Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie  
Deputy Leader of The Nationals  
Minister for Rural Health  
Minister for Sport  
Minister for Regional Communications

Llew O’Brien MP  
Federal Member for Wide Bay

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New service for young children in Gympie

Local families will benefit from a new $120,000 service providing multidisciplinary early intervention to young children in Gympie who are at risk of falling behind in their development.

Federal Member for Wide Bay Llew O’Brien and Minister for Rural Health Senator Bridget McKenzie announced the new service in Gympie today.

“The Children’s Therapy Centre in Gympie will provide this great new service to children in the area,” Mr O’Brien said.

“The Turnbull Joyce Government is funding this service through the Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast Primary Health Network (PHN).”

Minister McKenzie said young kids aged 3.5 to 5 years will now be able to access services locally if they have identified behavioural and developmental issues.

“Parents, GPs, paediatricians, kindergarten teachers and others can all make referrals for services like physiotherapy, speech and language pathology and occupational therapy,” Minister McKenzie said.

The Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN identified the need for a new therapy service in Gympie because of its relatively high rate of developmentally vulnerable children compared to Queensland as a whole – 17% of children in Gympie compared to 13% in the rest of the state.
Federal Member for Wide Bay Llew O'Brien said the new service would help young children to develop skills and prepare for full-time school.

“The service will be particularly beneficial for vulnerable children in parts of the Gympie local government area which don’t have early intervention services.”

The therapy centre will provide free services to children who are rated vulnerable on two or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census. Teachers rate children in five key areas of early childhood development:

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

“This initiative is a great example of the work being done by PHNs across Australia to identify local health issues and improve outcomes,” Mr O'Brien said.

“From more services for children’s development, to more mental health services for Indigenous people or support for mature aged people to lose weight, PHNs are making a real difference to individuals, families and communities.”

Minister McKenzie said PHNs are vital for helping rural and regional communities who do not have the same access to a range of health services as people in the major cities.

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