



ELIZABETH MACKNEY
REGISTERED MUSIC THERAPIST
BN MMUSTHY, RN RMT



8 JANUARY 2022

TO
REUBEN AND HAYLEY
WALSH (MOTHER)
AND NDIA

**RE: REUBEN WALSH – NDIS PLAN REVIEW REPORT &
PROGRAM PLAN**

As per the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission Registration process Elizabeth Mackney is a Registered NDIS Provider. This Registration is current until 2023 and the Registration Id is: 4-3LLO-1571.

Reuben and Hayley, thank you for the opportunity to continue working with you through my role as a Registered NDIS Provider of Therapeutic Supports to provide Reuben with a program involving individual music therapy sessions, joint music therapy and speech therapy sessions, and joint group music therapy and speech therapy sessions. Music therapy offers fun, engaging, and age appropriate techniques for meeting the needs of children, such as Reuben, who are living with significant and complex, lifelong disabilities associated with Down Syndrome. The agreed program targets building Reuben's capacity, independence, and daily living skills across his key developmental areas of need (i.e. his physical, psychological and social domains of functioning) in an integrated way by using evidence-based techniques (e.g. such as, but not limited to - Neurologic Music Therapy techniques), strategies and contexts he finds safe, highly motivating and rewarding (i.e. shared creative music-based experiences).



This program simultaneously supports the development of Reuben's musical and creative skills and sensibilities. Overtime, this will result in him having the confidence to be involved in, and build his social, community and potentially economic participation in, the local musical/creative/performing arts community (N.B. non-musical and musical goals). As such, this service offers a highly specialised, participant-led, generalisable value-for-money service (i.e. meets the NDIS definition of reasonable and necessary criteria).

Please note that this report and its outcome descriptions address all the NDIS reasonable and necessary criteria and components of the NDIS's published "Early Childhood Provider Report Form".

Summary of sessions, outcomes and recordings:

Since Reuben's last music therapy NDIS plan review report in January 2021 he has attended a total of 16 face-to-face music therapy sessions with the support of his mother or grandfather. Six of these were individual music therapy sessions, seven were joint music therapy and speech therapy sessions (including one with speech therapy teleconferencing into the session), and three were joint group music therapy and speech therapy sessions involving up to two other participants. The persistent restrictions and risks associated with the COVID pandemic significantly impacted Reuben's capacity to attend all his scheduled sessions across this program period – particularly the groups sessions. Also, after one trial of telehealth with the speech therapist we agreed he derived the greatest benefit from face-to-face sessions. And so, we replaced some of the group sessions with individual sessions and shared the individual therapy load to ensure the continuity of critical developmental support to each of the group participants while optimising COVID safety.

In addition to the face-to-face sessions, and with Hayley's consent, during this program period Reuben participated in a significant project in celebration of "International Day Of People With Disability", which occurs annually on December 3. The project involved him participating in a music video which accompanied an original song called "Loved Ones Make Us Who We Are" that I composed in celebration of the day. The music video included more than 30 participants with and without disability and was publicly released on December 3, 2021. So far it has made \$1344.00. This money has been shared between all the NDIS participants ($n = 30$) involved. As such, Reuben



has made \$44.80 from the project. This is a significant social, community and economic outcome for Reuben and his fellow NDIS participants – many of whom have never had the experience/opportunity of earning pocket money from their own creations in the same way as their typically developing peers do (i.e. such as children who enter Eisteddfods, performing arts productions, talent competitions, etc. from a young age). This is just the beginning of such outcomes and experiences for Reuben. The promise of the NDIS to Reuben and others is that they can grow up expecting that outcomes and opportunities such as these are readily present in their world. This is where and how the social change intended by the NDIS will materialise in our society over time and generations. Reuben and his fellow participants involved in this project are the face and future of this change. The music video is publicly available so Hayley can share it with the plan reviewer upon request. More of these projects are already planned for 2022.

