

Media Release

14th August 2010



Children's Services
Since 1895

KU opens NSW's first and only Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre

KU Children's Services today opened a unique early learning centre, incorporating both a mainstream preschool and NSW's first and only Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre. The multi-million dollar facility was built using more than \$1.5million of Commonwealth funding and \$700,000 of KU's own funds, and was officially opened by Senator Hon. Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion.

"This is an historic day for early childhood education, particularly for NSW families of children with autism," said Sheridan Dudley, KU's Chief Executive Officer. "KU is very pleased to be playing such an integral role in ensuring that families are able to access quality early intervention support in their local area.

"We are also proud that the development of the new centre assures that KU Liverpool Preschool, which has been providing high quality early childhood education and care to Liverpool families for 62 years, can continue to do so for decades to come, in a purpose built facility."

The KU Marcia Burgess autism centre provides education in a long day care setting, for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) from 6 weeks up to 6 years of age.

"The children's program combines KU's highly regarded play-based approach to early education with the principles of the Early Start Denver Model which focuses on helping children with ASDs to develop play and communication skills, relationships and language," explained Ms Dudley.

Children and families can also access a full range of specialist support services including Paediatrics, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology and Psychology. These services are delivered as a result of KU's partnerships with Sydney South West Area Health Service, The University of NSW and The Benevolent Society.

"The co-location of the new autism service with the rebuilt KU Liverpool Preschool provides opportunities for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders to engage and interact with their typically developing peers, on a daily basis," Ms Dudley said.

The official opening function was attended by families and children from both services, Commonwealth, State and Local Government representatives, KU's project partners and community members. Senator Hon. Ursula Stephens and KU Chairman, David Bryant, officially cut the ribbons to open the services. After the formalities guests had the opportunity to take a 'behind the scenes' tour of the centre, while children enjoyed face painting and a magic show.

KU currently cares for more than 14,000 children each year in over 150 services nationally, including 3 services in the Liverpool area. KU has been enriching children's lives through early childhood education and care since 1895 and believes that every family should be able to access affordable, high quality early childhood education and care for their children.

KU already supports around 1000 children a year in KU services, who have developmental delays and disabilities including Autism and ASD like symptoms.

The Early Learning and Care Centre Initiative is funded by the Australian Government.

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