



TAS VIC NEWS

TASMANIAN VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN'S SUPPORT GROUP INC

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Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative

The **Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative** aims to assist eligible children with developmental disabilities to access funding for early treatment, diagnostic and management services.

- What are the components of the initiative?
- Funding for early intervention
- Medicare items
- Information for families
- Information for potential service providers
- Does the Better Start initiative only include children diagnosed with sight or hearing impairments, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or Fragile X syndrome?
- What other services are available for children with disabilities and their carers?
- Further information

What are the components of the initiative?

From 1 July 2011, eligible children diagnosed with a sight or hearing impairment, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or Fragile X syndrome will have access to funding and Medicare rebates under the Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative.

The initiative includes the following components:

- Children under the age of six can register for access to funding for early intervention services and treatments.
- Medicare items for the development of a treatment and management plan for eligible children under the age of 13.
- Medicare items for up to four allied health diagnostic services and for up to 20 relevant allied health treatment services for eligible children up to the age of 15 (provided a treatment and management plan is in place before the age of 13).

The Australian

Government has committed \$122 million in funding over four years under this initiative.

Funding for early intervention

From 1 July 2011, children who are aged under six years and have been diagnosed with either a sight or hearing impairment, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or Fragile X syndrome will be able to register to access early intervention funding of up to \$12,000 (to a maximum of \$6,000 per financial year).

The funding will be able to be used for services such as speech pathology, audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychology and orthoptics. Families will have until their child turns seven to use the early intervention funding.

This targeted early intervention in the pre-school years, aims to complement existing Commonwealth and State and Territory services and to assist these children to have the best possible

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Multi-sensory activities for a baby or child who is blind with additional needs



Technology for people with a Print Disability



<http://www.quantumtechnology.com.au>



preparation for transition to school.

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Medicare items

Under the Better Start initiative, eligible children will also have access to new Medicare items.

A Medicare item for the development of a treatment and management plan will be available for children under the age of 13.

Medicare items will also be available for up to four allied health diagnostic services and for up to 20 relevant allied health treatment services per eligible child. The new items will be available for children up to the age of 15, provided a treatment and management plan is in place before the age of 13.

Families will be able to access the new Medicare items from 1 July 2011.

Information for parents

Parents or carers of eligible children will need to register their child for the Better Start initiative in order to access the early intervention funding. Registration will be available from 1 July 2011.

The Department is still developing the registration process. Consistent with the registration for the Helping Children with Autism Package, it is likely that parents or carers will be required to provide:

- the child's Centrelink Customer Reference Number (CRN)
- proof of the child's age, and
- supporting evidence of confirmed diagnosis, such as a letter from their paediatrician or general practitioner.

Further details about how to register a child for the Better Start initiative will be published on this website as they become available.

Information for potential service providers

As part of the implementation of the Better Start initiative, a panel of allied health service providers will be established. Parents and carers of eligible children will be able to seek early intervention services from members of the service provider panel.

Service providers will need to be qualified and accredited in one of the specified allied health professions (speech pathology, audiology, occupational therapy, orthoptics, physiotherapy and/or psychology) and would be expected to be able to demonstrate experience in working with children with the listed disabilities. Providers who meet these criteria will be encouraged to apply as part of a consortium or as a sole provider.

Applications for the Better Start Early Intervention Service Provider Panel will open in the lead up to 1 July 2011. Further information will be published on this website in the coming weeks.

Does the Better Start initiative only include children diagnosed with sight or hearing impairments, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or Fragile X syndrome?

The announcement made by the Prime Minister on 28 July 2010 listed sight and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and Fragile X Syndrome as the identified disabilities included in the Better Start initiative.

The categories of disability identified in the announcement were determined based on evidence that intensive early intervention in the pre-school years is effective in preparing this cohort of children for school.

The planned evaluation of this new initiative, together with the ongoing evaluation of the Helping Children with Autism package, will provide further information to the Government about the extent to

which these types of early intervention packages can improve outcomes for children. These evaluations will assist Government consideration of any extension of these early intervention initiatives.

What other services are available for children with disabilities and their carers?

Australian Government services

Parents and carers of children with disability may be eligible for Australian Government financial assistance through Carer Payment and Carer Allowance, which are available to carers of people with disability or severe medical conditions.

For further information on these payments call Centrelink on 13 2717 (calls made from a mobile may incur additional costs) or visit Centrelink website.

Further information about support services is also available from Carers Australia on 1800 242 636 (calls made from a mobile may incur additional costs) or at Carers Australia website.

State and Territory based services

The Better Start initiative aims to complement existing services for children with disability and is not intended to replace or reduce disability support services that are provided in each jurisdiction.

Families and carers of children with disability are encouraged to contact their relevant State or Territory government disability services for further information about the types of support to which they may be entitled.

Further information

Further information about the initiative will be published on this website as it becomes available.

