

MACA LTD
OUR IMPACT
2019 - 2024

Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia Ltd



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**Mobility & Accessibility
for Children in Australia[®]**

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MACA acknowledges the Lands on which we work.

We celebrate the significant connection and kinship all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples share with their Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, for their custodianship, their courage and their resilience.



“...this is only the beginning — there is still a long way to go to close the gaps in research, information, policy, and products that impact the rights of children with disability to safe transport in Australia.”

— Helen Lindner, MACA Chief Executive





Mobility & Accessibility
for Children in Australia[®]

Established in 2019, Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia Ltd (MACA) is a not-for-profit charity dedicated to driving research and development to advance the rights of children (under 16 years) with disabilities and medical conditions to safe and equitable transport.

OUR VISION

Every child has access to safe and equitable transport

OUR MISSION

To develop and deliver solutions for the safe and equitable transport of children with disabilities and medical conditions

KEY PRIORITY AREAS

Build capacity and capability

Strengthen policies and systems

Advance knowledge

Drive innovation

HOW WE CREATE IMPACT



With children and families at the centre of our activities, we work with diverse sectors including transport, health, education, disability, industry and academia.



OUR CORE VALUES



COLLABORATING ACROSS SECTORS

By working across sectors, we expand knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the road safety needs of children with disabilities and medical conditions in the community.

Our work to date has been evaluated with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services. These findings are presented in this Impact Report, highlighting achievements against our key priority areas.

Chief Executive's Message

Children living with disability are entitled to enjoy human rights on an equal basis to other children. Yet until MACA, there was no national expert body to support and advocate for best practice transport and associated products and services for children with disabilities and medical conditions.

MACA is leading a significant research and development program to advance research, knowledge, consumer information, product availability and training to improve road safety and community participation for children with disability and their families.

We are also raising awareness and removing regulatory and legislative barriers by working closely with road agencies throughout Australia.

The lived experience of children with disability and their families is at the heart of MACA's approach — and we thank those who have taken part in our research or shared their stories and experiences — some of which are presented in this report.

As part of MACA's Information Linkages and Capacity Building program (ILC) grant, funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, MACA engaged Curtin University to evaluate the effectiveness of MACA's national information resources.

Parents, health professionals and organisation representatives were invited to share their experiences relating to the safe transport of children with disability through a baseline (2020) and follow up (2023) survey.

This data has enabled MACA to measure the impact of our work and to highlight where more work needs to be done.

I am proud of the progress we have made in strengthening all parts of the system to better support the real-world transport needs of families, and I'm delighted to share the impact of our work in this report.

However, this is only the beginning — there is still a long way to go to close the gaps in research, information, policy, and products that impact the rights of children with disability to safe transport in Australia. For example, less parents today (43%) feel that their child is missing out on participating in everyday activities due to their transport arrangements compared to 2020 (49%). This is still unacceptably high.

For an inclusive Australia, further work is urgently required to ensure that the rights of children with disability to safe transport and community participation are met equal to other children in the community.



Helen Lindner



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“MACA is leading a significant research and development program to advance research, knowledge, consumer information, product availability and training to improve road safety and community participation for children with disability and their families.”

— Helen Lindner, MACA Chief Executive

BUILD CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Build capacity and capability across organisations and among allied health professionals.

Objectives

- Create tools and resources to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills for supporting the safe transport needs of children with disabilities and medical conditions.
- Empower organisations to promote a road safety culture.

Highlights — Training

2022

Transporting Children with Disabilities and Medical Conditions

An online training course for allied health professionals to build knowledge and confidence in assessing and prescribing for children's motor vehicle transport needs.

*Course participants receive a free copy of the MACA Guide, a comprehensive prescribing tool.

