

Rural & Regional
Empowerment
Program

Empowering
neurodivergent people
through understanding
and conversation

More Than
Quirky

Rural & Regional
Empowerment
Program (RREP)
NSW 2025



www.morethanquirky.com.au

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Refer a Family

Easy shortcut!

About MTQ

More Than Quirky was founded in 2023 by Jen Goodwin. It provides support to parents and other key adults in the lives of neurodivergent young people, to improve their quality of life.

Jen is an AuDHDer (autistic ADHDer), and mum of neurodivergent kiddos. She was born in central-west NSW, and grew up in a small town in north-west NSW before moving to Sydney to obtain a BA(Psych)DipEd from Macquarie University. Jen loves most things creative, including painting, crafts, writing, drawing, playing music, and dancing.

Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians...

...of country throughout Australia. I pay my respect and express gratitude for the stewardship of the Dharug and Guringai people, Traditional Custodians of the land on which I work, and the Gamilaroi people, Traditional Custodians of the land on which I was raised. I honour the Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Jen Goodwin, More Than Quirky



VISION

To provide a deeper level of understanding and connection between adults and neurodivergent young people, creating a safer world for ND youth in which they can thrive and succeed.



MISSION

To improve the interpretation and perception of traits and presentations of neurodivergencies, through discussion with key adults. To provide neurodiversity-affirming strategies and methodologies that empower young neurodivergent people to thrive, both now and as adults.





RREP

Bringing Quirkiness to Rural and Regional NSW in 2025

Thanks to the generosity of the Backing the Future grant program, delivered by the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF) and Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), **More Than Quirky** is offering pro bono support to a select number of families in rural and regional NSW over the next 12 months through the **More Than Quirky: Rural & Regional Empowerment Program (RREP)**.

This program will be delivered entirely online via video calls, email, and/or digital downloads (phone and postal options also available), making it possible for **More Than Quirky** to connect with more communities. It is a fully customised approach, engaging directly with each family to develop a support package tailored to their child, family, and community needs.

There is no cost to the family, referring body, or community for this program. RREP is for families of young people aged 12-30.




Why?

Studies into neurodivergence - particularly broad diagnoses such as autism and ADHD - have repeatedly shown that the “diagnostic”¹ and support experience for families in rural and regional areas is a much rougher ride than for those in major cities. Parents frequently report multiple barriers for autistic children’s participation in their community, and a need for additional services in non-metropolitan areas to overcome these hurdles.² When quality of life outcomes for autistic people are measured, living in a regional or remote area is considered a disadvantage, alongside low English proficiency and being from a low socioeconomic background.³ A Senate Inquiry into ADHD noted a lack of services in rural and regional areas.

Where there are services, wait lists are usually longer due to demand, and costs are exacerbated. And once neurotypes are confirmed? Access to allied health services, guidance, support, and advice is slow, difficult and expensive. Fewer are lived-experience directed, and are often not neurodiversity-affirming. This results in poorer outcomes for the children and their families, and an increase in trauma and mental health concerns later in life. All in all, these kids are not being adequately supported to access education, contribute to their community, and thrive as neurodivergent children... and then as neurodivergent adults with access to decent work.

“It was observed that a lack of access to specialists has resulted in many patients needing to travel long distances - sometimes interstate - to see a specialist, at considerable cost.”⁴

