



MEDIA RELEASE

26 November 2008

Senses throws Abbey a lifeline

Without the support of Senses Foundation, life wouldn't be the same for little Abbey Hrabar, of Ballajura.

The two-and-a-half-year-old probably wouldn't be learning to walk, talk and play, and it would be highly unlikely she'd ever attend mainstream school.

Instead, thanks to a raft of specialist services provided through Senses' Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program, her parents Natasha and Ward are planning for her to attend kindergarten in 2010 and are hopeful she will lead a full and independent life.

Abbey was born with an underdeveloped corpus callosum, which is the 'bridge' that transfers messages between the left and right sides of the brain.

The side effects of this condition can vary, but in Abbey's case they include epilepsy, vision impairment and global development delays.

For the first year of Abbey's life the Hrabars spent endless hours ferrying Abbey to Princess Margaret Hospital for therapy services and other specialist appointments.

However, since just after Abbey's first birthday, Senses has been providing most of her therapy services in the family home.

Once a week a physiotherapist guides Abbey through strengthening exercises to help her learn to crawl and walk while an occupational therapist plays with Abbey to help her develop her fine motor skills. Abbey also has regular sessions with a speech therapist to improve her communication skills.

"Abbey just loves their visits and she has come along so much since they started," says Natasha.

"Senses has been wonderful to us...they are pretty much like our second family. You can call them any time with questions and they always try to help."

Senses also helped the Hrabars secure special disability funding for a new walker to help Abbey get around with some independence.

Senses Foundation was formed in 2001 when the Royal WA Institute for the Blind - one of WA's oldest charities - amalgamated with the WA Deafblind Association.

It is now WA's primary advocate and service provider for people who are deafblind or blind with additional disabilities, providing highly specialised programs and services to improve communication, socialisation, mobility and quality of life for both adults and children.

The ECI program provides therapy services to preschool children who have vision impairment with another significant disability, or who are deafblind, in their own home.

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