2023

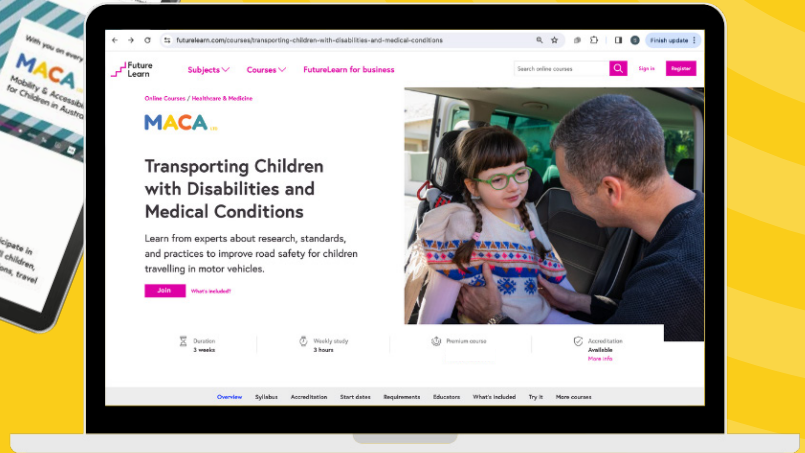
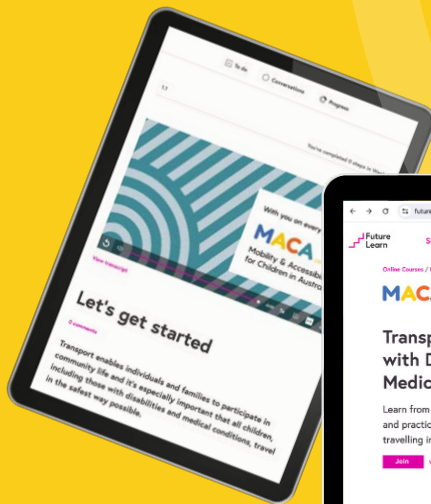
Leadership in Supporting the Transport Needs of Children with Disability

An online training course for suppliers and service organisations to develop confidence and leadership in product supply.

2024

Workplace Road Safety Leadership

An online training course to assist organisations in the care sector to manage vehicle-related risks in the workplace and influence their organisation to adopt a culture of workplace road safety.



OVER

700

training enrolments

86%

of allied health professionals found MACA's training course 'very helpful'

80%

of allied health professionals reported having 'some' or 'considerable' knowledge and skill in addressing children's car seating/travels needs (up from 63% in 2020)

49%

reported that they developed these skills from 'online learning' (up from 21% in 2020)



BUILD CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Build capacity and capability across organisations and among allied health professionals.

Highlights — Information Resources

2021

Launched MACA's website — <https://www.macahub.org/>

A trustworthy and independent resource for health professionals, parents and other stakeholders.

2022

Developed the MACA Guide

A comprehensive prescribing tool to assist MACA trained health professionals with clinical reasoning and documentation requirements.

2023

Created the MACA Hub — <https://www.macahub.org/macahub>

A subscriber portal for MACA trained health professionals.



Issued 13 e-newsletters

Keeping subscribers informed of the latest research, news and development.

OVER

42,000

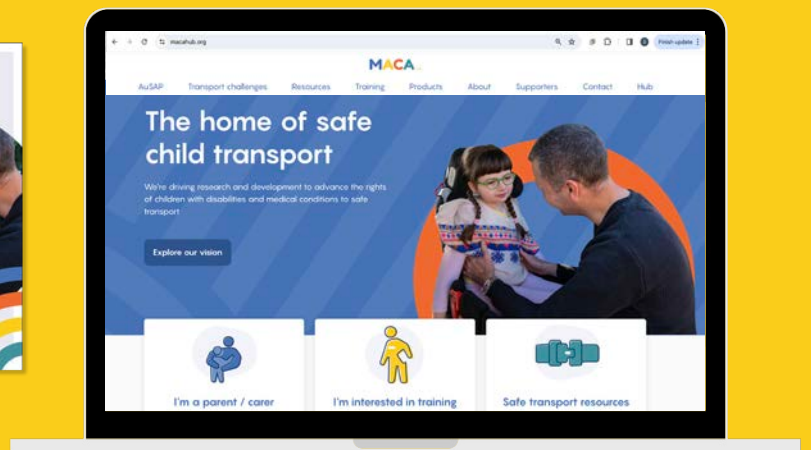
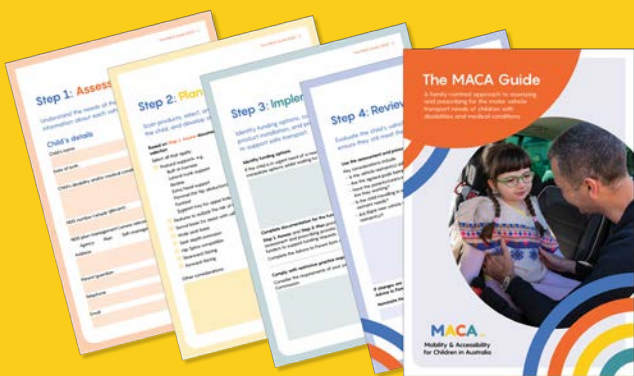
website visitors

