

**Keynote speaker:**  
***Professor Dawn Adams***



#ASfAR2023

**Biography**

Professor Dawn Adams (she/her) is the Director of the Autism Centre of Excellence, Griffith University. As well as being an academic, she is also a Clinical Psychologist. She has published over 75 research articles and been awarded AUD\$4.75 million in research funding. Dawn uses both her clinical and research experience to inform her work in the area of anxiety, mental health and wellbeing in autistic individuals. To ensure her work is driven by, and has immediate relevance to, the autistic and autism communities, all of Dawn's current research grants and projects are collaborations with community and/or clinical partners. Her work in this area has led her to co-develop and evaluate an autism-specific anxiety prevention/intervention for autistic preschoolers. She is also currently working with four community partners, including Reframing Autism, to co-produce an autism-specific intervention to enhance wellbeing in young autistic children.

**How far can research inform the development of accessible, inclusive and effective mental health supports or services for autistic people?**

There has been a rapid growth in the number of research articles describing mental health issues, particularly anxiety, in autistic people. This has led to the development of autism-specific models of mental health, which provide a theoretical basis for tailored, neurotype informed supports. However, autism-specific supports are of limited effectiveness if they are not accessible, or offered through inclusive services. In this keynote, I aim to consider how far the current research can inform the development of mental health supports or services that are accessible, inclusive and effective for autistic people. Drawing upon data from autistic people and their supporters, I will explore many of the barriers that may be “invisible” to services (i.e., those that prevent autistic people from being able to access mental health services) and question how we can deem effectiveness of a service if many people are finding it difficult (if not impossible) to access. In doing this, I hope to inspire and challenge us all to consider ways to collaborate with the community to generate evidence-based solutions to such experiences and enhance clinical pathways to improved mental health and wellbeing for autistic individuals now, and into the future.