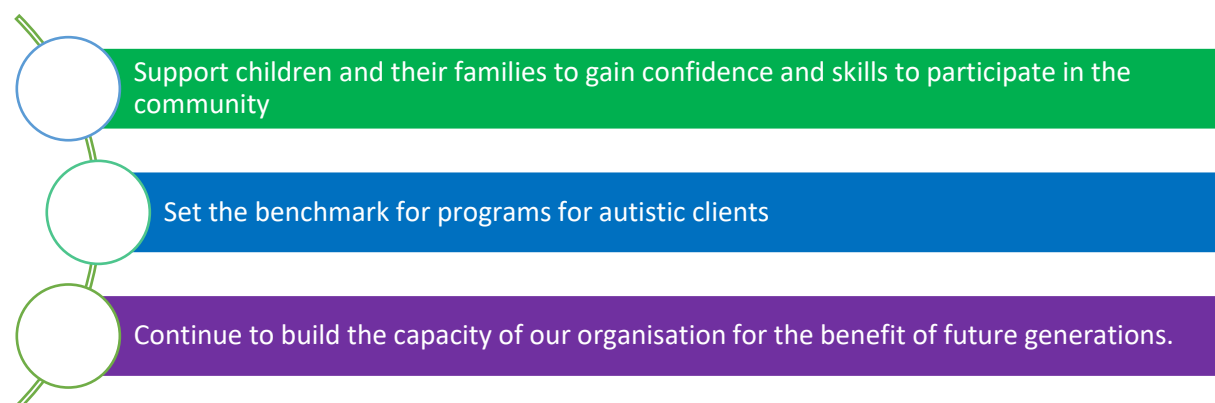
# Identified Risks and Challenges 2018

The following risks were identified in 2018 and reassessed at the end of 2020.

Risk	2018	2020
<b>Financial</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition from State based funding to Commonwealth funding under the National Disability Insurance Scheme</li> <li>New financial software for claiming benefits</li> <li>Insufficient funding available to clients under NDIS plans to cover service delivery costs</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✘</p> <p>✘</p> <p>✓</p>
<b>Physical</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical injury to staff by clients</li> <li>Physical injury to clients by others</li> <li>Distance between sites</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<b>Legislative</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults transition to aged care funding and housing creating trauma</li> <li>Transition to NDIS Rules and Standards</li> <li>Compliance with new requirements for child safety, privacy, worker screening</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✘</p> <p>✓</p>
<b>Relationships</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Damage to reputation</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>

# Mansfield Autism Road Map

Three key strategic directions were identified in the Mansfield Autism Road Map in 2018:



The following tables are taken from the Strategic Plan 2018-2023 and data is taken from the Annual Report 2019 and from administration records to report on progress and describe key achievements.

## 1. Support children and their families to gain confidence and skills to function in the community

High Level Outcomes	Action	Timeframe	Implementation	Measures of success	2018 Status	2020 Status
<b>Actively engage families in a variety of settings on the methods taught to students through the program.</b>	Establish capacity to increase the number of family camps offered annually.	2018	Review timing of camps to offer both in terms and school holiday programs to allow mix of participation and staffing. Establish long term bookings at a variety of venues.	Increase to four camps in 2018 and five camps in 2019.	Five camps booked in 2018.	Four camps with 36 families in 2019.  No camps in 2020 due to bushfires and COVID-19.
	Investigate options to support and enhance parents' skills in real time when working with their children.	2019	Either use of digital technology and/or new classroom and residential layout to provide coaching setting.	Program established and participation rates exceeds 70%.	Parents visit school during term to observe students in real time.	MAPs visit families on home weekends to transfer skills from placement to home.
	Repeat the use of Jonathon House or elsewhere as a transitional learning space for young people to move towards more independent living.	2020	Replicate and enhance Term 2, 2018 placement with older youth contemplating independent or semi-independent accommodation.	Established and documented findings of trial.		The farmhouse at the farm is being used for young adults for independent living skills and vocational activities.
<b>Provide the service in an optimum setting which maximises the engagement of the participants in the rural environment of Mansfield.</b>	Prepare a business case for relocation of the current facilities to a new site which caters for a broader range of 'hands on' learning experiences such as farming and environmental restoration.	2020	Engage assistance to develop design costing based on scope of works prepared in-house on the learning environment and physical space needs of the programs provided.	Board briefed on the viability, risks and options of staying at current location or extending to new site.	Board approved land search and preparation of Master Plan for 2018 as well as development of funding strategy.	Farm purchased and being utilised with current clients for outreach, and outdoor activities including equine therapy and horticulture.

