



Annual Report

FY2022-2023

Respect. Accept. Embrace. Empower.





Acknowledgement of Country

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

The Reframing Autism team would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we have the privilege to learn, work, and grow. Whilst we gather on many different parts of this Country, the RA team walk on the land of the Birpai, Awabakal, Wattamattagal, Bindjareb, Whadjak, Amangu, Dharawhal, Turrbal and Jagera peoples.

We are committed to honouring the rich culture of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this Country, and the diversity and learning opportunities with which they provide us. We extend our gratitude and respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to all Elders past, present, and emerging, for their wisdom, their resilience, and for helping this Country to heal.

Artwork: Jordan Ardler, 2021



What we do

Reframing Autism is a thought leader in the Autism space, providing Autistic-developed, designed and led educational opportunities and resources to the Autistic community and to our families and allies.

We offer a range of learning options, including on-demand online workshops, short courses, masterclasses and professional development, in-depth courses focusing on Autistic wellbeing, and conferences and symposia.

Our resources include blogs, articles, podcasts, webinars, position statements and research summaries, and are free for everyone to access. We also offer bespoke professional development, workshops, presentations, and consultation to the private, public and research sectors.

[Learn more about Autism and our purpose](#)



A Message from our Co-CEOs and Directors

At the end of each year, we tend to reflect on the year that has been. 2023 has been a mammoth year for the Australian Autistic community. The Disability Royal Commission (DRC), National Autism Strategy (NAS) and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Independent Review have given us, as a community, not only unprecedented attention, but equally unprecedented opportunities to share our stories, explain our experiences, and bring what we need to lead flourishing lives into national focus. Undoubtedly, these opportunities have had the potential to be liberating, validating and cathartic. But they have also been exhausting and arduous, and have often required us to revisit old traumas. We know that, for some, at the end of such a gruelling year, there is a feeling of ‘what has it all achieved?’, ‘what have we accomplished by sharing our stories?’, ‘has anyone really listened?’. To those who are wearied and demoralised by the slow pace of change, we offer our compassion and understanding, as well as our assurance... change, slow though it may be, is coming.

At Reframing Autism, then, we end this year with hope. We have been encouraged and emboldened by the opportunities to be seen and heard as Autistics. We have been excited by the conversations we have had with Government representatives, researchers and professionals, who have genuinely sought to give Autistic voices – across the Autistic spectrum – a space to be heard. And we are enthusiastic to embark on the many opportunities to amplify Autistic voices and foster Autistic wellbeing, that are planned for 2024. For all that 2023 has been challenging – and for all that 2024 will no doubt be, too – it is through our collective continued perseverance and commitment to driving change, that change will come for each of us and for our Autistic community more widely.



But we know that this has not been an easy year for many. Continued fighting in Ukraine, multiple natural disasters spanning the globe, the emerging crisis in Israel and Gaza, and – closer to home – the devastating result of the Voice Referendum, have all taken an extraordinary toll on individuals and communities around the world.

So, as we close out 2023, the Directors of Reframing Autism, together with our operational team, would like to offer our deepest condolences to all those effected by these events. We also want to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to you – you who have shared your stories, who have supported and encouraged us, who have attended our events or taken our courses or read our words, who have contributed to Reframing Autism through your involvement, advocacy, feedback or donations.

Reframing Autism is only possible with you, and we only achieve our aims alongside you.

Melanie Heyworth *Sharon Fraser*

Melanie Heyworth and Sharon Fraser
Co-CEOs
On behalf of the Board of Directors



A note from Melanie Heyworth

When I founded Reframing Autism over five years ago, I had no sense of the organisation it would become. My vision for the organisation was to make a difference so that my children – and their Autistic peers – could grow up in a more accepting, welcoming world that understood, respected and valued them. Whilst this vision remains a core one for us, Reframing Autism became so much more than that.

Over the years we have evolved to become a thought leader in the Australian Autism landscape, and an organisation that fosters the learning and knowledge of the Autistic and Autism communities alike. I am immensely proud of how far we have come, in such a short period of time, and of the difference we have made both to individual lives, and to the communities we serve. And I am deeply appreciative to work with such an incredibly dedicated and passionate team, without whom we could not achieve all that we have achieved, and continue to achieve.



