



## Commencing implementation of the Autism State Plan

Funding of \$8.27 million over four years in the 2009-10 State Budget signals the commencement of the implementation of the Autism State Plan. Victoria is the first jurisdiction in Australia to develop an Autism State Plan to improve outcomes for people of all ages with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Implementation of the Autism State Plan will strengthen services, and build new and better approaches across government for meeting the growing and complex needs of people with an ASD. This ten year plan has been developed with a whole-of-government approach in partnership with Autism Victoria, and has been informed by an extensive statewide consultation process.

Investment in key priority actions is the first stage of a coordinated effort across government to implement the Autism State Plan. This investment augments current efforts across government to support individuals with an ASD, their families and carers. The Plan will add to the range of universal, general and specialist services and supports currently available to individuals with an ASD, their families and carers.

In December 2008, \$2.75 million was allocated to implement the government's acknowledgement of ASDs as a neurological impairment under the *Disability Act 2006*. This change has meant that all people with an ASD can be considered for disability services access.

The Budget investments in 2009-10 in the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will further add to the total investment in services and supports for people with an ASD.

### Mental health service enhancement

Of the \$8.27 million over four years, funding of \$4.16 million has been allocated for mental health service enhancement to improve service quality, support staff training and provide greater access to mental health services particularly complex ASD diagnostic services for young children and adolescents.

Staffing will be increased in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, which includes the appointment of 14 new dedicated coordinators to manage the process of diagnostic assessment of children and young people with complex presentations of ASDs (\$3.727 million over four years). Operational guidelines will be developed (\$225,000 over four years) and ASD training to the specialist mental health workforce and education specialists will also be rolled out (\$208,000 over four years).

This new funding adds to \$512,000 non-recurrent funding made available to reduce the waiting lists at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for diagnostic assessments of children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder with complex presentations through the CAMHS Wait List Reduction Project.

## Education and Early Childhood Action for Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

Funding of \$4.11 million over four years to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will improve support to pre-school children and young people of school age with an ASD, as well as provide staff development opportunities including secondary consultation and mentoring.

In the Early Childhood portfolio, \$598,000 is provided for autism training, mentoring and resources for the early childhood workforce and \$678,000 to support professional ASD regional networks to identify the training needs of the early childhood workforce, including transition. In the Education portfolio, \$550,000 has been allocated for the development of regional ASD plans which will address service gaps and build system capacity to support children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. The regional planning process will identify how to increase access points for families, for example, via satellite centres in mainstream schools. \$2.287 million over four years is also provided for 100 scholarships for education staff to undertake a vocational graduate diploma in autism.