HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN ABA PROGAM

ABiA
Autism Behavioural
Intervention Association

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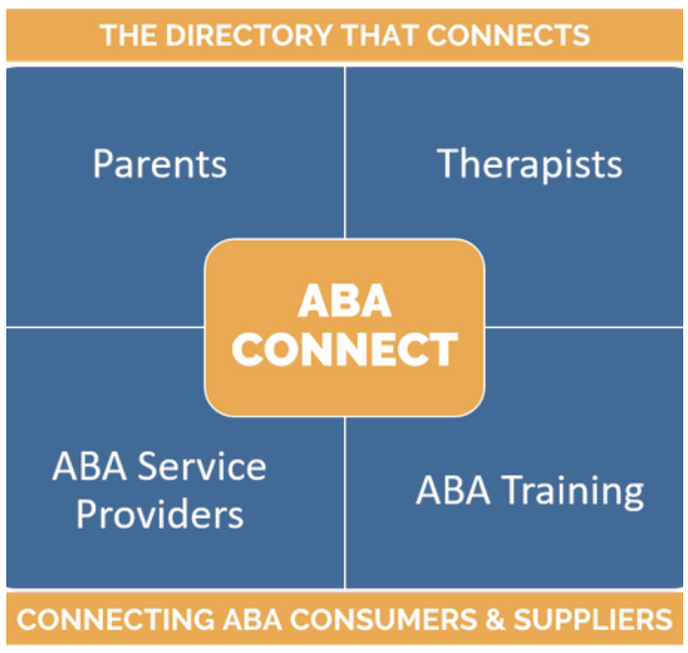

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ABA arises from the branch of psychology known as behaviourism. As a science-based methodology, you can rest assured that your child is in the safest and most competent hands.

WHAT IS ABA?

Around the world, across the globe, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is used to aid learning and development, and create behavioural change.

As a scientific methodology ABA has hundreds of uses: organisation change, sleep disorders, acquired brain injuries, eating disorders, sports performance, relationship issues and addictions. Basically where there is problematic or challenging behaviour, where there is a need for learning or development, ABA has a role. As a consequence it's used in businesses, schools, child-care centres, aged-care centres, aged care, psychology and counselling rooms.

The foremost goal of ABA is to increase helpful behaviours and decrease behaviours that are harmful or affect learning. Your child's ABA program will be built on this premise.

ABA applied early in a child's life is known as Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI). It was first used to help children with autism by Dr Ivar Lovaas in 1987.

ABA FOR AUTISM?