One element that has established Reframing Autism as a credible and reliable source of information is our dual focus on lived experience expertise and research. Our research contribution – as a research, community, or coproduction partner – has allowed us to shape not only the research questions being asked, but the ways in which research is done, to ensure a diversity of Autistic voices and priorities shape Australian Autism research. But this work is intensive and takes considerable energy and time. So, I am thrilled to announce that in 2024 I will move into a specifically research role for Reframing Autism, leaving the CEO duties in the capable and committed hands of Reframing Autism’s current co-CEO, Sharon Fraser.

Research is undoubtedly my first love and my deepest passion, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to pursue research in this focussed way in 2024, and to continue to work towards my PhD. It will be a privilege to continue to serve Reframing Autism and its communities through research work, and to change lives through shaping the research agendas and methodologies to make sure every Autistic person has the opportunity to flourish.



Melanie Heyworth
Co-CEO and Founder



Our impact in FY2022-23



Registered

7,173

participants for
our newly
launched Autism
Essentials course



Contributed to

14

research
projects and
peer-reviewed
research articles

Provided

2,162

people with
facilitated
learning
opportunities



Produced

32

free tip sheets,
blogs and
research
summaries



Our growth in FY2022-23

As we look back on FY2022-23, we are thrilled to report an astounding 98% growth in people accessing our digital resources, a testament to the expanding reach and impact of our online presence. Furthermore, our social media community experienced a remarkable 20% surge in followers, demonstrating a thriving and engaged audience that continues to connect with our mission and values. This exponential growth is a clear indicator of the resonance and value of our content, and the connection we have with the Autistic community and its supporters.



98%

Growth in the number of people accessing our digital resources
→ 119K unique users



20%

Growth in the size of our social media community
→ 94K followers



Education and training

Reframing Autism runs a range of events for different audiences, including Autistic adults, parents of Autistic children, and professionals working with Autistic individuals and their families. In FY2022-23 we held ten online events open to members of the public, comprising a mixture of Masterclasses, Community Workshops and Continuing Professional Development sessions.

We firmly believe that financial hardship should not hinder access to neuro-affirming Autism education. Our \$5 Community Workshop tickets are complemented by free tickets for those facing hardship, and by the option for paid attendees to donate. Through this inclusive approach, our community's generosity covered the equivalent cost of 242 free tickets, embodying our commitment to making Autism education financially accessible to all.

In FY2022-23, we provided a total of **9,335** educational opportunities for our community. This included 2,162 registrations for facilitated learning, and 7,173 self-study participants who enrolled in our Autism Essentials course.



Reframing Autism 2023 Conference

23 & 24 February 2023
Online



Innovations in Autism
Education: Neuroinclusive,
neuroaffirming schooling



With thanks to our
generous sponsor



In late February, we successfully hosted the 2023 Conference on Innovations in Autism Education: Neuroinclusive, neuroaffirming schooling. The virtual event, which drew insights from both research and the lived experiences of 24 presenters from Australia and around the world, mapped out a blueprint for supporting Autistic students, their peers, and educators.

The virtual conference attracted 469 attendees over the two-day program as we examined two pillars of inclusion – social-emotional inclusion and pedagogical inclusion. Conference attendees engaged in a comprehensive array of topics and learnings from experts in their fields, and explored how teachers, support staff and educational leaders can work together to create neuroinclusive, neuroaffirming environments, which actively support Autistic children – and, indeed, all children and staff – to thrive.

Keynote presentations were provided by renowned thought leaders in this space, including Dr Ross Greene, Peter Hutton, Emma van der Klift, Norman Kunc, and Dr Rebecca Wood.





“Wow! The conference content exceeded my expectations. The presenters shared a perfect balance of evidence-based research and experiential knowledge that led to so many ‘Aha!’ moments for me. I can't wait to take away all I learnt and apply it to my roles as a professional working in the education sector and a parent to an Autistic child trying to navigate it.” – Professional & parent attendee

We are thrilled to report that the post-event survey garnered incredibly positive feedback, resulting in an impressive overall average score of 4.3 out of 5 for our conference content. This achievement reflects our commitment to delivering valuable insights and fostering a collaborative learning environment for key stakeholders, including Autistic people, families, and professionals.

We extend our sincere thanks to the stellar lineup of thought leaders, psychologists, educators, inclusion specialists, researchers, therapists, writers, and Autistic advocates who contributed their expertise, and to Illume Learning for their generous sponsorship of the event.

