

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Benevolent Society launches In Sync to help children with disability play, connect and grow

[The Benevolent Society](#) (Benevolent) has introduced a new early intervention program to support children with a disability and their families in New South Wales and South Australia. Based on proven support delivered through Benevolent's Early Supports program in Queensland, the [In Sync](#) program recognises that a child's greatest asset is their relationship with their parents/caregivers.

Over three to six months, practitioners help parents/caregivers learn how to implement useful strategies and techniques that families can integrate into their daily routines. Sessions are play-based, leveraging the parent / caregiver and child relationship to target the specific needs and goals of the child and can help build a child's vocabulary, manage behaviour or sensory challenges, recognise cues and support them with development milestones.

Jeremy Halcrow, Benevolent's Executive Director, Disability, Ageing, Carers & Business Development, said: "Through our work in the Early Supports Program, we could see that the therapies to assist children who had missed key milestones were more effective when supported by a parent's relationship with their child.

"To test the efficacy of this approach more broadly we took a research and development approach to pioneering a new intervention. In Sync aims to strengthen parents' responsiveness to their child's unique cues, so they can interact with them in ways that support their development."

The program combines the clinical [research](#) work of Benevolent's Consultant Occupational Therapist [Dr Jacqui Barfoot](#) and Psychologist Dr John Callanan, which identifies children learn and grow best within their natural environments and are more receptive to learning through play-based activities with their parents/caregivers.

"When we work with parents in ways that strengthen their interactions with their child through these play settings, children get many more opportunities to practice their skills across their routine at home with their parents' help, compared to when a therapist interacts with a child in sessions," Dr Barfoot says.

"Strengthening these parent child interactions helps create a strong platform for development that often makes it easier to try other things that will support a child's development."

Families supported through The Benevolent Society's In Sync program have reported significant improvements in goals for their children after three to six months of therapy. Children like [six-year-old Quinn from Adelaide](#) are reaping the benefits of the program with his mother Jill stating she has seen so much improvement in his interaction with peers and family.

Eden Diggle, Occupational Therapist and Benevolent's Project Implementation Lead, says: "We work to harness the power of the parent, caregiver, and child relationship to achieve functional gains. We have found this model not only helps children learn and reach their developmental goals, it also builds the capacity of the family to continue to support their child in real-life settings as they grow."

The program is tailored to children aged 0-7 years who have a NDIS Plan under Developmental Delay. If individuals don't have this funding, they are welcome to contact Benevolent for support.

Sessions are provided for three to six months however if further access to support is required, we will work with the parents/caregivers to ensure support is available. The In Sync program is available in South Australia (Melrose Park, Elizabeth Vale and Port Pirie) and NSW (Tamworth and the Illawarra region) with the potential to expand in other locations.

For more information, fill out the [referral form](#) or contact The Benevolent Society on 1800 236 762 and visit benevolent.org.au

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About The Benevolent Society

The Benevolent Society, operating since 1813, provides integrated support services to children, young people and families, older Australians, people with disability and carers. It has more than 1,000 people-first practitioners working to help people live their life, their way. As one of Australia's first charitable organisations, The Benevolent Society has pioneered positive social change and uses its practice wisdom to advocate for a just, caring society. Visit benevolent.org.au for more information.

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