

Keynote speaker:
Dr Chris Edwards



#ASfAR2023

Biography

Chris is a Postdoctoral Researcher with Autism Spectrum Australia and Adjunct Research Fellow with the Menzies Health Institute Queensland (Griffith University) as part of the Inclusive Futures beacon. Chris is also an Executive Committee member of the Australasian Society for Autism Research (ASfAR). Chris is autistic, and has been supporting the autistic community for over nine years through various roles. These roles have been in special education settings, as a disability support worker, positive behaviour support and research-focused positions. Chris' PhD was completed through the Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC) in 2019. His PhD thesis explored how teleconsultation could help provide professional development and support for school staff in rural and remote regions, supporting autistic children with complex needs. He has published and presented at conferences in areas related to education and autism in adulthood. Chris' current research projects are all autism specific, connected to higher education, mental health and adult experiences.

Investigating autism disclosure: Insights from social media

Deciding whether to tell others that you are Autistic (sometimes referred to as disclosure) can be a tough choice for many Autistic people. It can have both good and bad consequences. Instead of asking people directly, we looked at public social media posts from Reddit and Twitter that talked about autism disclosure. We looked at three years' worth of posts from Autistic and non-autistic adults. We learnt four main things. The big one is that society does not understand autism, and that causes problems at work, in relationships, for healthcare, and mental health. Autistic people want more privacy, respect, and representation, while non-autistic people should offer more support. Our research shows we need better advocacy, accurate media representation, and public role models. If society understands autism better, it will help Autistic people feel safer about disclosing.