



Guidelines for Creating Autistic Inclusive Environments

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The Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC)

The Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC) is the world's first national, cooperative research effort focused on autism. Taking a whole of life approach to autism focusing on diagnosis, education and adult life, Autism CRC researchers are working with end-users to provide evidence-based outcomes which can be translated into practical solutions for governments, service providers, education and health professionals, families and people on the autism spectrum.

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1. Background

At the Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC) our vision is that autistic people are empowered to discover and use their diverse strengths and interests. Our primary vehicle for doing so is the facilitation and translation of collaborative autism research across the life-span, underpinned by inclusive practices.

To ensure the research we invest in is both appropriate for, and relevant to, the autistic and autism communities, the Research Academy was instituted in 2015. This is currently a group of 28 autistic adults, and 17 autism researchers, who attended Autism CRC residential workshops on peer research, and subsequently graduated into the Academy. Guided by members of the autistic and autism communities, who formed both the Project Teams and Project Advisory Groups, we aimed to cater for the needs and desires of all autistic participants at our Academy events. Through the implementation of various strategies and methods, and feedback – this guide to promoting inclusive environments has been generated.

Co-produced with members of the 2017 Research Academy, we hope this resource is used to promote inclusionary practices so autistic people can truly be empowered to discover and use their diverse strengths and interests.



Dr Olivia Gatfield
Research Academy Coordinator

2. Introduction

An inclusive environment is one that caters for the needs, desires and preferences of *all* attendees, and reduces anxiety as much as possible. The outcome of creating such an environment is a **physical** and **psychological environment** that supports and promotes optimal participation, engagement, comfort and learning as well as helping to retain a higher number of participants.

*It enables the freedom to be yourself
and not feel judged.*

Maree Maxfield, Academy alumni.

*Sounds, colours, smells, textures, and
tastes are all factored in so there are few
surprises. A place where being autistic is
valued and welcomed.*

Katy Fowle, Academy alumni

The guidelines and checklists in this document are provided to support the creation of inclusive environments at events including, but not limited to: workshops; conferences; and, conventions. In considering the information and tools outlined in this document, it is suggested that you incorporate the following two principles:

1

Involve autistic people from the outset, starting with the initial thinking and planning, and well before any decisions are made about ALL event related aspects. Once a project has begun, bias is already present and may be hard to remove. As experts of the lived experience, autistic people's guidance and insight will be invaluable. Their experience may be used by including them as members of the project team or advisory committee, or as consultants. See the Autism CRC's Inclusive Research Practice Guides and Checklists for details on advisory groups and committees (www.autismcrc.com.au).

2

Ask individuals in your particular participant group, as far as is practical, to detail their needs, desires and preferences, and any concerns or fears, as anxiety may be a barrier to expressing needs – as well as to participation. Autism is experienced and can present very differently between individuals, so needs may vary considerably between participants – this requires an accepting and responsive approach. Commonalities may include sensory sensitivity, anxiety, and effort involved in (or alternative forms of) communication, but the expression of these attributes may be diverse. As described by Research Academy alumni, James Fahey:

Don't presume to know me based on stereotypes or labels

- *I am not a detail-oriented 'small picture' thinker.*
- *I am not a concrete or literal thinker.*
- *While not my choice, small-talk does not bother me.*
- *Though I think in pictures, I have strong visual and auditory learning abilities.*
- *My skills with computers are quite poor. I haven't got a clue about programming.*
- *As an adult I can read faces, body language and social constructs as well as anyone, and I do it automatically and intuitively (though not innately).*
- *I have not suffered a meltdown or shutdown once in all of my 43 years.*
- *I have no issues with directions, reading maps or understanding verbal instructions.*
- *I like having friends and can see benefits of having friends, but I don't need to have friends for either their assistance or to maintain my sanity.*
- *I rarely have issue with eye contact when listening, though I have great difficulty maintaining it while speaking.*

- *In my 10 years of attending autistic support groups and the like, I have never once done so for my own needs. Just because I'm present and autistic, don't presume I need your help.*
- *I tend to get on better with NTs than most autistics.*
- *I haven't had a 'special' interest in years.*
- *I can read between the lines better than many, if not most, NTs.*

3. Creating an Inclusive Environment

Anxiety is one of the most significant barriers to participation in workshops and other events, so a large part of creating an inclusive environment is directed at minimising this. As well as causing reluctance to contribute opinions and ideas, anxiety itself may be distracting, and may heighten or be heightened by other common experiences in autism, such as sensory sensitivities and delays in auditory processing.