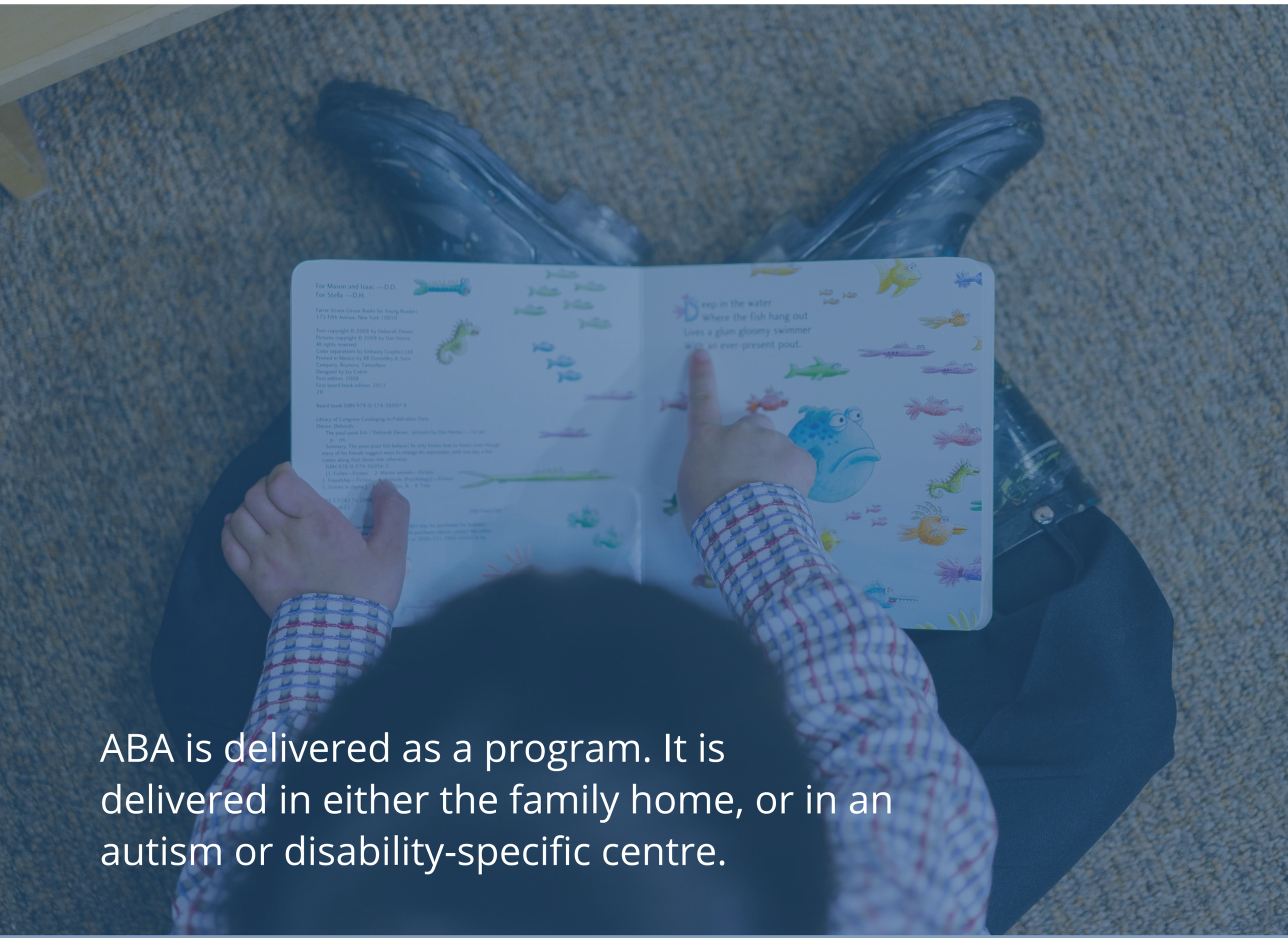
Dr Lovaas is considered the father of ABA-for-autism. His 1987 study is the preeminent work on ABA for autism. (You have likely come across it in your research.) Lovaas' research found that "90% of children substantially improved when utilizing the Lovaas Model of Applied Behavior Analysis, compared to the control group" ... and that ... "Close to half attained a normal IQ and tested within the normal range on adaptive and social skills."

Since Lovaas' initial study, hundreds of further studies have been done and many hundreds of ABA research papers have been written. The consensus is that ABA works. Here in Australia the Federal Government rates ABA as an 'effective and evidence-based' intervention; the highest rating for any autism intervention. Many hundreds of research papers (worldwide) state or show similar findings. And as the USA Surgeon General's Report cites, *"ABA therapy accounts for 45% of therapies that develop long-lasting and observable results."*

When applied early in a child's life, ABA is often referred to as Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI). In Australia you will hear ABA and EIBI used interchangeably. While they mean slightly different things, just know that professionals or other people are talking about the same thing.

ABA is used extensively in the USA. This is because healthcare insurers pay for it. It's also because there are around 20,000 highly-qualified behavioural clinicians to support children and families, and many more tens-of-thousands of therapists available to work with children. This is partly population related, but also because behaviourism and ABA were both formulated in the USA. Without a doubt, it's also because it works.

ABA is also a popular and sought-after intervention because it aids improvements across multiple development domains. It can be use to support communication skills, social skills, cognition, play, self-help, executive function -- to name just a few. Most other therapies are single-level domain therapies.



ABA is delivered as a program. It is delivered in either the family home, or in an autism or disability-specific centre.

HOW IS ABA DONE?

ABA as a therapeutic intervention is primarily done in the family home. This is known as home-based ABA. It simply means your child's ABA program--and the majority of their therapeutic and learning experiences--will occur within the home. Another option is centre-based ABA. This means the therapy and learning experiences will occur in an autism or other purpose-built centre.

