

# RURAL IMPLEMENTATION

## National Guideline for the Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder

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### BACKGROUND

The National Guideline for the Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder was commissioned by the National Disability Insurance Agency and developed by the Autism Cooperative Research Centre after extensive community consultation. It was approved by the National Health and Medical Research Council in July 2018. There are 70 recommendations to guide implementation and provide equity and consistency in the diagnosis of autism. It has not yet been implemented and evaluated in a rural area.

In rural and remote communities:

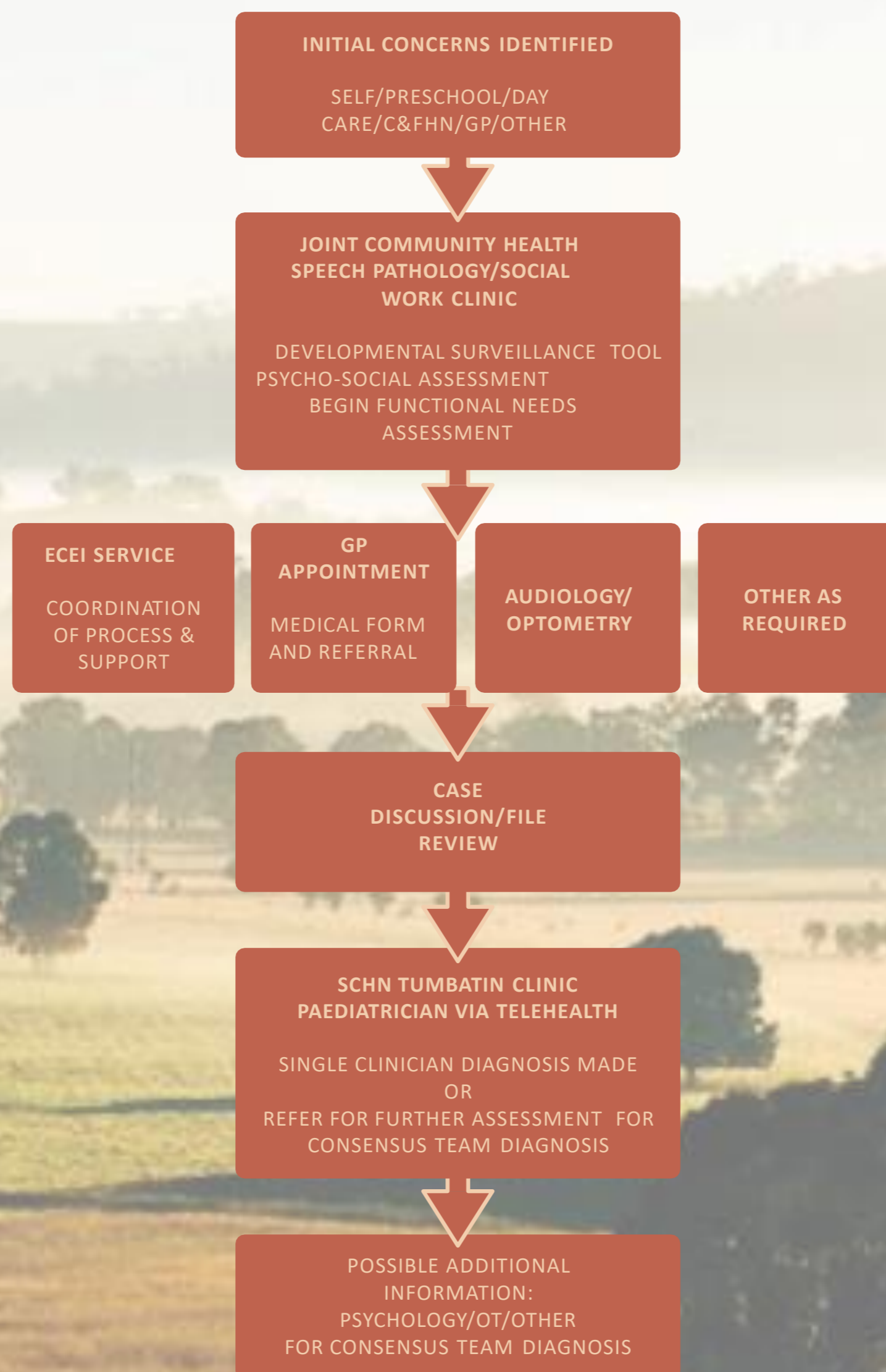
- There are significant challenges in accessing skilled professionals.
- Children are diagnosed at a later age (Bent et al 2015; Mandell et al 2005).
- Families and professionals describe a diagnostic process characterised by confusion, expense, lengthy delay, and stress (Bourke 2015).

### APPROACH

A locally-developed model of autism assessment will be implemented in the NSW Mid-Western Regional Council area. Children under 5 years of age who attend an established community health clinic will be offered participation in the research. The model will be evaluated against the guideline. (Ethics approval pending).

- A local implementation committee and an executive group will guide the project.
- Telehealth from Sydney Children's Hospital Network's Tumbatin Clinic will be trialled.
- An action research approach with mixed methods will be utilised.
- Qualitative data about the experience of families and clinicians will be gathered
- Quantitative data including length of the process, cost and benefit, travel and guideline adherence will be collected.

### DRAFT MODEL OF DIAGNOSIS



### IMPACT

It is imperative to assess the implementation of this best practice guideline and associated recommendations in a variety of real world settings, including rural and remote communities. The evaluation will contribute to the planned guideline review, including its flexibility and effectiveness in rural settings

Understanding barriers and key factors for success of guideline implementation is necessary to achieve greater equity and consistency in the diagnosis of autism. For children and families in rural communities, this may lead to:

- Earlier and more timely diagnosis.
- Earlier access to services tailored to identified needs.
- Reduced emotional stress and financial expense.
- Findings that can be translated to other rural communities.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

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### REFERENCES

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