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Media Release

Bracks Backs Autism

A briefing by Minister Garbutt and Ministerial advisers from the Premiers Office provided Autism Victoria and other key interest groups an early opportunity to pore over the Bracks Government's disability policy released today "*Addressing Disadvantage. Investing in a fairer Victoria*"

"It's disappointing that Disability policy announcements are so close to the election. It signals that it is not yet a true priority for the ALP or the Liberal Party. We would like to see political parties so committed to their disability policies, that they announce them at their Campaign launch said Meredith Ward, Government & Public Relations Liaison, Autism Victoria.

"Develop an Autism State Plan in partnership with Autism Victoria" is the highlight for the autism community from the Bracks Government's announcement.

"On the face of it, today's announcement is key to developing future effective and appropriate service delivery for the whole autism community. We look forward to seeing the detail" she said.

"The Bracks Government's policy on Autism recognizes they need to address the statewide crisis affecting 1 in every 166 Victorians who has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Autism; Aspergers; PDD-NOS).

The issues affecting people with an ASD are extensive and affect every area from Early Childhood, Education, Youth through to Adults. At present people with an ASD and their parents and carers are disadvantaged and do not have access to basic levels of service.

"We need a whole of Government statewide strategic response to the issues affecting individuals of all ages which is underpinned by compassion, commitment and cold hard cash.

"Minister Garbutt's announcement of "Enhanced Early Childhood Intervention Places" for children with high complex needs including autism is a sign that this government has listened, understood and applied it to policy development.

"The investment attached to this initiative is small, however together with the state plan is a significant first step in the right direction. We are concerned how the Department of Human Services will develop the detail. The Victorian early childhood intervention services sector cannot afford a repeat of the disastrous 2005 Early Childhood Intervention Flexible Support Packages rollout she said.

Media Enquiries: Meredith Ward: 0400 226 408