You can also contact the Department of Families, Housing, Community



Multi-sensory activities for a baby or child who is blind with additional needs

Babies with low vision or blindness and additional needs have unique learning needs. Understanding these needs helps parents and carers to develop rewarding activities to enhance all the child's senses.

Before any of these activities, tell your child what you are going to do. As you do the activity, watch for their responses to see if the activity needs adjusting. Afterwards, talk to your child about what happened.

Contact your Vision Australia children's service specialist for more assistance adapting these activities to your child's level of vision and play.

Helping your child to understand how their body and the environment works can be a delightful experience - for you and the child you are caring for.

Developing body awareness

- Cuddle and carry your child while talking. Describe everything that is happening around you both.
- Vary your child's experience of movement as much as possible by bouncing, swaying, rocking.
- Blow "raspberries" on all parts of their body.
- Tickle the child's body all over.
- Brush all over the child's body using a soft brush.
- Massage your child's body with scented oil. Pull, push, squeeze and rub gently as you massage.
- Rub talcum powder on the

whole body.

- Lay the child on the floor with no socks and minimal clothing. Vary the surface on which you place them. Try carpet, grass, lambskin, water.
- Brush over the child's hands and body with a variety of materials such as velvet, sponge, feathers, talc.
- Use vibrating massagers or vibrating toys to move along the child's hands, feet, arms and head.
- Swing the child gently in a hammock or blanket.
- Carry the child in a backpack or papoose.
- Lay your child in a ball pool or box sounded by soft balloons, shredded paper, leaves, shredded paper.
- Lay the child on a waterbed for safe movement.
- Use a supportive swing. Vary the speed of movement.
- Sing to your child while touching and naming the body parts you touch.

Encouraging Hand Awareness

- Massage your child's hands with lotion or oil.
- Blow on your child's hands and bring them to your face. Blow raspberries
- Brush a variety of textures on the child's hands such as sponge, feathers, or food such as honey or vegemite.

- Shaking the child's arm from the elbow or stroking the back of the arm or forearm will relax their hands.
- Tickle their hands while singing "Round the Garden".
- Hang from a play frame objects that vary in texture and sound. Only two at a time. Try using a light wind chime, CDs, Christmas balls, slinky springs, balloons. Place the frame close to your child so any movement from them will result in movement of the objects.
- Use a battery operated toothbrush to massage the child's hands.
- Develop messy play with shaving cream, pudding mix, pasta.
- Hide toys for the child to find within a shallow tray of rice, sorghum or sand. Lay them on their tummy so reaching into the tray is easier.
- Make tactile books with different textures glued to each page.
- Fill rubber gloves with cornflour, rice, beans, water.

Smell and taste

- Using the senses of smell and taste can provide information that helps your child understand where they are and what is happening.
- Use a small touch of food on the lip to signal the beginning of mealtime.
- Allow the child to smell lotion prior to being massaged.
- Use the same scent each time on a favourite toy before playing with it.

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Adaptive technology may well be a large part of a vision impaired child's life, starting the process early.

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- Use oil burners with a particular essence to identify each room in the house.
- Use the same soap or lotion each bath time.
- Create a garden with distinct scents and textures. For example lavender, rose, jasmine, gardenia and herbs such as lemon thyme and basil.

Sound

- Explain the sounds your child hears.

- Play music at particular times of day or for particular activities.
- Sing songs that teach body parts and describe body movements.
- Use sound to identify specific locations and routines. For example, a mobile near a table and chairs used outdoors, a musical toy only played at sleep time, or at the change table.
- Sounds can be used to

motivate the child to reach. For example, film canisters made into sound shakers, scrunch bags, percussion instruments, wrist bells, threaded cotton reels. These can be hung from a baby frame or placed on the tray of the child's chair within easy reach.

Light perception

- Use torches, lights, shiny mirrors, CD's.
- Put overhead transparencies onto a light box.

The Braille and Talking Book Library

**31 - 51 Commercial Rd,
South Yarra, Vic 3141
Telephone : (03) 9867 6022
Facsimile : (03) 9820 1335**



The Braille and Talking Book Library provides a free library service of braille and cassette books and magazines for people who are unable to handle, read or comprehend standard print material with ease. The books and magazines are delivered by free post.

What is available?

Braille and cassette books and magazines are available for loan. The Library's cassettes can be played on any standard cassette player. These are available for sale from the Library if you do not have one already.

Choosing books

We will ask you to specify your preferences in reading - adventure, romance, biography, etc. - and any favourite authors. The Library staff will then select books for you from the categories you have selected - dependent on the availability of books at the time.

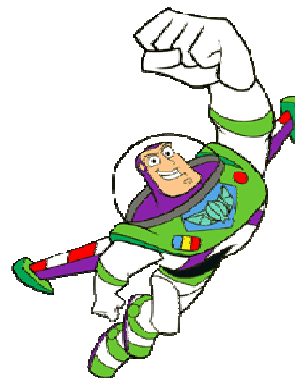
Returning books

When you have finished reading each book, you simply reverse the address label and send the book, in its container, back to the Library by post. The loan period is two months. All postage on this material is free.