Despite the disruptions to Reuben's therapy course associated with COVID, we have witnessed steady, integrated and comprehensive progress regarding his developmental outcomes across this program period. Most outstanding has been Reuben's progress in terms of transferring his broadening and advancing skills across a range of contexts. At the beginning of the year Hayley would often comment that Reuben was confident at displaying, or practising what he had learnt in music therapy at home, but noticed that when he was in the space he was reserved, shy, less vocal and often sought refuge in her arms. In this regard Reuben has utterly transformed over the course of this year. He is now, without doubt, a seasoned performer beyond his home environment and proudly and confidently directs much of the full hour of his sessions – irrespective of the company. In recent months we have seen him initiate suggestions through an ever-expanding repertoire of alternative communication strategies (key word sign, gestures, vocalisations, eye contact, props, visual supports, exploration, etc) regarding such things as who we should sing a greeting to next, what instrument we should play, and what song we should share together. Hayley has sent me video clips of Reuben initiating and directing the same experiences at home with his older siblings. These video clips convey, overwhelmingly, the confidence and sense of pride Reuben is filled with in these moments. Grounding this strong sense of self and purpose at this early age across contexts and different social relationships is the key to strong positive outcomes later in life. This is well defined in all early childhood literature. Another comment that Hayley has made more than once over the course of this year is that she believes music therapy has been the most beneficial of the therapies Reuben has received in his earliest years. High praise from a mother of six. This is



because it is naturalistic and feels like play to Reuben (i.e. it is age appropriate, individualised and dignified). Further, the long-term nature of the therapeutic relationships we have developed in the space have meant that familiarity, repetition, positive reinforcement, united and consistent role modelling (from mum, speech therapist, granddad and other siblings), and a “whole-of-family” approach have all been fundamental to Reuben achieving these strong outcomes.

These outcomes have demonstrated and assured us of Reuben’s advancing cognitive capacities and potential. For example, Reuben’s eagerness to engage in shared musical experiences has revealed his receptive understanding is developing well, as is his understanding of concepts such as turn-taking, up/down, off/on, in/out, high/low, identifying body parts, identifying animals, following instructions and making choices. Further, his eagerness to fill every session with as many experiences as possible while seeing them all through to completion demonstrates excellent cognitive endurance (attention and physical stamina), as well as a nicely developing understanding of logical sequence (i.e. experiences have a beginning, middle and end). These are excellent outcomes given Reuben could only muster the energy to sit awkwardly and observe all we did when he first started attending sessions. On this point, in this last six months we have witnessed Reuben consistently trying to improve in his capacity to lift, physically manipulate and play various instruments of all shapes and sizes (such as the harmonic whirly, keyboard, drum kit, metallophones, etc), and master long and extended vocalisations - such as an elephant’s trumpet (his favourite animal). Mastery of these aspects of musical play continually challenge and advance Reuben’s fine and gross motor skills, core strength, co-ordination, proprioception, visual and auditory development, and speech/language development. Hayley deserves the highest regard for her commitment to pursuing all avenues to mitigate any obstacles (medical or otherwise) to Reuben achieving optimal developmental progress. This has been important because as humans our first and most primal way of knowing this world, and achieving our critical developmental milestones, is through our senses and our ability to physically explore (touch, taste, hear, see, smell).

As noted in research requested by the NDIA: an individually-tailored intervention program of sensory-rich experiences... (such as music therapy) ...is hypothesised to promote the better future integration of sensory information and/or to support sensory processing on a permanent basis. By supporting the development of ...sensory processing abilities, sensory integration therapies aim to facilitate greater and broader engagement of the individual with day-to-day



activities.

Hayley and her father are to be congratulated on their dedication to Reuben's care. Joint music therapy and speech therapy is a context wherein Reuben feels safe and where the way he experiences the world is understood and transformed into a zone of strength and joyful shared learning. Through such contexts we can all, including Reuben, discover more about his most authentic needs, desires and ambitions. Honouring these is a basic human right. In other words, music therapy is supporting Reuben and his family in targeting his non-musical and musical goals while simultaneously supporting the construction of a vision and a dream for his future. Therefore, based on the outcomes described here and the ongoing needs to be met, the funding recommendations below meet all NDIS reasonable and necessary criteria i.e. music therapy offers high quality, value for money, individually-tailored service, that supports Reuben in striving to live an ordinary life beyond just supporting his basic needs, as is the expressed purpose and intent of the NDIS (as per the NDIS Worker Orientation Online Learning Module).

A summary of the broader evidence (including brain imaging research) and recommended music therapy techniques for working with a range of disabilities and neuropsychological conditions across a range of populations is well summarised in Michael Thaut's text, The Handbook of Neurologic Music Therapy, for which he won the prestigious honour of second prize in the British Medical Association's book awards for 2015. Michael Thaut currently works as the Professor of Music, Neuroscience and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Toronto, Canada.

Recommendations for the continuation of Reuben's Music Therapy:

N.B. The funding recommendations for ongoing speech pathology will be made in Jodie's report.