[Learn about our upcoming events](#)



AUTISM ESSENTIALS

by reframing **AUTISM**



“I have not yet divulged my Autism to some areas of my life, participating in this course has helped me to be more confident about being proudly Autistic in all aspects so that I can role model neuro-affirming for my Autistic daughter. Thank you.” – Participant

Launched in early April, Autism Essentials is a free, self-paced course that provides a solid overview of Autism in a neuroaffirming way. This course is designed for a wide variety of people and lived experiences and features video content and worksheets to help people reflect and apply their knowledge around five main topics: Language, What is Autism?, Brain Differences, Communication and Socialising, and Thinking and Processing.

Since its April launch, the response to this course has been phenomenal, with 7,173 registrations received from April through the end of June, and this number continues to grow today. Furthermore, participant feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the course's effectiveness in meeting diverse needs and solidifying its reputation as a valuable resource in the Autism education space.

[Learn more and register](#)



Luz's story

When Luz's son was identified as Autistic, she struggled to find clear, reliable information about neurodiversity.

"I started to look for information about Autism, and I couldn't find anything relatable to my son, or myself. Nothing that I found described him," she recalls, so much that she thought he might have been misdiagnosed.

Her searching led her to Reframing Autism.

"I felt that it had a very different description of what Autism was, an explanation of what Autism was," she says.

"I found that Reframing Autism had information that based Autism on highlighting strengths without hiding the challenges, that we are not some kind of disordered human, but that we are just different, we have a different neurology. And I started learning about this more with Reframing Autism."



[Read the full story](#)



Resources

Reframing Autism is proud to have brought a wealth of Autistic-produced lived experience insights and practical tips to our vast audience of researchers, allied health professionals, educators, Autistic people, and the allies who support them.

Creating Autistic content is a catalyst to positive change, by amplifying lived experience expertise in a neuroaffirming and trauma-informed space. It also empowers individuals to broaden their skills and gain confidence to share their stories. The process yields work experience, exposure, and a profound sense of validation. Some of our Autistic writers have had opportunities come their way following their publication on our website, and have gone on to become published authors and renowned advocates in their own right.

In FY2022-23, we produced **32** free tip sheets, blogs, and research summaries, spanning a breadth of topics important to the Autistic community, and covering various stages in life, experiences, challenges, and accomplishments.



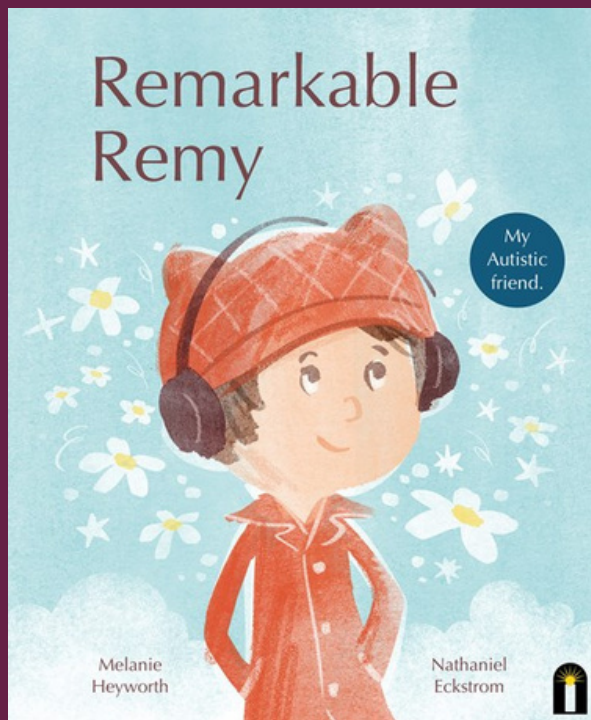


“As a copywriter working in health and social services, Reframing Autism is always the first place I go to find reliable, factual, Autistic-led information. Its articles, resources and webinars have been invaluable in both my professional and personal life.” – Tanya Hollis

For readers, our Autistic resources provide critical insights into the lived experiences of Autistic individuals. By tapping into authentic narratives, researchers gain a deeper understanding of the neurodivergent perspective, which can inform their studies, and lead to more accurate research outcomes. Educators benefit greatly from these resources, as they gain access to strategies and tools for creating inclusive learning environments, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive. Supporters of the Autistic community can access reliable information and guidance through our resources, allowing them to provide more effective support and advocacy for Autistic individuals.