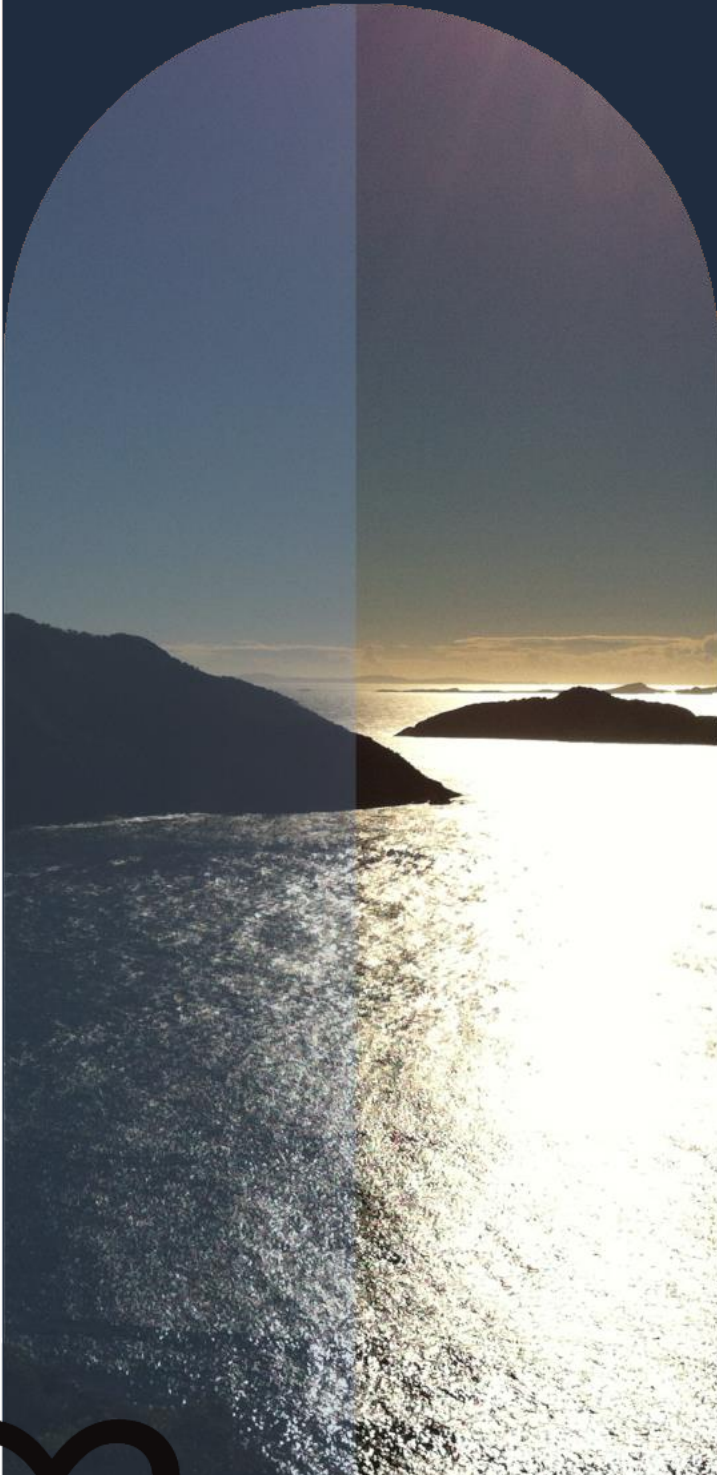


What's the price of this? The cost to community is the loss of opportunity and production, engaged members; neurodiversity is just as crucial to the optimal wellbeing of any environment as biodiversity! The cost to the economy is massive; lack of adequate accommodation and support of ADHDers alone costs Australia billions every year.⁵ Consider the number of neurodivergent adults currently on disability or unemployment benefits, in correctional centres, or requiring the financial security of other family members, who could be employed if adequately supported, and this increases exponentially.

And the cost to the individual? Undiagnosed and inadequately supported neurodivergent children, and late-diagnosed neurodivergent adults, are more prone to low self-esteem, mental health issues, and being victims of abuse and assault. They are undereducated, underemployed, unemployed, and significantly more likely to attempt suicide.



Addressing the Gap



75% of autistic people do not complete education beyond Year 12

8 times as many autistic people are unemployed compared to people without a disability

51% of autistic people and their families feel socially isolated

>50% of autistic people experience co-existing mental health conditions, many of which are a result of living in a neuronormative world

39% of autistic people and their families feel unable to leave the house due to concerns about socially perceived negative behaviours⁶



What is Neurodivergence?

Despite the way the term is frequently used in the media, neurodivergence covers a lot more than autism and ADHD.

Neurodivergent brains are simply brains that don't function the way a typical brain does. As such, the term "neurodivergence" includes:

- Autism
- ADHD
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dyspraxia / DCD
- Dysgraphia
- Apraxia of Speech
- Tourette's
- Sensory processing disorders
- Down syndrome
- Epilepsy
- Chronic mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder, OCD, BPD, anxiety, and depression
- Brain injury
- Learning disorders

...and many more



What is More Than Quirky?

