

Aim and Rules of Mackay Autism Support Group

The aim of the support group is to support each other as individuals and as a group in dealing with issues arising from being either a parent or carer of a person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder or someone on the Autism Spectrum.

The Group Objectives are

- Maintain a support network of parents, friends and carers of people with ASD in a safe, nonthreatening and friendly environment
- To address both individual and group support needs
- To share information, experiences and expertise regarding resources and services
- To identify relevant issues and areas of need in the local community that impact on the lives of people with ASD and their families or carers.

Rules:

Membership is for parents/grandparents, carers of persons with ASD, individuals with ASD, Professionals and service providers and other interested community members. The cost of membership for parents/grandparents/carers/spouses/other relative and for those on the spectrum is \$5 per family per financial year. This provides access to our group library of books and other resources. Access to the library is only provided for parents/grandparents and for those on the spectrum. Membership is renewed on July 1st each year and renewals paid before 31st July are \$5 a year. After 31st July, renewals are \$10 a year. New memberships anytime during the year are \$5. If members do not have an email address or any internet connection cost of membership is \$10 a year due to postal costs to deliver newsletters.

As an unincorporated group, an informal committee is in place to organize and maintain the functioning of the group. No elections are necessary, but people's strengths should be noted when taking on positions. For example the coordinator should be a good communicator, an active listener and someone with empathy for others and the treasurer should have a good head for figures and fine detail.

Current volunteer positions are

- Group coordinator
- Treasurer
- Additional contact person
- Basketball/Activities coordinator
- Art Show convenor
- Other coordinators as activities warrant

The group meets regularly on the 3rd Tuesday of each month except during school holidays. This day can change and is always announced to members via newsletters or email. Venues can also change.

Confidentiality must always be adhered to within the support group, this providing a less stressful and relaxing time for all. What is said in the group, stays in the group.

Any funds raised by fundraising or memberships is kept in a group bank account and used appropriately as determined by the committee with consultation with other interested group members.

All deposits are to be receipted by the treasurer.

The group although affiliated with Autism Queensland is not to represent Autism Queensland and no group member may represent themselves as either a representative or staff member of Autism Queensland.

Autism Queensland's support for the group is detailed in the document "Support Group – Operational Guidelines" and is attached to our group rules.

No member is to represent the support group, without prior consent from the working executive.

Guest speakers or professionals and representatives from business/service providers are welcomed to our meetings, but must not attend our meetings in their professional role without prior consent from the coordinator. This includes group members with interests as service providers within our community. Volunteers are not permitted to use their volunteer status to either promote or conduct personal business.

Information is provided to members via monthly newsletters, email, phone and Facebook. The support group shows no preference to any information provided by individual service provider or professionals and all information shared and any views or opinions expressed may not necessarily be those of the "Mackay Autism Support Group". The Mackay Autism Support Group and the writer therefore disclaim any liability arising directly or indirectly from the information provided by the group.

Networking with other support groups, professionals and service providers is encouraged to be done by coordinator and those in "executive" positions in the group, in relation to further expanding services and links for those living with ASD in the community.

Members are free to share their own personal experiences and knowledge, but it must be done in an empathetic way, as not to "tell" other members what they have to do or what they should be doing.

It should also be remembered that there are areas beyond the support group base to handle and a line must be drawn in such circumstances and handed to someone trained to assist. Eg depression or family breakdown issues.

The group is involved in autism awareness activities in the community by ways of guest speaking from a parents perspective, promotion of the challenges and positives of ASD, with the hope of giving the

community a full awareness of ASD and its impact to individuals and their families and the community.

Current Contacts for group autismmackay@gmail.com is our only official email address

Debbie Brooker - Volunteer Coordinator - Ph. 49423458

Kara Collins – Volunteer Treasurer – kara.collins@ybr.com.au

Group Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/133009150350/>

Aspies Adult Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/236622159754087/>

Rules as at June, 2016