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Coast families finally have help they need at new autism centre

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FAMILIES in desperate need of treatment for their autistic children have moved from as far as Tasmania to get help at a new \$1.6 million Coast centre.

The state-of-the-art Gold Coast Autism Intervention Centre has opened to cater for the demand from dozens of local families.

James Morton, chairman of the AEIOU Foundation which has launched the centre, said there were more than 60 children who needed early intervention on the Coast that they knew of. But the centre only has funding to offer 20 placements, with room to double numbers if the foundation can secure \$300,000 in State Government grants.

“There’s a shortfall for the Gold Coast compared to other parts of the state,” he said.

Three-year-old Stella Gaffney is just one of the 20 children who have already had remarkable results.

Parents Angus and Lorraine said Stella, who was diagnosed a year ago, never interacted with her six-year-old brother Amos until two weeks ago when they started seeing real changes in their daughter.

“She was non-verbal and non-engaging, she wouldn’t look you in the eye, she’d never look at Amos, never engage with him and since coming here she’s started playing with him,” Mr Gaffney said.

“We had a massive breakthrough ... she just started parroting everything and she said, I love you mummy, I love you daddy’ so that was huge.”



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Senior Behaviour Therapist Claire McIvor with Finn Cullen and Isabella Robinson at the opening of the new Gold Coast Autism Intervention Centre. Picture: JERAD WILLIAMS