

# MINUTE

## Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

MaPS.Net PDR Id	MN10-000878
Due Date	23 June 2010
Critical Date	N/A
Consultation	Media No
	Group Manager Yes
	Deputy Secretary Yes
	State Manager No

**To the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services**  
for information

cc: Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

**Subject: Update of BR08-001478 – Early Intervention and Support Services for Children with Disability**

**Purpose:** Your office has requested additional information on BR08-001478 – Early Intervention and Support Services for Children with Disability, which identified options and provided costings for expanding identification and early intervention support to children with all developmental disabilities.

### Issues:

On 19 April 2010, your office requested an update of BR08-001478 – Early Intervention and Support Services for Children with Disability (**Attachment A**). This Minute explores requested options for using the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) model as a template to assist selected groups and provides you with updated performance data on the package.

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Since the implementation of the HCWA package, there has been consistent criticism from the disability sector about the inequity of the package. Many concerns have been raised regarding the Commonwealth Government providing funding on the basis of diagnosis rather than on assessment of need.

This was also highlighted in the findings of the Phase 1 evaluation of the HCWA package.

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The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is implementing part of the HCWA package through its Positive Partnerships program, which supports school-aged students on the autism spectrum. The aim of the program is to improve the educational outcomes for school-aged children with ASD through:

## IN CONFIDENCE

- professional development for teachers and other school staff who are working with students with ASD, and
- workshops and information sessions for parents and carers of school aged children with ASD.

Both components are delivered nationally by the Australian Autism Education and Training Consortium.

A 2010 report by the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales called for the development of a package of therapy similar to the HCWA model that would provide financial support for ongoing therapy and psychology for adolescents

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A summary of available performance data for the HCWA package is at **Attachment D**.

BR08-001478 included a draft discussion paper, *Foundations for the Future: Increasing Support for Children and Young People with Disability*, which provided a range of options and costings for early intervention for children with disability.

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The Department's Disability and Carers Group was consulted in the preparation of this minute.

#### Recommendation:

1. That you note the information provided in this minute and in the Attachments. Noted / Please Discuss

Name: Deborah Winkler  
Position: Branch Manager  
Branch: Mental Health and Autism Branch  
Mobile: 6244 6622 /

D. A. Winkler

Date: 22/6/10

Contact Officer: Robyn Oswald  
Ph: 6244 1357 /

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Comments (MO use)

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Signature:  .....

Date: .....

## Ratings Box

Rating	Quality	Timeliness
Unsatisfactory		
Satisfactory		
Good		

## Additional Information

### Background

In late 2008, the Department's Disability Policy and Coordination Branch provided you with a number of briefs relating to early intervention and support services for children with disability, with a focus on children with Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome, vision impairment and hearing impairment.

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- **BR08-001180: Meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Gillard – Disability Early Intervention.** This brief provided information on how to best maximise the inclusion of children with disability and their needs into the proposed Early Childhood Framework. It included information on best practice approaches to early intervention for children with Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome, vision impairment and hearing impairment.
 

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- **BR08-001478: Early Intervention and Support Services for Children with Disability (Attachment A).**

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Attached to this minute was a draft discussion paper, *Foundations for the Future: Increasing Support for Children and Young People with Disability*, which was prepared by the then Autism Spectrum Disorders Branch.

### Use of Carer Allowance data

Both the LoRD and the Child Disability Assessment Tool (CDAT) are used to determine eligibility for Carer Allowance, and inclusion of a disability type in the LoRD is not an indication that it is more 'recognised' than the disability of someone assessed through the CDAT. While useful for the purposes of initial estimations of the target groups for using the HCWA model as a template for children with developmental delay, there are significant limitations in relying on the LoRD lists of conditions alone.

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*Other information*

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All state and territory governments provide or fund early intervention for children with disability, including children with ASD, through a range of service options. Children may be involved with several programs as a formal coordinated package, or parents may take advantage of whatever opportunities they can locate. Early intervention options use methods such as interdisciplinary teams, centre or home based developmental programs, family support or inclusion support.

These early childhood service models are generally comprehensive and promote family centred practice and developmental models of skill acquisition. Specific approaches such as Applied Behaviour Intervention, Direct Teaching and Floortime may be offered through these initiatives. Privately funded programs are more likely to use particular strategies.

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In 2009, FaHCSIA provided funding to the Australia Federation of Disability Organisations to undertake research to inform policy around the costs of living with disability. The report concluded that while insufficient funding for disabilities was an important issue for people with a disability in Australia, it was not the most significant issue. Rather, the history of disability shows that the top priority for people with disability has been to be recognised as full citizens, with the same rights and entitlements as all other citizens.<sup>1</sup> It is about their full inclusion and participation in society, which includes access to public spaces and to justice, to employment, education and leisure opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Further discussions with peak bodies on the usefulness of the package and its possible expansion are also recommended.