## Achievements 2018 to 2020

- Continued to provide services through the COVID-19 pandemic and state lockdown
- Completed purchase of the farm at Ogilvies Road and using current facilities to provide equine therapy, establish a greenhouse for horticulture and outdoor activities for clients
- Expanded services to include Outreach, Permanent Care and Respite.
- Client numbers in 2020:
  - Mansfield Autism Practitioners: 170
  - Dookie Day Students: 11
  - Mansfield Campus Day Students: 20 (includes Therapeutic placement and permanent care)
  - Outreach: 18
  - Therapeutic Placements: 20
  - Respite: 10
  - Permanent care: 2
  - Camp (Feb only): 6
- Feedback from clients and families is very positive and details provided in Appendix A.
- In 2018, Mansfield Autism facilities included the Mansfield & Dookie schools and three residences. By the end of 2020, the facilities have grown to include an extra 4 bedroom residential facility, a 2 bedroom transportable residence and the 100 acre farm that includes a 4 bedroom house and large outbuildings.
- Outreach participant and former student Callum Gunn developed a Revegetation Proposal for the Farm. Up2Us Landcare Alliance partnered with us on a seed propagation program that will involve teaching skills to students and community members with the ultimate aim of having seedlings for sale. A hot house and shade house have been erected and irrigation system installed with funding achieved via a grant and donations.
- Media and social media campaign enacted to raise the profile of Mansfield Autism, and share the increasing demand for service necessitating expansion on the farm and the need for capital funding. Project dubbed *Operation Gamechanger*.
- Active engagement and advocacy for Operation Gamechanger with presentations and meetings with local, state and federal politicians, senior advisors and influencers including Ovens Murray Regional Partnership and Regional Development Australia Hume.
  - Submission to the Federal Inquiry into Autism.
  - Inclusion in Mansfield Shire Council's Council Plan and Economic Development Strategy.
  - Funding applications to a number of philanthropic trusts.
- Multi million dollar funding applications to a number of state and federal grants including:
  - Independent Schools Block Grant Authority, Federal & State – *Project Education*
  - State Housing Stimulus Program – *Project Residence*
  - State Local Economic Recovery Program – *Project Retreat*
- Cost Benefit Analysis conducted pro bono for *Operation Gamechanger* showing a return rate of 1.6 and \$127 million in socioeconomic benefit over a 10 year life of project.



