

MEDIA RELEASE

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TOWNSVILLE AUTISM CENTRE EXPANSION CONSTRUCTION COMMENCES ON EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICE

AEIOU Foundation will expand the reach of its leading autism early intervention services in Townsville with the construction of a new purpose-built centre at Idalia, made possible with funding from the Australian Government and Queensland governments.

The new facility, replacing an existing leased centre in Kirwan from mid-2024, will feature an additional classroom, state-of-the-art therapy rooms and a dedicated parent education room, enabling AEIOU to expand its reach and support more local children with an autism diagnosis.

The Australian Government committed \$2 million to the project's construction, and the Queensland Government dedicated a further \$1 million towards the \$5.6 million development. AEIOU CEO Alan Smith said private philanthropy and community fundraising has been essential, with cost-of-construction doubling in recent years.

Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services Stephen Jones, representing the Australian Government at a sod turning event on Wednesday, 12 July, said breaking ground at the site marked a significant milestone for families in Townsville.

"AEIOU plays a vital role in the community here, and it's fantastic to support young children through this new facility," Mr Jones said. "It will improve AEIOU's capacity to meet the needs of local children now and into the future, extending their reach to more children and families."

Acting Premier Steven Miles said the Queensland Government invested funding for the project through the Resources Community Infrastructure Fund (RCIF), which was created to improve economic and social infrastructure in resources communities and to support jobs and boost the economy.

"This project will ensure children in regional Queensland receive the best education and care opportunities to support their growth and development," Mr Miles said.

State Member for Mundingburra Les Walker said a new purpose-built early intervention and learning centre would be a great addition for families and children with autism in North Queensland.

"The Queensland Government is proud to invest in our young people and in this excellent new center that will provide so much for the Townsville Community.

"We're investing an additional \$120 million through RCIF to support the construction of more infrastructure in resource communities."

AEIOU CEO Alan Smith said the new centre was designed by the esteemed Buchan Group and would be constructed by Hutchinson Builders.

"Our team in Townsville have delivered a high-quality service here in Townsville for 15 years, working around the limitations of an aged building which is not fit for purpose. The need for a purpose-built facility

has been acknowledged for many years, and it is very exciting to see this project come to fruition for Townsville children, families and staff,” Mr Smith said.

“This result is a true collaborative effort, with funding from state and federal governments, backing from philanthropic partners, our own fundraising efforts, and support from partners like Buchan Group and Hutchinson Builders.

“We’re thrilled that it is now becoming a reality with today’s sod turning.”

The new AEIOU Centre in Idalia is expected to be completed in mid-2024.

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