



**Empower  
Autism**

# EMPOWER AUTISM THEORY OF CHANGE

The Empower Autism Theory of Change sets out our understanding of change needed for autistic people, and how we will work with the autistic community to impact that change. The Theory of Change builds a common understanding of Empower Autism's change goals and outlines the needs, strategies, actions, and conditions of the change we envisage.

## TO IMPACT THAT CHANGE

**WE WILL:**

### EMPOWER AND AFFIRM AUTISTIC PEOPLE

**BY:**

- Providing autism affirming spaces.
- Developing programs that are peer led and peer designed.
- Adjusting our engagement as guided by autistic people accessing our service.
- Listening to and respecting the needs and goals of our participants.
- Including autistic representation across all areas of Empower Autism, inclusive of concept identification, design, delivery, leadership and innovation.
- Reflecting on and adjusting our language based on community feedback.

### EDUCATE MAINSTREAM COMMUNITY

- Designing and delivering educational training and resources that allow people to increase their understanding and through that their acceptance.
- Creating safety to question in order to build understanding.
- Increasing understanding and capacity to connect.
- Encouraging the breaking of stereotypes and unconscious bias.

### COLLABORATE

- Expanding our capacity through connection and collaboration with like-minded organisations where synergies exist.
- Connecting our community with complimentary services.

### CONTINUOUSLY LEARN

- Asking questions and cultivating connection and welcoming feedback to build our understanding.
- Engaging in critical reflection.
- Creating and sharing opportunities to engage with new research, language and programs.

### RECOGNISE THAT CHANGE STARTS WITH US

- Applying the adjustments and affirmation that we advocate into all of our practices.
- Questioning the accessibility of socially constructed norms.
- Creating safety to engage in a way that works best for the individual.
- Treating each person with unconditional positive regard.

## THE CHANGE WE WILL SEE

Autistic people will be empowered to self-advocate, confident to share their strengths and to connect as their authentic selves.

Mainstream community will have the knowledge and understanding to affirm and connect with autistic people.

Both autistic and non-autistic people will benefit from:

- Equitable employment opportunities
- Strong and accessible community connections
- Improved social well being
- An inclusive, accessible and collaborative community.



## OUR ULTIMATE GOAL

To create one accessible community which celebrates the value of neurodiversity.

## THE NEED TO CHANGE

Autistic people experience social isolation due to socially, and environmentally, created barriers impacting through: -

- trauma,
- the need to mask, &
- overwhelm

which lead to: -

- negative mental health outcomes,
- high rates of unemployment or underemployment,
- low education outcomes, &
- low community engagement.

## OUR CHANGE GOALS

1. To empower autistic people to connect as their authentic selves with confidence.

2. To educate mainstream community and empower them to reduce barriers to connection with autistic people.