



SLD assessment and diagnosis: What parents think, want, and need from educational and developmental psychologists.

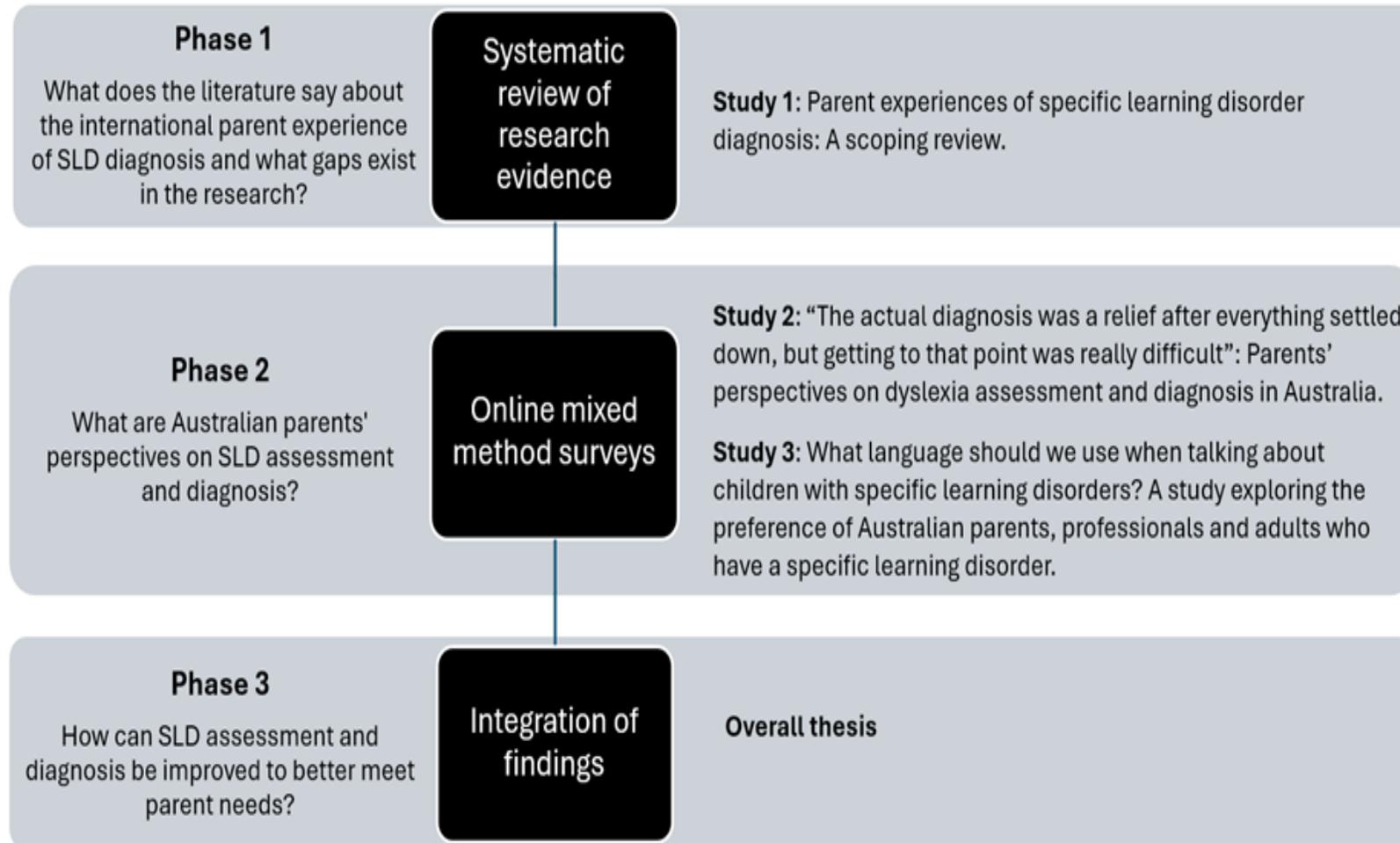
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Background

- PhD research - Australian Parents' Perspectives on Specific Learning Disorder Assessment and Diagnosis: An Exploration of Barriers, Service Gaps, and Opportunities to Improve Care for Families.
- Acknowledgement of contribution: PhD supervisors - Andrea Reupert, Louise McLean, and Aspasia Stacy Rabba, and parent advisory panel - Heidi Gregory, Katharine Levi, Julie Mavlian.
- Experience as a service user (parent) and service provider (psychologist and business owner)
- Diagnostic assessment is not just about diagnostic accuracy (Makino et al., 2021)

Australian Parents' Perspectives on Specific Learning Disorder Assessment and Diagnosis: An Exploration of Barriers, Service Gaps, and Opportunities to Improve Care for Families.



