



# State Budget 2009

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## 9j FROM THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND MENTAL HEALTH AND THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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Tuesday 5 May 2009

### **\$8.3 MILLION AUTISM STATE PLAN TO SUPPORT VICTORIANS WITH AN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

A Brumby Labor Government 2009 State Budget boost will better support Victorian children, adolescents and adults with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The Minister for Community Services, Lisa Neville, said the **\$8.3 million** Brumby Labor Government 2009 State Budget boost focuses on improving the assessment, diagnosis and support to Victorians with ASDs, their families and carers.

“The Brumby Labor Government is leading the way developing an Australian-first *Autism State Plan* to provide better means for meeting the growing and complex needs of people of all ages living with autism and ASDs,” Ms Neville said.

Critical programs funded as part of the \$8.3 million package are:

- **\$4.2 million** for mental health service enhancement to improve service quality, support staff training and provide greater access to mental health services particularly for young children and adolescents; and
- **\$4.1 million** to improve support to pre-school children and young Victorians of school age, and to provide staff development opportunities including secondary consultation and mentoring.

Ms Neville said the initiatives in the 2009 State Budget would build on the existing service system, link to other key government initiatives including the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* and the *Mental Health Reform Strategy* and target key areas to improve and increase support.

“The Brumby Labor Government is taking action to deliver jobs now in the autism treatment sector and provide more support for Victorian families caring for somebody with autism,” Ms Neville said.

“By enhancing mental health service provision, the Brumby Labor Government will create 15 extra jobs by increasing staffing in specialist mental health services, specifically, the appointment of new dedicated coordinators to manage the assessment and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders.”

Operational guidelines will be developed and ASD training for the specialist mental health workforce will also be rolled out.

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Maxine Morand, said families with children with autism would benefit from the investment in secondary consultation and early childhood workforce mentoring.

“This investment will result in more individualised responses to children with an ASD with complex issues,” Ms Morand said.

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“The 2009 State Budget will fund 100 scholarships costing almost \$2.3 million for education staff to undertake a vocational graduate diploma in autism.”

The autism package also includes:

- Nearly \$600,000 for more autism training, mentoring and resources;
- \$550,000 for regional ASD plans to address service gaps and build system capacity to support children with autism; and
- Almost \$700,000 to better coordinate autism services for pre-school children and transition into schools and training for pre-school teachers.

In a further effort to improve Victorian families’ access to mental health services, the Brumby Labor Government has allocated \$512,000 this year to reduce the waiting lists at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for diagnostic assessments of children and young people with ASD with complex presentations.

The Brumby Labor Government will also increase access points for families at schools, via satellite centres and base rooms in mainstream schools that will provide a space for “time out” for children with autism.

Ms Neville said the Victorian *Autism State Plan* was the culmination of two years of extensive consultation by the Brumby Labor Government in conjunction with Autism Victoria.

The 2009 State Budget investment builds on the \$2.75 million committed in December 2008 to implement the Brumby Labor 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.

Children, adolescents and adults with ASD will benefit from further Brumby Labor Government Budget initiatives, including:

- \$21.3 million for the new *Early in Life* program which will provide diagnosis, treatment and support for children and adolescents including \$13.8 million boost to early intervention and outreach services; and \$4.5 million for two new *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Schools Early Action* teams to be established in metropolitan and rural regions;
- \$9 million for reforming early childhood intervention and ongoing support services for children and young people with disabilities or developmental delay. This will deliver new early childhood intervention quality assurance framework program standards and workforce strategy improving access to services and assessment; and
- \$59.1 million for the *Disability Reform* program providing a whole of government approach to disability services focusing on building individual capacity to live in the community, providing flexible services to support and enhance individuals’ abilities and ensure mainstream services are accessible to people with a disability, and providing funding to improve sustainability of disability support providers.

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