*Stakeholder involvement*

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Federation of Disabilities Australia Disabilities Inclusion Allowance Paper April 2009, p43

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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For example, as outlined in BR08-001561, each state has early intervention programs for children with hearing impairment from the point of diagnosis. All states also offer early intervention programs for deaf and hearing impaired children through most State Education Departments and through independent organisations and schools.

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## Attachment B

**Early Intervention Options for Children with Disability**

Best practice approaches for early intervention appear to be consistent across most types of disability. The more successful early intervention initiatives ensure individualised programs are implemented as early as possible in a child's life and make available a wide range of assistance from specialists who, along with family members, are closely involved with delivery of the program.

In discussions with your office, four options were identified for further investigation:

- 1.
- 2.
3. use the HCWA model as a template to assist children with specific disabilities—
  - a. Cerebral Palsy
  - b. Down syndrome
  - c. Fragile X syndrome
  - d. hearing impairment
  - e. sight impairment

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Each of these options is analysed in more detail below. A summary table of the options appears at **Attachment C**.

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**Option 3: Use the HCWA model as a template to assist children with specific disabilities**

The HCWA model could be used as a template to provide assistance to other groups of children with disability who can reasonably be expected to benefit from tailored early interventions that help them achieve better educational and social outcomes. This includes children with hearing and sight impairments, Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome and Cerebral Palsy. BR08-001180 included information on best practice approaches to children with these conditions, except for Fragile X syndrome.

In general, the earlier treatment begins the more opportunity there is for children with developmental and other disabilities to build or acquire competencies that help them to participate in the activities of daily living and interact with others and their environment. Research has shown that significant social, physical and economic benefits can flow from early investment in children's development.

Fragile X syndrome has been included in this option as there has been criticism of the Commonwealth Government for not including it in the current HCWA package given the similarities between its effects and those of ASD. Fragile X is the most common cause of inherited intellectual disability and approximately one in every 4,000 males and between one in every 5,000 and one in every 8,000 females has Fragile X syndrome.<sup>12</sup> Characteristics include global developmental delay and speech and communication problems. People with Fragile X are likely to suffer from anxiety, ADHD and autism.<sup>13</sup> There is no cure but there is a wide range of specific treatment and management strategies that are of great benefit to the individual and their family.<sup>14</sup> Early intervention, including speech and occupational therapies, can assist in managing Fragile X syndrome.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.nhmrc.gov.au/.../11%20-%20Fragile%20X%20syndrome%20WEB.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/.../11%20-%20Fragile%20X%20syndrome%20WEB.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.fragilex.org.au/fragilex/about-fragile-x/>

<sup>14</sup> [www.nhmrc.gov.au/.../11%20-%20Fragile%20X%20syndrome%20WEB.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/.../11%20-%20Fragile%20X%20syndrome%20WEB.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Foetal Alcohol Syndrome – Briefing Summary (from MaPS)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

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Global developmental delay is the term most frequently used when a child is not achieving key developmental milestones in line with other children. Children with global developmental delay have delays of the order of 25 per cent in the majority of areas of development (gross and fine motor development, communication, socio-emotional development, cognitive development and self-care)<sup>18</sup> as well as daily activities (eating, dressing etc). Children with global developmental delay will not necessarily have any intellectual impairment.<sup>19</sup>

Often, the term global developmental delay is used until the cause of the delay is identified, such as Cerebral Palsy, autism, Fragile X syndrome and Rett syndrome. Some children's functioning improves substantially when the medical conditions that cause their developmental delay are treated while others need more intensive assistance in order to improve. The current structure of the HCWA model is based on a specific diagnosis related to the cause of the global developmental delay, which ensures that only children who are likely to experience longer term effects from their condition receive assistance.

The types of support delivered through the HCWA model that could be used for a disability model include:

- a national network of advisors to help families and carers develop an individualised plan and access increased early intervention services – such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists, as well as the acquisition of suitable resources – for children aged up to six years;
- education and support for eligible children aged up to six years and their families and carers through a national program of workshops, information sessions and online resources through the Raising Children Network and other relevant websites;
- new Medicare rebates for diagnosis and treatment plans for eligible children aged up to 13 years, and 20 visits for early intervention treatments for children aged under 15 years who have a treatment plan.

The model supports access to multidisciplinary early intervention services and could be modified to provide more aligned types of assistance for the additional nominated groups—for example, audiologists, physiotherapists, specialist eye therapists, and conductive or other individualised teaching/therapy sessions for children and parents.