More Than Quirky was founded in 2023 in response to the lack of genuine neurodiversity-affirming (neuroaffirming) support offered by the standard health system to most families of neurodivergent children; a situation the founder, Jen Goodwin, experienced herself when seeking support for her own family.

Parents' concerns are frequently dismissed; they're told their children are "just quirky", and no support is offered apart from the odd parenting course or advice to ensure the child is eating and sleeping well. Parents of autistic children are encouraged to "fix" their autistic traits with traumatic therapies. Autistic kids are repeatedly encouraged to mask, conform, and tolerate inhumane levels of distress and discomfort for the perceived benefit of others. ADHDer kids are prescribed medication and sent home; parents are given the impression that once the medication levels are correct their child will be much like a neurotypical child, then feel like failures when things are still difficult at home. Dyslexic kids are frequently taught literacy skills using the same approaches as neurotypical kids, with an acceptance that they will lag behind their peers. A ridiculous number of neurodivergencies are overlooked or misdiagnosed because they present alongside another neurotype (dyscalculia often coexists with ADHD, for example, which means many dyscalculic kids are assumed to be "not paying attention" rather than acknowledged as having a learning disability).

More Than Quirky is there for families on a more realistic level, providing support that works alongside the medical and educational systems, that improves regulation, communication, advocacy, awareness, and abilities. **MTQ** gives guidance to those yet to assess, so time and money isn't wasted, and strategies and hope to those who are already somewhere on this path.

Families who have worked with **More Than Quirky** have expressed that they understand, and appreciate the efforts of, their children more after receiving **MTQ's** support. They have shared stories about how much easier it is to get to school (and on time!), that mealtimes are no longer stressful and dramatic, that bedtime is a happy time, goals are being kicked, bedrooms are cleaned by kids rather than parents, successes are found in a school setting, self-esteem is strengthened and growing, friendships are now a source of delight rather than hurt, and that their child is finding a sense of safety in the world, and thriving.



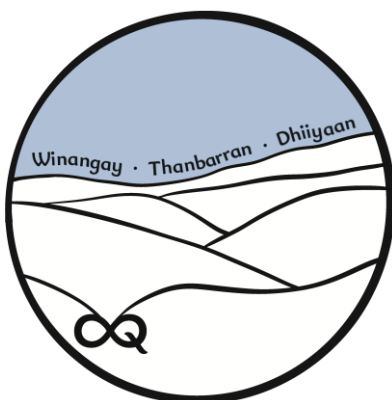
Don't rural and regional families deserve this too?

As the costs around assessment - including medical fees, tests, appointments, travel, accommodation, and more - are already unreasonably higher for rural and regional families, the option of “extra” support such as **More Than Quirky** is often a financial step too far.

Thanks to Backing the Future, the **More Than Quirky: Rural & Regional Empowerment Program** has now launched and is taking referrals for families of young people aged 12-30.

Spaces are limited, so if you recognise a young person in your community who you feel would benefit from **More Than Quirky's** approach, please submit a referral as soon as possible.

[Refer a Family](#)





Each referral will be assessed for their suitability, and either placed on a waitlist, or offered immediate access. The latter will be invited to complete an online survey which will provide much greater insight to their personal situation and experience.

What will More Than Quirky deliver to these families?

The 2025 project is a fully remote offering, at ZERO cost. Each family receives:

- + Video call with parents to discuss their child's presentation, needs, differences, health, and difficulties; as well as their own feelings, experience, and hurdles, all in a safe judgement-free environment.⁷
- + A separate call or text-chat engaging directly with the young person (if parental permission given, and interest expressed) to incorporate their perspective.
- + A unique, detailed, validating report, elaborating what is possibly being demonstrated in terms of difficulties, neurodivergencies, and other needs. This includes clearly defined strategies, where to find relevant neurodiversity-affirming information, and potential next steps regarding assessments or allied health support.
- + A personalised PDF for the young person with age-appropriate information, recommendations of media (books, film, TV, gaming, etc), neurodivergent celebrities and influencers, safe websites and communities, and strategies; giving them the opportunity to explore their identity, connect with like-minded youth, learn more about neurodivergence, and improve self-esteem, self-understanding, and self-advocacy.
- + An open offer to liaise with, or provide communications for, the young person's school: advocacy, IEP development, staff education, accommodation recommendations, etc.
- + Multiple opportunities to have follow-up questions answered, and regular check-ins.
- + Invitation to connect online after 3 months to assess progress, whether they are receiving adequate support (from GP, school, etc), and if they need further assistance from MTQ.
- + Access to all MTQ content, newsletters, and members-only events; discounts to workshops, online programs, or future appointments.





