



First ever National Campaign for Autism launches in Australia

Media Release

Picture this: The seconds are ticking by and you're struggling to communicate the simplest of ideas to the person next to you. Limited faculties make you feel disconnected, hampered and frustrated. You can see it clearly in your mind but just can't find a way to convey it.

This is a common communication challenge that many people living with autism face on a daily basis and a new national campaign is inviting us to glimpse into their world to raise both funds for and awareness of the disorder.

Drawtism® which is being launched in association with Mattel's Pictionary™ is Australia's first ever national campaign for autism. Throughout Autism Awareness month, this May, Australians will be asked to draw a crowd and host Pictionary™ evenings to raise funds for autism charities across the country.

With one in 160 Australians diagnosed with an ASD, there are over 120,000 people living with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) across Australia. A considered campaign, Drawtism® seeks to increase the community's empathy for the thousands of Australians affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Wojciech Nadachowski from Alpha Autism Inc. and creator of the Drawtism® campaign says; "By basing Drawtism® on Pictionary™, which has an authentic connection to the experience of autism, we aim to give people both an insight into the impairments of autism, as well as provide a positive and meaningful way by which to galvanise support."

Elissa Down, director of the award winning feature film, *The Black Balloon*, is an ambassador for Drawtism® in 2009. After growing up with two younger brothers with autism, Elissa has first-hand experience of the disorder which inspired her acclaimed 2008 film starring Gemma Ward, Toni Collette, Rhys Wakefield and Luke Ford.

"I have three brothers — two of whom have autism — and I grew up knowing in my heart of hearts that one day my family story would make fertile ground for a film. There are a lot of misconceptions out there about autism and it's great to be part of a national campaign that aims to break these down and bring the spotlight onto this largely misunderstood disorder." Elissa said.

Drawtism® is a campaign initiated by Victoria-based Alpha Autism and will be running in association with Autism Spectrum Australia in NSW, Autism SA and the Autism Association of WA. Proceeds from the campaign will go towards supporting those affected by Autism.

Wojciech Nadachowski, of Alpha Autism Inc which specialises in adult training and support, employment and respite services says: "Our appropriately developed and targeted programs foster important social and communication skills. Such programs encourage participation in meaningful activity and independent living, with skills to help integrate participants into their local communities."

Sharpen Your Pencils...

To show your support for the campaign, Pictionary™ and Alpha Autism are inviting Australians to get together during May and play Pictionary™ with friends, family and colleagues to help raise awareness and funds for those living with autism. To find out more log on to www.drawtism.com.au

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For more information on Drawtism® or to arrange an interview with Elissa Down or Wojciech Nadachowski, please contact Haystac:

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