400+

MACA Guides sent to training participants

42%

of parents reported that they had received information about how to safely transport their child with disability (up from 30.5% in 2020)



BUILD CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Build capacity and capability across organisations and among allied health professionals.

Highlights — Raising Awareness

15

conference presentations including in Australia, Germany, Japan, Norway and New Zealand

12

media releases issued



5

television news stories have featured MACA's work and given a platform to family experiences

1400+

social media followers have engaged with us through Facebook and LinkedIn

5

published papers as a direct result of MACA's work





“We are also raising awareness and removing regulatory and legislative barriers by working closely with road agencies throughout Australia.”

— Helen Lindner,
MACA Chief Executive



CASE STUDY

MACA's resources and training are a trusted 'source of truth' for the Cerebral Palsy Alliance (CPA).

The resources and training are supporting clinicians in their assessing and prescribing role, as well as informing the organisation's transport safety guidelines and resources.

CPA is a global centre of expertise for cerebral palsy research, advocacy, intervention and assistive technology innovation — providing assistive technology services to children and families across New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

Safe transport in the spotlight

Transport is considered a high-risk area of practice and a key focus for CPA. Around 60 per cent of CPA's seventy occupational therapists have already enrolled in MACA's training course, Transporting Children with Disabilities and Medical Conditions, since it launched in mid-2022.

"The feedback from clinicians is that it is an incredibly beneficial course."

"It has been an amazing addition to our knowledge and understanding and is a valuable source of truth for staff. We have great confidence in the information and are constantly referring staff to MACA's resources."

— Rachelle Baldock, CPA Clinical Educator, Occupational Therapy



Informing new guidelines

CPA began reviewing its transport safety guidelines in late 2023, with updated guidelines and supporting education resources to be launched in the second quarter of 2024.

MACA's information and resources have 'completely informed' this review, according to CPA.

"As a large organisation, we had to look at what we currently have in terms of assessment and risk assessment, and determine what we're going to use from MACA's resources and what we're going to keep using."

"It's looking at both and thinking, what's going to work best for our staff."

— Jane Berry, CPA Consultant Occupational Therapist

The MACA Hub

The MACA Hub is a subscriber portal available to MACA trained allied health professionals — and its resources have been invaluable for CPA clinicians.

The Hub contains the MACA Guide, Product Guides, template letters, access to professional development opportunities and public listing on a 'find a MACA-trained professional' lookup map.

"In a supervisory context, I've used the Hub a lot and referred staff to it to help with their clinical reasoning around transport situations," Jane said.

The Hub's Product Guides contain essential information about each special purpose car seat on MACA's National Product Register to assist with prescribing and funding applications — and have been particularly useful for CPA.



STRENGTHEN POLICIES AND SYSTEMS

Strengthen policies and systems to be more inclusive and responsive to the transport needs of children with disability and their families.

Objectives

- Promote the inclusion of the transport and road safety needs of children with disabilities and medical conditions in policies and strategies.
- Influence the improvement of standards and regulations relating to child restraint systems and devices for children with disabilities and medical conditions.

Highlights — Standards

MACA is a member of two Standards Australia Committees, responsible for the development of two key standards.

AS
5384

MACA participated in the development of a new standard, **AS 5384: Accessories for seat belts used in motor vehicles**. This standard includes requirements for postural support devices, such as specialty harnesses/ vests and outlines crash testing, labelling, and packaging requirements. MACA is advocating for industry to develop and supply products that meet this standard.

AS/NZ
1754

MACA is involved in the review of **AS/NZS 1754 Child restraint systems for use in motor vehicles**. The working group is developing a new section to allow for variations to Australian standard car seats. This will cater for the motor vehicle needs of some children with disabilities and medical conditions.



Highlights — Regulations and Legislation

MACA has worked closely with a number of jurisdictions to remove barriers and improve the transport experience for children with disabilities.