Child and parent characteristics and service setting

- 80 parents completed the survey.
- Almost half of the participants (47%) received their child's diagnosis within the last 12 months (diagnosis received throughout 2024).
- Most assessments occurred in a private practice setting (75%).
- Parents were predominantly from the east coast of Australia, English-speaking, educated, and higher earners.
- On average, the child was 9 years old ($SD = 2.4$) at time of diagnosis
- The diagnosing professional was generally a psychologist (81.8%), most commonly an educational and developmental psychologist (68.2%) with the others being GP (N=1), paediatrician (N=4), psychiatrist (N=2), or special education teacher (N=1).
- Many assessments also explored social, emotional, attention and executive functioning challenges.

Parent satisfaction

- Overall, parents were generally satisfied with their child's dyslexia diagnostic assessment (M=3.96, Likert scale 1-5).
- Two key factors predicted parent satisfaction:
 1. Relationship with the diagnosing professional
 2. Satisfaction with the written report
- Perception that the assessment was collaborative and comprehensive, and that they were expecting and agreed with their child's dyslexia diagnosis.
- **Parents were NOT satisfied with the cost and are less satisfied with post assessment support**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Overall satisfaction ^a	3.96	.97	1													
2. Manner of professional ^a	4.20	.99	.62**	1												
3. Communication of diagnosis ^a	4.19	1.07	.57**	.52**	1											
4. Written report ^a	4.21	1.02	.56**	.44**	.74**	1										
5. Recommendations ^a	3.90	1.11	.61**	.43**	.54**	.66**	1									
6. How long assessment took ^a	4.05	.94	.49**	.36**	.49**	.44**	.44**	1								
7. Cost ^a	2.60	1.37	.29**	.19	.24*	.25*	.18	.12	1							
8. Support post diagnosis ^a	3.49	1.27	.56**	.44**	.56**	.48**	.61**	.41**	.44**	1						
9. Agree with diagnosis ^b	4.76	.53	.23*	.27*	.296**	.22	.147	.194	.109	-.01	1					
10. Expecting diagnosis ^b	4.45	.91	.15	.12	.108	.109	.23*	.22*	-.08	-.05	.49**	1				
11. Collaborative ^b	4.14	.78	.47**	.29**	.44	.36**	.47**	.25*	.25*	.49**	.29*	.07	1			

Likert scale 0-5

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables.

Parents experienced **barriers** in accessing the assessment

“ the actual diagnosis was a relief after everything settled down, but getting to that point was really difficult” - parent participant



👉 **Affordability** was identified as the biggest barrier faced by families.

👉 A **lack of national screening and referral processes** in schools was perceived to be causing unnecessary delays to diagnosis.

Parent stress was at its highest BEFORE assessment.

Parents **want** more support earlier on in their diagnostic journey.

Where can we do better?

“ I felt as though I was not adequately advised. I was ill prepared to advocate for my child and I had no idea what help she required or what her rights were”.

Gaps in service delivery **do** exist

High quality information at the time of diagnosis

Although some parents were satisfied with the information provided at the time of diagnosis, others needed to seek it independently.

Post diagnostic support

Many parents feel alone and unsupported as they navigate life following their child's diagnosis.

Information at time of diagnosis

Parents want to know:

- ✓ What is SLD and why has my child met criteria?
- ✓ What interventions and educational adjustments do they need?
- ✓ What am I able to ask the school to do? (Disability rights)
- ✓ Prognosis and support needs over time
- ✓ How do I support my child's self-esteem, confidence and mental health

Provide multiple opportunities for parents to access information, at a time and in a way that suits them (report, feedback session, website links, webinars/recorded webinars)

Raise the Bar
PSYCHOLOGY

Dyslexia
Clinic Lead

“Now What?” Webinar

Specific Learning Disorders

ONLINE
Targeted to parents

Webinar Topics:

- ✓ Understanding dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia
- ✓ Sharing the diagnosis with your child, school and others
- ✓ Understanding child rights for reasonable adjustments
- ✓ Evidence-based interventions and accommodations for learning
- ✓ Establishing an effective student support team
- ✓ Understanding pivotal milestones in your child's education
- ✓ Supporting self-esteem, confidence and self-advocacy