Who to Refer?

The Quirky Kids

Young people who might be neurodivergent but haven't been confirmed during childhood are likely to be high-masking, have low support needs, or be naturally accommodated. Recognition of neurotype is considered to still be highly beneficial, as a means of significantly improving long-term academic, mental health, and social engagement outcomes.

There are many presentations of neurodivergence that you will recognise, such as stimming, not being able to read, physical hyperactivity, etc. If you see these things, it is highly likely the parents do too, or you have already flagged it with them. Please refer any of these families to **More Than Quirky**.

Refer a Family

How many kids do you know that are a combination of some of these less recognised traits of different neurodivergencies? *(None of these prove neurodivergence, individually or in combination, but can be indicative of neurodivergencies when other factors are ruled out)*

- Considered to be the “weird one”
- Academically advanced
- Poor hygiene
- Clumsy and/or uncoordinated
- Parents report outbursts or behaviours at home that don't match the relatively easy-going kid you see
- Has hayfever and/or asthma induced by sports or weather events
- Flexible dancer or gymnast and /or known to roll their ankles or wear a wrist or knee brace
- Chronic unexplained pain
- Walks on the balls of their feet / tiptoes
- Frequently chews hair, fingernails, inside of mouth, pencils, gum, etc
- Changes friendship groups often, or has regular peer conflict
- Regularly copies the style of others (beyond usual youth trends), or is a chameleon between different groups
- Poor school attendance without obvious cause
- Inappropriate conversation topics or timings
- Noticeably poor handwriting, including illegibility and reversed letters
- Low mood, low self-esteem
- Aggression
- Rocking on chair, finding reasons to move around the classroom, asking to go to the toilet more than average
- Interrupting
- Regularly has wrong uniform or equipment, forgets homework, late assignments
- Perfectionist or model child
- Tests and assessments don't seem indicative of ability observed during class discussion or one-on-one interactions
- Appears to “not pay attention”
- “Class clown”
- Frequently the subject of disciplinary measures

Refer a Family





Who to Refer?

The Suspected Neurodivergent Kids

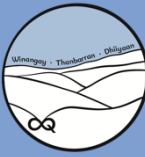
Parents who suspect their child is neurodivergent, whether they have raised this, or you have, are likely facing multiple possible pathways, significant expenses, confusion and questions, lots of big feelings, and potential push-back from within the medical system.

More Than Quirky can help these families:

- adapt their approach to accommodate differences and to meet needs, often significantly reducing difficulties before any external support is acquired
- determine the best step forwards for their child and whole family, preventing wasted time and funds
- pre-emptively assess all presentations and concerns, so the young person is helped holistically and adequately when support is achieved; rather than focusing on one concern, then needing to “start again” when the approach that helps overcome that concern doesn’t address others
- discover support networks and resources to reduce the feeling of isolation, helplessness, and frustration
- work collaboratively with their young person rather than trying to “fix them”, or leaving them feeling judged, criticised, or defective
- consider the financial implications of different approaches
- understand the likelihood of other neurological differences and physical health conditions
- be aware of “scaffolding”, and the background work that really helps neurodivergent people thrive, rather than focusing only on therapies and medications
- communicate with school, family, GP, sporting groups, and anyone else who needs to support and accommodate the young person in question... and that a formal “diagnosis” doesn’t prevent this from happening
- learn about neurodiversity-affirming approaches, which therapies are now considered to cause long-term trauma despite early “success”, and how to raise a neurodivergent child with a healthy self-esteem, personal pride, and skills in self-advocacy, self-care, and autonomy

[Refer a Family](#)





Who to Refer?

The Neurodivergent Kids

(even if they're "doing fine")

Young people with known neurodivergencies often have more than one neurodivergence, but frequently one disguises the other.

