

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2007-08 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome 2

DEEWR Question No. EW141_08

Senator Allison asked on 20 February 2008, EEWL Proof Hansard page 73.

Question

Autism Spectrum Disorder Support

Senator ALLISON—I will not go into detailed questions, but is there a document that explains more about the autism spectrum disorder support?

Ms Paul—We can certainly get that for you.

Answer

As part of the cross-portfolio *Helping children with autism* package, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is implementing two initiatives to support students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), their teachers, parents and carers. These initiatives are:

- \$16.3 million over five years for professional development for up to 1,800 teachers and other school staff who work with school students with ASD; and
- \$7 million over five years for up to 5,800 parents and carers of school students with ASD to attend workshops and information sessions and to access online workshops and information.

Fact sheets about each of these components are at [Attachment A](#) and [Attachment B](#). An overview of the entire *Helping children with autism* package is at [Attachment C](#).



HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Support for school-aged children with autism spectrum disorders – professional development for teachers and other school staff

Why is this important?

- Teachers and other school staff sometimes need support to address the special learning needs of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).
- This initiative will provide professional development for up to 1,800 teachers and other school staff to support school-aged children with ASD to help them improve their learning skills.
- It will also equip teachers and staff with the expertise and confidence they need to be able to work in partnership with parents and carers to address the needs of school-aged children with ASD.
- A number of residential courses of up to five days will be available for up to 450 teachers and other school staff from government and non-government schools each year. Travel, accommodation and meals will be provided to participants.
- Course training modules will be made available on the internet and a professional network offering ongoing advice and support will be established.

Who will benefit?

- Teachers, other school staff, school-aged children with ASD and their parents will benefit. Teachers will be better equipped to support students with ASD, students will achieve better learning outcomes, and parents will have more confidence in teachers.
- Online learning will ensure that teachers and school staff who are unable to attend the residential courses do not miss out on this opportunity. Priority will be given to teachers and school staff who are working with children with ASD and who have not received previous specialist training of this type.

What funding is the government committing to the initiative?

- \$16.3 million has been allocated to this measure over five years.

How will the initiative be implemented?

- The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is undertaking a tender process to select a professional development provider.

- Details on the location of the residential courses and the nomination process for teachers and other school staff to attend the courses will be determined once a provider has been selected.

When will the initiative commence?

- Professional development courses are expected to commence in mid-2008.

How can I find out more?

- For further information, email autism@deewr.gov.au or call the *Helping children with autism* Inquiry Line on 1800 289 177 and TTY 1800 260 402.



HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Support for school-aged children with autism spectrum disorders – parent workshops and information sessions

Why is this important?

- Parents and carers of school-aged children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) often need information about how to best help their children's learning.
- Up to 5,800 parents and carers of school-aged children with ASD will be able to participate in workshops and information sessions in city and rural locations.
- These workshops and information sessions will focus on helping parents and carers to support their children at school.
- Up to 25 face-to-face workshops will be held each year, followed by information sessions conducted over the course of the following day.
- These face-to-face workshops will be complemented by online workshops for parents and carers who are unable to attend.

Who will benefit?

- Parents and carers of school-aged children with ASD, as well as teachers, other school staff and the children themselves will benefit.
- Parents and carers will be able to access expert advice and information. They will also be better placed to develop effective partnerships with their children's teachers and schools to make sure the right strategies are in place to support their children to develop and improve the skills they need to learn.

What funding is the government committing to the initiative?

- \$7 million has been allocated to this measure over five years.

How will the initiative be implemented?

- The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is undertaking a tender process to select a provider for the workshops and information sessions.
- One-day workshops and subsequent information sessions will be held in each major city and in rural locations across Australia with exact locations to be determined once a provider has been selected.

When will the initiative commence?

- Workshops and information sessions for parents and carers are expected to commence in mid-2008.

How can I find out more?

- For further information, email autism@deewr.gov.au or call the *Helping children with autism* Inquiry Line on 1800 289 177 and TTY 1800 260 402.

HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

A package of initiatives to assist children with autism spectrum disorders, their parents and carers.

The departments of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), Health and Ageing (DoHA); and will be jointly implementing this package.

Why is this important?

- Diagnosis and early intervention services are vital for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and their families. Providing help and support for these children early in their lives will make it easier for them to attend school and participate in everyday life.
- Under this initiative, the government will provide:
 - new Medicare funded services to diagnose ASD and provide early intervention treatment, including speech pathology, occupational therapy and psychology services; (DoHA)
 - early intervention services for approximately 15,000 families of children aged up to 6 diagnosed with ASD, including playgroups, behavioural therapies and intensive programmes; (FaHCSIA)
 - 20 childhood autism advisors to assist parents and carers to find the best services available to meet the particular needs of their child. Prior to the appointment of the childhood autism advisors, existing autism stakeholder groups will be provided with early support funding to build their capacity to provide support to families; (FaHCSIA)
 - education and support programmes for families and carers of children aged up to 6 with ASD and the development of an ASD website; (FaHCSIA)
 - support for up to 5,800 parents and carers of school-aged children with ASD through workshops and information sessions in city and rural locations; (DEEWR)
 - professional development for up to 1,800 teachers and other school staff to support school students with ASD to help them improve their learning skills. (DEEWR)

What funding is the government committing to the initiative?

- \$190 million has been allocated to this package of initiatives over five years.

How will the initiative be implemented?

- The government will be consulting autism support groups and relevant professionals, including health professionals, during the implementation of these initiatives and a new advisory body will be established to assist with implementation.
- The initiatives will be implemented through changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule and provider selection processes for: early intervention services; professional development courses; and parent support groups and workshops.

When will the initiative commence?

- The initiatives are expected to commence from July 2008.

How can I find out more?

- Further information is available from the *Helping children with autism* Inquiry Line on 1800 289 177 and TTY 1800 260 402 or at the following websites:
www.dest.gov.au/schools/autism/ ; www.health.gov.au/autism and www.facsia.gov.au.