

New centre for Autism West

Autism West Support Inc

Autism West Support Inc is a registered charity formed by parents and friends of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The goal of the Autism West support committee is to aid and support families dealing with issues related to autism, growing and evolving to meet their requirements as they emerge.

Services offered by Autism West include occupational/speech therapy social groups, provision of ongoing education and networking for parents, as well as a toy and resource library.

President

Silvana Gaglia

Vice-president

Michael Malone

Secretary

Kylie Rigg

Treasurer

Tanya Robless

Karl Paganin

Tania Rodwell

Carolyn Shephard

Martha Robertson

Andrea Paganin

■ Adam Orlando

AUTISM West Support Inc has launched a five-year strategic plan to raise awareness of the neuro-biological disorder, following the opening of a new Autism West Centre in Nedlands last month.

As a privately funded and independent provider of therapy and support services for children and families affected by autism, Autism West has the autonomy to provide specialised and innovative therapy programs beyond those services traditionally subsidised by government.

The \$80,000 Autism West Centre will offer subsidised speech and occupational therapy programs and will work with health professionals to create new programs aimed at improving the skills and social development of children and teenagers with autism.

Perth-based investment house Argonaut Limited has sponsored the centre, donating \$40,000 over three years to help resource and develop the facility.

The centre will also provide support networks, information, and workshops for parents and siblings of children with autism, a disorder that affects one child in every 150 children.

With an annual operating budget of \$150,000, the not-for-profit organisation, which does not receive government funding, relies on sponsors and corporate donations to provide its services.

Supporters such as Euroz Securities, Gresham Partners, Amex Corporation, Aspen Group, Auzcorp, Pedersons Hire, and Christchurch Grammar School have helped raise funds to open the autism centre, run therapy groups, and contribute to education events.

Money raised from the recent iiNet Team Sprint Cup, the corner-



FIVE-YEAR FOCUS: Silvana Gaglia is heading a new five-year strategic plan for Autism West.

Photo: Grant Currall

stone fundraising event for Autism West, played a pivotal role in funding the initiative, with more than \$80,000 raised for the charity, up from \$50,000 in 2008.

Autism West president Silvana Gaglia told WA Business News the stature and recognition of the Team Sprint Cup had grown substantially during the past three years, and organisers hoped to raise more than \$120,000 in 2010.

She said the contribution of iiNet founder and Autism West vice-president, Michael Malone, was invaluable.

"We don't receive government funding because I guess once you start getting money from the government they will determine what types of services you can offer and how

you offer them," Ms Gaglia said.

"Ours is a very specialised organisation with services run by professionals with very clear objectives."

Autism West board member Karl Paganin said while internet service provider iiNet was again naming rights sponsor for the sprint event in 2010, Perth-based law firm Lavan Legal would be naming rights sponsor of the corporate challenge, to be known as the Lavan Legal Corporate Challenge.

"We are always extremely appreciative of the generosity and support of the corporate community in Perth, their participation in the swim, combined with the support of our corporate sponsors, makes a huge difference to the work and services that Autism West can offer to

Western Australian families affected by autism," he said.

Ms Gaglia said the new premier resource centre was part of Autism West's five-year strategic plan to raise awareness of autism in the state, with the facility designed to establish WA as a leading provider of services for autism and autism spectrum disorders.

She said the centre would help make the lives of WA families affected by autism stronger, healthier and happier.

"The Autism West Centre is a critical milestone for Autism West as we develop to deliver on our key mission to enrich the lives of families affected by an autism spectrum disorder," Ms Gaglia said.