

MEDIA RELEASE

Benevolent Society officially opens Chatswood Hub

**Hon Ray Williams, NSW Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Disability Services,
Speaks**

20 March 2018 – The Benevolent Society, Australia’s first charity, officially opened its Chatswood Hub at Citadel Towers, 799 Pacific Highway, Chatswood today.

The event was an opportunity to showcase the services and programs offered through the Chatswood Hub, one of four main Sydney hubs, including Brighter Futures, Fostering Young Lives, aged care home support, and specialist disability services. The Chatswood Hub services the northern and north western areas of and around Sydney and incorporates staff who previously worked in West Ryde, Macquarie Park, Hornsby, as well as Chatswood.

Following the Welcome to Country by Aunty Claire Jackson, Danny Burgess, Director of Disability Services (Central), The Benevolent Society, served as Master of Ceremonies for the event, officially welcoming everyone attending, and acknowledging all special guests.

Jo-Anne Hewitt, Executive Director Disability, The Benevolent Society, spoke and said, “When the Disability Clinical Services were transferred to The Benevolent Society last August, it was the biggest transformation of the organisation since its inception. While it’s been an opportunity, it’s also been a challenge, yet we rose to it and now we are the largest provider of specialist community disability services in Australia.

“We continue to stand up and speak out to help people live their best lives and work towards social change. The NDIS has been the most exciting piece of social change legislation since Medicare, with the potential to transform lives. It is pioneering innovation in helping people with disability. It has been challenging, but it is a journey towards a fairer, more just society.”

The Hon. Ray Williams, NSW Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Disability Services, and also responsible for Youth and Volunteering, Member for Castle Hill, acknowledged The Benevolent Society's 205 year history and its commitment to helping people. Additionally, he said that he was proud NSW was the first state to sign up to the NDIS, with close to 80,000 people transitioning to the scheme, toward a total of 100,000 people, likely by 30 June.

"As Minister for Disability Services, I spend my time looking for employment opportunities for people with disability including within government. We're behind the private sector but hope to double the number of people with disability working in government in the future. We want employers to look at people with disability and see what they can do, not what they can't do."

The federal Member for North Sydney and Chair of Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport, Trent Zimmerman MP, also addressed the audience and welcomed The Benevolent Society to Chatswood, part of his electorate.

Linda Barach, Manager, Macquarie University's PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) program in which students contribute to the partner organisations like The Benevolent Society and the community it serves while gaining valuable industry experience and skills. Students in PACE work with The Benevolent Society's Fostering Young Lives (FYL). Wayne Warburton, a psychology professor at Macquarie University, discussed the close partnership that the two organisations have and how beneficial it is for everyone.

Also attending were the Mayor of Mosman Council Carolyn Corrigan; the Mayor of Lane Cove Council Pam Palmer; Carol Sinclair, Manager, Community Services, Lane Cove Council; Eric Poulos, Community Worker, North Sydney Council; Michael Cashin, Willoughby Council; and Marjorie Janz, Disability Information Officer, Northern Beaches Council.

-ends-

For interviews, please contact:

Melanie King, Manager Media Relations & Public Affairs, The Benevolent Society

02 8262 3547 or 0414 341 328

Melanie.king@benevolent.org.au

About The Benevolent Society

The Benevolent Society is Australia's first charity, working as a catalyst for social justice and change for over 200 years. Founded in 1813, The Benevolent Society advocates for a better life for all Australians, and provides in-home services for older Australians, and people with disability, as well as providing programs in Family support and early intervention. We help people age well and live their best lives, staying in their homes wherever possible.

For more information, please visit www.benevolent.org.au, on Facebook/thebenevolentsociety or on Twitter - @BenevolentAU