



# Strategic Plan

2022-2027



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# SWAN's Strategic Plan at a glance

## Build the capacity of autistic people, their families, and the community

- Explain how services & systems work, & how to navigate them
- Connect with mainstream & community services, & help them to be inclusive of autistic people
- Provide workshops and training
- Run programs to build & maintain people's skills to self-advocate

## Represent the interests of autistic people and advocate for their rights

- Ensure staff have the skills to support autistic people & their families
- Provide best practice individual support & advocacy services
- Advocate and influence local & systemic issues affecting autistic people & families
- Develop connections with other advocates
- Run or be involved in systemic advocacy campaigns to address disability inequities

## Build our skills and capacity to provide quality services and supports

- The lived experience of autistic people & families guides how we work
- Focus on human rights, our mission & values
- Policies & procedures support best practice
- Ensure staff & volunteers embrace our values & have the skills to run our services
- Meet all legal & regulatory requirements
- Quality induction, ongoing training & individualised support for all staff

## Strengthen our governance, systems and processes

- Make sure that strong governance & risk management support all our operations
- Our governance policy guides SWAN Board & management to strengthen our systems
- Feedback from SWAN members and clients shows we are meeting their needs
- Have sound policies and procedures
- Be open and transparent in our governance & management

## Strengthen SWAN's identity and brand in the community

- Tell people who we are and what we do
- Maintain our identity by providing peer-led, rights based, quality services to autistic people
- Build a strong, appropriate & respected presence on social media
- Maintain our website & social media to ensure information is up-to-date

## Build our financial viability and sustainability

- Develop & implement written strategy to build financial viability & sustainability
- Review our operational efficiency
- Develop a range of diverse, sustainable revenue streams
- Identify & develop opportunities for funding through partnerships & sponsorships
- Create efficiencies in the way we operate

# Introduction

My name is Anthony (Ant) and as the recently appointed SWAN President, I have the pleasure of presenting SWAN's Strategic Plan. This plan will guide SWAN through a five-year period, from 2022 – 2027. This plan has been developed over the last few months, and draws from a strategic review that involved input from our stakeholders, including our membership, clients of SWAN, the SWAN Board and SWAN staff and volunteers. In developing this plan, SWAN reviewed our Vision, Purpose and Values and have adopted Strategic Goals that we feel are relevant, measurable, and achievable. There are some key challenges SWAN face in the present, and in the near future, such as maintaining financial viability, resourcing, and ensuring we keep abreast of current and future changes that occur in the disability sector and wider community. By exploring foreseen challenges, we are ensuring we plan and organise ourselves in a way that facilitates longevity of SWAN's services.

Our vision is for a community where every autistic person is able to live the life they choose. We strive to provide quality information and support services to ensure that people are aware of, and have the ability, to access mainstream and disability services as they choose.

SWAN is unique in the south west as a rights based, independent organisation with lived experience. We have no vested interest, and people seeking information and support from SWAN can be assured that the free advice we give is designed solely to empower them with choice and control. Feedback directly from families shows this to be the main reason they connect with SWAN and continue to seek us out.

At all times our objective is to have our members and their families kept up to date with all things that are needed for their own development and inclusion in society. This means sharing the knowledge to allow people to advocate on their journey into the wider community. Also educating the wider society to understand the needs and wants of people on the autism spectrum.

On behalf of our Board, and other stakeholders, I would like to acknowledge the involvement of our members, the SWAN management team, staff, volunteers, and consultant Jackie Softly in the development of this strategic plan.

**Ant Pursell**  
**SWAN President**

## Our Vision

A community where every autistic person is able to live the life they choose.

## Our Mission

To enhance the lives of autistic people and their families in their own communities by:

- Providing holistic support to individuals and their families through peer support, information, linkages, and advocacy
- Working together with autistic people and their families to build their capacity to make choices and have control in their own lives
- Working together with organisations and networks with similar values to share strategies and resources to bring about positive change and improve regional services
- Building the understanding, awareness, and capacity of the community, to enable participation, inclusion, and contribution of all people with disabilities.

## Our Philosophy and Values

SWAN operates from a philosophy that all people have the right to live in inclusive and supportive communities.

Our work with individuals and families strives to uphold and promote the values of inclusion in line with our vision and mission statement.