[Explore our full suite of free resources](#)





In February 2023, we were thrilled to release our second children's book, 'Remarkable Remy'. Written by Reframing Autism's founder and Co-CEO, Dr Melanie Heyworth, and illustrated by Nathaniel Eckstrom, 'Remarkable Remy' is a warm and optimistic story for children aged 3+ that shares the strengths of the Autistic brain, and the many joys of having a friend who teaches you new ways to experience the world.

“As an educator with an Autistic child, I deeply appreciate the perspective of this Autistic author. I'm eager to share this inclusive story with students and recommend this title to other families and educators.” – Amazon.com.au review

Over **5,000** copies sold!

At Reframing Autism, we believe that knowledge is power, and we want to see a world where Autistic children grow up learning that their brains are awesomely different. Through books like these, Autistic children can learn how wonderfully strong, how beautifully unique, and how completely whole they are.

[Purchase Remarkable Remy.](#)



Research

Reframing Autism is committed to furthering the aims of inclusive research that is genuinely co-produced with the Autistic community, and which acknowledges our community as the clear beneficiaries of knowledge production and translation.

We have thus offered our time and expertise to various research projects as co-researchers, collaborators, partners, and consultants to ensure that Autistic voices are represented across the research lifecycle and to inform all elements of research to best serve our community.

In FY2022-23, we contributed to **14** research projects and peer-reviewed research articles, in collaboration with other like-minded universities and organisations, across the world. Our work in this space covered a multitude of significant topics, including quality of life, late diagnosis, parent-teacher relationships, experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, Autistic identity, and more.





Furthering our commitment to Autistic representation and advocacy in this field, Reframing Autism founder, Co-CEO, and Autistic researcher, Dr Melanie Heyworth, delivered a keynote presentation at the Australasian Society for Autism Research 2022 Conference on 'Reaching the right people: Community perceptions of Autism research'.

It is only through research that is co-produced with and for the Autistic community that we will effect the greatest change for Autistic wellbeing and quality of life across the lifespan.

The Reframing Autism team, then, are challenging the research status quo paradigm by positioning Autistic voices not just as passive participants in or subjects of research, but as experts whose experiential knowledge brings depth, rigour, practicality, accessibility and relevance to Autism science.

[Learn more about participatory Autism research and practical steps](#)



Reframing Autism are proud to have contributed to various research projects throughout FY2022-23 in collaboration with our research partners.



Reference list of peer-reviewed research articles

- Smith, J., Rabba, A., Dang, N., Datta, P., Dresens, E., Nguyen, H. T. T., Nguyen, K.-V., Hall, G., Heyworth, M., Lawson, W., Lilley, R., Syeda, N., & Pellicano, E. (2023). “We don’t make trouble”: Vietnamese parents’ experiences of parent-teacher partnerships for their autistic children. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*. doi: [10.1016/j.rasd.2023.102142](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2023.102142)
- Heyworth, M., Brett, S., den Houting, J., Magiati, I., Steward, R., Urbanowicz, A., Stears, M., & Pellicano, E. (2023). “I’m the family ringmaster and juggler”: Autistic parents’ experiences of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Autism in Adulthood*, 5(1), 24–36. doi: [10.1089/aut.2021.0097](https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2021.0097)
- Scheeren, A., Crane, L., Heyworth, M., & Pellicano, L. (2023). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Autistic adults: A scoping review. *Current Developmental Disorders Report*. doi: [10.1007/s40474-023-00268-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s40474-023-00268-6)
- Smith, J., Rabba, A., Ali, A., Datta, P., Dresens, E., Faragaab, N., Hall, G., Heyworth, M., Ige, K., Lawson, W., Lilley, R., Syeda, N., Yusuf, N., & Pellicano, E. (2023). “Somali parents feel like they’re on the outer”: Somali mothers’ experiences of parent-teacher relationships for their autistic children. *Autism*. doi: [10.1177/13623613221146077](https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221146077)
- Smith, J., Rabba, A., Cong, L., Datta, P., Dresens, E., Hall, G., Heyworth, M., Lawson, P., Lee, P., Lilley, R., Ma, E., Syeda, N., Wang, J., Wang, R., Yeow, C., & Pellicano, E. (2022). “They were saying that I was a typical Chinese mum”: Chinese parents’ experiences of parent-teacher partnerships for their autistic children. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. doi: [10.1007/s10803-022-05748-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05748-z)
- Pellicano, E., Fatima, U., Hall, G., Heyworth, M., Lawson, W., Lilley, R., Mahony, J., & Stears, M. (2022). A capabilities approach to understanding and supporting autistic adulthood. *Nature Reviews: Psychology*. doi: [10.1038/s44159-022-00099-z](https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-022-00099-z)
- Lilley, R., Lawson, W., Hall, G., Mahoney, J., Clapham, H., Heyworth, M., Arnold, S., Trollor, J., Yudell, M., & Pellicano, E. (2022). “Peas in a pod”: Oral history reflections on Autistic identity in family and community by late-diagnosed adults. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. doi: [10.1007/s10803-022-05667-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05667-z)