Joining the Library

If you would like to join the Library or if you would like more information about the services we offer, please telephone the Library on (03) 9867 6022 or toll-free on 1800 032 645 if you are calling from outside Melbourne.

<http://home.vicnet.net.au>



**We take this opportunity to thank our co-partner for their assistance with this publication of
TAS VIC NEWS**



Tasmanians with Disabilities Inc



Blind Citizens Australia

A National Disability Insurance Scheme: How might this affect you? Second stage forums

The Productivity Commission on behalf of the Australian Government will soon release their recommendations on the establishment of a disability care and support scheme. This scheme has the potential to be the most significant social policy reform in our lifetime. But how will this impact people who are blind or vision impaired?

Join us for a **FREE** forum which will include a summary of the recommendations made by the Productivity Commission and will seek your views on how these recommendations may affect us all. Blind Citizens Australia has been funded by the Federal Government to

consult with people who are blind or vision impaired and will be making a submission to the final stage of the review. This is the time to provide input and tell us what you think!

HOBART

Date: Friday 1 April 2011

Time: Lunch will be provided from 12.00pm. The forum will start promptly at **12.30 pm** and will run to **2.30 pm**

Location: Tasmanians with Disabilities (TWD) Office, 20 Creek Rd, Lenah Valley. A shuttle service will be provided at 11.30am from the Hobart Royal Guide Dogs Tasmania office (please advise if you require this service)

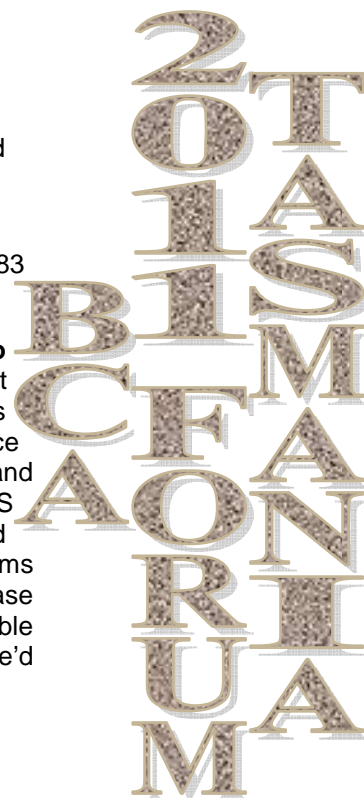
LAUNCESTON

Date: Saturday 2 April 2011

Time: Lunch will be provided from 12.30pm. The forum will start promptly at **1.00 pm** and will run to **3.00 pm**

Location: Royal Guide Dogs Tasmania, 83 Elphin Rd, Launceston.

For more details or to register, please contact the Blind Citizens Australia National Office on 1800 033 660 and specify which NDIS forum you wish to attend (we are holding forums around Australia). Please RSVP as soon as possible if you plan to attend! We'd love to have you there.



Royal Guide Dogs Association



Have a problem with seeing things such as reading and getting around. Maybe Royal Guide Dogs Association of Tasmania can assist you. For further information please phone:

Hobart: (03) 6232 1222
Launceston: (03) 6331 8100



TASMANIAN VISUALLY IMPAIRED
CHILDREN'S SUPPORT GROUP INC

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*Helping Tasmanian Families
with Blind and Vision
Impaired Children*



TAS VIC Inc.

**We are on the web
at
www.tasvic.org.au**



Puzzle Ball

This four inch ball engages with its bright colors, varied textures, and lively sounds~rattles, clicks, and squeaks. Invites exploration and manipulation, from grasping and holding to taking apart and putting back together again, from rattling to pressing the raised green triangles and hearing squeaks and clicking the raised red dots. Price **US\$15**

We hope this has been of some help, it is sure worth a visit to the website

<http://www.playworks.net/next-toys.html>

Toys for young kids

We have recently been asked about information on toys for very young children with vision impairment and we have come up with the following result from

<http://www.playworks.net/next-toys.html>

Playworks
toys for serious play



One Two Squeeze Blocks

Ten blocks hand-sculpted on every side for a total of 60 different raised images for maximum tactile explo-

ration and language learning. Children squeeze and squeak, stack and knock down, learning cause and effect. One Two Squeeze Blocks float, adding another dimension to water play. Each is a 2" cube, the ideal size for tiny hands to grip. Phthalate-free. Packaged in a reusable 100% recycled polypropylene storage bag with zipper closure and attached handle for easy take-along. Price **US\$17.99**

Price US\$17.99

Stacking Clown

Four toys in one, Stacking Clown enhances visual, auditory, and fine motor development. His hat contains a prism that affords a new way to look at the world. His head consists of two attached hemispheres that click gently as the child rotates the halves back and forth. A cube and a circular cage form the body and contain rattle balls with high contrast graphics. Portable and designed to be enjoyed individually or together, the pieces stack easily, one atop the other Price . **US\$15**

