



Media release for April 1, 2011

## No time to waste when choices critical for families

A family suspecting that their child has autism today may have to wait up to two years for a diagnosis, even in metropolitan areas of Australia.

On World Autism Day (April 2) the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders is making a call for access to timely and affordable diagnosis.

'It is a critical time for families and evidence shows that early interventions are of significant benefit. Waiting too long has an enormous impact. Time delays create additional frustration and stress on everyone in the family,' said Jon Martin, Chairperson of The Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders. He said early diagnosis is the critical starting point for families to access services.

This national peak body represents people who have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), their families, carers and helpers.

'We are also recommending a national benchmark to be established, for a multi-disciplinary approach to autism diagnosis,' he said.

The *National Call to Action* is the result of a collaborative approach between all autism associations in all States and Territories. They have identified a number of important imperatives for the autism spectrum community; those outlined above, as well as a call to extend existing Medicare rebates available for diagnosis.

'We appeal to policy makers in the Australian government and bureaucracy to ensure effective resourcing and structuring of future service delivery,' Mr Martin said.

Another area essential to community welfare is to create a way to collect quality data – a national register that will accurately profile ASDs in Australia. This would inform decision-making regarding policy, services, clinical practice and workforce development.

Government action might include ASD on registers such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). State, Territory and National data is essential for planning purposes.

MEDIA – for interviews with Mr Martin or other members of the Advisory Board around the country, please call (02) 9267 2711 Feehan Communications.

For more information go to our website [www.autismadvisoryboard.org.au](http://www.autismadvisoryboard.org.au). Contact can be made with the Australian Advisory Board via your respective state or territory organisation:



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