



DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH
and HUMAN SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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File:

Mr Bob Buckley
27 Fairbridge Crescent
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Dear Mr Buckley

Thank you for your letter of 8 April 2006 regarding services for children with Autism Spectrum disorder.

In response to your query regarding the diagnosis rate of Autism Spectrum Disorder, the Department of Health and Human Services (the Department) recognises that a significant increase in the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder has been reported in recent years.

To improve intervention services for all children with a disability, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, the Department is currently conducting a Children's Therapy Improvement Project. As part of this project, the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Tasmania has been investigated. However, the final report for the Children's Therapy Improvement Project is not due for release until June 30 2006.

The impact of Autism Spectrum Disorder is known to vary according to a range of factors, with the effect on functioning and learning ranging from mild through to severe and profound. The Department is committed to equity and consistency in the provision of services. To achieve this, access to specialist services for all people with a disability, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, is prioritised on the basis of assessed need.

The effectiveness of early intervention programs for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder is measured on an individual basis. Independent research has not been undertaken by the Tasmanian Government to measure the outcomes of interventions and treatment for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and comprehensive outcome data with which to compare the outcomes of different forms of intervention for children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder is not currently collected in Tasmania.

Early intervention is recognised as being an essential component of improving longer term outcomes for children with autism and their families. Additional information regarding Early Intervention programs for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder is available through the Tasmanian Department of Education.

Yours sincerely



Dr Martyn Forrest
Secretary

23 May 2006