

Spectrum Support Official Statement
31st October 2020

Public statement about latest NSW policing incident with autistic schoolgirl.

Dear Community,

In response to the latest NSW Police incident involving an autistic schoolgirl, we have received a significant number of messages and online comments concerning the Spectrum Support “Autism & First Responders Training” partnership with the NSW Police.

In this statement we would like to address this incident and your questions.

Firstly, we would like to reiterate that Spectrum Support is dedicated to the safety, education, health and inclusion of all Australians on the spectrum.

Two years ago, Spectrum Support embarked on a journey to ensure that every police officer in Australia completed autism training to assist them in dealing with incidents involving people on the spectrum. The intensive 4-day training course covers the complexities that rise in both victim and perpetrators scenarios and requires very specific training for specialist departments.

We funded this research and training development ourselves. We included experts from across the world with leading experience in developing programs for law enforcement and diverse group from the autistic community. The training has been developed to both de-escalate engagements as well as reduce trauma for the autistic individual.

In 2018 we approached NSW Police to pilot the implementation of our innovative autism training. In June 2019 our training was successful and in October 2019, our work received Commissioner Fuller's Safety Initiative Award. Something we are extremely proud of.

In February of 2020, a public launch of the partnership between Spectrum Support and NSW Police Force was announced. Police Commissioner Mick Fuller said “It’s a step in the right direction for police. We’re not doctors, we’re not nurses, we’re not specialist, we have enormous pressure to deal with things quickly, but this course and the feedback from the police officers who have done this course, they’re saying ‘why didn’t we do this 30 years ago?’”

We wish it noted that while we held several training sessions, like most businesses around the globe, Spectrum Support has suffered substantially at the hands of Covid-19 and our training program along with the ASD Talisman program has been impacted and delayed. Our aim is to commence training once again in the coming months.

Spectrum Support remains committed to the Australian autistic community to continue our education, training and talisman program to NSW Police and all first responders across the country.

It is heartbreaking that we continue to see policing incidents involving people with autism, especially children with autism. Clearly, we need to do better and we must do better. As parents of three autistic boys, we never want to see our children experience the horror of an interaction with police that suffers from a lack of education. Every outcome will have a lifelong impact.

Like every parent across Australia, we want to know that if our special needs children ever encounter law enforcement that they will be treated with understanding, consideration and compassion.

In closing, we would like to thank you all. We thank the autistic community for your continued contributions and the parents and carers for your patience through this unprecedented time in history.

We thank all those that follow and support our work on social media, we do notice and some days we really need you!

Acknowledgement for our specialised training has been recognised by law enforcement, government officials, the autistic community and families. These collective voices have helped Spectrum Support open a much needed and overdue dialog.

When incidents like this take place, they remind us of how we need to do better, together. Our task is daunting and long, but we stand to this challenge.

With love and respect,

Kathrine & Stephen Peereboom
Spectrum Support