



PRESS RELEASE

DATE: 24/03/2016 CONTACT: Danielle Blewett PHONE: 0400642794

Launceston's first autism specific playgroup will continue during 2016 at StGiles.

The REEL (Relationships that Enrich Emotions for Learning) playgroup was piloted last year with a grant from the MyState Foundation.

REEL uses multi-disciplinary therapy teams working with no more than six children per two-hour session.

“It helps rewire the brain. It doesn't make autism go away, but gee, it helps with outcomes,” StGiles behaviour support and REEL co-ordinator Pam Johns said.

“The program aims to teach children with autism how to play so they can go to school and learn,” she said.

Last year four groups of six children participated in REEL as preparation for the 2016 school year.

“There is strong evidence that the REEL multidisciplinary approach helps children with autism learn to think, problem solve and begin to reason in a group environment,” Mrs Johns said.

Each group of six children has a high staff to child ratio with its own speech pathologist, occupational therapist and behaviour support person.

Before the playgroup starts the children participate in an individual session to allow StGiles therapists to meet the family and explain how REEL works.

“We show parents ways to understand their child's unique developmental differences and develop home programs for play. They also learn how to extend their child's ability to regulate their behaviours through play and we celebrate successful engagement with shared attention and circles of communication,” Mrs Johns said.

REEL uses a recognised, structured approach to play called DIRFloortime (Development Individual differences and Relationships).

Using Floortime REEL aims to help children reach six developmental milestones crucial for emotional and intellectual growth. They are:

- Self-regulation and interest in the world
- Intimacy, or engagement in human relations
- Two-way communication
- Complex communication
- Emotional ideas
- Emotional thinking

The REEL sessions are each two hours between 9.30am and 11.30am once a week during school term. You can learn more about REEL from PamJohns@stgiles.org.au

Caption: Left to right (pic Scott Gelston) (pic hasn't previously been used in The Examiner)



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REEL Playgroup graduates of 2015 - Luana (Luana) Moses, Jake Mitchell and Lucas Horner.