



HON EMILY BOURKE MLC

ASSISTANT MINISTER TO THE PREMIER
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR AUTISM

Attention: Expert Panel
GPO Box 1815
Adelaide SA 5001

Via email: DTI.PlanningReview@sa.gov.au

Dear Expert Panel,

I write on behalf of the Autistic and autism community in regards to the Planning System Implementation Review.

Since my appointment as the Assistant Minister for Autism in August of this year, I have continued to meet with many in the Autistic and autism communities – key stakeholders, families and carers, professors, organisations and most importantly, Autistic people.

At each meeting, each forum, each roundtable and each event the Autistic and autism communities have made it clear the importance of the built environment.

Many in the community have shared how spaces and the built environment significantly impacts the quality of life of Autistic people.

For example, the opportunity for Autistic people to independently interact with the built environment is often compromised (and sometimes denied) due to the mismatch between their specific needs and the 'built form.'

Research has also emphasised how the altered perception of sensory stimuli and processing of information coming from the environment is one of the main issues experienced by Autistic people, including:

- adverse responses to specific sounds or textures, temperatures, smells or lighting
- distress at changes to routine, locations, travel, interior design.

From this, many have shared the necessity to consider living environments on the basis of universal design (which includes, but is not limited to, the specific needs of Autistic people). Indeed, though universal design has gained increasing importance in urban planning and design over the past decade, many in the Autistic and autism community have highlighted how more needs to be done in this space.

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Autistic people contribute across all areas of society – in homes, schools, workplaces and local sports and community clubs.

Over 200,000 Australians are autistic and 1 in 4 Australians have an autistic family member. Autism is also the largest primary disability group in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and South Australia sits above the national average, with 39% of South Australian NDIS participants having autism as their primary diagnosis.

Therefore, it is essential the Planning System Implementation Review considers how the built environment and future infrastructure projects impact Autistic people and looks to ways that help promote autonomy and enhance their overall quality of life.

Specifically, many in the Autistic and autism community have shared the importance sensory spaces such as sensory rooms.

A sensory room is a purpose-built space that is available to support people with sensory differences to participate. They are often a separate room or space that contains a range of tactile, auditory, visual or movement-based experiences that can help when someone might be feeling overwhelmed with the external environment.

Other design features such as dimmable lights, light blocking curtains, low odour paint and noise control are all tools listed by the Autistic and autism community that can help create a more inclusive environment within developments.

Further, and in regard to consultation, I also ask that the Planning System Implementation Review considers ways that consultation on development proposals and submission methods are more inclusive towards the Autistic and autism communities. For example, having alternate modes of submissions (such as audio and video submissions) and consultation information available to be made in 'Easy Read' format are methods that have been highlighted by the Autistic and autism community to increase inclusivity and accessibility.

With these in mind, I ask the Planning System Implementation Review to prioritise inclusivity and consider the ways in which the built environment, and the consultation processes around future developments, interact and impact the Autistic and autism community.

I thank you for considering the concerns of the Autistic and autism community. If you would like to discuss further, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Emily Bourke MLC
Assistant Minister to the Premier
Assistant Minister for Autism

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