



## Parliamentary Friends of Autism

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:00AM 17 OCTOBER 2019**

### ***Parliamentary Friendship Group of Autism Arrives in the House***

The inaugural Parliamentary Friends of Autism was launched in Parliament House today with a morning tea celebrating the occasion sponsored by Autism CRC.

Co-Chaired by Hollie Hughes, Liberal Senator for NSW and Milton Dick MP, Federal Member for Oxley, this friendship group aims to promote the importance of autism acceptance and inclusion and will also provide:

- Access to meet adults on the spectrum and hear first-hand experience;
- Provide accurate and up to date information from those working in the area;
- Discuss key issues that are important to the autism community.

Opening the event, Senator Hughes said this was personally a very big moment for her, “As the mum of a son with autism, who is here today, and as an elected member of Parliament, to be able to create a platform like this for our autism community is incredible.

With this friendship group, we intend to educate members of Parliament and the wider community about barriers for those living with autism as well as the issues their families face as an unintended consequence. And how we can make everything more accessible and streamlined to better support all of the families with autistic members in Australia” Senator Hughes said.

The keynote speakers, Mike Tozer from Xceptional and Laura Lewis who is an adult with autism and the mother of a son with autism, spoke about their experiences and insights into transitioning to work and the struggles around getting employment in the first place.

The federal Labor Member for Oxley, Milton Dick, could not attend but sent his warmest wishes for the launch saying, “I’m thrilled to be a part of this inaugural friendship group as everyone deserves the chance to be set up to succeed. And by this I mean getting the best therapy as early on with a view that when these babies and children become adults, they can live independent lives and make an excellent contribution to society. That’s one of our main goals for this group.”

The Parliamentary Friends of Autism will meet again in the New Year where they will be looking forward to a visit by Laser Beak Man himself, Tim Sharpe, and his mother Judy Sharpe.

*Media Contacts:*

*Hughes: Aerin Gordon Heinrich 0419 555 560*