# Our Operating Environment

SWAN is a not for profit, charitable organisation supporting autistic individuals and their families living in the south west region of Western Australia for the past 13 years. Our aim is to improve the lives of autistic people by providing information, linkages to mainstream and disability supports (including the National Disability Insurance Scheme), resources, peer support and advocacy. SWAN also provides support and information to the wider community via phone, face to face meetings, email, and/or social media contact. We are a Disabled Persons and Families Organisation (DPFO) who are currently delivering two Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) projects funded by the Department of Social Services. All staff, volunteers and Board members either have a disability, are the family member of someone with disability, or both.

SWAN has grown dramatically since a small group of families founded the network in 2009. Most of our services are provided free of charge, and we aim to continue this to ensure that all members of our community can continue to access our services. Support from SWAN is available via phone, face-to-face support, email, SM and video conference using Zoom or Microsoft Teams, in addition to our website, e-Newsletter and social media. The use of technology enables the SWAN team to support people with disability and their families anywhere in Australia, and we are increasingly contacted by people living outside the south west region who are seeking information and support. At the time of writing, SWAN have 1,731 registered members. Our SWAN private Facebook group has 983 members, and the SWAN public Facebook page currently has 2,353 followers.

We support people across the lifespan, at different stages, with a wide variety of needs. The lived experience and local knowledge of our team enables us to individually tailor the support we provide to each person contacting SWAN. The largest group of autistic people in our community age from their early 20s down to early childhood. Over the next 5 years, we expect to see a constant stream of people transitioning from high school to adulthood, employment, to independent living, and seeking skill development and capacity building on their life journey. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) offers greater opportunity for people with disability to be more independent and involved in the local community, and there is a great need for individual capacity building to make the most of this opportunity.

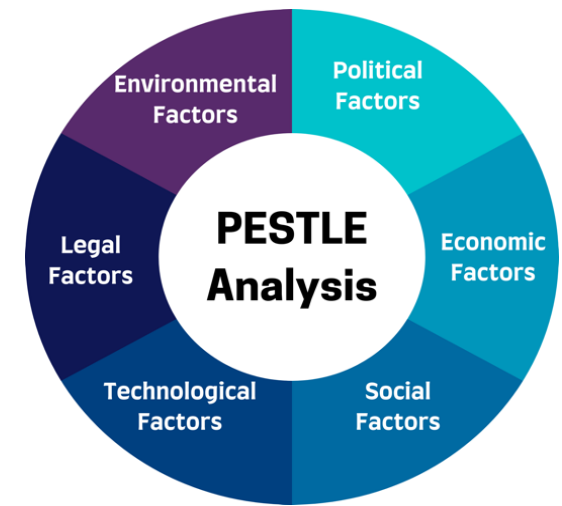
As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021, there were 26,692 West Australians who have been diagnosed with autism and related disabilities who are NDIS participants, with approximately 8.3 percent (2,227 participants) living in the South West of WA (NDIS data insights: <https://data.ndis.gov.au/explore-data> ). We expect this number will continue to increase as the south west population grows, understanding and recognition of autistic traits and diagnosis improves. This suggests that there will be a continued need for SWAN's support as the incidence of autism is 1 in 70 according to Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT) – from 2018.

An important part of developing this new strategic plan was to think about the environment in which SWAN operates. We need to understand the different factors so we can adapt our internal processes, resources and capabilities to suit the changing operational environment.

We discussed the factors that currently, or will potentially, influence how we work during the life of this strategic plan. We did a PESTLE analysis to help us think about the political, environmental, social, technological, economic and legal factors that we need to be aware of and adapt to.

PESTLE analysis is a tool used to gain an overall picture of the environment an organisation works in. It identifies the factors that might impact on SWAN, including potential opportunities and threats. Knowing these factors will help guide SWAN’s Board and Management in making decisions for the organisation.

