To Whom it May Concern,

We are writing to you on behalf of our community members to share the reactions and impact of the aftermath of Autism Tasmania entering voluntary administration mid last week.

Community Member Riley Williams expresses so eloquently what Autism Tasmania means to the autistic community and the risk the community is placed at by the discontinuation of government funding:

*“Autism Tasmania has meant hope, kindness, and solidarity. My involvement has greatly improved my mental health and wellbeing. To engage with people just like myself is profoundly meaningful. Many people are dependent and reliant on the services, facilities, and capacity of Autism Tasmania. In the case of RAEN, RAEN has been dependent on the resources and facilities of Autism Tasmania to build a community network. Many folks are individually dependent on the support of Autism Tasmania, groups like RAEN don't have the capacity to fill these gaps.*

*What this all means, is that with the insolvency of Autism Tasmania, the result for the Tasmanian Autistic community is a sudden increase of psychological, physiological, and existential burden. Personally this is all quite heartbreaking for myself and processing the implications of all of this will take time, but if we are at all to recover affiliated advocacy groups will need to find a way to absorb this sudden shock, managing and mitigating the effects of this is paramount to the health and wellbeing of the Tasmanian Autistic community.*

*Government assistance would be appreciated in these times by the community.” ~ Riley Williams (RAEN Peer Facilitator, Former Autism Tasmania Autistic Community Advisory Sub-Committee Co-Chair*

The Regional Autistic Engagement Network (RAEN) was founded three years ago and continues to be an autistic led community organisation. Over the last two years, RAEN has grown into an essential peer networking service for the Tasmanian autistic community with over 400 autistic community members online and upwards of 11 regular peer gatherings per month with many more in development. We are currently expanding to statewide delivery of peer group, advocacy & educational services.

Building on the history and passion of Autism Tasmania, RAEN has been working frantically since the breaking news of Autism Tasmania’s closure to fill the gaps left for the autistic community. We are in contact with grassroots organizations and advocates across the state and are currently operating entirely volunteer to make sure that our community has a safe space to retreat and process last week's news as well as seek reassurance and information (see our attached introductions to meet the volunteers behind the face of RAEN).

RAEN is currently incorporating and intends to seek funding to fill the essential gap in support services autistic Tasmanians are currently experiencing. Our peak body organisation may be gone but the community need remains. We will continue as a small disability led organization and work tirelessly, within our capacity, to bring the autistic community together, and fill the gaps we can of the invaluable services that Autism Tasmania delivered for 30+ years to the Tasmanian autistic community whilst we await further clarity.

We welcome meetings, phone calls and emails from stakeholders, advocates and elected officials to talk with us about the urgent support needs of autistic Tasmanians, and to work with us on the path to finding a solution.

**Regional Autistic Engagement Network**

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