## 2. Set the benchmark for programs for autistic clients

High Level Outcomes	Action	Timeframe	Implementation	Measures of success	2018 Status	2020 Status
<b>Embed our reputation as a leader in the provision of services to clients</b>	Investigate options to support and enhance parents' skills in real time when working with their children.	2019	Either use of digital technology and/or new classroom and residential layout to provide coaching setting.	Program established and participation rates exceeds 70%.		Parents invited during Therapeutic Placement to observe their child and teachers.
	Enhance our methods of pre- and post- program assessment.	2019	Support for university training using data from workplace	Establish longitudinal study of participant outcomes.	Survey of clients and families.	Staff attended course conducted by University of Western Australia.
	Establish a partnership with university or similar to externally evaluate our programs.	2020-2022	Meet with prospective agencies to establish how this might occur.	Publish and promote findings through relevant journals and speaking engagements.		Awarded Community Research Grant through University of Melbourne to evaluate MAPs
	Establish a social media presence and promote the organisation, its programs and successes.	2022	Work across teams to develop content.	Monthly updates and posts promoting work.		Website improved and further work scheduled. Facebook account created and managed.
<b>Support staff with training and development opportunities to continuously improve the quality of programs.</b>	Establish a partnership with psychology support services to assist the MAPs, occupational therapists and speech therapists to work with children in an integrated treatment approach.	2019	Scope a brief to procure and engage services and coordinate implementation, after confirming approach is supported by funding.	Program implemented		Not progressed. Incorporating reflective practices and Positive Behaviour Support courses.
	Continue to develop systems to ensure that record keeping is efficient and effective for all staff.	Ongoing	Develop an annual improvement plan based on staff feedback.	Improvements adopted and used by staff. Annual report to Board on actions and results.	Improvement in critical incident reporting and implementation of ProSims undertaken.	Using MS Teams and ProSims. Recruited specialist in CRM and website development.
	Retain key staff to train new team members and actively plan for successions and promotions.	Ongoing	Establish clear documentation and education materials for internal training modules.	Evidence of active training and support for staff and recognition for those training.	Improvement to induction made. Yet to embed review for this process. Staff appointed to update and inform on P&Ps.	Late 2018 relaunched CompliSpace Online compliance training platform. Training further detailed below.



## Achievements 2018 - 2020

- Client and family surveys are conducted and the feedback is summarised in Appendix A.
- Staffing levels increased over the period, despite some staff turnover:
  - In 2018 there were 104 staff with 40 new staff and 14 ceasing employment.
  - In 2019 there were 116 staff with 26 new starters and 9 ceasing, an increase of 11.5%.
  - In 2020 there were 149 staff with 42 new starters and 15 ceasing, an increase of 28.4%
- Introduced new Induction Program late 2018 and completed from week 1 to 6 on commencement. 2019 Outreach Worker Induction Manual and plan implemented. Police Check renewals every 3 years commenced 2019 in line with NDIS requirements.
- CompliSpace training compliance: 100% in 2019. 100% compliance with NDIS Worker Orientation module and PPE and Infection Control in line with COVID-19 requirements. All residential staff and adult services staff completed PPE donning and doffing training. Culturally and linguistically diverse training completed by MAPs in 2020.
- First aid training and annual CPR refreshers offered in March and November each year and all staff up to date.
- Annual staff two day professional development event held in 2018 and 2019.
- In 2019, 13 staff completed Certificate IV in Disability Care. In 2020, 10 staff completed Certificate IV Child, Youth and Family Interventions
- In 2019, a new MASS Code of Conduct was implemented inclusive of employee, child safety and disability sector codes of conduct
- In 2020, staff were supported through COVID-19 lockdown to work from home where possible, were provided with wellness vouchers and an inaugural staff walking challenge facilitated teamwork and physical activity.

