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Draft National Autism Strategy welcome, but needs implementation plan

The Federal Government's Draft Autism Strategy provides a welcome framework to guide the delivery of services and supports for people with autism and allow them to fully participate in all aspects of life, according to a submission developed by Mallee Family Care.

Mallee Family Care (MFC) provided feedback on the Draft Strategy from its perspective as a place-based organisation supporting individuals and families impacted by autism in the Mallee region.

CEO, Teresa Jayet, said that MFC supported the vision for the National Autism Strategy of a safe and inclusive society where all autistic people are empowered to reach their potential.

"This vision reflects MFC's belief that every person with autism has unique strengths, abilities, and attributes that should be recognised and valued by society," Ms Jayet said.

"Our submission emphasises the importance of a place-based approach in delivering a genuinely integrated and comprehensive autism strategy. This includes the integration of services, such as health, education, and social care, within the community to provide comprehensive support for individuals with autism and their families.

"As a regional provider of comprehensive services, we stress the importance of utilising the knowledge and expertise of local professionals whose understanding of the specific context and needs of the community can enhance the effectiveness of their services," Jayet said.

MFC's submission also calls on the government to work with stakeholders to develop a detailed roadmap for the implementation of the strategy, with measurable KPIs and clear comprehensive evaluation processes. It also recommends that the Federal Government should seek a commitment from state/territory governments to work collaboratively on a coordinated approach to implementation.

In highlighting the specific challenges faced by service providers in rural and remote areas, Ms Jayet said that MFC welcomes the recognition in the strategy of the critical importance of timely access to appropriate assessment, diagnosis, and therapy in addressing children's developmental challenges and improving their outcomes.

"Delays in accessing services are particularly common in rural and regional areas partly due to workforce shortages and turnover which leads to interruptions in service provision and additional costs," she said.

"Challenges posed by workforce shortages are often compounded with other access barriers for families in rural and regional areas, such as the higher costs, lower incomes, and greater



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distances they face when seeking care. As advocates for rural and remote communities, we recognise the importance of providing affordable, timely, and suitable services closer to home.

“As the strategy is finalised, we call on the government to commit to co-delivering the Strategy with people with autism, their families, carers, and support networks. By ensuring active involvement and leadership from the Autistic community, we can create solutions that genuinely meet their needs and preferences,” Ms Jayet said.

ENDS



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