MACA worked with the Northern Territory and Queensland governments to introduce new legal requirements for using seatbelt buckle covers — making it easier for health professionals to prescribe these products and for families to comply with the law. MACA will continue to call on the commonwealth and other state and territory governments to clarify the legal requirements when using seatbelt buckle covers.



MACA successfully advocated for the removal of barriers for South Australian families which were impacting their rights to safety and community participation. Read more about this good news story on the next page.



MACA is calling for the review of the Australian Child Restraint Road Rules to be inclusive of the needs of children with disability. The safety of children with disability who require specialised products is not protected by the current laws, creating barriers and unnecessary burden on families of children with disability. MACA is advocating for the National Transport Commission to introduce clearly defined laws that are designed to protect the safety of children with disability — the same level of protection that all other children enjoy.

CASE STUDY

Improving access to transport — for South Australian children and their families

From 2022, MACA launched an advocacy campaign calling on the South Australian Government to remove barriers that were unfairly disadvantaging children with disability and their families.

Families whose children were prescribed specialty child restraint products had been required to attend the Department for Infrastructure and Transport's office to obtain a certificate of exemption — which was incredibly difficult for many families, especially those in regional or rural South Australia.

This process had to be repeated for every vehicle the child travelled in, and if the family changed their vehicle.

MACA's advocacy efforts led to the government undertaking a comprehensive review of legislation and processes — and ultimately removing the unnecessary requirement on 30 March 2024.

“This change is significantly improving access to transport for South Australian children with disabilities and their families, enabling their participation in community on an equal basis to others.”

— Helen Lindner,
MACA Chief Executive





“MACA’s advocacy efforts led to the government undertaking a comprehensive review of legislation and processes.”

— Emma Clarkson, MACA Director

ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE

Advance knowledge to address the historic and global lack of research and information in this area.

Objectives

- Progress the evidence-base to improve vehicle transport safety for children with disabilities and medical conditions.
- Explore lived experience to improve transport safety for children with disabilities and medical conditions.

Highlights — Research

MACA has initiated and led several research projects to progress the evidence-base for safe and equitable transport of children with disabilities and medical conditions.

Our work has also stimulated and informed other important research, such as a NeuRA PhD scholarship investigating the modification of Australian standard child restraints.

MACA's unique position at the forefront of research enables rapid translation of research findings into practice. We regularly update our website, resources, and training programs in response to new research learnings, ensuring our audiences are kept abreast of the latest research and development in this specialised area.



2020-
2024

National Evaluation Survey

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services under the ILC program, MACA engaged Curtin University to evaluate the effectiveness of MACA's national information resources. Parents, health professionals and organisation representatives were invited to share their experiences about the safe transport of children with disabilities through a baseline and follow up survey.

2020-
2021

Buckle Release: Eliminating road safety risks for children with disability

Funded by the Office of Road Safety, MACA worked with the La Trobe University Centre for Technology Infusion to better understand the challenges of buckle release. Key project outcomes included an informative Buckle Cover Model Policy for allied health professionals and information and guidance to inspire vehicle manufacturers and innovators to develop new and safer products.

2022-
2024

Investigating specialty harness/vest use

Funded by Austroads, MACA is working with The George Institute for Global Health to investigate specialty harnesses/vests, develop expert safety recommendations, and recommend what MACA should include in its Australian Safety Assessment Program (AuSAP).

2021-
2023

Ethnographic research

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, MACA worked with Monash University Emerging Technologies Research Lab to listen and learn from ten families in their lived environments. This important research is informing and enriching MACA's information and training resources. Read the case study on page 20 to learn more.



CASE STUDY

It shouldn't be this hard — insights from families' daily transport experiences

Groundbreaking ethnographic research undertaken by MACA and Monash University's Emerging Technologies Research Lab revealed significant — and at times distressing — transport challenges faced by families.

Researchers immersed themselves in the lives of ten families of children with disabilities and medical conditions from across Australia. They conducted interviews, observations, and ride-alongs to gain a deeper understanding of their day-to-day transport experiences.