Regardless of your choice, the first step is finding an ABA Service Provider. These are autism-specific organisations that have been set up specifically to support families and children. They have skilled behavioural clinicians (Program Supervisors or BCBAs) and ABA therapists on staff. These are the people who will assess your child's knowledge and skill, develop and tailor the ABA program curriculum. But we'll learn more about program personnel (and how to find them) in the next section.

ABA is generally delivered as an intensive intervention. Intensity primarily relates to the number of hours being done, however, it's also a measure for ensuring outcomes. As an early intervention measure, 20-hours of therapy per week is a commonly quoted amount to obtain required learning and development outcomes. Depending on your child's capabilities and capacity, more or fewer hours may be needed.

The amount of hours also varies (fewer or more) depending on your child's age. For example, it would be unrealistic for a child with a very early diagnosis (ie 12-18 months) to do 20 hours of therapy. In other words, ABA therapy is adapatable and flexible depending on your child's age and needs.

Whether you choose a home- or centre-based program, ABA will often be facilitated in additional locations. For example, ABA is commonly delivered in schools to support a child's academic progress or social skills. An ABA program may also include therapy locations such as a shopping centre, sporting venue, swimming pool, or cinema. This is about teaching the child (and parent) how to generalise learnings across different environments. On the next page we've provided elements specific to each delivery method. They are provided to aid informed decision-making. The best option is always what fits your child, your family, and your financial situation, and child.

DELIVERY ELEMENTS

HOME-BASED

Home-based ABA is done in the family home.

Most initial learning occurs in the family home so this makes sense. It can be easier for parents and kids because there's no travel. And it's a familiar environment, which for kids' with autism means less anxiety.

Considerations to be given to this ABA delivery method are: space, delineation, time, boundaries, management.

Home-based ABA can also be more cost-effective because there is an option for you (the family) take on more of the program management and administration, including direct hire of ABA therapists.

CENTRE-BASED

Centre-based care is provided at a center by a team of specialists (which we learn more about in the next module).

The centre will be an autism or other disability provider who has premises or space, and Therapeutic consulting rooms. Many of these centres are purpose-built, have multiple educational resources on hand to aid therapy, and have multiple staff members.

Considerations to be given to this delivery method are: cost, time, resources and staffing benefits.

Become an ABIA Member

and receive multiple benefits

- Free access to ABA Connect -- the premier online platform that connects you with ABA therapists and ABA Service Providers
- Free access our ABA library with over 700 educational resources
- Discounted conference tickets (parent rate, heavily reduced)
- Discounted event tickets (parent rate, heavily reduced)
- Free access to members' only resource area on our website