Providing an appropriate space and making communication and expectations clear and predictable will go a long way to reducing anxiety, will enable participation and reduce the likelihood of overload or withdrawal from the event.

Focusing on aspects of the following four elements will help to create inclusive environments:

- the **physical environment**;
- the **materials** that are provided;
- the **processes and practices** that take place before, during and after the event; and,
- the **communication, presentation and workshop protocols**.

The relevant aspects of these elements are detailed sequentially below and are colour coded to help you navigate.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Structuring the physical environment appropriately can make people feel comfortable and lead to increased engagement and participation. Consideration needs to be given to all aspects of the environment including, but not limited to: décor; lighting; odours; room/s availability, use and set-up; seating; sound; and, temperature. These categories are listed alphabetically on the left hand side below.

Décor	Visual ‘clutter’ can be distracting for some people, and for others it can lead to sensory overload. Where possible choose rooms that:
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- do not have brightly coloured or highly patterned: carpets; curtains/blinds; furniture; ceilings; walls; or artwork;
- avoid using ceiling fans, if possible. These can be visually distracting as well as noisy.



Lighting

Some people are hypersensitive to bright lights or fluorescent lights. This may negatively impact on their ability to concentrate and/or interact comfortably and effectively. Consider:

- using as much natural light as possible;
- adjusting blinds to reduce glare and potential visual distraction. Blinds which can be individually adjusted to allow for greater flexibility to meet the various needs of different participants;
- ensuring there are no flickering lights/bulbs;
- providing lamps if only fluorescent lights are available. This will be dependent on the size of the room.



Sometimes there is no option, so let people know in advance if there is fluorescent lighting. You can suggest that they might like to bring a cap, sunglasses or tinted glasses.

Odours

Some people are hypersensitive to smell. This can reduce people's focus. Accordingly:

- avoid wearing perfumes and strongly scented deodorants. Inform all participants of this before the event.
- ask participants not to bring food or drinks, other than water, into the event spaces;



- have catering away from the seating/workshop area;



- check the cleaning schedule and products to be used because the smell of cleaning products can be overwhelming and this process may need to be considered and planned for;
- check to ensure there will be no new items, e.g. paint, furniture, carpet or curtains, within a month of the event because smells from these items may cause significant discomfort.

Rooms

Ideally, there will be a number of different rooms including:

- a Main Room;
- one or more Break-Out Rooms; and,
- a Chill-Out Room (see sub-section below).

Access to a green space/garden may also be beneficial for some participants.



It is preferable that Break-Out Room/s and the Chill-Out Room are away from the Main Room – and with closeable doors – to prevent noise transfer.

Consider technology solutions that would enable participants to listen and/or watch the event via their own device. Alternatively, a feed (visual

and sound) could be provided in a separate Break-Out Room. This would be beneficial for participants who may feel overwhelmed in the Main Room but do not want to be completely excluded.

Chill-Out Room

A Chill-Out Room provides a quiet space for people to use if they need a break from the environment. Information about the location and use of the room should be provided in written material provided pre-event, as well as during the event introduction.

Ideally, a Chill-Out Room will have:

- **a variety of comfortable seating**, for example tub chairs and beanbags, yoga mats and/or floor cushions;
- **water** – room-temperature, chilled and warm/hot water and a clearly marked place to put used cups and glasses;
- **sensory tools** (see ‘Sensory Tools’ sub-section at the end of this section for further details) but, additionally, weighted blankets may be a useful sensory item;
- **low lighting**, preferably not fluorescent. It may be necessary to provide lamps and turn off all overhead lighting to achieve low light. Blinds/curtains should be adjustable;
- **device charging points**;
- **instructions** for use of the room clearly and prominently displayed;
- copies of **schedule of events/ program**; and,
- **communication preference stickers** (see ‘the red dot system’ in **Inclusive Processes and Practices – During the Event**).

Below are photos of the Chill Out Zone and instructions used at the Autism CRC apps4autism Hackathon:



Seating

In the main area and chill out zone it is preferred that there is a variety of seating, standing and reclining options. Seating may include:

- tall tables with bar stools;
- beanbags;
- tub chairs;
- chairs with tables;
- single chairs that people can move to preferred area;
- yoga mats and/or floor cushions.

