



**Media Release**

**10 February 2011**

## **New Autism Association Centre Expands Services for WA**

The Premier of Western Australia today officially marked the commencement of construction of the Autism Association of Western Australia's new Service Headquarters and state of the art Early Intervention Centre in Shenton Park.

The new facilities will expand the Association's delivery of services in all areas and enable clinical and training staff to connect with organisations, professionals and families throughout Western Australia.

Autism Association of WA Chief Executive Officer, Joan McKenna Kerr, said the new Service Headquarters was the result of a true partnership between the Autism Association, the community and the public sector.

The Government and Lotterywest have supported the development of the centre with a \$4million grant with the balance of the funding coming largely from community fundraising and other activities.

"Our new Service Centre will provide the infrastructure to expand services for both children and adults, and will include a state of the art early intervention centre for newly diagnosed children under the age of six years," Ms McKenna Kerr said.

"It will provide the Association's multi-disciplinary teams with the capacity to work with over 400 pre-school children with Autism each year. In addition to the Early Intervention Centre, the new complex will also provide facilities for all of the Autism Association's community based Children and Adult Services as well as Family Support Programs.

"It will also have a medical consultancy suite for adolescents and adults with complex needs."

Ms McKenna Kerr said importantly the new facilities would assist clinical and training staff to connect with organisations, professionals and families in regional Western Australia.

"This will be a place where any member of the public can come to find out more about Autism; a place where the achievements of people with Autism will be on show; and facilities where families can come to meet with staff and with each other".

Lisa Cocks, mother of two children with Autism, said early intervention was critical in helping develop life-long skills for her children and strategies to cope in different situations.

“This is about teaching them many of things we all take for granted, such as how to play with other children, to share, to understand emotions and facial expressions and to interact with children their own age” Ms Cocks said.

“My eldest son Aaron was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome at six years of age, while Bryce received his diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at three. While they both have very different autistic tendencies they both need special support. Aaron would have benefited greatly from early intervention if we’d had an earlier diagnosis,” she said.

“The work the Autism Association does is amazing. At three years old Bryce had no language and communicated through ‘melt downs’. He still has trouble with eye contact but he is a different child.

“I can’t wait to see the new centre operating. Having all the facilities located in one place rather than being spread across different locations will certainly make it logistically better for both staff and for families.”

Designed by Architects Cameron Chisholm Nicol and being constructed by Diploma Group, the building is expected to be completed in early 2012.

### **Autism Association of WA Background**

Autism is a complex, life-long developmental disability which is neurobiological in origin. Approximately one in every 160 children in Australia is diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The Autism Association of Western Australia is a large not-for-profit organisation providing services from diagnosis in infancy and throughout the life of person with Autism.

Our mission is to advance the personal development, equality of opportunity and community participation of people with Autism.

The Association is the only specialist Autism organisation in Australia providing the full range of services to meet the needs of people with Autism from early childhood into adulthood; and is the second largest specialist organisation providing services to people with Autism and their families in Australia.

The Association also works with a range of service providers in Western Australia and is one of only five agencies worldwide providing specialist programs to assist job-seekers with Autism to find and maintain employment.

Find out more at [www.autism.org.au](http://www.autism.org.au)

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