Our PESTLE findings showed that the following factors could impact on SWAN and the services we provide:



Factor	Findings
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change of Government bringing changes to the NDIS and potentially other relevant agencies</li> <li>Management of Information Linkages &amp; Capacity building (ILC) handed over to the Department of Social Services from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), thus impacting on SWAN’s current funded projects</li> <li>The National Disability Employment Strategy</li> <li>Renegotiation of the Bilateral Agreement for NDIS coming up in 2022 between the State and Federal Governments</li> <li>Review of the Disability Support Pension in 2022</li> <li>Federal advocacy funding (that is generally low and only accessible to selected organisations)</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased need and greater complexity of needs, due to people struggling (hard to get housing, rising interest rates, increasing costs etc)</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact of Covid-19 on individuals and the community</li> <li>Increasing numbers of individuals moving to our region which will likely result in more SWAN clients and more advocacy work needed, but no increase in funding to do it</li> <li>Growth of population of people being diagnosed</li> <li>Inadequate services in our region and long wait lists for existing services (thin markets)</li> </ul>

Factor	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sandwich generation (parents supporting disabled kids while helping parents with aged care)</li> </ul>
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Internet outages</li> <li>▪ Potential for data breach</li> <li>▪ Keeping up to date (and the human and financial resources required to keep up to date)</li> <li>▪ People more likely to use technology to access support (therapy and peer support)</li> <li>▪ SWAN has a greater reach due to technology use, thus allowing opportunities to work with people all over the state and country</li> </ul>
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legal and regulatory operating and reporting obligations as an incorporated</li> <li>▪ Police and Working with Children Check (WWCC)</li> <li>▪ Redress, Child protection</li> <li>▪ NDIS worker checks</li> <li>▪ Insurances (and what SWAN is covered for)</li> <li>▪ Contracts, Engagement letters</li> <li>▪ Partnerships with other organisations</li> <li>▪ Risk Management</li> </ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impact of Covid 19 – adaptation of operations, programs, and governance as a result</li> <li>▪ Climate change and how it will affect the regions and SWAN</li> <li>▪ Business continuity – importance of planning for when SWAN is affected by environmental factors</li> <li>▪ Eco-friendliness of SWAN’s operations</li> <li>▪ Office space, venues being appropriate for use</li> </ul>

Supporting people with disability and their families is at the centre of everything we do at SWAN. To maintain our independence as a peer support organisation we need sound governance and financial sustainability. SWAN will need to continue to work hard to diversify our income streams, so that we are not relying on grant funding which may or may not eventuate. It is a very positive time at SWAN, having seen our funding and thus capacity to provide support increase significantly due to Federal ILC funding over the past 3 years, and I am honoured to be a part of this. With a strong, committed, and highly skilled Board, management team, staff and volunteers, the next 5 years will see SWAN continue to grow to meet the needs of our community.

**Nick Avery**  
CEO



# Our Strategic Focus

This Strategic Plan will guide SWAN over the next 5 years to work towards our vision of a community where every autistic person is able to live the life they choose. We have developed six strategic goals that focus on the priority areas that could impact SWAN during that time. These goals are aligned with SWAN's Vision, Mission, Philosophy and Values. We will work to meet these strategic goals to achieve successful outcomes for autistic people and their families.

## Our strategic goals are to:

1. **Build the capacity of autistic people, their families, and the community**
2. **Represent the interests of autistic people and advocate for their rights**
3. **Build our skills and capacity to provide quality services and supports**
4. **Strengthen our governance, systems, and processes**
5. **Strengthen SWAN's identity and brand in the community**
6. **Build our financial viability and sustainability**

## How will we know if we are achieving our strategic goals?

- We will use our Strategic Plan as a quality framework
- We will set goals, milestones, and timeframes for when we will achieve specific outcomes
- We will develop an Operational Plan that is in line with the strategic goal areas
- We will set performance measures for each outcome
- We will develop a reporting process for staff to use
- We will report against our goals at each Board meeting and in our Annual Report.

We will also use a Balanced Score Card (BSC) approach which focuses on clients, finances, internal processes, and organisational capacity. We will use this as an overall summary assessment of:

- **How well we are supporting autistic people, their families and the community;**
- **How well our business processes are working;**
- **Our organisation's capacity, development, and growth; and**
- **How well we are building and maintaining our financial sustainability.**



# Strategic Goal 1

## Build the capacity of autistic people, their families, and the community

### Commitment:

We will support autistic people and their families to understand and navigate government and community systems and develop their skills and capacity to self-advocate.

