

Premier

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Tasmania

23 JUN 2008

Mr RJ Law
Secretary
Action for Tasmanian Autistic Children
PO Box 161
NEW NORFOLK TAS 7140

Dear Mr Law

Thank you for your letter of 9 April 2008 to the former Premier, Paul Lennon, regarding services in Tasmania for children at risk particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

In your letter you raised concerns about the need for government departments to work collaboratively in the best interests of children at risk, particularly those with ASD. I would like to reassure you that this work is being progressed.

The Department of Education (DoE) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have been working with other agencies (particularly Tasmania Police and the Department of Justice) to implement the recommendations made in *A Way Forward*. This report is the result of a number of reviews undertaken into child protection in Tasmania.

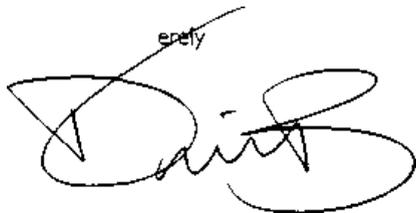
A high-level inter-agency committee has been established to monitor implementation of the report's recommendations and to ensure a collaborative approach. A senior position has been created between DoE and DHHS to assist with planning and service delivery. Furthermore, officers from the two departments are holding regional meetings to facilitate a coordinated approach.

The Tasmanian Government also recognises the need to work closely with nongovernment organisations providing services, particularly in relation to early assessment, diagnosis, therapy and intervention services. To assist with this, DoE and DHHS have been developing a collaborative therapy model, as recommended in the Children's Therapy Services

Improvement Project. The model outlines processes that will assist with collaboration between the different children's service providers. It also includes the establishment of a statewide specialised service for ASD assessment and diagnosis. This service will supplement the more generalist services available for children with suspected developmental delay and improve the level of expertise available in Tasmania.

As indicated in your letter, the Commonwealth Government is establishing a specialist early intervention centre in the North-West for children wrth ASD. The need to closely integrate the new service with existing services, including those within DoE's Early Childhood Intervention Services, will form a key part of forthcoming discussions between the State and Commonwealth Governments.

Thank you again for your letter. My Government recognises the challenges facing parents of children with ASD and is committed to working with groups, such as yours, to deliver improved services for the families concerned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Bartlett', with a small 'erely' stamp above it.

David Bartlett MP **Premier**