Annual membership -- from just $70.00 per annum

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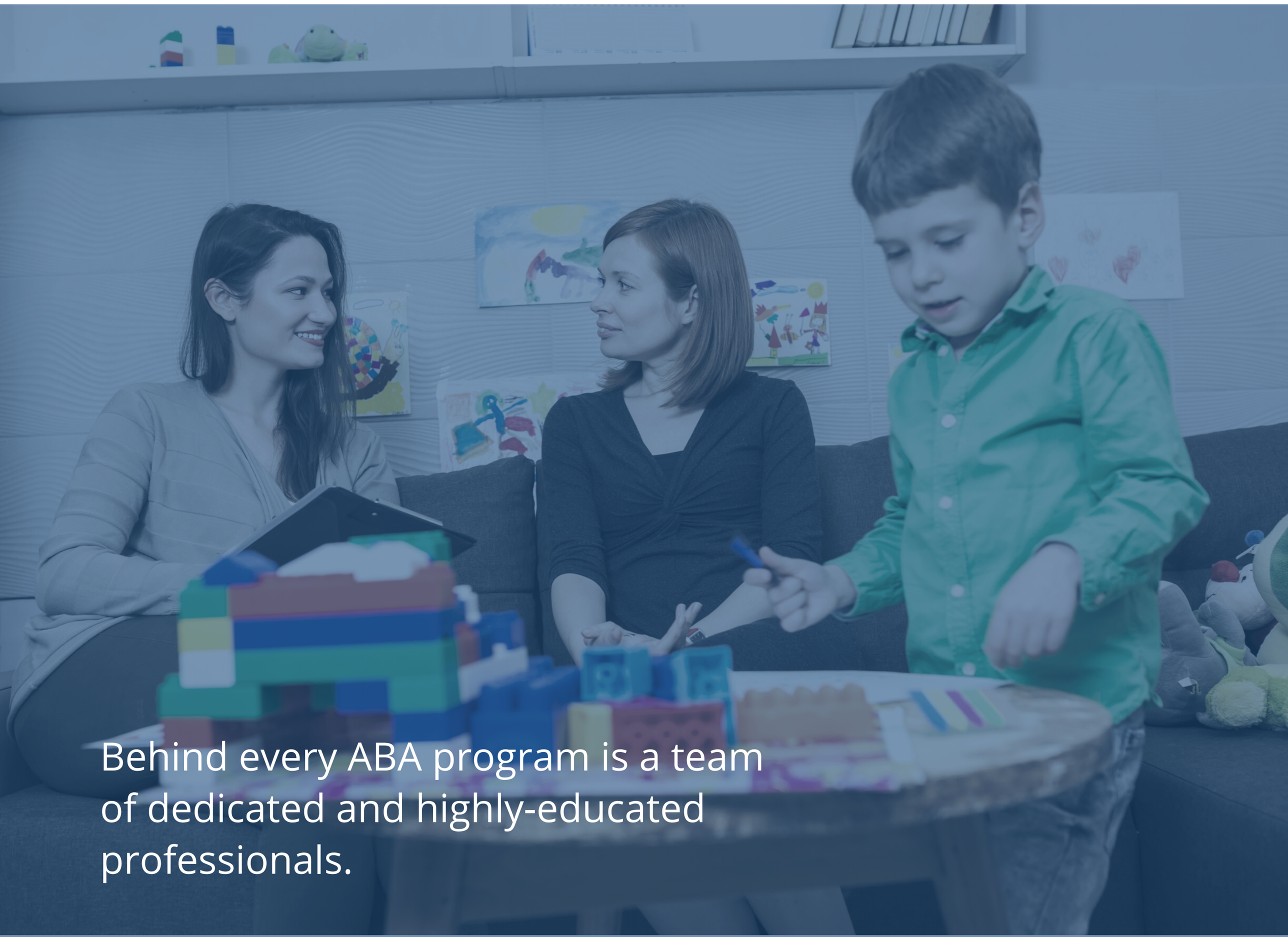

Behind every ABA program is a team of dedicated and highly-educated professionals.

WHO RUNS THE PROGRAM?

The ABA Team consists of an ABA Service Provider, an ABA Program Supervisor, an ABA Therapist, you, and your child. Each team member plays a particular and important role.

ABA SERVICE-PROVIDER'S ROLE

The Service Provider's role is to provide ABA Services and to offer best-practice ABA. There are around 75 ABA Service Provides in Australia. Our website has a search engine which allows you to search and find a provider in your area. Visit abia.net.au/ABAConnect

ABA PROGRAM SUPERVISOR ROLE

The Program Supervisor designs your child's ABA program. ABA is a tailored program which meets your child at his/her current developmental point, but always with a view to moving he/she forward. An ABA program is constantly evolving to ensure your child's learning and development progresses.

ABA THERAPIST'S ROLE

The therapist's role is to facilitate the ABA program, as developed by the Program Supervisor. Across Australia, on a daily basis, thousands of therapists support and develop children on the spectrum. When implementing your program, keep in mind that the therapist implements rather than writes or designs the program.

YOUR ROLE

The role you take on will depend whether you have opted for home- or centre-based ABA. Some parents choose home-based because this enables cost savings (but equally it requires more hands-on involvement). Others choose centre-based because it offers a full-service model (ie delivered at the centre).

Either way, your ultimate role is to ensure your child's availability, regularity, and attendance at their ABA program.

It is also common for parents to do ABA Parent Training. This up-skills you to communicate with your child, and continue therapy session learnings in a non-therapeutic setting. Parent training is core to a successful ABA program. Find out more about parent training at abia.net.au/training/parents/.

YOUR CHILD'S ROLE

Your child's role is to attend therapy sessions. Their role is to learn and develop to their full capacity. Each team member mentioned here plays a critical role in achieving this outcome.

If a child cannot learn in the way we teach...
we must teach in a way the child can learn."
-Dr Ivar Lovaas

A TYPICAL ABA SESSION

In some ways, there's really no such thing as a typical session. That's because sessions are tailored to the individual's developmental and learning needs. Sessions also vary in length, which can relate to the child's age, time availability, or other environmental and familial constraints.

