

MEDIA RELEASE

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Thriving Kids a chance to change the story for children with autism and developmental delay

William Campbell Foundation has welcomed the potential of the Federal Government's new Thriving Kids Initiative to improve outcomes for children with developmental delay and autism - but is urging government to ensure no family is left without support as changes to the NDIS take effect.

In its submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry, William Campbell Foundation said Thriving Kids could transform how children are identified and supported, particularly if services are embedded in trusted community and education settings. But the organisation cautioned that poor design, underfunding, or lack of continuity could undermine the program before it begins.

"Thriving Kids is a positive step that could change the trajectory for thousands of children," said Sonia Liddicoat, CEO of William Campbell Foundation.

"But it must be designed with equity and continuity in mind. Families cannot afford gaps in support, particularly if children with autism are moved out of the NDIS before Thriving Kids is fully operational."

WCF's submission highlights five priorities for government:

- Guarantee no service gaps for children moved out of the NDIS.
- Fund free and timely assessments through schools and community services.
- Resource trusted community organisations like William Campbell Foundation as delivery partners.
- Invest in workforce so regional families can access supports.
- Partner with Aboriginal and CALD organisations to embed cultural safety.

As both a community-based organisation and a provider of social services - including foster care, family preservation, and its specialist school, William Campbell College - the Foundation sees daily how delayed diagnosis and missed early intervention affect children and families. "We know that when developmental needs are identified early, children have a far better chance of success at home and at school," said Ms Liddicoat.

"Thriving Kids can help make that happen - but only if government works with community organisations to deliver it in a way that is practical, accessible, and built for the families who need it most."

In the Illawarra-Shoalhaven, WCF has already seen the cost of delay, with children entering William Campbell College after years of exclusion from mainstream schooling. The organisation believes Thriving Kids is a chance to change that story.

William Campbell Foundation is calling on government to seize this opportunity to create a program that delivers lasting change, not a short-term fix. With the right design and funding, Thriving Kids could give children with autism and developmental delay the support they need, when they need it, and ensure no child is left behind.

About William Campbell Foundation

William Campbell Foundation is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation committed to empowering children, young people, individuals, and families across the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. Through we provide trauma-informed, culturally responsive services that promote safety, healing, inclusion, and opportunity. Our programs span disability support, out-of-home care, education, and clinical services - creating real and lasting change for those who need it most.

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