Many confirmed neurodivergent young people are also under supported, most often because the parents are not adequately informed and supported within the current health model. If you're aware of any family with a neurodivergent young person who struggle with day-to-day organisation, regulation, emotions, or anything else:

[Refer a Family](#)

If you know of a neurodivergent child, consider if any of them look like this:

- A known ADHDer who is under the care of medical professionals, and potentially even medicated, but is still struggling academically, socially, or emotionally
- Academically average or above average, but has incongruously poor spelling, handwriting and/or maths skills
- Autistic child who talks a lot, has many hobbies, and/or gets very stressed during assessment/exam periods
- Any neurotype that isn't technically a learning disability, but isn't coping academically
- Has the same food in their lunchbox every day, reads the same book often, carries an object often
- Other reasons you might want to refer a known neurodivergent young person:
- Parents report difficulties at home, from disorganisation through to violence; or parents don't see these things, but you do!
- Difficulty with - or change in - academic, social, emotional, behavioural, or mental presentation
- Easily dysregulated, low self-esteem
- "Not achieving their potential"
- "Needs to pay more attention"
- "Should show more dedication"
- Doesn't seem happy
- You have a feeling could shine, thrive, and love life, with the right support. **Trust your gut.**

[Refer a Family](#)





Testimonials

More than Quirky is a wonderful place to obtain excellent advice and information when you're just starting out your journey into the ND world and beyond. Jen really is a wealth of knowledge and has the insight to help parents and children navigate the challenges that ND children face. She really understands!

Mother of AuDHD son

From the day I met Jen, she has been incredibly supportive and warm and so knowledgeable. She provided me with knowledge, information, practical and emotional support, helpful strategies and tools as well as validation I so greatly needed.

Mother of autistic daughter

Jen has been an exceptional support for me, as a mother processing her daughter's diagnoses. She has actually been quite pivotal in my own personal journey as well as supporting me through each step of this process.

Mother of autistic daughter

As a parent of [an autistic child] it is really hard to find the right support. The compassion and understanding Jen has about neurodiversity is outstanding. She has always took time out of her day to talk to me, offer advice and help me navigate many meetings giving me the tools to advocate for my child. It has empowered us as parents to create a supported nurturing environment for my child both at school, home and the community. We are grateful that she has our back and is always there to answer questions and provide advice.

Mother of multiply neurodivergent sons



Referral Process

To recommend a family of a young person aged 12-30 for the **More Than Quirky: Rural & Regional Empowerment Program (RREP)** please click on the link below to complete an online referral form:

[Refer a Family](#)

Want to help?

If you've read this information and thought, "I'm in a position to help these families," because you're a neurodiversity-affirming allied health professional, run a regional NSW community group that would suit ND kids, offer support to parents with kids with disabilities, or any other angle, please submit your details here:

[Submit Your Details](#)

The bigger the database, the more safe, supportive pathways **More Than Quirky** can send families on!



Self-Referral

If you have been sent this information and would like to apply for pro bono support from **More Than Quirky**, please submit your family's information here:

