

CREATING A PLACE TO BELONG



Autism WA's weekly social groups are helping build confidence and combat social isolation.

The organisation aims to build a community where people with a range of abilities, personalities and capacities can engage, interact and contribute at work, at home and socially.

Autism WA CEO Louise Sheehy said up to 150 people, aged from 10 to over 18, regularly attend the 14 different social group catch-ups throughout Perth.

"The groups focus on activities and interests of the individuals to encourage interaction," Louise said.

"We see the world through a different lens and when it comes to autism, there is no box to think outside of - a world where diversity is so 'normal', it's unremarkable."

The social groups are an important way to help tackle social isolation and depression.

"As a very real consequence of living in an environment that doesn't accommodate for neurodiversity, social isolation is a real issue," she said.

"Depression, social anxiety and other mental health issues are very common for people with autism and these groups provide a space for belonging, gaining confidence and being valued.



"This helps build mental health resilience to prevent vulnerability to mental health issues."

A mum of one of the social group participants said her teenage son was more confident as a result of his regular catch-ups.

"My son always feels accepted for who is, no questions asked, and the social group he attends is a place where he feels welcome," she said.

"He has become a more confident person through the support he has been given and has made some lovely friends in his social groups.

"He has really grown and matured over the past few years and I honestly do believe this is partly due to the unconditional support and caring provided by the staff at Autism West."

www.autismwest.org.au