Dear friends and families,

My mum thinks by sharing my story I will be able to raise awareness and further develop an understanding of children with challenging behaviours.

So here goes….

*Hi my name is Tenzin, I started in Prep this year. I am the one that at times is wearing what looks like a dance party necklace, but really it is a piece of rubber and when chewed it can assist in calming my anxiety and help me stay focused.*

*Just recently I have scored the label Asperger’s or High functioning Autism. This hasn’t changed who I am in any way. What it has done though is help those around me understand how I learn. You see for those of you that haven’t known a kid with Asperger’s it is one of those hidden diseases where ‘Aspi’s’ seem normal. In fact we each present very differently and all have different strengths and weaknesses or let’s call it challenges.*

*I have a wicked imagination and spend any free time doing role-plays with my sister and friends. This at times can be frustrating for mum, as when I’m really engrossed or just need to escape my surroundings I go to this imaginative place and it is challenging for me to return to reality.*

*Where most kids have an ‘off’ or ‘pause’ button mine is rather like holding the fast forward button and then finding it is jammed. I am receiving loads of help and support to find my ‘pause’ button. Also other learning strategies to help stop me from running and hiding when I feel anxious or overwhelmed, this often happens when I am surrounded by lots of people.*

*I like to feel in control of situations, so when I know how the day will be structured, I feel more at ease. Sometimes I get overly anxious or excited when there is too much information to process. Social situations with a large group are challenging. These situations can cause a meltdown, in my words for me to ‘go crazy!’ My mum describes it as a ‘state’ of being overwhelmed.*

*So if you are lucky or unlucky depending how you see it, you might just witness one of my performances of kicking and yelling. At such times it is impossible to reason with me, better to leave me to do my thing in a safe and supportive environment! I really don’t like reaching this stage. Mum is getting pretty good at reading the triggers such as sudden changes and things that seem for me to be ‘unfair’. A trip to Extreme Air and birthday parties are particularly challenging. I love these two things so together with my support team we are working out strategies to make it an enjoyable experience for all involved. Mum and I have worked out if I do a calming activity like Lego, Where’s Wally? or puzzles it helps to reduce the chances of a meltdown.*

*A lot of things that help assist me in the classroom may help support some of my classmates. You see I like to move and find it really difficult to sit still for longer than 10mins - assembly is a killer! I benefit from ‘hard workout area’ this means I sit for a bit and then do 100 jumps on the mini tramp or push-ups, maybe not a 100 though.*

*When I am somersaulting around at floor time it is not that I am trying to be disruptive and it doesn’t mean that I am not paying attention as I can recite what has been read, said or even answer a question. My body just needs to move!*

*I forgot to tell you about some of my strengths. I love karate and am working towards the Avitar state, I am a loving and protective brother and great with number recognition. I shocked my mum by telling her it was not yet 8pm, time for bed. I’m not sure that she is happy about me acquiring this new skill. Like every other kid I love play dates and particularly love the Beau North buddy program. I have the best buddy in the entire school!*

*Mum has been on a turbulent learning journey trying to understand how I learn and the way I navigate the world and is becoming a bit of an expert about ‘ME’ and my label. If you have any questions she is always keen for a chat. She has learnt a lot from experts such as Sue Larkey and Tony Attwood and recommends them if you want to know more checkout their websites.*

*Thanks for taking the time to get me! Tenzin.*