

STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER — SPECIALIST LEARNING PROGRAM

Statement by Minister for Education and Training

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Education and Training) [2.05 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house that an additional seven schools will receive a specialist learning program for students with autism spectrum disorder from 2019. Coo롱gup Primary School, Alkimos Primary School, North Mandurah Primary School and Eaton Community College will deliver the program from 2019. Additionally, existing secondary autism extension programs at Ashdale Secondary College, Ocean Reef Senior High School and Fremantle College will be enhanced with additional resources and capacity to provide for an increased number of students. A further three secondary schools, Baldivis Secondary College, Butler north senior high school—planning name only—and Coodanup College, will offer the program from 2020.

The program provides specialist and intensive support to students with autism who have the intellectual capacity to learn the mainstream curriculum, but who have specific social and emotional development needs. Each primary school selected to offer the program is in close proximity to one of the selected secondary schools, providing students with a seamless kindergarten to year 12 program if required. Some classrooms in these schools will be adapted to meet student needs, and specialist teachers will provide individual education and support plans for each student based on the best-known teaching techniques. A total of \$32 million is being invested in the 16 programs, which are being rolled out from 2016 to 2020. The program is currently in place in six schools, which are already reporting high attendance rates and positive feedback from parents, particularly regarding reduction in their child's level of anxiety and increases in their verbal communication.