Seating options from the Autism CRC's Research Academy, 2017 are shown on the next page:



Participants may desire to bring their own seating or supports (back/neck supports, cushions or seat covers) to reduce distraction and allow for fuller participation.

If the event requires lecture style seating (rows of chairs), make sure there is plenty of space between chairs. Specifically:

- more than 50cm between chairs;
- a maximum of 4 chairs in a row and then an aisle.

Sound



Some people find it difficult to distinguish between background and foreground sounds. Also, some people have hypersensitive hearing. To cater for this, consider the following:

- some older fluorescent lights make a humming sound. Avoid these or use natural light, or alternative lighting;
- ensure the environment is quiet and there is minimal background noise from *outside the room* – such as traffic, music or construction – or *inside the room* – such as a ticking clock or air-conditioning;
- reduce environmental noise by choosing carpeted rooms. This will reduce echoing as well as the scraping of chairs on the floor;
- small group activities can be noisy! Break-out rooms are ideal. However, if this is not an option, ensure the groups are as far away from each other as possible.

- be aware that if a room does not have central heating or cooling, opening windows and doors for ventilation during the session may introduce outside noise that was not an issue previously.

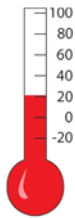
Bathroom hand-dryers are very noisy, particularly in a small area. Ideally, the venue you choose would not have them. If they do:

- unplug the hand-dryer or put an 'out of order' sign on them; and/or
- provide paper towels and a waste bin.

If a large event, or an event where there is shared public space, allocate and identify a quiet bathroom where noise is minimised.



Temperature



Individual's experience of what is a comfortable temperature varies so, if possible, ask participants whether they would like it cooler or warmer.

Room temperatures are not always adjustable therefore, in advance of the event, encourage individuals to bring layers of clothes so they can make themselves comfortable.

MATERIALS

Providing appropriate materials that account for people's differing needs is an important part of creating inclusive environments. Consideration needs to be given to materials including: booklets; handouts; notebooks; pens; and, sensory tools. These categories are listed alphabetically on the left hand side below.

For some autistic people, handwriting can be a challenge due to co-ordination or sensory considerations. Exercises requiring writing should be minimised if they can't be avoided, or an alternative provided for participants.

Booklets

To maximise participation and reduce anxiety, booklets containing necessary information should be provided to the participants in advance (see section **Inclusive Processes and Practices – Before the Event**).

These booklets need to be written in plain English (see section **Communication Style and Teaching Protocols – Communication Style**) and include relevant pictures and photos.

The booklets should be provided in hard-copy at the event, and available near the entrance.

Handouts

If you are providing handouts, these should be Arial font, with a font size of at least 14 point.

Notebooks or Notepaper

If you are providing notebooks or notepads, these should be:

- plain or lightly ruled;
- medium size (such as B5); and,
- have a hardback so they can be used in a variety of settings, e.g. while not at a desk .




Avoid providing graph paper or paper with logos as these can be distracting.

Pens

If you are supplying pens, please consider the following:



- 
- avoid novelty pens and pens with a strong odour or non-standard shape;
 - avoid pens that 'click' in and out. The noise of clicking can distract some people;
 - pens which come with a separate lid serve a double purpose – the pen can be used for writing and the lid can be used as a sensory tool;
 - consider supplying some moulded hand grips with the pens if participants are given tasks that require hand writing.

Sensory Tools

Many people find the use of sensory tools helpful for a variety of reasons. Providing such tools may increase a sense of inclusivity and promote engagement.

Ideally, these should be available in all rooms – either in clear containers, spread on flat surfaces, such as tables, or near entry/exit doors.

Not all participants will feel comfortable using supplied items due to hygiene concerns, or not finding a suitable item. Others may find the use of these distracting and this needs to be monitored and managed. Encouraging participants to bring their own items via pre-event information would be helpful.

Examples of sensory tools are below.



INCLUSIVE PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

To enhance inclusion, and reduce potential anxiety, there are a number of processes and practices that have been found to be helpful. These should be considered early in the planning phase to enable event management responsive to the needs of participants. Underpinning these processes and practices are the principles that information should be provided in advance and as clearly as possible, and that the means by which participants wanting more information can obtain it, is clearly stated.

Inclusive Processes and Practices have been categorised as 'before the event', 'during the event', and 'after the event'. These categories are listed alphabetically on the left-hand side below.