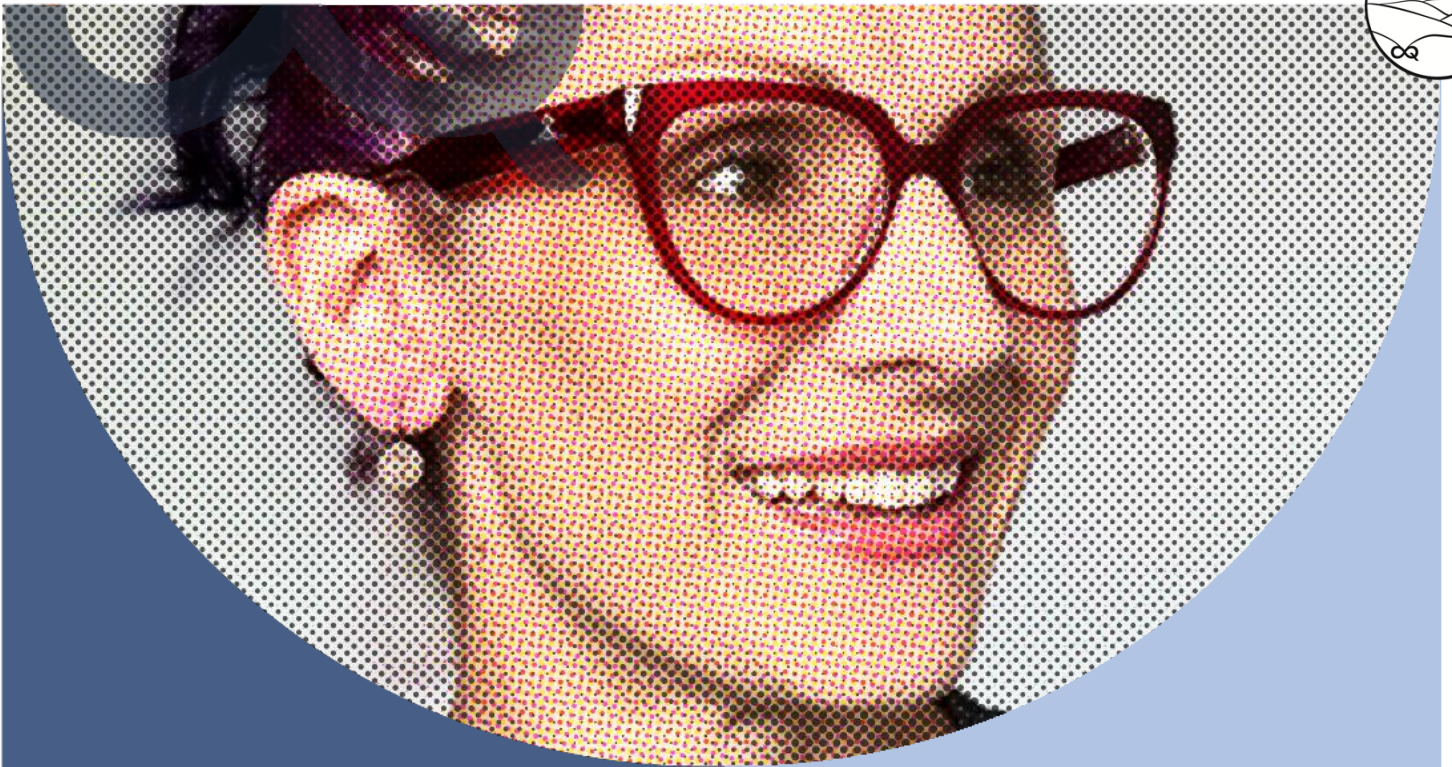
[Refer Your Own Family](#)



Request More Info

If you're not sure if the **More Than Quirky: Rural & Regional Empowerment Program** is a good fit, whether it's for someone you know or your own family, please contact Jen at info@morethanquirky.com.au with any questions.





Contact

WEBSITE:

<http://www.morethanquirky.com.au>

ADDRESS:

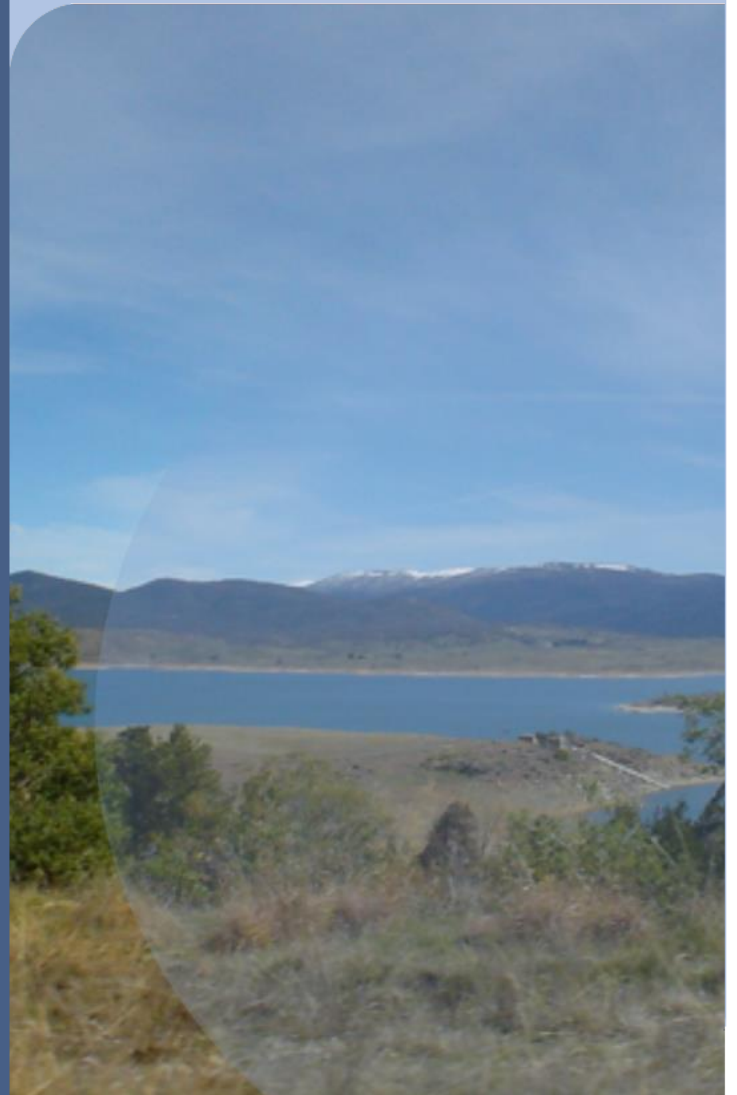
More Than Quirky
PO Box 20
Mount Kuring-Gai NSW 2080