### 3. Continue to build the capacity of our organisation for the benefit of future generations

High Level Outcomes	Action	Timeframe	Implementation	Measures of success	2018 Status	2020 Status
<b>Ensure services are financially sustainable in an NDIS environment.</b>	Refine understanding of the cost of each service per placement.	2018	Ensure cost of services includes whole-of-service costing and depreciation/long term funding component.	Cost of service meets NDIS threshold and long-term business sustainability.	Work with various service areas underway.	2020 Costings were completed in 2020 by Finance Manager & CINCH Financial Services.
	Prepare and forecast income and expenditure to ramp up service capacity as provided for in the section on Client Demand.	2018	Calculate all costs to provide service and present to Director and Board.	Forecast completed and adopted service levels established.	Initial work to be completed by consultant May 2018.	Budget prepared and approved by the Board for 2021.
	Prepare an economic impact assessment on the value of local services and family camp services.	2022	Capture data on family spend with various programs.	Complete economic impact assessment and present to Board for use with grant proposals.	Work to be prepared in 2018.	A cost benefit analysis for Operation Gamechanger has been completed.
	Prepare monthly financial KPIs for each Board meeting.	Ongoing	Prepare report on financial indicators to be used.	Forecast income and expenditure mirror expected results.	Delayed pending completion of forecast income and expenditure.	To be initiated in 2021.
<b>Actively embed risk management into programs and operations.</b>	Monitor and audit enhanced processes to record incidents in care.	Ongoing	Nominate staff member to lead OH&S implementation and monitoring.	Ability to retain and retrieve records on a long-term basis (>20 years)	In progress, staff appointed to role and required training in progress.	Completed risk management workshops with all business areas to create Risk Management Plan and reporting framework.
<b>Support high needs/ complex care clients in a way that doesn't reduce capacity in other programs</b>	Develop a feasibility and program model to support high needs clients with complex care needs in crisis in a manner separate from planned operations.	2021	Review historic demand & expected future demands. Evaluate costs for service and likely duration. Assurance of support from State and Commonwealth agencies.	Feasibility completed and outcome adopted by Board.	Include in Master Planning project.	Included in Operation Gamechanger - Therapeutic Care Farm Plan.

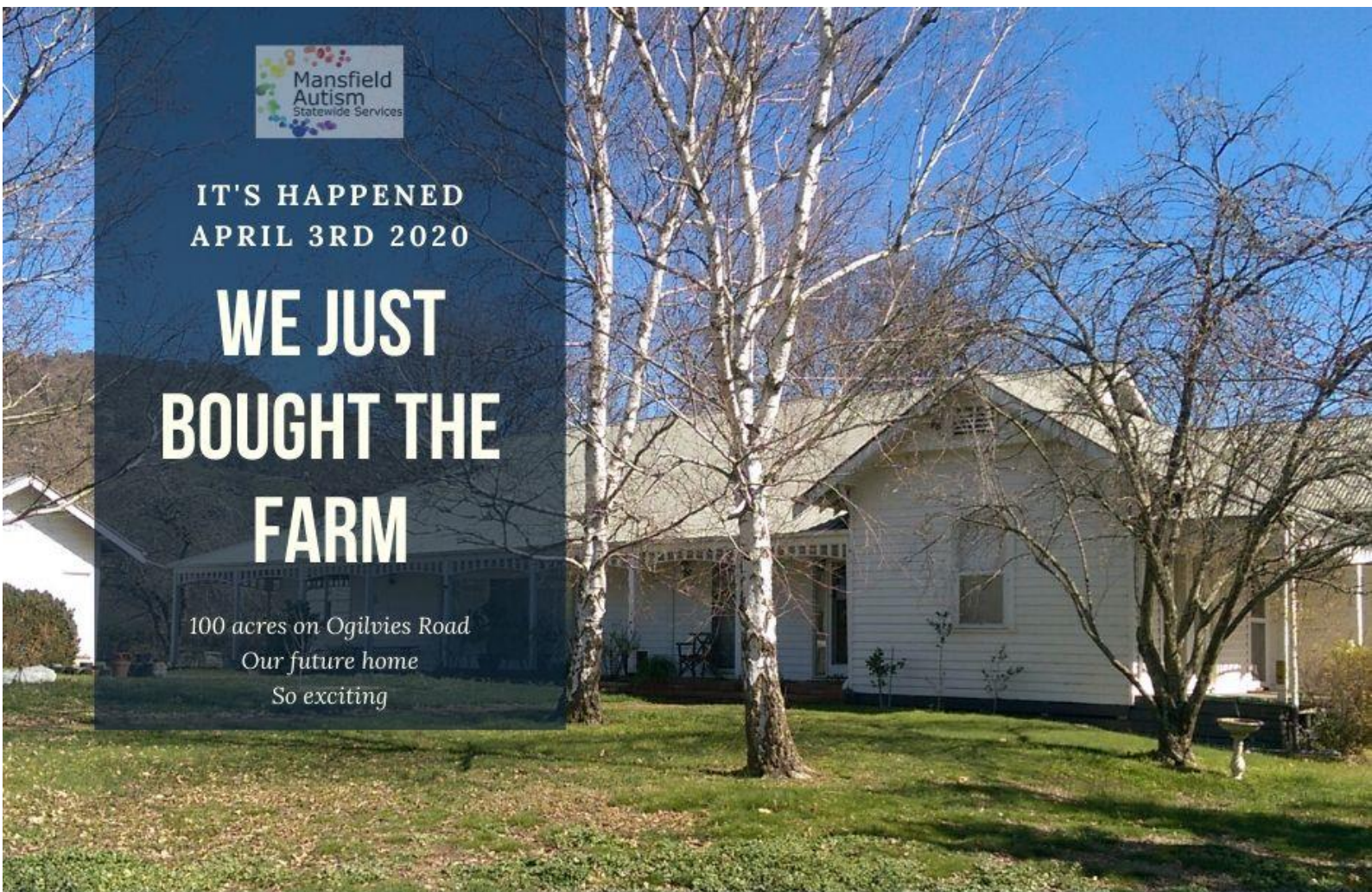
Increase capacity for provision of care for complex clients in the short term to provide a broader base for developing feasibility	2019	Utilise the land available on the conjoined sites in Malcolm St to build additional accommodation to support the extension of the program.	Site established and occupied and progress with client documentation to external agencies	New action added to business case in development	Application made for funding for three Crisis Pods for provision of emergency care.
Development of a new model for planning, training and review needs consideration to ensure all relevant staff can participate without impact on client care.	2019	Leadership group review program delivery and reporting key periods and plan how and when participation in key training and planning can occur.	Established and agreed dates for annual training and planning implemented as well as a variety of means for sharing information both in person and using technology.	New action added.	Increase staff numbers and opportunities for participation in training.



