



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Early childhood intervention team recognised for excellence**

Burswood-based not-for-profit organisation, Senses Foundation, has been recognised for its highly successful early childhood intervention program.

Last week, Senses was presented with a 2009 Excellence Award by the WA chapter of Early Childhood Intervention Australia.

In presenting the award, Early Childhood Intervention Australia (WA Chapter) described Senses as “an organisation which has made a significant contribution to services for young children with disabilities and their families by developing innovative services, evaluating their service and demonstrating positive outcomes and achieving significant improvement in the skill level of practitioners.”

Senses' Early Childhood Intervention team includes Specialist Services Manager Matthew Wittorff, social worker Karen Wickham, speech pathologists Melanie Robartson and Voon Pang, physiotherapists Melissa Evans and Holly Coopes and Occupational Therapist Fiona Kemp.

Matthew says children who are deafblind or vision impaired with additional disabilities have very individual needs, as many have multiple disabilities as well as sensory impairment.

“Senses has developed a service that helps these children develop to their full potential as well as supporting their families through our Family Leadership Program and Sibling Support Group,” he says.

“Our new playgroup has also had a very positive impact on families. In terms 1 and 4 we run the HydroActive playgroup, which is all about water-based therapy and fun, and in Terms 2 and 3 the Little Explorers group provides an alternative during the cooler months.

“The playgroup is open to all our early intervention families as well as those on our waiting list. Parents have access to the multidisciplinary team while attending the group and can focus on their child's developmental priorities. They also have the opportunity to socialise with others in similar circumstances to themselves, which has proven to be a very important benefit of this group.”

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

Senses Foundation provides services to people with disabilities and ~~it is now~~ WA's primary advocate and service provider for people who are deafblind ~~or vision impaired 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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