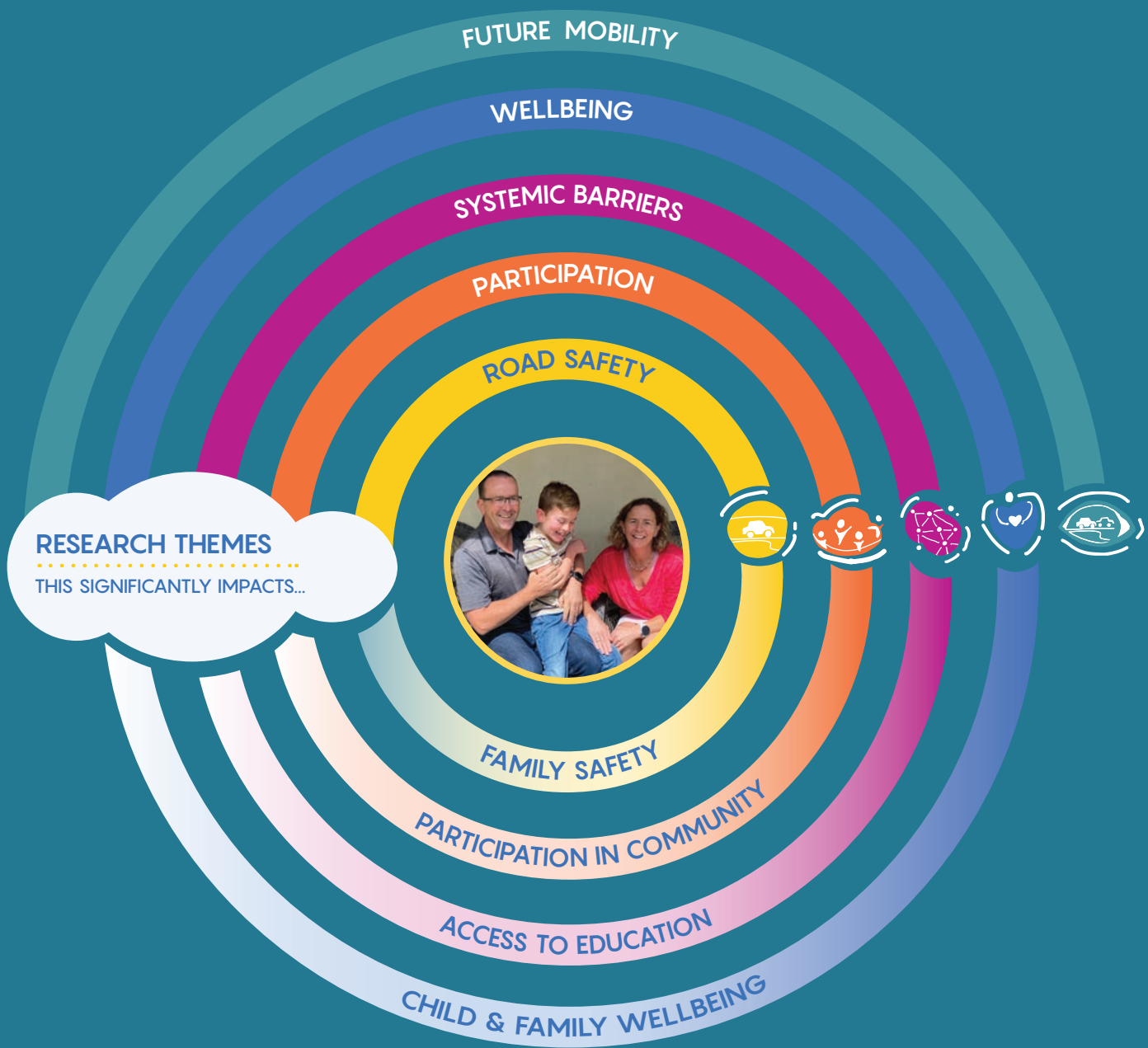
The researchers found that the families shared a common, and often isolating, experience of 'fighting' for their child's right to safe motor vehicle transport.

"These families shared harrowing experiences, such as serious road safety incidents, their child being unable to go to school because they can't access suitable transport, or the physical and emotional toll of managing their child's transport needs."

— Emma Clarkson, MACA Director

The research report provides clear actions required for system-wide change.





“MACA has already started to address some of the systemic barriers experienced by families in this research, but there is much more to be done.”