The two things that are typical of an ABA session is that the therapist is always seeking to engage the child and learning is framed in a positive manner. This helps ensure an environment conducive to learning, and keep your child motivated to attend sessions.

If you'd like to see some typical ABA therapy sessions, check out our You Tube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/ABIAautism/>. Have a look at ***Learning About Animals*** and ***ABA Therapy Play*****.** These are good start points to understand the look and feel of a therapy session. In the first video, Daniel learns about animals. In the second, the therapist's focus is on teaching Daniel play.

If you would like to hear about why other parents and families have chosen ABA, check out our 21st anniversary video. You'll hear from our founders, and the next generation of parents who chose ABA. The resounding message you will hear is that ABA gives hope.

https://www.youtube.com/user/ABIAautism/

PROGRAM SUPPORTS

Why does Lockie always hit me when I buckle his seat-belt? Why does Saskia squeal when we enter the supermarket? What's with Harry 's constant fidgeting when we sit for dinner?

Whether you choose home- or centre-based ABA, the purpose of your ABA program is to learn how to understand what drives your child to act in a certain (or uncertain) way. As your knowledge increases, you will also begin to reflect on, and better understand, your own drivers. All of these learnings are incredibly important. They return our personal power. And powerful parents better-support challenged kids.

But you will also need support. An ABA program does not come without challenges. Like any disability, autism is time-consuming, confronting, intensive. It will demand that you draw energy reserves you often don't have. We're not saying this to scare you off, but to let you know it's okay to ask for and seek help. The support you will need will be physical (educational resources, learning materials), emotional (someone to listen, someone to talk to and share experiences with), and intellectual (knowledge of ABA specifically, and autism generally).

Our organisation exists to meet these needs. Our services and resources have been developed to specifically assist with your ABA journey. Information about available support mechanisms can be found on the reference page at the end of this publication. While it's unlikely you will need all these straight up, it's nice to know they 're available. When times get tough, when there's not one enough time in your day, when you hit the "I just can't do this" space, it's comforting to know someone's got your back. Our organisation is that someone.

What we hear time-and-again is that ABA gives hope. Hope for a better way of communicating with your child. Hope for a more harmonious home. Hope for better life outcomes for your child. It's this hope that saw our founding parents bring ABA to Australia some 22 years ago. And it's that hope that sees thousands of Aussie mums and dads around the country choose ABA as their preferred intervention. ANd as previously mentioned, our 21st anniversary video captures this hope. Visit our YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/ABIAautism> and watch the poignant and deeply personal ABA stories of our courageous families.

Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the most significant economic and social reform since the introduction of Medicare in the 1970s.

HOW TO FUND ABA

The primary funding method for disability support in Australia is now the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This scheme is operated by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), a federal government body.

Under this scheme, participants receive an annual funding package. The amount of funding is calculated relevant to the level of disability and types of supports required. These supports fall into three categories.

Core

A support that enables a participant to complete activities of daily living.

Capital

A support that enables an investment, such as assistive technologies, equipment and home or vehicle modifications, or funding for capital costs (e.g. to pay for Specialist Disability Accommodation).

Capacity Building

A support that enables a participant to build their independence and skills.

Under the NDIS, your disability funding package can be self-managed, NDIA managed, or partially managed (ie partially self-managed and partially NDIA managed). One of the fantastic aspects of the NDIA is that the person with the disability, and/or their carer or authorised representative, has choice. The process on the next page shows you how to register with the NDIA to obtain a funding package.

THE NDIS JOURNEY

A new system, new jargon and terminology, a bunch of acronyms; often on top of a new diagnosis. It's overwhelming. So let's walk it together. A hand held makes the journey easier. Here's the link to the relevant NDIA website page: https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply

Step 1: Are you eligible?

Are you eligible? Check basic eligibility for your loved one here. You'll answer a few quick yes/no questions. such as age, residency status, equipment and supports regularly used or needed. If criteria is met, the next step is apply to become an NDIS recipient.

Step 2: How to apply?

This is about making a request for access (assuming you've met eligibility requirements above).