ERIN HUME
Senior Educational & Developmental Psychologist

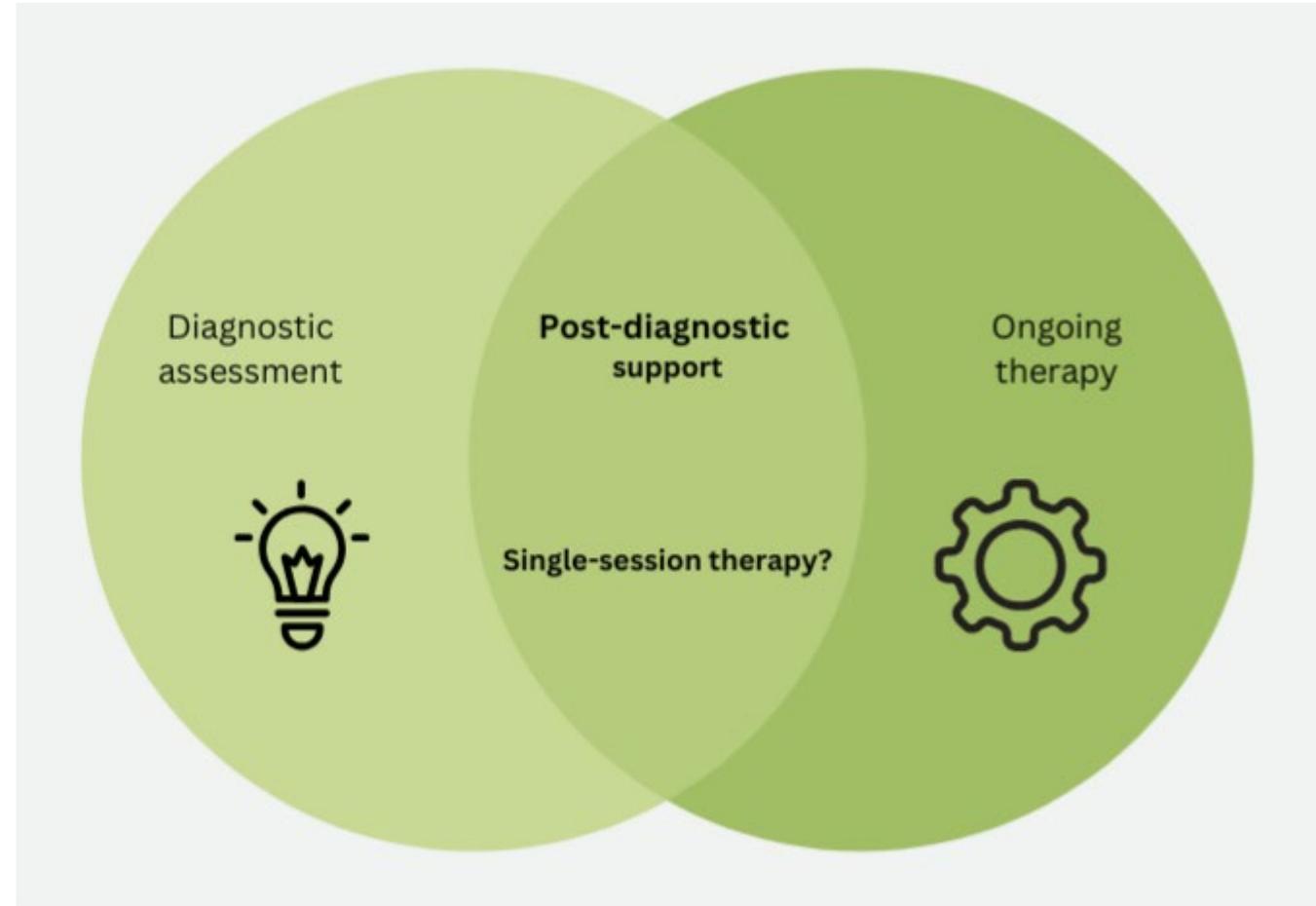
REGISTER HERE

Date: Mon 27th Oct 2025
FREE for current/past clients OR \$45 for non-clients

Post-diagnostic support

Suggestions for post-diagnostic support:

- ✓ Child feedback sessions
- ✓ School feedback session
- ✓ Attendance at PSG / SSG meetings
- ✓ Allied health/multidisciplinary communication
- ✓ Individual Education Plan reviews
- ✓ Letters and forms, e.g. SEAS, VCAA, university special provisions
- ✓ Review and update of recommendations at pivotal transitions, e.g., beginning secondary school, tertiary education, joining the workforce.
- ✓ Single session follow-up, e.g. supporting self-esteem, confidence and self-advocacy, understanding disability supports and reasonable adjustments, and specific issues.