— Emma Clarkson, MACA Director

DRIVE INNOVATION

Drive innovation to encourage new solutions for children and their families.

Objectives

- Openly share insights and learnings with industry and researchers to stimulate innovation.
- Accelerate user driven product design and safety solutions.

MACA established the world leading Australian Safety Assessment Program (AuSAP) in 2020 — with funding from the Victorian Transport Accident Commission and in-kind support from Britax Childcare Pty Ltd and Neuroscience Research Australia — Transurban Road Safety Centre. Baker McKenzie law firm provides pro bono support for AuSAP agreements and trademarks.

Supported by a preeminent Expert Technical Committee, AuSAP independently assesses the specialty vehicle restraint systems used by children with disabilities and medical conditions. Australian disability product importers actively participate in AuSAP, including donating products for crash testing.

AuSAP aims to —



7 primary importers of special purpose car seats in Australia signed up to AuSAP

NEARLY

30 special purpose car seats have been considered by AuSAP

NEARLY

100 crash tests/assessments have been conducted

10 special purpose car seats published on MACA's National Product Register



Product Guides published for each special purpose car seat – containing independent information about compliance with standards/regulations, AuSAP outcomes, and prescribing advice



engaged with manufacturers from Poland, Japan, Germany, Spain and the USA



expanded product range to cater for vehicle occupants from birth to adulthood

CASE STUDY

From stressful to supported — meeting Ashton’s car travel needs

Melbourne mum Sandy used to find it stressful and worrying to travel in the car with her then 14-month-old son Ashton, who has Down syndrome and uses a nasogastric tube, as his Australian standard car seat was not meeting his needs.

“We were constantly looking in the rear-view mirror making sure he’s OK,” Sandy said. “Other than his specialist appointments I wouldn’t take him out in the car unless I had to.”

Thankfully, it’s a very different story today. Ashton was prescribed a HERO-NXT special purpose car seat. Product importer Medifab Australia had only recently introduced this special purpose car seat into Australia as a result of the AuSAP findings — which included sled-crash testing and the development of a comprehensive Product Guide.

The HERO-NXT caters for younger children and comes with a unique swivel base and additional postural support features that aren’t available on Australian standard car seats. It has been life-changing for the family.

They were able to go on their first family trip at Christmas time, with Ashton travelling comfortably and Sandy no longer constantly distracted whilst driving.

“We’re thrilled that, through AuSAP, we have been able to expand our special purpose car seat range, including the HERO-NXT. This is the first car seat for young babies and children requiring specialised support when travelling in a car.”

— Graham Mascull,
Medifab’s Managing Director





“Travelling used to be stressful, but now we don’t have to think about it anymore. You just pop him in the car seat and off you go.”

— Sandy, Ashton’s mum



PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

Major funder

Australian Government Department of Social Services

AuSAP supporters

Transport Accident Commission (establishment funding)

Britax Childcare Pty Ltd (in-kind)

Neuroscience Research Australia, Transurban Road Safety Centre (in-kind)

AuSAP industry participants

Active Rehab

Apex Mobility Pty Ltd

Dejay Medical and Scientific Pty Ltd

Etac ANZ Pty Ltd

Medifab Australia Pty Ltd

Specialised Wheelchair Company Pty Ltd

FAS Therapeutic Equipment Pty Ltd

Grants

Department of State Growth Community Road Safety Grants Program

Department of Transport and Main Roads Community Road Safety Grants Scheme

Office of Road Safety Road Safety Innovation Fund

Transport for NSW Community Road Safety Grants Program

TAC Road Safety Grants Program

VicRoads Community Road Safety Grants Program

In-kind support

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Research partners

Curtin University

Monash University Emerging Technologies Research Lab

The George Institute for Global Health

La Trobe University

Vehicle Design and Research Pty Ltd

APV Engineering & Testing Services Pty Ltd

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CEO, Assistive Technology Suppliers Association Australia

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David Sinclair

CEO, Assistive Technology Suppliers Association Australia (2020-23)

Volunteers

Mike Lumley

Michael Griffiths

Kenneth Gray

Glenn Dixon Visuals



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MACA is grateful to the many partners and supporters who work with us to achieve our vision.

THANK YOU



Australian Government
Department of Social Services





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MACA would like to acknowledge and thank the many children and families who have generously given their time and shared their stories.

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