



Being able to find and navigate supports for autism is important. Many autistic people and their families say it's still too hard to find the help. This is impacting their ability to do basic things and live fulfilling lives.

Istar and Araf's story shows why a new National Autism Strategy is needed to help improve coordination and information, especially for multicultural communities.

## Istar and Araf's story

Istar is a former refugee. She has a Bachelor of Human Services and is studying a graduate certificate in autism education. She is a passionate disability advocate. Istar is a mum of 5 kids and her son, Araf, is autistic.

Araf is 9 years old. He loves playing soccer and is fascinated with technology. Istar feels that when he's using computers or an iPad, Araf can draw, spell and play in a way he is comfortable.

Istar shares how hard it can be for people to get the help they need when they have an autistic child.

*'After Araf's diagnosis I was looking for help with speech and occupational therapy. I understood the system – because of my studies – and I speak the language. I found some support, but it was hard.'*

*'In my journey to get help for Araf, I see too many children left behind.'*

Autistic people from multicultural backgrounds can face additional barriers. Istar says this is because it's a new country and there are cultural differences or language barriers. It is hard to understand the system and what support is available.

Istar believes there needs to be more support and services that are better connected to help autistic people. She is looking forward to the development of the National Autism Strategy.

*'I'm looking for change. Every child can achieve their goals with the right support and love.'*

*'Let's work with autistic children today, so that tomorrow they can live the lives they want.'*

*'Autistic people want to be independent. With the right help and support we can make sure there is less chance autistic people are unemployed or facing homelessness.'*

Istar hopes that autistic people and their families – particularly multicultural communities – have their say on the National Autism Strategy.

*'We need to speak for ourselves. Have our voices heard. We can make a real difference – a good change. But we need to learn about the experiences from autistic people and their families.'*

*'I want to live in a community that recognises and appreciates my son for who he is. He is amazing – like all children are. He has so many strengths, we need change to be able to realise his potential so he too can contribute to our community and make it better.'*

**Help shape the change. Visit [dss.gov.au/National-Autism-Strategy](https://dss.gov.au/National-Autism-Strategy) to see how you can have your say on the National Autism Strategy.**