



Townsville family preparing to transition from autism-specific organisation AEIOU to mainstream school

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SENDING your child to school for the first time is daunting for any parent, but the Sangricoli family are even more nervous.

Michelle and Tim Sangricoli are preparing their son Heath, 5, for his first year of prep in 2019.

Heath, who has autism, attended early intervention and therapy specialist centre AEIOU for two years.

Mrs Sangricoli said Heath's development improved in leaps and bounds with the centre's help.

"When he started there he was non-verbal and had a lot of social anxiety and aversions to startling sounds," she said.

"He's progressed from the junior room to the pre-prep room, and in that time he's just blossomed.

"In the last few months his speech has come in, he's made great gains in that area, he no longer has social anxiety and he's able to deal with a lot of sounds."

The family decided to send Heath to Belgian Gardens State School after recommendations from other parents of kids with autism.

“We live in Bushland Beach, so we went outside the catchment. I waited there from 6.30am in the morning and we got in – which was just lucky,” Mr Sangricoli said.

“The reason we went to Belgian Gardens is because we know they’ve experienced children on the spectrum before, which is important to us.”

“We’re excited for Heath, to see him be more confident and be so excited to talk and be able to interact with peers,” Mrs Sangricoli said.

Despite the excitement, the family are still concerned about his transition.

“I’m very anxious of him leaving AEIOU, because everyone there understands him,” Mrs Sangricoli said.

“People don’t know what autism is and if they have an idea, they have an idea of a stereotype.

“Because autism is invisible, it’s difficult to explain what it is and how it affects your child and the range of symptoms ASD displays.”

“I think Australia’s understanding of ASD is a fair way behind the curve,” Mr Sangricoli said.

Mr and Mrs Sangricoli said if North Queensland had better access to testing and information, more facilities like AEIOU, support for public schools and better education about autism it would improve understanding and acceptance of the disorder throughout society.

Article link: <https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/townsville-family-preparing-to-transition-from-autismspecific-organisation-aeiou-to-mainstream-school/news-story/65do12e7a8aebcd685b892778cb1c546?csp=53674932e5do865aa45cdafa9bcdeb73>