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Thriving Kids Scheme Faces Rights Backlash

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The federal government has announced the \$2 billion “Thriving Kids” initiative, aimed at providing targeted support for children with mild to moderate developmental needs outside of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Officials state the program is designed to reduce pressure on the NDIS while ensuring services are delivered more efficiently.

The program will transition children with mild to moderate developmental needs to school- and community-based support services. Government materials indicate that this approach is intended to focus NDIS resources on individuals with higher or more complex needs, maintaining long-term sustainability.

Shantelle Marks, founder of Hope in Colour Advocacy, highlighted concerns about consistency in care for children with autism. While advocacy groups emphasize the importance of ongoing support, the government has confirmed that all children in the program will continue to receive services tailored to their developmental needs.

The initiative has been developed in consultation with education and healthcare providers, and aims to integrate supports within local schools and early learning services. Officials say

that this integration will streamline delivery and allow families to access therapy and developmental programs closer to home.

Funding arrangements will provide \$2 billion over the next several years, with priority given to programs that meet defined developmental milestones. The program is intended to complement, not replace, existing NDIS services, ensuring children with complex or high-needs cases continue to receive comprehensive support.

State and territory governments will be responsible for implementing services at the local level. The program also incorporates measures to coordinate with existing disability and health services, including therapy providers, schools, and community-based programs.

Government officials have emphasized that the Thriving Kids scheme is designed to maintain continuity of care while enhancing efficiency. According to official statements, the program will monitor outcomes through performance reporting and regular assessments to ensure children receive appropriate and consistent support.

The federal government asserts that the initiative reflects a targeted, evidence-based approach to developmental services, aiming to balance sustainability with quality care. Program implementation will include consultation with local service providers and oversight mechanisms to track progress and maintain accountability.

Families will continue to have access to assessment and therapy services appropriate to each child's developmental needs. Officials state that the program provides clear pathways for support while allowing for flexibility based on individual circumstances, including location, available services, and specific developmental requirements.

The government has committed to reviewing the program regularly, with an emphasis on ensuring equitable access and outcomes for all participating children. Measures include regular reporting, coordination between federal and state services, and ongoing evaluation to identify and address gaps in service delivery.

By streamlining services and targeting resources, the Thriving Kids initiative seeks to optimize outcomes for children with mild to moderate developmental needs, while preserving NDIS capacity for higher-need participants. Officials stress that the program's design is intended to support both children and families effectively, promoting sustainable, accessible developmental support across Australia.