You can apply for access in three ways:

- via telephone on 1800 800 110
- via the Access Request Form which can be downloaded at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/2323/download>, then email this to NAT@ndis.gov.au.
- with the support of a Local Area Coordinator, Early Childhood Early Intervention partner, or your local NDIA office. Locations for these support partners can be found at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/contact/locations>.

Once completed, the Access Request results in an access decision. A 'success' decision moves you to the next step. Other supports are available if you are unsuccessful. A list of these can be found on the NDIA website. Some people who have not received a success decision have challenged the NDIA. This is called an internal review. Further information about this is also on the NDIA website.

Step 3: The planning meeting.

Once you have gained access you will be contacted to meet with an NDIA planner. They are contacting you to arrange a planning meeting to discuss support and funding needs. The key thing here is to be organised prior to the meeting.

Your ABA Service Provider can assist. Our organisation also has helpful information in the form of an NDIA Advocacy kit. Email us at info@abia.net.au with *NDIA Advocacy Kit* in the subject line and we will forward the kit to you.

Experience shows that best outcomes are achieved when you are organised and clear about your child's needs and goals before attending the meeting. Most Service Providers offer help and guidance with this as they've been through it many times. *And* they want you to use their services (that's why they exist) so don't be afraid to reach out.

Step 4: The planning meeting outcome.

Following the meeting you will receive a letter and a copy of your plan in the mail. You will be able to start using funds immediately. If you haven't already joined our organisation, now is a good time to do so. For $70 per year we will keep you in touch with ABA and autism events, and industry happenings. Your membership fee provides access to ABA Connect, a platform which allows you to search and connect with ABA therapists and Service Providers, and ABA-for-autism training courses facilitated by our organisation.

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In regard to your child's development, the single most important step you can take is to up-skill yourself.

ABA PARENT TRAINING

Up-skilled parents are better equipped to respond (rather than react) to a child's behaviour or actions. Up-skilled mums and dads are better placed to initiate growth strategies and reinforce positive tactics, rather than continually placate or manage (ie give into) an upset child, or one that is acting out. All behaviour occurs for a reason. ABA helps you pinpoint the reason.

Up-skilling in ABA is done through courses like our *Making It Work* series. Up-skilling is done through knowledge building and behaviour change. In the autism sector this is known as parent training. Our organisation offers ABA Parent training in two formats: face-to-face at our Canterbury (Melbourne) office or online. The face-to-face course is three days' duration. You'll meet other parents, young people training to become therapists, educators who are up-skilling, and allied health professionals wanting to better support kids in their care. If time and distance are factors, choose our online training. Once you've registered and paid, you'll have access to 29 hours of introductory level ABA content.

Regardless of the learning format you choose, our ABA training teaches how to do a Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA). Other topics include task analysis, reinforcement and extinction, shaping and chaining, stimulus control. These may sound a bit heavy, but rest assured they 're delivered in a manner that is practical and applicable to you, your child, and your family situation.