Diversity & representation

At the heart of Reframing Autism's mission is a profound commitment to fostering inclusivity and amplifying a multiplicity of voices within the Autistic community, and this dedication comes to life through the impactful initiatives led by the Intersectional Advisory Committee (IAC) and the Autism Professionals and Practice Committee (APPC).

We recognise that the Autistic experience is remarkably varied, and our commitment to diversity and representation is not just an ethos, but a driving force that shapes our initiatives. By actively seeking to include a variety of perspectives, Reframing Autism aims to break down stereotypes and ensure that the richness and complexity of the Autistic experience is authentically represented.

Through these efforts, we strive to create a community where every voice is heard, valued, and contributes to a more accurate and inclusive portrayal of Autistic lived experience.



The Intersectional Advisory Committee (IAC) is a group of 11 adults, most of whom are Autistic, who represent many intersectional communities and diverse experiences. Our IAC members are lived experience experts who not only inform our work at Reframing Autism, but whom we support to co-produce projects of highest importance to them and to the broader Autistic community.

Currently, the IAC is working on two projects: a narrative and informational welcome pack for newly identified Autistic adults, and a position statement on diagnosis. In 2024, the welcome pack will be formally evaluated to understand its impact on the wellbeing of Autistic adults post-diagnosis. As we continue to develop the IAC model of co-production, we hope to utilise its framework as a cornerstone of our work into the future, so that the full and rich diversity of Autistic experience drives our priorities and suffuses our resources.

The Autism Professionals and Practice Committee (APPC) is a group of 6 professionals working with Autistic clients or students. The professions covered by the committee include teaching, psychology, occupational therapy, speech therapy, medicine and more. The goal of this committee is to inform Reframing Autism on the best ways to provide information and tools to the committee members' colleagues and other professionals who wish to improve their skills in providing neurodiversity affirming care to their Autistic clients or students. The first project of the committee is to write a position statement on what it means to be a neurodiversity affirming practitioner.

[Learn about available opportunities and register for our Opportunities List](#)



Why our work is vital

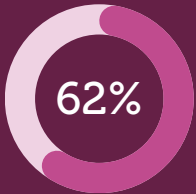
By reframing society's perspective on Autism, we pave the way for transformative change and improved outcomes for Autistic individuals, both in the present and the future.

The following statistics may feel uncomfortable and confronting, and rightfully so. Autistic people often face challenges and barriers in their everyday lives, however, the current outcomes surrounding education, employment, mental health and life expectancy for the Autistic community, are simply unacceptable.

Reframing Autism is steadfast in its commitment to proactively enhance these outcomes through our mission and our initiatives, and we are dedicated to improving the long-term wellbeing of our Autistic community. We aim to create a world in which the Autistic community is supported by families and allies to achieve genuine acceptance, inclusion, and active citizenship, and in which Autistic culture and identity are celebrated and nurtured.



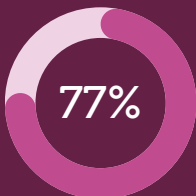
Autism and Education: Did you know?



of Autistic students have co-occurring learning difficulties ¹



of Autistic students don't complete Year 10 (compared to 17% of typically developing children) ¹



of Autistic students report experiencing difficulty at their place of learning ²

Autistic Australians are **50% less likely** to obtain a bachelors degree than other people with a disability. ¹

¹ Amaze (2019)

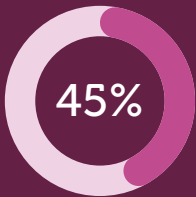
² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019)



Autism and Employment: Did you know?



of Autistic Australian adults are unemployed (a figure 6 times greater than the average population) ¹



of Autistic Australian adults are underemployed ¹



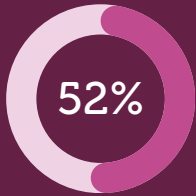
of Autistic Australian adults feel they have lost their job because of Autism ¹

In terms of transparency, only about **1 in 4** Autistic employees have felt comfortable in disclosing their Autism to their current employer. ¹

