



## Northern Territory Government

Department of Health and Community Services

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Mr Bob Buckley  
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Dear Mr Buckley

### **RE: EARLY INTERVENTION FOR AUTISM**

Thank you for your recent letter dated 30 March 2006 requesting information relating to the services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the Northern Territory and the views of Northern Territory (NT) Government towards children with ASD.

The NT Government has a strong commitment to all children with disabilities including children with ASD, their families and carers. In the NT, a paediatrician, child psychiatrist and/or psychologist, in consultation with family members and professional staff from relevant agencies, which may include a multidisciplinary team of allied health therapists, provide assessment and diagnosis of ASD.

Service planning and early-intervention services for children diagnosed with ASD is carried out using a consultative and collaborative approach involving parents, families and carers, medical staff, early intervention advisers, therapists from various Non-Government and Government Agencies, which provide health, education and disability services.

Services provided by the Department of Health and Community Services are specialist community support services, which provide early childhood intervention and case management. Department staff are committed to providing coordinated quality services for children with ASD based on best practice management models. Research tells us that there is no one program that suits all children with ASD and their families so the early intervention programs are developed utilising key components of best practice: content which focuses on attention, compliance, imitation, language and social skills; highly supportive intervention environments and generalisation strategies; predictability and routine; a functional approach to problem behaviours; transition from preschool classroom; family involvement.

The Department is committed to ensure there are clear pathways for accessing services in regard to government processes so as to establish clear entry and exit points from the service system. This is essential in ensuring services are user friendly. Families and carers are provided with information and choices about available services. The program takes a whole-of-government approach to ensure coordinated and integrated service delivery.

The DHCS is very aware of the increase in the diagnosis of children with ASD over the last decade. In the NT the DHCS is not the only service provider for these children so it is difficult to provide answers to your questions relating to specific numbers. Student Services Branch within the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training contributes extensively to the support of families and children with ASD and would be an excellent source of information.

During 2005, the Department of Health and Community Services provided support to the 'Prevalence of Autism in Australia Study' auspiced by The Autism Council of Australia Ltd. Outcomes from this project, which will no doubt, provide Commonwealth and State Governments with critical data for future policy and planning.

Should you require further information, please contact Ms Jude Eastaway, Senior Policy Adviser, Aged & Disability Program, DHCS on Ph 08 89 99 2589.

I thank you again for your enquiry regarding service provision for children with ASD, their families and carers living in the NT.

Yours sincerely



Rose Rhodes  
Assistant Secretary  
Community Services Division

28 April 2006