

## ***Autistic Partnership in Action: Weaving Research into Policy and Practice to Support Autistic Well-Being***

The Autistic Partnership in Action: Weaving Research into Policy and Practice to Support Autistic Well-Being symposium provided a platform for leading researchers, practitioners, and community voices to share emerging evidence, innovative approaches, and lived perspectives focused on improving outcomes for autistic people and their whānau across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keynote speaker, Professor David Trembath, = Head of Autism Research at CliniKids, The Kids Research Institute Australia, has dedicated his career to improving = outcomes for autistic people and their families. His keynote presentation titled '*This Changes Everything: The Promise and Possibilities of the new National Autism Centre*' explored the transformative opportunities created by the opening of the Autism Research Centre Aotearoa New Zealand, highlighting the Centre's potential to unite researchers, practitioners, autistic people, and their support networks around a shared commitment to enhancing autistic wellbeing.

Professor Trembath reflected on the promise a Centre of this kind holds for strengthening both the impact of autism research and the collaborative approaches used to achieve meaningful and lasting outcomes. His presentation emphasised the importance of research that is informed by lived experience, connected to practice, and capable of influencing policy and systems change across Aotearoa New Zealand.

The symposium showcased a diverse range of research, partnership initiatives, and evidence-informed practice, with presentations covering topics including:

- ***Co-designed early support for autistic children and their whānau/families***  
Dr Hannah Waddington (Victoria University) Professor Laurie McLay (University of Canterbury)
- ***Outcomes across the early life course for Autistic young people: evidence using the Integrated Data Infrastructure***  
Dr Nick Bowden (University of Otago)
- ***Examining case complexity among Pasifika Autistic/Takiwātanga youth in Aotearoa New Zealand: A national cross-sectional study***  
Dr Troy Ruhe (University of Otago)
- ***Getting it Right – Provision and Access to Timely and Appropriate Supports for the Tāngata Whaitakiwātanga/Autistic Community Before, During, and After Diagnosis***  
Lee Patrick (Autism NZ)
- ***Auditory Sensitivities and Quality of Life in Autistic People***  
Professor Paul Sowman (Auckland University of Technology)
- ***Autistic Partnership – New Zealand (AP-NZ) panel discussion***  
Joanne Dacombe, Gabrielle Hogg, and Beth Noble

The symposium highlighted the importance of collaboration between researchers, clinicians, educators, community organisations, and autistic people in shaping responsive and inclusive systems of support. Discussions throughout the event reinforced the value of co-designed research, equitable access to services, and ensuring autistic voices remain central to future policy and practice development.

Closing remarks were delivered by Dr Ruth Monk, (Autistic Partnership – Aotearoa, University of Canterbury), concluding a significant and forward-focused event dedicated to strengthening wellbeing outcomes for autistic communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.