Before the Event

This section details considerations for (a) what to ask participants and (b) what to provide to participants – in advance of the event. In addition to these, it is strongly recommended that you:

- have a designated support person/people available to participants in person, on the phone and via text message to help with such things as finding a location at the venue;
- encourage participants to discuss any potentially triggering event/s – such as those of a personal nature – with their support network in advance;
- ensure that designated support people trained in psychological first aid are available in person or by other means (such as text or email), if needed, and that contact details are provided to participants;
- provide a brief to staff to ensure 'unusual requests or behaviours' (altogetherautism.org.nz).

What to ask participants

To enable inclusivity and engagement, you need to know the needs and desires of participants. This also conveys to participants that their attendance/participation is valued and important.

Depending on the event, you might ask about the following:

- **Dietary requirements**, such as gluten-free, wheat-free and dairy-free. A number of autistics experience discomfort with certain textured foods or strong flavours. As such, you should also ask people their food preferences.



What to provide participants

- **Sensory sensitivities**, such as noisy environments and bright lights.
- **Contact preferences** e.g. how people prefer to give and receive information. Some autistic people do not like talking on the phone due to auditory processing issues and lack of whole-person context for conversational cues while others dislike in-person communication or email.

Providing as much information to participants as possible prior to the event can reduce anxiety. It is suggested that you provide a booklet that details the following information:

- **Venue details.** This should include photos of the rooms, the entrance and, if relevant, the reception desk. This will help people know what to expect and help them prepare. For example, if they know in advance there is fluorescent lighting, they may choose to bring a cap.

If the event is residential or involves people staying in a designated hotel, photos and information about what is or isn't in the room should be included. Appendix A shows examples used for the 2017 Research Academy;

- **Maps of the venue and surrounding areas.** This should include directions to the venue room and the entrance to parking areas – with photos also being advantageous;

- **Guides to airports**, if relevant for the event;



- **Rules of engagement.** These are detailed in the 'During the Event' section below, however, should be communicated to *all participants* in advance;
- **Information about supportive practices in advance.** Some autistic people may minimise expressions of discomfort in group

settings because it can be perceived as pedantic or complaining. Providing information about the supportive practices allows your participants to know what to expect – encouraging greater freedom for people to discuss their needs and highlight areas that had not been considered;

- **Information about presenters, support people (if relevant)** and other people attending (if possible). Autistic people have a much higher incidence of ‘face blindness’ – prosopagnosia – than the general population, meaning that they can have difficulty remembering what people look like from one moment to the next. Current photos of the presentation team in the information pack can help, as can name tags being worn consistently.

Clarifying who to ask questions of during the event will reduce anxiety, with a single central person (or two people) preferred – e.g. “any questions you have can go to either X or Y, who will refer it on if they can’t answer it themselves”. Ideally this would be the designated support person;

- **Food and/or eating establishments.** Menus should be provided where possible, with alternatives noted for food allergies/sensitivities. If these are provisional, make that clear, and provide the final menu when available. It is also appropriate that participants be provided with the option to go to eating establishments if desired. A list and/or map of nearby restaurants and food outlets would be helpful;
- **Contact numbers.** Contact number/s for the organisers or support people should be available for instances such as difficulty finding the venue or for psychological support. If a main contact is not going to be available at a certain time, e.g. while in transit to the venue, it is helpful if an alternative contact is provided;
- **Schedule of events.** This should include times, schedules, transitions between activities and expectations for participation.

During the Event

- **What to bring and what to wear.** To enable attendees to be prepared and appropriately dressed, details should be provided. An example from the 2017 Research Academy is in Appendix B.



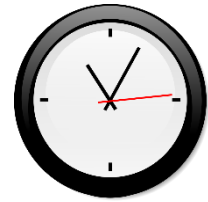
There are a number of processes that can be used to support engagement of all participants. Those relevant to all events are as follows:

- **Rules of engagement.** These should entail instructions regarding perfumes, physical contact, eye contact and other supportive processes used. Appendix C shows those used for the Autism CRC's 2017 Research Academy and include:
 - **Perfumes and heavily fragrant deodorants** should not be used as some people are hyper-sensitive to smell;
 - **Permission to touch.** Many people are uncomfortable with being touched and/or hugged therefore permission to touch should be sought;
 - **The red dot system.** This system allows participants to visually represent their communication preferences. Typically these are stickers placed on nametags. It should be communicated that these can be changed when or if needed, and that these should be observed before approaching someone. The colour representation is:
 - I would prefer not to engage with people
 - I don't feel like an in-depth conversation.
 - I am happy to engage in conversation.
 - **Eye contact.** For many autistic people, eye contact is not necessary for engagement, and can actually detract from concentration and focus on the presented material. This is a

very individual practice and varies considerably but is worth noting.

