



Sid Sidebottom MP ... for a fair go in Braddon

Media Release

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\$4.8m Autism Centre delivered in Burnie

The Rudd Government has delivered \$4.8 million for the construction and operation of a new Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre.

Mr Sidebottom announced today funding for the new centre, to be delivered to Burnie City Council. Joining him at the announcement was Minister for Families, Housing, Community Service and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities Bill Shorten today.

"Families on the North West Coast have been telling me about the need for more Autism services for many years," Mr Sidebottom said.

"In fact, I brought Jenny Macklin to our region in 2007 to show her first-hand the plight of families in our region dealing with Autism Spectrum Disorders, and to highlight the distinct lack of services available to them.

"This resulted in an election commitment from the Rudd Government for an Autism Centre for the region, which I'm delighted to see come to fruition today."

During Jenny Macklin's visit back in 2007, she and Sid met with local parents Andrew and Marisa Barry who have two children with autism, to discuss how best to service theirs, and other families' needs.

Mr Barry attended the announcement today.

"Families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders have long sought and needed a centre of this kind to assist them in raising and educating their children afflicted with Autism," Mr Barry said.

"The Autism Specific Child Care Centre focusing on pre-school age and early development is an important part of this package in increasing and improving services to affected families.

"This centre will greatly assist in working with children at an early developmental stage to enable them to commence and continue schooling in an assisted yet integrated environment.

"It will also significantly enhance the ability of children to cope with schooling and social life aspects - this is where affected children and families generally struggle."

The centre will be situated on-site at Alexander Beetle House in Burnie, with satellite services extended across the North West Coast.

"The Burnie City Council will extend the existing Alexander Beetle House site to accommodate for the new centre," Mr Sidebottom said.

"The new centre will cater for up to 20 child care places for children up to six years old with autism.

"Six specialist staff will be employed at the centre, including an early childhood education teacher, psychologists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists to work alongside five trained child care workers," he said.

"The centre will provide an avenue for children to learn and interact with others, and will also provide an extensive support network for parents."

The Burnie centre is one of six to be delivered through the Rudd Government's \$190 million Helping Children with Autism package.

The Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre is expected to open in mid 2010, Mr Sidebottom said.

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