




RIGHTS IN ACTION


A newsletter for kids in the ACT about your rights and wellbeing



What's new?

This week most of you headed back to school after the April school holidays... and the weather has cooled down. Check out what else has been happening in our city!

 Masks are still required for school staff and high school students in government schools. Over the next couple of weeks, the Education Directorate will decide if masks can be ditched.

 Muslims have been observing Ramadan (a time of fasting between dawn and dusk for 40 days) but this will finish when the new moon is spotted, probably around the 1st of May. They will then celebrate Eid al Fitr, an important holiday in the Muslim calendar. So remember to say *Eid Muburak* (meaning blessed festival) to Muslim friends on Monday 2 May.

 ANZAC day was marked on Monday 25th April and people across Australia were munching on ANZAC cookies. [Here's a recipe if you want to enjoy them all year!](#)

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Hi everyone,

April is World Autism Awareness month, so our April newsletter is dedicated to all ACT children and young people who are Autistic, or neurodiverse in other ways.

If you don't know what **neurodiverse** means, check out the article on the next page that explains the words we are using! We also have contributions from neurodiverse young people who wanted to share some of their talents and knowledge with you, as well as friendship advice from Autistic young people.

Neurodiversity is so valuable to our community. The perspectives, insights and experiences of all types of brains help make Canberra a better place to live. I want to celebrate neurodiversity while acknowledging it can be tough being a neurodiverse person in a neurotypical world! If you want to tell me about the things that would help Canberra be more comfortable for all types of brains, you can get in touch anytime.

Jodie



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Young Thinker Forum
actkids.act.gov.au



Choosing words carefully

When it comes to neurodiversity, there are a lot of new words and specific meanings that we need to be clear about. To be respectful, it is important to use language people are comfortable with, but not everyone will like the same things! Below we explain how we have chosen to use certain words in this newsletter.

What does neurodiverse mean?

Neurodiverse describes the fact that everyone experiences and interacts with the world in different ways and those differences are valuable. Most of the time the term is used when talking about Autism or other differences such as ADHD, dyslexia, and many more. People without those differences are referred to as '*neurotypical*'.

What is Autism?

Autism is a difference in how a person's brain works. It affects how a person thinks, feels, interacts with others, and experiences their environment. It is called a 'spectrum' because every Autistic person is different and experiences their Autism differently.

Some people say that having Autism is like playing on a Play Station when everyone else has an X-Box. You can't use an X-box game in a Play Station, but that doesn't mean it's broken, it's just a different system with its own strengths and challenges.

Person with Autism or Autistic person?

In this newsletter we use 'identity-first' language when talking about Autism and other forms of neurodiversity. This means we say 'Autistic child or young person' instead of 'child with Autism'. We do this because a lot of Autistic people think it shows that their Autism is a key part of them and is a different way of seeing and interacting with the world, with its own strengths and challenges, rather than being a negative thing.

Because everyone is different, some people prefer saying 'child with Autism' so if we are speaking about a specific person we will always try to use the term they are most comfortable with. If you know an Autistic person, you might like to ask them what words they prefer to use when talking about Autism. And of course, mostly, we just use people's names!

To learn more

Here are some videos that explain Autism:

[Operation Ouch: What is Autism](#)

[Autism Explained](#)

[Fast Facts About Autism For Kids](#)

"I don't care if you say I am autistic, or that I have autism. I just don't like it when people call it a disability."

10 years old.



Tips for being a good friend

Autistic people often get told how to socialise (interact with other people). The assumption is that they need to learn how to be friends with neurotypical people. But, what if neurotypical people understood and valued some of the different ways people connect and socialise? What if it was neurotypical people who got told how to socialise with neurodiverse people? Here are some tips from Autistic young people about how to be a good friend.



Neurodiversity through art



When we asked children and young people if they would like to contribute to this newsletter, we received these incredible works of art. Being neurodiverse in a world made for neurotypical people can be stressful. This young person uses painting and other art to help them calm down.

"Three different images, each unique in their own way but also connected by their oddity. Painting them calmed my mind by distracting me from my racing thoughts."

16 YEARS





Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos

Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos are my favourite bird. They look cool, make a cool sound and don't show off. They just say I am here, take me or leave me.

People don't know much about them, they are very mysterious, which is another reason I like them.

They eat seeds and live in hollow homes in really old trees. The average age of trees used by them for nesting is over 200 years old.

They mate for life.

By Zac, age 11, AWEtistic and awesome!

(Zac wrote this article and designed the page)



Young Thinker Forum

The ACT Children and Young People Commissioner's job is to make things better for children and young people in the ACT. To do that, I need to hear directly from you! But I know that sending an email, or making a call can be really scary and that people express themselves in lots of different ways.

That's why we have our **Young Thinker Forum**.

If you are a child or young person under 25 years old, you can tell me what you think about community or social issues that you feel strongly about... or about anything at all that interests or matters to you.

You can write to me or create an artwork or cartoon, submit a video or audio recording, or send a poem or song. You can do this on your own or with your friends. Have your say in your way!

If you have something you want to tell me go to actkids@act.gov.au or click the link above.

