

The Team

- On occasion an intelligence or developmental assessment. Where this is not readily available and, if it is required, options for completion of this include being done within this team, through Early Intervention Services, where applicable, or privately with partial Medicare rebate.
- At the end of the first session with the Paediatrician it may be decided that this service is not the optimal one for your child. If that is the case alternative services will be discussed and we will facilitate access to the appropriate other service. It is envisaged that this will occur very infrequently.
- The formal report will be provided on payment of fee. We are very aware of the urgency that exists in the receipt of a formal diagnostic report. If for any reason the full report is to be delayed an interim report sufficient to meet the needs of Autism Victoria, and Medicare will be provided within three weeks of the second Paediatrician appointment.
- Cost for Assessment & Report - \$450

Thank you for choosing the Bendigo Early diagnosis Autism assessment & Referral Service for your child. We look forward to meeting you.

Dr Ken Armstrong

Ken is a Paediatrician who has specialised in Developmental/Behavioural Paediatrics for over the 30 years. He has a special interest in Autism Spectrum Disorders. He has published more than 60 papers in International and National Scientific journals, and been the primary speaker at National and International conferences. Dr Armstrong is a Churchill Fellow and has achieved many awards including the Australian Violence Prevention award, the Queensland Child Protection award, and a Rotary International award for research.

Ms Donna Morgan

Donna is a Psychologist who has experience in working with children and families in both agency and private practice settings, providing support in the areas of developmental delay, disability, autism assessment and treatment and mental health.

Ms Julie Gillin

Julie is a Speech Pathologist, and a member of Speech Pathology Australia. She has thirty years experience in Early Intervention, working in schools, specialising in assessment and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, and has also been in private practice for the past 2 years.

Ms Kim Revell

Kim is a Social Worker who has experience in working with children in both health agency and school settings, providing support in the areas of Autism, behavioural difficulties, social skill education and developmental delay.

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BEARS

**Bendigo Early diagnosis
Autism assessment &
Referral Service**

**A GUIDE FOR PARENTS
AND CAREGIVERS**

The BEARS Clinic provides a multidisciplinary comprehensive and timely assessment of children and youth with developmental concerns. The service specifically determines whether the individual has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The category of Autism Spectrum Disorder (Autistic Disorder, High Functioning Autistic Disorder, Asperger Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Delay- Not Otherwise Specified) is delineated. Where the individual is deemed not to have an ASD, alternative diagnoses may be made.

On the basis of the assessment a comprehensive report along with recommendations for parents/care providers, early intervention or educational service providers will be made.

- If you have concerns your child may have an autism spectrum disorder there are a multiplicity of reasons to have this professionally assessed. At the very least an assessment will aid in understanding the unique features of your child and help in guiding the best intervention for your child through their life course.
- Autism spectrum disorder diagnosis is a complex task that needs to be undertaken by professionals specifically qualified and highly experienced in this field.
- A multidisciplinary assessment (more than one individual, each representing different disciplines, eg Paediatrician, Speech & Language Pathologist, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Early Education Specialist, Child Psychiatrist, is the 'gold standard' of diagnosis. A Paediatrician or Child Psychiatrist has to be part of the team to enable access to autism funding at State & Federal level.

- Access to services following a diagnostic assessment is determined by the how and by whom the diagnosis is made as much as by the diagnosis itself.
- The Department of Education & Early Childhood Development will not consider extra funding and support unless the diagnosis is made by a multidisciplinary team which must include a Paediatrician or Child Psychiatrist, & Cognitive (intellectual/developmental) assessment, Language assessment, and Adaptive behaviour assessment must form part of the assessment.
- Access to Federal Government Autism Disorder specific funding requires a diagnosis being confirmed by a Paediatrician or Child Psychiatrist. Diagnoses made in isolation by other specialist (eg Psychologists) does not allow for access to these funding streams. Similarly if the diagnosis is made in isolation by any professional it will not be accepted for school based funding.
- The diagnostic report required to access services needs to be a comprehensive one and based on the use of specific diagnostic tools.
- There are an array of individual professionals and a few teams offering diagnostic assessments in Victoria. Autism Victoria can provide a comprehensive list. The cost of assessments provided varies substantially.
- Generally it is ideal to have a multidisciplinary assessment that is affordable and can be provided in a timely manner.

As part of our assessment process we require:

- A referral from your GP to Dr Ken Armstrong, stating 'for autism assessment & intervention as required'. There will generally be two appointments with the paediatrician, an initial information gathering and general health assessment which also may include blood and urine investigations.

Initial consultation

- Where the parent has a pension or health care card - \$20
- Where the parent does not have a pension or health care card - \$60
- Hearing assessment. This can be arranged by you GP or will be arranged at the time of the initial health assessment.
- An information form 'Bendigo Early diagnosis Autism assessment & Referral Service (BEARS) - Assessment Inventory' which is attached (or has already been given to you)
- Developmental Behaviour Checklists completed by yourselves. These forms are enclosed, or have already been provided to you.
- A speech and language assessment. Where this is not readily accessible we can facilitate this either through Early Intervention Services, where applicable, or through private practitioners under a system which is partially funded by Medicare.