

MEDIA RELEASE

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One year on: Autism Connect has answered over 25,000 requests for support, helping Autistic people and their families to live their best lives

Australia's free Autism helpline, Autism Connect, celebrates its first anniversary as a nation-wide service this month.

Autism Connect, established by leading autism organisation Amaze, has become an integral tool in helping Autistic people and their families to live their best lives.

"We're proud to say that Autism Connect has made a real and meaningful difference in the lives of Autistic people, their families and supporters," Amaze CEO Jim Mullan said.

"We like to think of Autism Connect as a means of empowerment. It empowers members of our community by providing them with accurate information to move forward and take action in their own lives. It also provides a great deal of support and an important sense of connection," he said.

To date, the Autism Connect service has received more than 60,000 interactions (via phone, email, webchat and SMS) and has responded to more than 25,000 requests for information from Autistic Australians and their families and carers. That's more than 50 requests each and every day.

With a significant 1.8m online page views, Autism Connect and partner websites have also become a valuable resource for Autistic people and their families.

"Autism Connect has proven to be a critical resource and the Government is proud to support this service," said Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP.

"Amaze is working to develop relationships with local partners which will mean it can offer a consistent national service that is informed by on-the-ground local knowledge to help Autistic people, their families, friends, and carers," she said.

Mother of two Autistic children, Amy Williams, called the Autism Connect helpline when she received her eldest daughter's autism diagnosis.

"I was so overwhelmed. I felt isolated and alone and I really needed someone to talk to who would understand what I was going through.

"Unfortunately, my friends and family didn't seem to understand," Amy said.

"Calling the helpline was the first time I really felt validated and heard. They gave me advice which led me to joining online communities and I finally found my tribe, a whole community of people who were going through the same thing as me.

"They helped me to realise I was not alone. I found like-minded people and finally felt that we could move forward through this as a family. It was such a relief," she said.



Amy is not alone in her praise for the Autism Connect service. Indeed, 97 per cent of Australians who have used Autism Connect reported they were satisfied with the service and support provided.

"The level of caller satisfaction is a testament to our wonderful team of Autism Connect advisors, many of whom are themselves Autistic," Mr Mullan said.

"Our advisors are able to help the community because they truly understand what they are going through."

Autism Connect advisors commonly provide information and resources to the community so that they can then take this and apply it in their own lives. An advisor may help a family with information regarding booking an autism assessment, finding a speech therapist or other specialist, or applying for NDIS funding.

According to Amaze, Autism Connect is not just for Autistic people and their families. Health and allied professionals, teachers, employers, government and the wider community are also encouraged to use the service.

"Autism Connect is not just a helpline – it's a valuable source of knowledge that includes a free online database of more than 700 resources available around the clock," Mr Mullan said.

"Our aim is to make sure people in the Autistic community have somewhere to turn to when they need it most. We want them to know they are not alone. When they are armed with the right information, they will see a way forward."

The Autism Connect National helpline is available to call between 8am and 7pm weekdays on 1300 308 699 or visit <https://www.amaze.org.au/autismconnect/>

Media enquiries:

Amy Williams and Amaze CEO Jim Mullan are available for media interviews.

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