## Achievements 2018 to 2020

- Prepared for and completed external NDIS audit with minor non-conformities to retain registration for NDIS funding in August 2020
- Developed financial dashboard to manage forecast income and expenditure across program areas
- Established *Operation Gamechanger*, which is the project plan for a \$30 million expansion on the 40 hectare farm, bought by MASS in 2020. The expansion is in response to the demand for autism services that exceeds Mansfield Autism physical infrastructure capacity to supply. The Therapeutic Care Farm will be the first of its kind in Australia and is already in active use as a day and program excursion site. *Operation Gamechanger* will deliver four key projects being:

1. **Project Residence** – client and student accommodation for term placement, respite, acute and permanent care
2. **Project Education** – a new primary and secondary independent specialist campus for day and term placement students
3. **Project Retreat** – a purpose-built family camp with cabins and a common training/meeting facility for staff and external placements
4. **Project Recreation** - recreational facilities including hard court, swimming pool, walking/cycle track and equine facilitated learning arena. There will also be revegetation works and features such as sensory gardens.



# Appendix A: Feedback and Evaluation

The following is a summary of the experiences of our clients throughout the reporting period 2018 - 2020. Evaluation and feedback surveys are undertaken quarterly for Therapeutic Residential Placement clients and those receiving the MAP service. Feedback on family camps is conducted on site after each camp. Educational services at our Dookie and Mansfield Campuses receive an annual evaluation survey.

## Therapeutic Residential Placement

Overall families strongly supported the statement that the Therapeutic Residential Placement was beneficial for their child.

The median response when asked if families would recommend the service to others remained consistent across the reporting years of 'strongly agree'. Overall families indicated that priority goals for the child attending the Therapeutic Placement were to support emotion regulation, behaviour, and self-care skills.

In 2020 some suggestions for improvements to the service were:

- Improving communication during handover and transition and to assist with implementing strategies at home
- Increase the length of the placement

In response to the feedback, in 2020 greater emphasis was made to ensure that the Mansfield Autism Practitioners were available during home weekends to transfer the skills learnt at placement into the home environment.