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It should be noted that, as with the existing HCWA package, there is some crossover between assistance provided by the Commonwealth and through state and territory government programs, which results in service gaps in some areas and duplication in others. The complexity of the system encompasses not just early intervention support but also diagnostic and assessment practices and processes, education support and family support.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.sa.gov.au/subject/Community+Support/Disability/Disability+types/Developmental+delay>

<sup>19</sup> Noah Ark Children's Services Resource Unit. *Fact Sheet – Global Developmental Delay: General Overview*. 2008.

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## Summary of estimated costs

Service option	Available data	Estimated unit cost	Number of clients	Duration of assistance	Estimated cost over four years
<p>5476</p> <p>Dyslexia</p> <p>Processor</p>					
<b>Option 3</b> Use the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) model as a template for children with specific disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Cerebral Palsy</li> <li>o Down syndrome</li> <li>o Fragile X syndrome</li> <li>o hearing impairment</li> <li>o sight impairment (inc. deaf-blindness)</li> </ul>	Carer Allowance data, April 2010: total population			EIS: diagnosis by age six; assistance until age seven. Medicare items: diagnosis by age 13; assistance until age 15.	\$144.9 million

## Attachment D

**Helping Children with Autism Package: Data**

The Australian Government committed \$190 million for the four years to June 2012 to deliver the HCWA package. A further commitment was also made to establish six Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres (ASELCCs).

The HCWA package is designed to augment the current state and territory investment in supporting children with ASD. FaHCSIA initiatives include:

- **Early Intervention** – funding for Autism Advisors (32.9 full-time equivalents) and funding (up to \$12,000) for families with eligible children aged 0 to six years with ASD to access eligible early intervention therapies through an approved panel of providers; and
- **Education and Support** – initiatives include PlayConnect Playgroups, workshops and access to information for families and carers of children with ASD.
- **ASELCCs** – early learning programs and specific support for children aged 0 to six years with ASD in a long day care setting.

**Expected HCWA FUNDING 2008-12**

	2008-09 \$m	2009-10 \$m	2010-11 \$m	2011-2012 \$m	Total \$m
Early Intervention	10.255	36.222	28.657	29.202	104.336
Education and Support	5.060	4.468	5.343	6.453	21.324
ASELCCs	1.169	8.704	5.342	5.476	20.691
Total	16.484	49.394	39.342	41.131	146.351

Note: ASELCCs funding includes four years' operational funding and two years' capital funding.

**EARLY INTERVENTION**

Early Intervention funding supports the delivery of multidisciplinary evidence based early intervention to facilitate improved cognitive, emotional and social development prior to a child starting school. Funding can be used by families for eligible therapies, at approved panel providers which include speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists. As at April 2010, there are 209 lead providers, working with 550 organisations, across over 800 locations.

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**Table 1: Early Intervention activity levels and funding amounts**

From October 2008 to April 2010	Children assisted by an Autism Advisor	Children received EI funding	Total funding claimed for EI services	Access support payment	Total access support payment
State/ Territory	number	number	\$	number	\$
ACT	122	96	\$444,933	22	\$44,000
NSW	2,987	2,526	\$9,912,823	340	\$680,000
NT	60	60	\$186,405	64	\$128,000
QLD	1,325	1,124	\$4,405,115	552	\$1,104,000
SA	686	594	\$1,972,520	245	\$490,000
TAS	178	141	\$502,046	48	\$96,000
VIC	2,627	2,182	\$7,952,048	354	\$708,000
WA	708	648	\$2,869,642	189	\$378,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,693</b>	<b>7,371</b>	<b>\$28,245,532</b>	<b>1,814</b>	<b>\$3,628,000</b>

Notes: Total funding claimed for EI services include the access support payment. The figures do not include children with claims yet to be processed by providers for payment.

**EDUCATION AND SUPPORT****PlayConnect Playgroups**

PlayConnect Playgroups offer play based learning opportunities and allow families and carers to develop social networks. Playgroup Australia is required to establish 75 Playgroups by June 2010 and 150 across Australia over the next 4 years to end June 2012.

**Number of PlayConnect Playgroups by  
state/territory – March 2010**

State	Location	Partnership
ACT	4	Playgroup ACT
NSW	22	Playgroup NSW
NT	1	Playgroup NT
QLD	7	Playgroup QLD
SA	8	Playgroup SA
TAS	1	Playgroup TAS
VIC	18	Playgroup VIC
WA	7	Playgroup WA
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	

Source: PlayConnect Playgroups website

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**Early Days Workshops**

The Early Days workshops are being delivered nationally through local early childhood intervention services by qualified professionals with expertise and experience in ASD. The locations of workshops are based on demand in a local area and are conducted in small groups to maximise participant interaction and provide quality learning experiences.

