



AutismCRC

Future Leaders 2018 Evaluation Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr Olivia Gatfield

Tori Haar

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Evaluation Report

Dr Olivia Gatfield

Executive Officer, Sylvia Rodger Academy

Tori Haar

Project Coordinator, Autism CRC

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- Geraldine Robertson
- Judy Brewer, AO
- Jon Martin
- Malcolm Mayfield
- Dr Olivia Gatfield
- Rochelle Johnson
- Tori Haar
- Dr Wenn Lawson



Above L-R: Olivia Gatfield, Malcolm Mayfield, Tori Haar, Judy Brewer, Wenn Lawson, Geraldine Robertson & Jon Martin.



Left: Rochelle Johnson

We also wish to acknowledge the 14 passionate and talented participants for being a part of the program and continuing to make a positive impact in their communities. We also acknowledge the host placement organisations without whose support this program would not have been possible.

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

Future Leaders is Australia's first holistic leadership capacity building program for autistic adults. It was designed to empower autistic adults with leadership potential who want to make a positive impact in their communities. Building upon the concept of the 2013 Future Leaders delivery, the program was revised and expanded to include a holistic approach to training and development. The 2018 program was co-developed and co-delivered with autistic adults to 14 autistic adults aged 25-40.

2. Objective and Governance

The objectives of the program were to:

- empower young adults on the autism spectrum with leadership potential to build and develop their skills; and,
- support organisations to discover and leverage the strengths of neurodiversity and foster inclusive environments.

The program was governed in development and delivery by a majority autistic project team.

3. Program Elements

The elements of the program included:

- Four **online training modules** delivered in a custom e-learning platform. Engagement and learning was supported by the provision of online sessions hosted by the module authors.
- A 3.5-day **residential workshop** held in Brisbane, focused on skill development and knowledge for leadership.
- **A 50 hour voluntary placement** with a community or corporate organisation.
- **Mentoring** by project team members in their capacity as established leaders in the autism community.

To support participants wellbeing a **Preparation and Wellbeing Toolkit** was developed with a registered psychologist.

4. Evaluation Description

Three fit-for-purpose surveys were administered to program participants (n=14) at different timepoints. Representatives from organisations (n=11) who provided volunteer placements for participants participated in a survey and a 30-minute interview.

5. Summary of Findings

All program participants completing the second survey (n=5) rated the program as 'excellent' and all would recommend the program to others. All participants completing the first survey (n=11) indicated the workshop as 'good' (n=2) or 'excellent' (n=9).

With regard to the online modules, all participants (n=11) rated the online modules as 'good' (n=5) or 'excellent' (n=6) and all participants in the second survey (n=5) rated the voluntary placement and mentoring as 'okay', 'good' or 'excellent'.

At one year follow up, the majority of participants completing the survey (n=7) indicated the areas that they have been involved in for the first time, or increased involvement in, as: public speaking or delivering training (n=5, 71%); being part of a board, committee or reference group (n=4, 57%); working with or giving advice to government or community organisations (n=4, 57%); and, writing blogs or media articles (n=4, 57%).

The majority of volunteer placement host organisations completing the survey (n=5) indicated the placement benefited their organisation (n=3), themselves personally (n=3) and all would host a placement in the future. Interviews with host organisations identified barrier and difficulties to providing placements. These are discussed in the following section.

Evaluation Outcomes and Proposed Next Steps

The evaluation data indicated highly successful and appropriate delivery of the program in line with the program objectives. However, interviews with placement hosts indicated that further consideration should be given to 'matching' potential opportunities within organisations with participants leadership goals and the personal and practical skills they need to develop to reach these goals. This would involve further refinement of goals and skills prior to organisation placement. The commencement of mentoring at the workshop and a more flexible approach to placements, such as allowing a number of hours to be spent doing activities that support personal and practical skill development rather than activities within a corporate organisation, may also enhance leadership outcomes.

Last, it is recommended that to further enhance meaningful opportunities, consideration be given to providing organisations with a suite of supporting documents and/or checklists which includes:

- details of the mentor/mentee relationship and contacts;
- suggestions for first meeting - discussing code-of-conduct, confidentiality and intellectual property rights;
- benefits of site visit prior to engagement; and
- provision of information about the organisation in advance.

Similarly, that participants are encouraged to complete learning and/or reflection logs throughout placement experience and provide their placement host with information in advance regarding what they hope to achieve through the experience; their goals and strengths; and, potentially their values.



AutismCRC

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The University of Queensland
Long Pocket Precinct
Level 3, Foxtail Building
80 Meiers Road
Indooroopilly QLD 4068

T +61 7 3377 0600

E info@autismcrc.com.au

W autismcrc.com.au



@autismcrc



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