A snapshot of feedback comments:

*'The Therapeutic Placement was extremely beneficial and gave us hope for the possibilities for our child'*

*'The Therapeutic Placement was life changing'*

*'Our child has made massive improvements in such a short time compared to regular fortnightly OT and Speech Appointments over the years'*

## MAP Service

Overall families are using the MAP service to support emotional regulation and behavioural goals within the family home: this was consistent across the reporting period. In response to the question, 'I would recommend MAP service to a friend', families overwhelmingly responded with 'strongly agree' across the reporting period. The median response to 'I am finding MAP visits useful' continued to be 'strongly agree' over the reporting period.

In 2020, the Mansfield Autism Practitioner team have regularly engaged in staff reflective practice sessions as staff have transitioned to the new NDIS reporting requirements. The staff reflective practice sessions have included report writing and timing, as this has become an integral part of the NDIS Improved Relationships funding.

Some suggestions for improvements to the service were:

- Offer access to the support for longer  
We need to be able to access longer support
- Run a program for siblings to help them better understand autism and how it affects the family
- Attend to follow up reports more quickly

A snapshot of feedback comments:

*'Our MAP has been an amazing help to our family and we would not be the family unit we are today if it wasn't for the help of her and all the Mansfield team'*



*'Our MAP support is fantastic and if I could only access one type of support it would be this. I have recommended MAPS to multiple people'*

*'Very happy with the service and looking to engage further services'*

*'The MAPs package is actually educating and informing us of the strategies and possibilities which can be used to assist our child. We cannot overstate our gratitude for the efforts of all involved in providing this service.'*

*'It is the best thing our family has been involved with.'*

## Family Camps

The availability of family camps was reduced in 2020 due to COVID-19. The feedback on family camps prior to COVID-19 found that for the autistic child and their siblings, families responded that the time with the group, family time, excursions, time allocated with adult and meeting other children was all 'very valuable'. This response was consistent across the 2018 - 2020 reporting period.

A summary of the responses to the question 'what did you learn at the family camp' respondents tended to answer along the following:

- A better understanding of autism
- To reinforce the day-to-day routine and bring back basic strategies
- The importance of less screen time and more exercise

Some suggestions for improvements to the service were:

- Extending the camp by a day or two
- More activities for the family to join
- A little more time for discussion and feedback with parents

A snapshot of feedback comments:

*'The family camps have been amazing'*

*'I was a little apprehensive at coming but the staff made me feel at ease and are so professional'*

*'Thank you for another wonderful week away enjoying our own family time'*

*'Thank you for this amazing experience and giving me the time out as well'*

## Educational Services – Mansfield Campus and Dookie Campus

Families report seeing positive changes since attending the school. 100% of respondents in 2020 indicated that they strongly agree or agree that the school offers good support and assistance to meet their child's individual needs. Further, the curriculum meets the needs of the student was also reported as either strongly agree or agree by all parents. Additionally, parents indicated that they are happy with the learning and life skills opportunities that their child has at the school.

Some suggestions for improvements to the service are:

- The admin section overlap could be better as some communication is getting lost

A snapshot of feedback comments:

*'All teachers are professional and caring. I have found that they continue to go the extra mile for the kids. My son has grown as a person since being there'*

*'The skill taught are suited to the student and are exactly what we need'*

*'They are an amazing school with an amazing team of people. I have received sooo much support from the school'*

## Staff Feedback

Due to the significant changes within the MAP role to meet the requirements of the NDIS, staff were surveyed in June and December to find out which areas they were and were not confident in. MAP reflective practice sessions then provided further training in these areas.

Overall, staff confidence levels increased in most areas, with responses moving from 'not so confident' to 'somewhat confident' and 'very confident'. Areas that have been highlighted for further training in 2021 will continue to build on knowledge of relevant disability and NDIS legislation, rules standards, policies and frameworks. While staff have become more confident with conducting Functional Behaviour Assessments and writing Behaviour Support Plans, this is an area that we will continue to build on and refine. An additional area of training that has also been highlighted through the evaluation is further training to include working with clients with adverse life experiences and trauma.

