

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

8 October 2007



### **Psychological assistance for children with autism**

The Australian Psychological Society has today commended an Australian Government package that will increase access to early diagnosis and early intervention for children with autism.

The "Help for children with autism" package will provide \$190 million over five years, including \$20.7 million to introduce new Medicare items allowing children with autism to access paediatricians, child psychiatrists, developmental psychologists and other allied health professionals for assessment and early intervention.

Executive Director of the Australian Psychological Society, Professor Lyn Littlefield, said the package was critical in providing early intervention strategies.

"Early intervention is extremely important in the treatment of autism as it can provide children and their families with the support and skills needed to manage the symptoms of autism. In addition, it ensures the child and the family attain the best quality of life possible," Professor Littlefield said.

She said early intervention helps children with autism develop more functional behaviours which not only assist the children but provide families with greater freedom in their daily lives.

The Medicare items will ensure that families struggling with autistic children will have access to affordable treatment, improving the rate of identification and early intervention. The new Medicare items will become available for up to 20 sessions per child with allied health professionals and developmental psychologists.

Psychologists are trained in the assessment and treatment of autism and are able to provide individual treatment programs designed specifically for each child, their families and carers.

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*The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 15,700 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.*

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