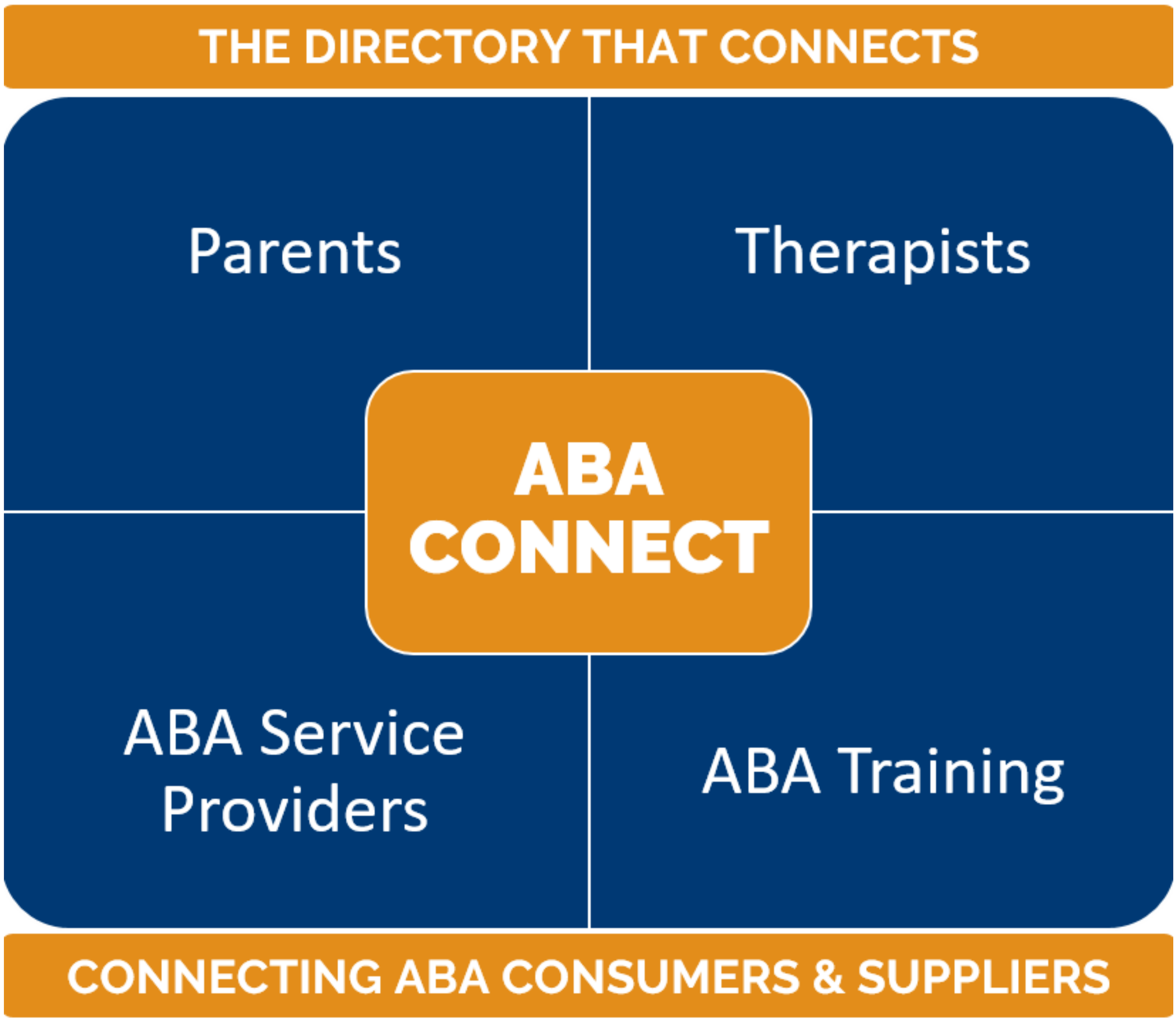
Most parents quickly comprehend the benefits of parent training. As previously mentioned, you are your child's first and foremost teacher, and most learning occurs in the home. ABA parent training equips you like nothing else. It literally is life-changing learning.

