



## Early autism intervention essential to give children the best start in life

Embargoed until 12.05 am on Wednesday 2 April

**On World Autism Awareness Day (2 April 2025), the President of the Australian Medical Association in South Australia (AMA SA) Dr John Williams is highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and intervention.**

More than 15,000 people across all ages have received a diagnosis of autism in South Australia according to data compiled by Autism SA.

But recent research suggests that many children are being diagnosed much later than is ideal.

'Early identification of autism is vital to give kids the best start in life and help them understand their strengths and meet their potential,' Dr Williams says.

'Delays in receiving a timely diagnostic assessment can lead to missed opportunities for early intervention, potentially impacting social, emotional, learning and behavioural development.'

Autism is a neurological developmental difference that impacts the way an Autistic person sees, experiences, understands and responds to the world.

It can be reliably identified at two years of age, but the average age of diagnosis in Australia is between five and 14.

'Identifying autism often requires a lengthy and rigorous assessment process. It's clear from this data that too many young people are not being diagnosed as early as possible,' Dr Williams says.

'The sooner a child can be diagnosed with autism, the sooner they can be referred to a range of services that are tailored to meet their unique needs.'

Dr Williams is a member of the South Australian Government's recently formed Autism Assessment and Diagnosis Advisory Group which is led by Minister for Autism Emily Bourke. The group is examining opportunities to break down barriers for autism assessment and diagnosis.

'AMA SA is the only organisation that represents all South Australian doctors and it's a privilege to represent our members and their patients in this nation-leading group,' Dr Williams says.

'Together, we're working to ensure individuals and families can access diagnostic assessments, treatment and support in a timely manner.'

'I thank Minister Bourke, and the other advisory group members, for their commitment to helping all children reach their potential.'

**For interview requests please contact Media Advisor Ben Terry on 0478 847 604.**

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