

MEDIA RELEASE

8th MARCH 2021

PARENTS DELIGHTED BY GENEROUS FUNDRAISING EFFORTS OF LOCAL COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT TOOWOOMBA AUTISM CENTRE

Families from across Toowoomba will walk, run and race on Sunday 21st March to help raise awareness for children living with Autism and to raise funds for AEIOU Foundation in Toowoomba.

Hundreds of locals are expected to don their brightest pink and blue workout gear for the annual 'Take A Hike' event which will be hosted at Toowoomba Grammar School for the first time.

For local nurse Tamara Blackey and Antony's Bakery and Patisserie owner Tony Blackey the generous efforts of the community – which have so far beat fundraising expectations – go a very long way.

"Our son Ethan was diagnosed with non-verbal autism at two and a half years old. We needed to access so many different specialist from speech therapy and occupational therapy to behaviour therapy which is very difficult in Toowoomba given the shortage of specialists here," said Mrs Blackey.

"Thanks to AEIOU we were able to access all of those critical professionals needed for early intervention in one spot, which enabled Ethan to have a team of specialists who can all communicate and work together towards his goals.

"Without AEIOU, Ethan wouldn't have had the life skills which enable him to have a bright future. To access world-class support right here in Toowoomba has been life-changing for Ethan and our family. Since joining the Foundation, we've noticed positive changes in Ethan's social and communication skills, and his general behaviour – it's extremely encouraging to see.

"What makes Ethan's experience even more special is seeing how generous the community has been to support children and families in our community. We've nearly reached our fundraising goal, as have many of the other families at the centre."

Helping to fundraise and participate are students from Toowoomba Grammar School's Mackintosh House. Mr Andrew McKinnon, Head of Mackintosh House said the school was proud to support the community event for the past three years but are particularly delighted to host it in 2021.

“Not only are students raising funds for a great local cause but they’re becoming active members of our community by making the event happen. On the day, students will be on the ground ushering participants – making sure things go smoothly, participating and most rewarding of all, engaging with AEIOU learners, their families and the Toowoomba community,” said Mr McKinnon.

AEIOU Foundation Toowoomba Centre Manager, Sandy Peachey said the first fundraising event of the year for the Foundation would help purchase play equipment and educational tools to enable the team of specialists to provide the best support for local children and families.

“Every cent raised through ‘Take A Hike’ will be used by our centre to help deliver life changing programs, to help children like Ethan in their early childhood developmental stage,” said Mrs Peachey.

After participating on the day, participants and families are encouraged to stay and enjoy a fun afternoon of activities including a sausage sizzle by Wilsonton Lions Club, jumping castle, face painting and more!

- ENDS -

For further information, images or to coordinate an interview please contact:

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Take A Hike – Toowoomba event details:

- **Where:** Toowoomba Grammar School 24 Margaret Street, East Toowoomba
- **When:** Sunday 21 March 2021
- **Time:** 10km: 7.30am for a 8.00am start; 5km: 8.30am for a 9.00am start; 1km: 10.15am for a 10.30am start (for children under the age of 10 years only).
- **Registration:** <https://supportus.aeiou.org.au/events/10/take-a-hike-toowoomba>

About AEIOU Foundation:

AEIOU Foundation is a leading provider of early intervention for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Foundation provides evidence-based therapy and education which is family-focused and supports children to reach their individual goals, gain vital independence and achieve their full potential.

Operating from 10 locations, AEIOU enrolls children aged 2 to 6 years.

For more information about AEIOU Foundation visit www.aeiou.org.au.