

Let's get Gympie's kids ready for school

Child therapy services in Gympie have received a \$120,000 funding boost to kick off the new school year.

Debbie Blumel, CEO for Children's Therapy Centre said families in Gympie would be able to access free therapy sessions for developmentally vulnerable children.

"If parents, child care providers, GPs or specialists have any concerns about how a child is developing they can refer them to our services for an assessment and free therapy sessions.

"Referrals can be made to the Children's Therapy Centre by parents, doctors, child health nurses, child care centres or anyone else by phoning the centre coordinator on (07) 5349 2020.

"When children are between the age of three and a half and five years old, they are at a crucial stage in their development and any interventions have a significant impact.

"Children who are having difficulty with key areas of their development can really struggle when it comes to moving into a full-time learning environment like that first year of school," she said.

"When we talk about developmental issues we are looking at things like physical coordination or the ability to communicate, learn and solve problems."

Pattie Hudson, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN's Chief Executive Officer said the program, funded by the Federal government through the PHN, would give Gympie kids a step up.

"Early childhood development is a crucial step towards the ability of children to be engaged in full-time education and we know this has an impact on their long term health.

"Investing in early development is a great way to support families in the community who need the most help."

Mrs Hudson said that out of all the areas in the PHN region, Gympie had the highest percentage of children who were assessed as developmentally vulnerable in two or more AEDC domains.

Across Queensland, almost 14% of children are developmentally vulnerable, however in Gympie over 17% are at risk of not being ready for full-time school.

"The community feedback has been really positive and we are really pleased to be able to direct Australian Government funding into programs and services that are going to have the greatest impact and meet local needs," she said.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) outlines five key areas of childhood development, these are:

- physical health and wellbeing;
- social competence;
- emotional maturity;
- language and cognitive skills (school-based); and
- communication skills and general knowledge.

This program has been funded by Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN, which is an initiative of the Australian Government.

ENDS

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Matt Norman with the Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN via mnorman@ourphn.org.au or 0434 849 878