**Early Days Workshops: Number of workshops and Participants per Quarter**

	Total workshops held				Participants attended			
	Sept 2009 Qtr	Jan 2010 Qtr	March 2010 Qtr	As at 31 March 2010 (YTD)	Sept 2009 Qtr	Jan 2010 Qtr	March 2010 Qtr	At 31 March 2010 (YTD)
<b>ACT</b>	4	2	1	7	17	10	7	34
<b>NSW</b>	18	18	11	47	127	116	76	319
<b>NT</b>	5	1	3	9	30	8	8	46
<b>QLD</b>	18	14	14	46	114	84	99	297
<b>SA</b>	6	2	1	9	26	11	5	42
<b>TAS</b>	2	4	4	10	12	34	26	72
<b>VIC</b>	38	32	15	85	268	164	98	530
<b>WA</b>	18	6	4	28	122	43	21	186
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>1526</b>

**ASD website (built on the Raising Children Network website).**

This website offers information, online resources on autism and interactive functions to support parents, carers and professionals. It is receiving between 6,000 and 7,000 visits to the landing page per month (an average of 315 hits per day). The top ranked content is the forum 'Parents of children with autism spectrum disorder'.

**Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres (ASELCCs)**

The ASELCCs provide early learning programs and specific support for children aged 0 to six years with ASD in a long day care setting. They also provide parents with support in the care of their children and give them the opportunity to participate more fully in the community. Through their affiliations with universities or hospitals, the centres have a research and workforce training component which aims to achieve a better understanding of ASD and increase workforce capacity.

Three centres (Prospect in Adelaide, Warwick in Perth, and Nathan in Brisbane) have already opened and the enrolments for the three centres (as at April 2010) are 27, 34 and 34 respectively. The other three centres (Liverpool in South Western Sydney, Bundoora in Melbourne and Burnie in North West Tasmania) are all on track to open by 30 June 2010.

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**Cole, Mitchell**

**From:** Thomson, Julia  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 1 June 2010 11:20 AM  
**To:** Oswald, Robyn; Winkler, Deborah  
**Cc:** Cole, Mitchell; Tinkler, Mat  
**Subject:** MN10-000878 - early intervention  
**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Red

Hi,

Thanks for this brief. It provides a lot of good information. however, there are a few areas that we would like to tease out a little more though, as discussed (with Robyn) this morning. So can you please update the following:

Articulate some of positive outcomes from the HCWA package. 7

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I will send the minute back with these comments attached.

Give me a call if have any questions,

Thanks

Julia

2/06/2010



# MINUTE

## Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

MaPS.Net PDR Id	MN10-000878
Due Date	28/05/2010
Critical Date	N/A
Consultation	Media No.
	Group Manager Yes
	Deputy Secretary Yes
	State Manager No

**To the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services**  
for information

cc: Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

**Subject: Update of BR08-001478 – Early Intervention and Support Services for Children with Disability**

**Purpose:** Your office has requested additional information on BR08-001478 – Early Intervention and Support Services for Children with Disability,

### Issues:

On 19 April 2010, your office requested an update of BR08-001478 – Early Intervention and Support Services for Children with Disability (**Attachment A**). This Minute explores requested options for using the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) model as a template to assist selected groups and provides you with updated performance data on the package. These options are included at **Attachment B** and a summary of their costs is at **Attachment C**.

The Department is of the view that further work should be done to refine the HCWA model before using it more extensively.

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Under the National Disability Agreement, specialist disability services are the responsibility of state and territory governments, and expanding HCWA may conflict with these agreed roles and responsibilities. If this were considered to be an issue, it could be addressed by a commitment from the Commonwealth to move the initiative, after its implementation, to the states through a National Partnership.

Since the implementation of the HCWA package, there has been consistent criticism from the disability sector about the inequity of the package. Many concerns have been raised regarding the Commonwealth Government providing funding on the basis of diagnosis rather than on assessment of need. Any proposed use of the HCWA model for specific disabilities – such as Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, vision impairment and hearing impairment – would need to take into account these concerns.

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The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is implementing part of the HCWA package through its Positive Partnerships program, which supports school-aged students on the autism spectrum. The aim of the program is to improve the educational outcomes for school-aged children with ASD through:

- professional development for teachers and other school staff who are working with students with ASD, and
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and Carers Group was consulted in the preparation of this minute.

ly. The Department's Disability

**Recommendation:**

1. That you note the information provided in this minute and in the Attachments. Noted / Please Discuss

Name: Deborah Winkler  
Position: Branch Manager  
Branch: Mental Health and Autism Branch  
Mobile: 6244 6622 /

D. Winkler

Date: 24/5/10.

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Contact Officer: Robyn Oswald  
Ph: 6244 6186 /

} 22 Irrelevant material

**Comments (MO use)**

See email

noted by pso

Signature: ..... Julia Thomson

Date: 2/6/10

**Ratings Box**

Rating      Quality    Timeliness

Unsatisfactory

Satisfactory

Good