- **Have the correct time visible to all participants.**

Having a visible clock – or two clocks (front and back of the room) set on exactly the same time – will ensure that all participants and presenters are referring to the same time, reducing anxiety or distress around start and finish times;



- **Raising a hand/hands when audience silence is required.**

This provides a visual cue to participants and reduces the need for the speaker to raise their voice. As each participant notices raised hands, they raise their own hand, until the room is silent. This has the added benefit of providing a way for the participants to have a clear transition from discussion time to listening;

- **Silent applause.** Due to the auditory sensitivity of many autistic people, non-auditory clapping is sometimes preferred. This is accomplished by raising the hands to head height or higher, and twisting the wrists rapidly back and forth.



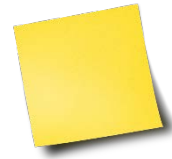
Silent Applause

However, some people find this visually and auditorily distracting, so ask your participants their preference;

- **Emergency procedures.** Give clear instructions on what to do in an emergency and also provide a simple visual prompt (map with assembly points). If time permits, practice an evacuation drill;
- **Communicate flexibility.** Ensure participants know it is okay if they need to leave the room, use sensory tools, use the chill out zone, etc. Reiterate this more than once, and autistic members of the presentation team may wish to access some of these options early, as this will reassure participants that the proffered flexibility is genuine.

Events that involve contributions, workshopping, questions and answers, panel discussion etc. will have additional process. These are listed below:

- **Allow people to contribute in multiple ways.** Not everyone is comfortable with asking questions and contributing verbally. Alternative options include the use of post-it notes and text messages;
- **Optional participation in sessions.** Participation in sessions should be optional, and the choice to disengage should not be questioned or highlighted. Withdrawal may be dependent on the participant's level of physical comfort and overwhelm, and should be communicated openly and – if necessary – repeatedly. Recording or videoing sessions and making those recordings available soon after the session may allow participants to engage in the topic matter and to give feedback when they feel more able. See also 'Rooms' in 'The Physical Environment' for other suggestions;



Questions and answers box. *“Working out when I can safely interrupt is exhausting!”* Providing a questions and answers box is an appropriate alternative, and allows for people to contribute anonymously if they choose. See next section for more information.

Another option is that questions and/or comments can be written on post-it notes (provided in convenient locations) and placed on a specified wall between sessions.

Whatever method is chosen, time should be designated for reading and response;

- **‘Parking lot.’** Some autistic people seek clarity and details to aid understanding. This can lead to an apparent digression from the topics to be presented. These additional items can be written in the ‘parking lot’ (whiteboard or poster paper) and discussed at a designated time, preferably at the end of each session.

After the Event

Conferences and workshops can be exhausting. Additionally, transitioning from an environment where their needs and desires are considered to an environment where this is not common can lead to people feeling 'deflated' after the Event.

A debrief session for autistic participants should be considered. Ideally, this would take place 5 to 7 days post-event using an online platform that allows people the option to talk or type, use a phone to 'dial in', and to use a webcam. Expectations that the debrief is a space where people can discuss or hear about other's experiences and feelings should be made clear.

PRESENTATION AND WORKSHOP PROTOCOLS

Dissemination of information and up-skilling are often an end-goal of events. However, a number of protocols should be considered to enhance this. These relate to communication style and aspects of presentations and workshops, including visual materials, group work and introductory activities/'ice-breakers'.

It is important to remember that people learn in different ways. Transmitting information through lecture-style does not suit everyone. Consider also using hands-on activities, discussion panels, question and answer sessions, role-plays and group work.

Communication When communicating, whether in print or verbally, it is appropriate that the following are considered:

- there is no one term that is preferred by all members of the autistic and autism community when referring to autism so, if possible, ask people how they want to be referred to e.g. on the autism spectrum, autistic person;
- ensure that information being communicated is accessible. Plain English, using non-academic language, is the most appropriate for everyone. For Plain English guides for layout and language use, see factsheets available at:
 - <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>
 - <http://www.scopeaust.org.au/service/accessible-information/>;
- avoid using metaphors, e.g. it's raining cats and dogs, housekeeping. These can be confusing for some autistic people for a variety of reasons.