...confirmation from NDIA that: "music therapy is a therapeutic intervention recognised by the NDIS when delivered by Music Therapists registered with the Australian Music Therapy Association as part of a planned therapy program to enable a participant to meet their goals" (20 Nov 2018).



Based on Reuben's outcomes in music therapy to date and the ongoing long-term needs to be addressed, I have made my following recommendation for funding based on him attending fortnightly individual music therapy (or joint music therapy and speech therapy) for one hour and monthly joint group music therapy and speech therapy for one hour for the length of his next plan. Therefore, I recommend that the amount allocated be determined based on the current NDIS recommended rate for Therapeutic Supports i.e. 193.99/hr (individual sessions) i.e. the total funding allocation for a 12 month period for the service recommended here would need to be no less than \$7721.62. This includes the cost of a comprehensive report at the end of the next program period.
**N.B. Please note that I have applied the individual therapy rate for the group sessions as the emerging challenges associated with COVID are likely to mean that these will also need to continue as individual sessions for the foreseeable future.*

REUBEN'S ONGOING MUSIC THERAPY & SPEECH THERAPY PROGRAM PLAN (i.e. same as NDIS defined FSSP)

We have reviewed and updated, where relevant, the below objectives for Reuben's program based on the outcomes to date and his ongoing long-term need for intensive, specialised support to advance his capacity and independence in all key developmental domains. These specific objectives outline how we will address, measure, monitor, observe and/or describe achieving the goal. This approach is based on the "SMART" method of reporting outcomes, which is well described in the scholarly literature for a range of therapies. Our regular session report writing will continue to document these outcomes as well as include the description of outcomes that surprise us – those we were unable to anticipate in our goal/objective writing. This information will guide us in refining and modifying Reuben's individualised objectives at review points.

Reuben's Key Need:

Close, long-term, integrated, specialised support in the key developmental areas i.e. physical, speech/language/social communication, cognition, social learning and self-regulation



Overarching Goal (derived from key need):

For Reuben to practise, develop and advance his physical skills, personal expression, speech/language/social communication, cognitive skills, social learning and self-regulation skills through experiences that are meaningful and rewarding to him

Objectives for Goal:

(how achievement of the goal will be addressed/monitored/measured/described/observed):

- 1) Reuben will integrate appropriate and matching verbal and non-verbal communication during the greeting and closing components of every session.
- 2) Reuben will practise important motor skills during every session.
- 3) Reuben will make at least three request requests in each session in a manner that is appropriate and responsive to such factors as the context, the play rules, his AAC skills set, and the other participants.
- 4) Reuben will start to use decipherable words over the course of the program.
- 5) Reuben will engage in all the shared musical/creative play every session that supports the development of his cognitive skills/concept knowledge (i.e. pretend play/attention/literacy/numeracy/ordering/sequencing/etc).
- 6) Reuben will follow the instruction/suggestion/direction of another most of the time during every session.
- 7) Reuben will successfully regulate his emotions/behaviours for the length of most sessions.
- 8) With support from Hayley/Grandad and/or Reuben's other significant communication partners, he will start to transfer skills/experiences from the music therapy/speech therapy space to other important contexts, and/or he will incorporate experiences from other contexts into the music therapy/speech therapy space.

If you have any questions pertaining to the above please do not hesitate to contact us.

KIND REGARDS

ELIZABETH MACKNEY
NEUROLOGIC MUSIC THERAPIST



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REGISTERED MUSIC THERAPIST
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AND

JODIE BOICOS

SPEECH PATHOLOGIST

For your information:

The following defines how the SMART goal/objectives are evaluated and described in session reports and summarised and updated at NDIS plan review points:

SESSION REPORT TERMS DEFINED:

OUTCOME: Quantitative measure based on 5 point Likert scale – defined below

CONTEXT DETAIL: Qualitative measure – describes how that outcome presented for the participant i.e. what it looked like in therapy, and any relevant considerations/concerns

LIKERT SCALE KEY:

- **ACHIEVING AND ADVANCING** = Achieving beyond the measureable element of the objective
- **ACHIEVING** = Achieving equal to the measureable element of the objective
- **ACHIEVING IN PART** = Achieving one part, such as half, of the measureable element of the objective. The element achieved and the element not achieved would then be described in the **CONTEXT DETAIL**.
- **WORKING TOWARDS** = Not achieving the measureable element of the objective, but demonstrating signs that would lead to it. These signs would be described in the **CONTEXT DETAIL**.
- **NOT ASSESSED/NOT APPLICABLE** = e.g. Not relevant for this particular session/s.