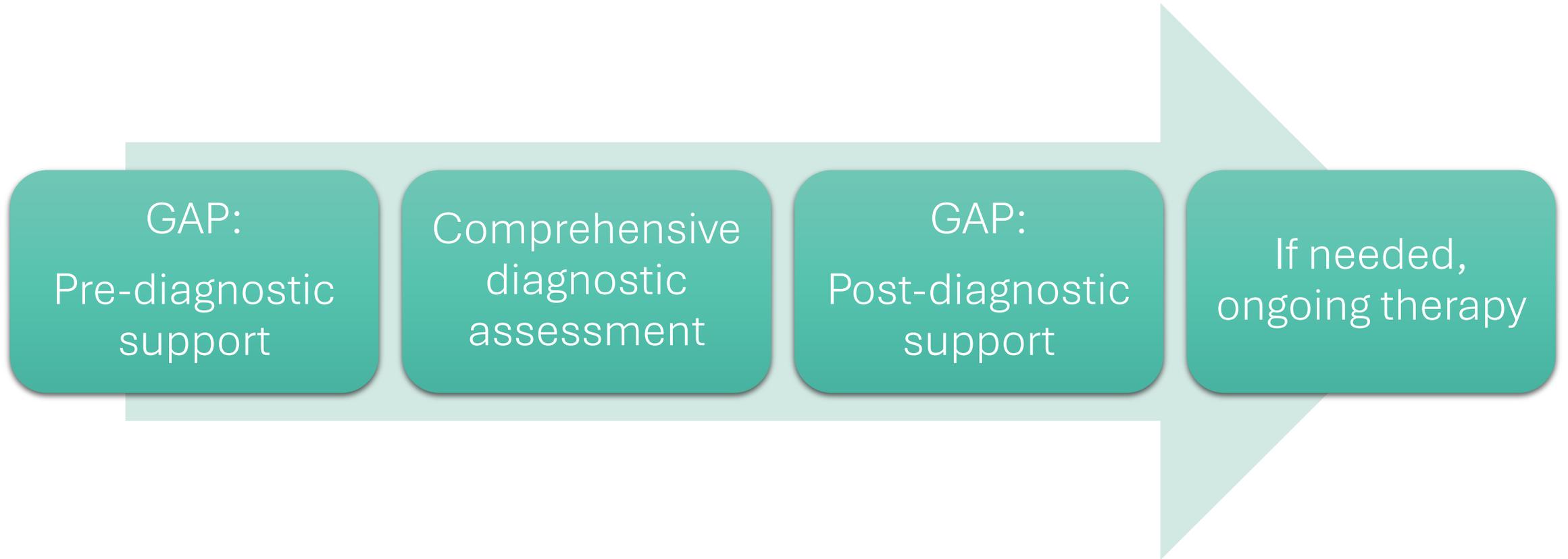


Terminology

‘Dyslexia- it is still the most commonly known term that parents and staff understand’
– parent quote

- ✓ Dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia (positive and strength based)
- X Learning disability, specific learning disorder, SLD, disorder
- ✓ Dyslexic, dysgraphic, dyscalculic, person with dyslexia/dysgraphia/dyscalculia (identity-first and person-first was ok)
- X learning disabled, person with a specific learning disorder
- ✓ challenges
- X weaknesses, deficits, problems
- ? neurodivergent and difference – higher acceptance amongst dyslexic adults. Future research needed. Parents – too broad – worried it would downplay challenges and get confused with autism and ADHD.

Integrating wrap-around services into our models of care



Summary of what parents want and need

- A strong collaborative relationship and assessment process
- A comprehensive high-quality report
- Lower-cost options, or adequate funding through Medicare or the education system
- Better systems in schools to identify learning concerns early, when intervention is most effective
- Answers and support earlier on in the diagnostic journey, when concerns first arise
- Better information at the time of diagnosis
- More support following diagnosis
- Preference for the 'dys' terms

References

- Anthony, H., Reupert, A., & McLean, L. (2024). Parent experiences of Specific Learning Disorder diagnosis: A scoping review. *Dyslexia*, 30(1), e1757-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.1757>
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- Makino, A., Hartman, L., King, G. *et al.* Parent Experiences of Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis: a Scoping Review. *Rev J Autism Dev Disord* 8, 267–284 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-021-00237-y>

Questions?

Thank you

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