For a list and meanings of commonly used metaphors in research, see the appendix of the Autism CRC's Visual Dictionary of Research Terms, available at autismcrc.com.au.



Presentations and Workshop Protocols

When presenting – be it lecture-style or workshopping – there are a number of protocols that need to be considered:

- adhering to stated timeframes. This is important because not observing these may increase anxiety in some audience members/participants. The ideal length of a session is no more than 60 minutes, with a minimum 10 minute break;
- co-presenting with an autistic person because co-presenting is associated with better knowledge translation and attitude change amongst the participants. Refer to Autism CRC's Inclusive Research Practice Guide 5 and Checklist 4 for detail on how to do this effectively. Go to: <http://www.autismcrc.com.au/inclusive-research-practice-guides-and-checklists>



Below is a photo of Olivia Gatfield and Wenn Lawson co-presenting at APAC 2017.



- asking participants to tell you, at the end of each session or day, “what they want more of and what they want less of”.
- having a ‘questions and comments box’ where people can anonymously write their observations, comments and questions (see ‘During the Event’ section);
- using a ‘parking lot’ to record topics for discussion that diverge from the objective of the session. Time should be set aside to allow topics in the parking lot to be discussed. This time should be clearly stated when explaining the ‘parking lot’ concept and adhered to.



Visual Materials

To enhance effectiveness of **slide (e.g. PowerPoint) presentations**, visual clutter should be kept to a minimum by observing the following:

- text on each slide should be kept to a minimum;
- black font on a cream background aids contrast and reduces glare;
- avoid moving icons, such as moving clocks;
- use consistent icons on all presentation slides.



For whiteboard and poster use, use black or dark coloured markers to aid visual clarity. Be conscious, however, of the strong smell some markers can emanate in small spaces.

Group work and discussions

Key strategies to enable inclusive group work and discussion include the following:

- ensure the group facilitators have adequate briefing in autistic etiquette, allowing voluntary (rather than directed) contribution to discussions, and supporting withdrawal from activities when required without comment;
- provide participants with as much information about the activity or discussion topics in advance as possible. This can reduce anxiety, thereby promoting genuine engagement;
- ensure people have adequate time to process information and respond;
- manage group dynamics so that quieter people have opportunities to contribute e.g. allow people to write their thoughts and have someone read these out, or set a time limit for each person so everyone has an opportunity to contribute.

Introductory Activities/'Ice-Breakers'

Introductory activities, often termed 'ice-breakers', aim to allow people to get to know each other so that they feel more relaxed together. However, this can be very stressful for some people. Some strategies which may help include:

- making participation optional by letting people know they can look through materials during this time; and
- letting people prepare by providing the details of the activity in advance.

An example of an inclusive introductory activity would be for each person to list 3 of their interests or passions.

4. Checklist for Inclusive Environments

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Structuring the physical environment appropriately can make people feel comfortable and lead to increased engagement and participation. The venue should be audited, and appropriate measures taken, to ensure the following:

Questions	Yes	No
Visual clutter is minimal?		
Lighting is appropriate for people with hypersensitivity?		
There is a separate catering area?		
Cleaning rosters are considered to minimise odours from cleaning products?		
Appropriate chill-out room (and breakout rooms if required) available?		
A variety of seating options is available?		
There is appropriate spacing between chairs?		
Minimal noise in rooms e.g. traffic, air-conditioning, ticking clocks?		
There are alternatives to hand dryers in bathrooms?		
Rooms with adjustable air-conditioning are utilised, if possible?		

MATERIALS

Providing appropriate materials that account for people's differing needs is an important part of creating inclusive environments. Have you ensured:

Questions	n/a	Yes	No
Handouts use at least 14 point Arial font?			
Notebooks are B5, hardback and lightly ruled?			
Pens do not have a strong odour and do not click?			
A variety of sensory tools will be available?			

INCLUSIVE PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

To enhance inclusion, and reduce potential anxiety, there are a number of processes and practices that can be used. Have you considered:

Questions	Yes	No
Having a designated support person/people?		
Encouraging participants to discuss the event with their support person/s, if the event content, etc. is considered potentially triggering?		
Providing a briefing to event staff?		

Have you asked participants about the following and made adjustments accordingly:

Questions	Yes	No
Dietary requirements?		
Sensory sensitivities?		
Contact preferences, e.g. phone or email contact preferred?		

