



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs Giulia Jones MLA (Chair), Ms Bec Cody MLA (Deputy Chair), Mr Deepak-Raj Gupta MLA

***Evaluation of Current ACT Policing***

**Submission 8**

**Speaking Out for Autism Spectrum Disorder (SO<sub>f</sub>ASD)**

Date authorised for publication – 28 April 2020



## **Snedden, Andrew**

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**From:** Bob Buckley (SOfasD Chair) <chair@sofasd.org.au>  
**Sent:** Sunday, 16 February 2020 12:02 PM  
**To:** LA Committee - JCS  
**Subject:** Submission for your Evaluation of Current ACT Policing Arrangements

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission to your *Evaluation of Current ACT Policing Arrangements*. I apologise for not achieving your deadline.

Many autistic people in the ACT and their representatives/advocates are concerned that police in the ACT are not trained to interact effectively with autistic people.

Too often, interactions between police and autistic people have particularly poor outcomes, and some autistic people can be left severely traumatised. Sometimes autistic people are forcefully and unnecessarily/inappropriately restrained ... and there is the risk they will be killed as was shown in NSW (see <https://a4.org.au/node/1784>).

Following a recent incident, the ACT Police Minister claimed "police officers ... undertake ongoing training in mental health conditions; including the treatment of patients with autism spectrum disorder". The Minister's disappointing response turned out to be incorrect (see <https://sofasd.org.au/d7/node/229>). Police in the ACT are *not* trained to interact with autistic people.

Police are the service of last resort when the ACT not-a-real-Crisis Mental Health Team decides to not attend any incident/situation that is a real mental health crisis or involves an autistic person, so ACT Police need current, properly maintained, training in interacting with autistic people.

Our recent Freedom of Information result shows ACT Police have no discernible training in how to interact with autistic people. The response of individual police varies: some are quite good but too many interactions with ACT police are horrendous. Some individual police are inclined to exacerbate challenging situations through their emotional and excessively authoritarian approaches. Those police are inclined to make excessive, unreasonable and/or incomprehensible demands on an autistic citizen, then those police escalate their own inappropriate behaviour when their demands are not met. It turns out that other emergency services personnel in the ACT share our concern.

While a few ACT police have responded well in some circumstances, at present autistic people, their families and carers simply cannot trust/rely on ACT police generally. ACT Police need to be trained to interact appropriately with autistic people. Their skill should be *maintained* through formal training processes. Preferably, training would be in collaboration with the ASD community in the ACT.

Please contact us if you want additional information or clarification of matters raised above.

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Bob Buckley  
Chair, Speaking Out for Autism Spectrum Disorder (SOfasD)  
*a voice for people living with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the ACT*

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