

MEDIA RELEASE  
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## **NEW RESEARCH REVEALS COST BENEFIT OF AUTISM-SPECIFIC EARLY INTERVENTION**

Every dollar invested into autism-specific early intervention results in a societal return of \$6.16 to the community, and from that, a direct cost saving of \$4.58 to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), according to new research commissioned by AEIOU Foundation.

AEIOU Founder and Patron A/Prof James Morton said the 'real world' data released on Wednesday 22 March sheds new light on developmental gains made by children, quality of life and improved social and economic participation from both individuals as they grow and their families.

"More than an academic study, this is a live, working repository unlike any other in Australia, with longitudinal research relating to 855 children. It outlines demographic information, clinical assessments and parental wellbeing. Among many questions, we asked: 'Is the AEIOU model of benefit to the individual, to families, to society, and does it contribute to the sustainability of the NDIS?', and the answer is a resounding 'yes'," A/Prof Morton said.

AEIOU Head of Research Ashleigh Bullock said the data relates to a cohort of children with highly complex needs. "Our data shows us children at AEIOU, even when presenting with elevated levels of difficulty, make very significant gains, catching up from their developmental delays at rates over and above what would be expected for a typically developing child."

"One in three families at AEIOU is Culturally or Linguistically Diverse. In addition, 8% of the cohort identify as First Nations, yet there is very little literature or resources on how to best support this cohort of children and their families in an early education setting.

"We have approached Indigenous Studies departments about using mixed methods to design longitudinal data and qualitative interviews to understand how First Nations People view autism, how autistic children and families want to be supported, and how to work together to achieve the best educational and clinical outcomes for these children," Dr Bullock said.

Children at AEIOU make gains in functional communication, fine and gross motor skills, and independent living skills. On average, children commence after they have turned three, with 17% toilet trained. Upon completion of the program, 81% of children are fully toilet trained.

A/Prof Morton said the research can be applied to other evidence-based, intensive early intervention settings. "What this really does is shed new light on a cohort of children that is otherwise not well understood or represented in our community. It also highlights the importance of continued investment in early intervention services."

AEIOU's digital data portal initiative is comprehensively analysing standardised testing results of 855 children enrolled at AEIOU over the past eight years.

"The portal captures standardised and clinical assessments of children on entry and annually, along with details on child goals and gains in real-time."

“AEIOU is excited to work with government and other stakeholders to leverage this rich information for the benefit of autistic children and their families,” A/Prof Morton said.

The independent cost benefit analysis of AEIOU’s program, undertaken by Synergy Economics Consulting, showed intensive early intervention programs like AEIOU’s equate to savings of approximately \$297,000 per child over the child's lifetime.

Synergies Consulting economist Daniel Culpitt said the study shows the trajectory of children’s lives changed dramatically at AEIOU, resulting in significant implications not only for their own lives into the future, but on their families as well.

“Children were categorised into ‘severity’ levels, based on their entry assessment at AEIOU, and then mapped this data to the NDIS expenditure to the trajectory of children with the same difficulties and severity levels. This was cross referenced.

“For every dollar that comes in here, more than \$6 is saved for the community. We've never seen a cost benefit that has such a significant ratio,” Mr Culpitt said.

These breakthrough findings demonstrate the significant and lasting impact on the lives of intensive early intervention autistic children, their families, and wider society.

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**About AEIOU Foundation:**

AEIOU Foundation is a leading provider of early intervention for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Foundation provides evidence-based therapy and education which is family-focused and supports children to reach their individual goals, gain vital independence and achieve their full potential.

Operating from 11 locations, AEIOU enrolls children aged 2 to 6 years.

For more information about AEIOU Foundation visit [www.aeiou.org.au](http://www.aeiou.org.au)

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