PHONE:

0407 804 722

EMAIL:

info@morethanquirky.com.au





References / Footnotes

1. **More Than Quirky** chooses to refer to “diagnosis” as “confirmation” in most contexts. Not all neurodivergencies should be automatically considered to be disabilities or illnesses. As such, **MTQ** prefers to consider “diagnosis” to be the acknowledgement and confirmation of a non-typical neurotype. It is up to the individual as to whether they perceive their neurotype to be an illness or disabling in either the medical or social models of disability.
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7852351/>
3. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Autism/autism/Report
4. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/ADHD/Report/Chapter_3_-_Barriers_to_assessment_and_diagnosis
5. <https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/economics/perspectives/social-economic-costs-adhd-Australia.html>
6. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Autism/autism/Report
7. **More Than Quirky** maintains the right to report any concerns for safety to the relevant parties





More from More Than Quirky

If you have any questions about More Than Quirky, the More Than Quirky: Rural & Regional Empowerment Program (RREP), neurodivergence, or anything else you think MTQ might be able to help you with, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Supporting Families

As well as the pro bono More Than Quirky: Rural & Regional Empowerment Program (RREP), More Than Quirky can provide their usual Guidance Package via online video call:

[Book a Guidance Package](#)

Training and Coaching

If your organisation is interested in professional development in this field, training can be provided via online video call or pre-recorded sessions. Programs can be tailored to specific topics (Coregulation in the Classroom, for example), or a general introduction to neurodiversity-affirming language, perceptions, and methodologies.

More Than Quirky strongly recommends a 1-2 hour introductory course if your organisation regularly engages with young people.

Share the Love

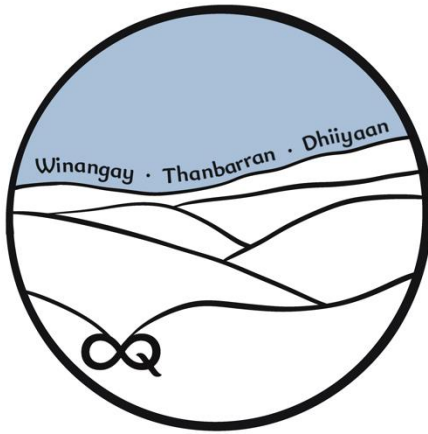
Please share this PDF with anyone you feel would be interested in the More Than Quirky: Rural & Regional Empowerment Program (RREP).

To donate a Guidance Package (AUD\$1,799+GST) for a family, or provide a school or organisation with a training session, please contact **More Than Quirky**. We will endeavour to utilise your generous donation in an area of your choosing within NSW, or as close to you as possible.

More Than Quirky
PO Box 20
Mount Kuring-gai NSW 2080
Australia
W: www.morethanquirky.com.au | E: info@morethanquirky.com.au | P: 0407 804 722



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