

28 May 2008

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Lindsay Electorate: Autism

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (9.52 p.m.)—I rise to inform the chamber of the valuable work of two community groups in my electorate, supporting the needs of children with autism and their families. Yesterday I attended the Autism Month parliamentary breakfast, jointly hosted by the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services.

Over my last decade in local government and now as a federal member, I have met numerous times with families of children with autism spectrum disorders, or ASDs, who have wanted to not only raise awareness of the problem but also highlight the need for a greater number of services. It is difficult to quantify the extent to which ASDs affect families, and that is one of the challenges we face in designing policy responses to address the unmet needs of those diagnosed with ASDs. What is clear is the high level of support required for children diagnosed with an ASD and the substantial burden of care on parents and families, who must also navigate the bureaucracies and the frustrating pathways to services and therapies that can help their children.

I am pleased to be a part of a government that is committed to delivering a \$190 million package to assist children with ASDs and their families. These measures will include the establishment of six specialist early intervention centres throughout Australia. There still remains substantial unmet need and I do applaud the parliamentary secretary for recognising this and recognising the need to continue working to deliver more services.

Meeting some of the demands of families in my electorate are groups like Lifestart Nepean and the Luke Priddis Foundation. Lifestart has been operating since 1996 as a parent cooperative. It now runs a number of early intervention centres and playgroups around Sydney. For several years now Deb Emelhain and her team at the Lifestart Nepean early intervention service have been relying on the generous provision of space in spare classrooms at St Marys and St Marys South public schools. It currently services 50 families, with at least another 20 on the waiting list. I am pleased to say that Penrith City Council has granted them a five-year lease at the St Marys occasional care centre, providing the staff, parents and children with a stable environment and a secure operational future.

Working with Penrith council and local stakeholders, I have also been assisting the Luke Priddis Foundation to attempt to secure one of the government's six specialist early intervention centres in Western Sydney. Luke Priddis, a member of the Penrith Panthers rugby league team, and his wife, Holly, established the foundation after the diagnosis of their son, Cooper, with autism. They have been raising funds through the generous support of local businesses with a view to establishing an early intervention centre.

I would also like to thank Mark Mulock, Jonathan Green, Mark Geyer, David Crossman and David Latty, who recently organised a charity walk that raised money for Lifestart Nepean and the Luke Priddis

David Bradbury MP

Federal Member for Lindsay



Foundation. I also acknowledge the Rotary Club of Nepean, who recently raised funds for the Luke Priddis Foundation. I am very proud to be supporting these local groups in such a worthy cause in my electorate.