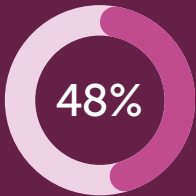
¹ Amaze (2019)



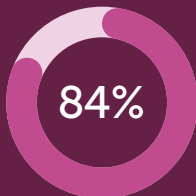
Autism and Quality of Life: Did you know?



of Autistic Australians report feeling socially isolated ¹



of Autistic Australians report feeling avoided or shunned ¹



of Autistic Australians recognise that Autistic people are discriminated against ¹

The current mortality rate for the Australian Autistic population is **2.06 times greater** than that of the general population, with suicide being a leading reason. ²

Sadly, the risk of suicide is up to **9 times higher** for Autistic individuals compared to their non-autistic peers – a statistic that requires urgent attention and effort to change. ³

¹ Amaze (2019)

² Hwang et al. (2019)

³ LaTrobe University (2021)

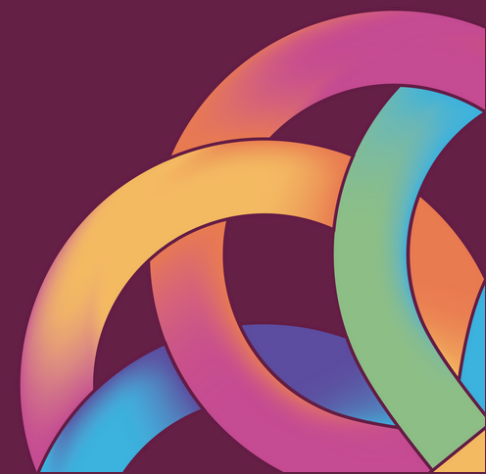


Financial statements

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Revenue	771,416	609,852
Other income	2,562	1,179
Amortisation & depreciation expense	(1,508)	(2,495)
Bank fees & charges	(335)	(318)
Employment expense	(434,978)	(389,884)
Insurance expense	(8,044)	(6,635)
Technology expense	(19,127)	(60,556)
Other expenses	(179,454)	(97,764)
NET SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	130,532	53,379
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	130,532	53,379



Financial statements

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash & cash equivalents	611,019	502,671
Trade & other receivables	-	709
Other current assets	259,196	6,079
<i>Total current assets</i>	<u>870,215</u>	<u>509,459</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant & equipment	<u>4,181</u>	<u>2,663</u>
<i>Total non-current assets</i>	<u>4,181</u>	<u>2,663</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u><u>874,396</u></u>	<u><u>512,122</u></u>



Financial statements

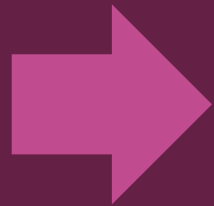
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade & other payables	88,628	12,376
Provisions	29,278	19,060
Other liabilities	515,410	370,138
<i>Total current liabilities</i>	633,316	401,574
TOTAL LIABILITIES	633,316	401,574
NET ASSETS	241,080	110,548
EQUITY		
Retained surpluses	241,080	110,548
<i>Total equity</i>	241,080	110,548

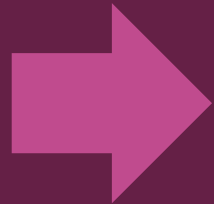


Next steps

In the next year, Reframing Autism's top priorities are to:



Include more diverse Autistic voices and experiences from across the Autistic spectrum into our work, educational opportunities, and resources. We know that there are many in our Autistic community who are multiply marginalised and under-represented, not least of whom are our nonspeaking neurokindred and those with an Intellectual Disability.



Pay due attention to lesser talked about 'ages and stages', so that our resources and educational opportunities are relevant to Autists across the lifespan. These might include giving visibility to Autistic experiences of puberty, pregnancy and childbirth, menopause, ageing or retirement.



Give specific attention to the ways in which we can translate our informational resources to be practically applicable to Autistic lives. We have developed such a rich repository of information and are excited to focus on how that information can concretely and measurably enhance the everyday lives and wellbeing of our communities.



Join our mission

Be part of the change - join us and help reframe the way the world sees Autism.

1. Donate

Your generosity will make a difference in the lives of Autistic people today and tomorrow.

2. Subscribe

Get the latest news and announcements delivered straight to your inbox for free.

3. Learn with us

Choose from a range of valuable learning offerings delivered online.



Contact us



reframing
AUTISM

respect · accept · embrace · empower

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