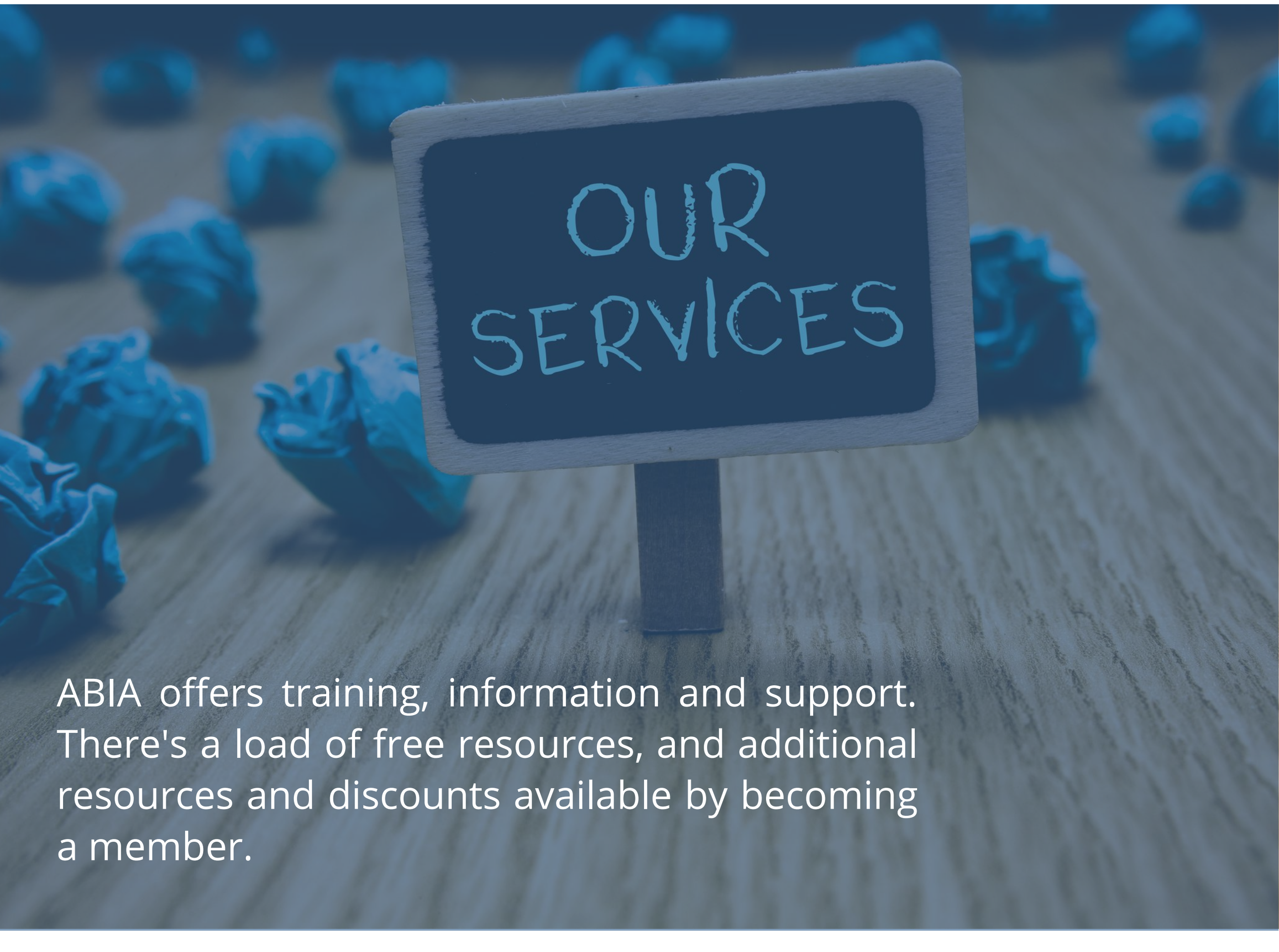
Thanks for reading this resource. We hope you've enjoyed building your knowledge as much as we've enjoyed sharing ours. May the challenges you and your loved ones currently face transform to triumphs. And may your child reap, for many years to come, the rewards of your foresight and discernment in choosing ABA as your preferred intervention.

www.abia.net.au

ABA CONNECT

Coming in August 2020! Join ABIA today to access hundreds of therapists and a listing of Australian ABA Service Providers.





ABIA offers training, information and support. There's a load of free resources, and additional resources and discounts available by becoming a member.

OUR SERVICES & OFFERINGS

Training

- ABA Parent-Training
- ABA Therapist Training
- ABA Training for Educators

Choose between facilitator-led live-streamed sessions on Zoom, and self-paced e-learning sessions in the privacy of your home. Our ABA Therapist Training is the preeminent Australian course. As a parent you'll likely be hiring our graduates. Our Parent Training will upskill you to better support your child and is paramount to the success of your ABA program. Our Educator Training aligns with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). With courses for you, your therapist, and your child's educator, we've got you covered.

Information

- How to Implement an ABA Program
- Parent/NDIS Advocacy Kit *(coming soon!)*
- Parent Information Kit
- Therapist Information Kit
- Educator Information Kit
- GP Information Kit

join ABIA today!

MEMBERSHIP FROM $70 P/A

Support

As the peak body for all things ABA-for-Autism, we offer a range of support services to both consumers and suppliers of ABA. Here's just a few: ABIA website with multiple free resources including podcast and videos, ABA Connect to help you find a Service Provider and Therapist/s; ABA Resource Library with 700 educational and play resources; ABA Today (national ABA-for-Autism biennial conference); ABA Exchange (Professional Development for ABA professionals and educational events for parents); ABA Round Table (Clinical Practice Group).

www.abia.net.au

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ABIA
1/121 Maling Road
Canterbury Vic 3126
abia.net.au | info@abia.net.au
(03) 9830 0677