### We will achieve this strategic goal by:

- Providing supports in ways that build people's understanding of how services and systems work, so they can learn to navigate them and address issues with less or no formal support in future.
- Building connections with mainstream and community services and helping them to be inclusive of autistic people through advice, information, training, and shared events.
- Providing workshops for autistic people and their families to develop their knowledge, skills, and connections.
- Running programs to develop strengthen and maintain people's skills and capacity to self-advocate.

### We will know we are achieving this strategic goal if:

- Autistic people are developing and demonstrating their capacity for self-advocacy.
- People rely less on formal support from SWAN to understand and navigate systems and resolve issues more independently.
- We are successfully connecting with mainstream and community organisations and seeing positive outcomes for autistic people and their families.
- We have provided workshops for autistic people and their families, and their feedback is that the workshops are what they needed. Follow up feedback shows they have used the knowledge and skills successfully.

## Strategic Goal 2

### Represent the interests of autistic people, and support them to advocate for their rights

#### Commitment:

We will provide high quality individual advocacy, build people's capacity to self-advocate, and speak out on systemic issues that affect autistic people.

#### We will achieve this strategic goal by:

- Ensuring our advocacy staff have the relevant skills, expertise, and experience to support autistic people and their families.
- Providing best-practice, high quality individual advocacy to support autistic people, their families (where appropriate), guardians and relevant others.
- Being an influencer and advocate on local issues that affect autistic people and their families.
- Working with other organisations to ensure people get the individual advocacy and supports they need.
- Developing our connections with other regional advocacy organisations to share information, expertise and for mutual support.
- Running or being involved in systemic advocacy campaigns to address issues that affect autistic people.

#### We will know we are achieving this strategic goal if:

- We have suitable advocacy staff who are trained and experienced and feel well supported in their roles.
- We are achieving successful individual advocacy outcomes.
- We have developed reliable relationships with other organisations that help us make sure people get the advocacy and supports they need.
- We have successful outcomes from our productive and mutually supportive connections with other regional advocacy organisations.
- We have run or been strongly involved in systemic advocacy campaigns. Especially those with successful outcomes.

## Strategic Goal 3

### Build our skills and capacity to provide safe, quality services and supports

#### Commitment:

We will develop our workforce, systems, work practices, resources, and infrastructure to enable SWAN to provide appropriate, person-centred and high-quality services and supports.

#### We will achieve this strategic goal by:

- Ensuring autistic people and (where appropriate) their families are at the centre of, and guide how we work.
  - Ensuring our workforce can design and deliver peer-based supports that are informed by lived experience.
  - Ensuring our services, supports and all that we do are grounded in human rights and in line with our vision, mission, philosophy, values, and strategic goals.
  - Developing policies and procedures to support us in providing best practice services and supports.
  - Implementing best practice and using current evidence to design programs and provide services and supports.
- Ensuring our employees and volunteers embrace our values and have the skills and expertise to run our services, by:
    - Identifying the skills, experience, and qualities we need, and developing these in existing staff, and volunteers.
    - Ensuring recruitment of new employees and volunteers includes the required skill sets, experience, and qualities.
  - Ensuring all staff and volunteers receive quality induction, ongoing training, and individualised support.
  - Ensuring SWAN meets all its employment obligations.
  - Developing and implementing risk management plans for all programs, services and supports.
  - Ensuring SWAN meets all legal and regulatory requirements regarding safety and safeguarding for staff, volunteers, and clients.
  - Providing technology and infrastructure to support effective and efficient work practices.
  - Developing partnerships, working relationships and networks with other organisations with similar values to share expertise and resources and together identify ways to improve quality, safety and responsiveness and create operational efficiencies.

**We will know we are achieving this strategic goal if:**

- We have processes to ensure we design our services and supports to be rights based and person-centred, including consulting and co-designing with autistic people/families, and continuous improvement informed by evaluations, feedback, and complaints.
- People value SWAN's lived expertise and choose our peer-delivered, safe, quality services.
- We have developed and are implementing a workforce development plan that includes recruitment, training, employee development, lived experience.
- We have developed operational policies and procedures to guide staff and volunteers in their work.
- We are complying with the National Standards for Disability Services and all relevant legislation to provide safe, quality services.
- We are complying with all relevant employment and safety legislation and standards.
- We have up to date technology to support safe, quality services.