Have participants been provided with the following:

Questions	n/a	Yes	No
Venue details, including photos?	-----		
Maps of the venue and surrounding areas?	-----		
Guides to relevant airports?			
Rules of engagement?	-----		
Information about supportive practices that will be used?	-----		
Information about support people, presenters etc.?	-----		
Maps to and menus for local food and eating establishments?			
Contact details for support personnel or organisers?	-----		
Details of what to bring and what to wear?	-----		

In planning the event, have you considered and/or planned for the following:

Questions	Yes	No
The rules of engagement and how they will be communicated to all participants?		
Nominating the clock that everyone will work from and communicating this information?		
Raising hands for audience silence and silent applause?		
Communicating flexibility of attendance and emergency procedures?		
Practices that enable participation in multiple ways e.g. questions box, post-it notes?		
Scheduling a debrief session?		

PRESENTATION AND WORKSHOP PROTOCOLS

Dissemination of information and up-skilling are often end-goals of events. Following a number of protocols can enhance these outcomes. Have you ensured the following:

Questions	n/a	Yes	No
Communication is plain English and avoiding metaphors?			
Slide (e.g. PowerPoint) presentations have minimal text, utilise black font on cream background and have consistent, non-moving icons on each slide?			
Autistic participants are asked how they would like to be referred to e.g. on the spectrum, autistic etc?			
Planning accounts for, and includes processes to ensure, sessions are a maximum 60 minutes before a break?			

Have you considered the following protocols:

Questions	n/a	Yes	No
Having autistic people present or co-present?			
Allowing time to ask participants what they want 'more of or less of' at the end of each day?			
Having a questions and comments box, and 'parking lot'			
For group work and discussions – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing information in advance; • allowing processing time; • managing group dynamics? 			
Making ice-breakers optional and providing details in advance?			

Appendix A

The Function Room

- The function room is the bottom floor of the building pictured below.

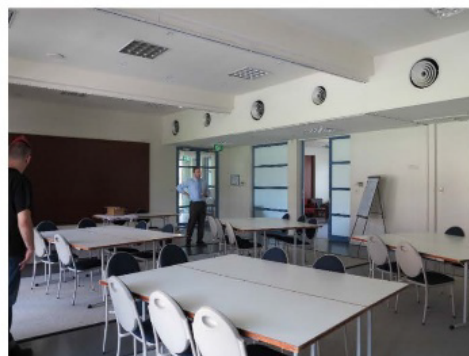


- It looks out onto the courtyard with tables and chairs. This is shown in the picture below.



The Function Room... continued

- The function room is a large space, which can be divided into 3 small rooms with concertina dividers. Photos are below.
- We can arrange the tables and chairs anyway we want, and will bring beanbags into the room.
- The lights are downlights. They do not make a sound, but some people don't like downlights so we can turn them off, dim them, or use natural light.
- The function room is close to a main road. During peak hour the traffic can be heard slightly.



Appendix B

What to Bring and What to Wear

The temperature in Melbourne during June is cool (7-14 degrees), so bring really warm clothes. The accommodation, function room and dining rooms are heated, but you will need to walk outside between buildings. Having a warm jacket that you can take off easily is a good idea.

The workshop is casual so wear clothes that you are comfortable in.

Remember to bring:

- anything that you use daily e.g., your mobile phone.
- things that calm you e.g., your iPod, colouring books.
- chargers for your devices e.g., phone, tablet, laptop.
- your toiletries e.g. toothbrush, toothpaste, body wash.
- a water bottle.

You may also want to bring:

- your pillow. One will be in your room but some people like their own pillow!
- noise cancelling headphones if you have them.
- a hairdryer if you use one.
- snacks that you like to eat.

We will give you the following:

- Black, blue and red pens.
- An A4 note pad.
- Post-it notes.
- A folder with the timetable, handouts and all the slides for the presentations.
- A printout of this booklet.



AutismCRC
Research Academy

Rules of Engagement

We aim to make the workshop as comfortable as possible for all of our participants. For that reason, we ask that you, and the researchers, please follow these:

- **Do not wear strong smelling perfumes and deodorants.**
- **Do not physically touch people without asking first.**
- **Do follow the 'dot system'.** Before approaching someone to talk, look at their nametag to see if they have a dot. Please don't approach people with a red dot, and remember those with a yellow dot only want a quick chat.
- **Do remember that not everyone is comfortable making eye contact.** This does not mean they are not listening to you, or engaging with you.