




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 31 March 2022

ADJOURNMENT

World Autism Awareness Day

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (6.20 pm): This Saturday, 2 April, is World Autism Awareness Day and on this day we wear blue. The purpose of the day is to put a spotlight on the hurdles people with autism face every day, and I will make my regular annual contribution to the House on our family's autism journey. In other years I have focused on the social or communication barriers that my boy has faced as he ages, but today I want to raise the awareness of some of those physical barriers. Autism spectrum disorder is often considered an invisible disability. That may be the case for many but not all. I want to thank my boy for joining us in the gallery today. If I had known it was going to be very noisy outside, I probably would not have brought him in. If I had known it was Pyjama Disco day at school, I probably would not have brought him in either. Sorry, dude!

As Ronan has gotten older and larger the physical symptoms have started to become more and more apparent. He does not have the balance or coordination that others his age have and apparently his inability to dance is not genetic; it is actually from his diagnosis. He has low muscle tone and poor core strength so that even the mildest exertion or strength takes up far more energy than it does for you or me. A trip to the shops is really enough to exhaust him. This often manifests in clumsiness—again, apparently not genetics—but it can be quite dangerous when he does not have the ability to protect himself when he falls. We have already had an ambulance trip from school this year when he fell and hurt himself. The other more obvious sign is actually in his gait—that is, the way he walks. Even at a distance amongst a group of his peers, he does stand out. For a child who has a lot of social issues, that can be quite disturbing and make him distraught because he still has trouble socialising. We have another NDIS review because now we are going to work on some of that physio aspect to really help him bring his muscle tone and skills so he can fit in amongst his peers.

Again, I get to update the House on his annual self-portrait. He is not as colourful as he used to be, but his name is perfect and we have been working really hard on that. I table this year's Ronan self-portrait update. Again, I want to highlight that although 2 April is World Autism Awareness Day it should be 'world autism awareness and understanding day'.

Tabled paper. Child's drawing [493](#).