## Strategic Goal 4

### Strengthen our governance, systems, and processes

#### Commitment:

We will provide strong governance and make sure SWAN has the resources, organisational systems, and processes it needs to:

- meet its legal and compliance obligations, and
- develop and implement the strategies and supporting policies needed to meet its goals

#### We will achieve this strategic goal by:

- Making sure that strong governance and risk management supports all our operations.
- Developing a Governance Policy to guide the SWAN Board and management to strengthen our governance and systems to ensure:
  - the SWAN Board is always made up of members who have the skills, knowledge, information, support, and commitment to successfully carry out their roles,
  - we are meeting the needs of SWAN's members and clients,
  - we always follow good governance principles,
  - we always comply with relevant legislation, funding, and financial obligations,
  - we have sound policies and procedures to guide SWAN's governance, management, and operations,

- we build and maintain appropriate, respectful, supportive, and productive relationships between the SWAN Board and staff, and
- we are open and transparent in our governance and management.

#### We will know we are achieving this strategic goal if:

- We have developed and are implementing a Governance Policy to guide the SWAN Board and management.
- We have developed policies and procedures to guide SWAN's governance, management, and operations.
- We are successfully meeting all our legal and compliance obligations.
- Our Board and staff work together in appropriate, respectful, supportive relationships to achieve the best possible outcomes for the organisation, our members and clients.
- We always ensure our governance and management decisions are in line with SWAN's Strategic Goals.
- We are successfully using a risk management policy, with plans and processes to support sound decision-making at all levels of the organisation.
- We have skilled, knowledgeable, experienced, committed, and actively engaged Board members.
- We ensure Board members receive induction training, governance training and support to carry out their roles.

- We ensure Board members have access to all the information they need to meet our strategic objectives.
- The Board is actively implementing a Board succession plan.

## Strategic Goal 5

### Strengthen community recognition of SWAN's identity and brand in the community

#### Commitment:

We will work to ensure SWAN is well known and recognised as a peer-managed, rights-based organisation providing valuable services to the community in the south west region of WA.

#### We will achieve this strategic goal by:

- Identifying the benefits of having a clear identity and brand in the community.
- Identifying what SWAN's brand is and how we will develop and promote it.
- Telling people who we are and what we do.
- Developing and maintaining relationships with other similar local, national, and international organisations.
- Building and nurturing strong connections with media.
- Building a strong, appropriate, and respected presence on social media.
- Maintaining our website and social media to ensure our information is relevant, up to date and accessible.
- Building and maintaining strong connections with the government and opposition.

- Maintaining our identity by providing peer-led, rights based safe, quality services to autistic people in SW regional WA.

#### We will know we are achieving this strategic goal if:

- We have determined SWAN's brand and have a written plan to promote our identity and brand in the community.
- We are consistent with our messaging about who SWAN is.
- The community knows who we are and recognises our brand, what we do and our achievements.
- It helps autistic people and their families to find the services and supports they need.
- It leads to benefits such as:  
Funding, sponsorships, partnerships, better understanding of issues relating to autistic people, ability to influence government policy, and other opportunities.



## Strategic Goal 6

### Build our financial viability and sustainability

#### Commitment:

We will build SWAN's capacity to provide services and supports to meet current and future needs of autistic people and their families.

#### We will achieve this strategic goal by:

- Developing and implementing a written strategy aimed at building our financial viability and sustainability.
- Reviewing our operational efficiency.
- The Board working together with management to increase and improve our financial viability, resources, assets, and infrastructure.
- Developing a range of diverse, sustainable revenue streams.
- Identifying and developing opportunities for funding through partnerships and sponsorships.
- Identifying and implementing ways of creating efficiencies in the way we operate.

#### We will know we are achieving this strategic goal if:

- We have developed and are implementing a strategy for ongoing financial viability and sustainability which is showing signs of success.
- We are alert, looking for, identifying, and benefiting from new opportunities and networks.
- We have a number of different, reliable revenue streams to sustain our core business.
- We are receiving government funds for core programs.
- We successfully negotiate ongoing or self-sustaining funding or sponsorship to help SWAN's financial viability.
- We have identified and implemented operating efficiencies that are proving successful.

# Contact details

## Email

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## Busselton Office

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## Website

[www.swanautism.org.au](http://www.swanautism.org.au)

## Facebook

[www.facebook.com/SWANAutism](http://www.facebook.com/SWANAutism)

## Bunbury Office

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