NDIS supports innovative efforts to support babies with early signs of autism to thrive

20 February 2024

Minister for the NDIS, Bill Shorten, and WA Minister for Health, Amber-Jade Sanderson, visited Inklings, an innovative early intervention program funded for $13.8 million by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

Based on world-leading research, Inklings supports babies aged 6-18 months who are showing early differences in their social and communication skills.

Inklings, a partnership between the NDIA, Telethon Kids, Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) and WA Country Health Service, will run for three years and involve 700 families from across Western Australia.

Early evidence from Inklings demonstrates that earlier intervention can lead to better outcomes for infants and families.

Minister Shorten welcomed the partnership as a step in the right direction for early intervention supports for Australian children.

“The NDIA is thrilled to partner with Inklings, which has seen great results for the children who took part throughout trial. It showcases the NDIA’s commitment to make sure children get the best support they need, informed by best research and practice,” Minister Shorten said.

“While the NDIS is and will always be there for those who need it, including children with autism, Inklings allows parents and carers to do vital early engagement with the guidance of a trained practitioner, to learn strategies to build on their own strengths as a responsive communication partner for their baby.”

The Inklings Pilot has already greatly improved the life of people like Brittany, mother to 10-month-old Addie.

“Inklings has given me so much insight into Addie’s communication and as a result, I am better able to understand her and see just how social she really is. I feel very lucky to be a part of the Inklings Program pilot and have found it very beneficial, especially as I am a first-time mum,” Brittany said.

Inklings is in line with recommendations from the NDIS Review, including early supports for children with emerging developmental concerns and child development checks.

Minister Shorten noted this is one of range of innovations being undertaken by the Australian Government.

“We are aiming to ensure our participants and all Australians with disability are well supported,” Minister Shorten said.

The program, along with the recent announcements on the introduction of the Provider Registration Taskforce and a crackdown on fraud, is part of the NDIS commitment to ensure every dollar is well spent on people with disabilities.

For more information on the Inklings Program, please visit their website.

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