



## THE RUBEN'S PLACE PROGRAM

Ruben's Place is an **NDIS registered, intensive Group-based Early Intervention Therapy Program** focusing on the improvement and development of school readiness skills through the principles of **Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)**. While attending the group, children work on skills such as increasing **functional communication** skills, facilitating **group participation**, improving **socialisation** skills with adults and peers, participating in group school readiness skills, following classroom **routines**, enhancing **social play** skills and cooperating with **self-help skills** such as toileting and dressing.

## RUBEN'S PLACE IS A GROUP THERAPY CENTRE, NOT A PRESCHOOL OR DAYCARE

In addition to supporting the generalisation of skills, our program exposes participants to a **group learning setting**, to support participants **to reduce barriers to learning** in these settings. **Individualised goals** are chosen, in **collaboration** with participant's support network (parents and caregivers), to improve upon their current skill set. Following is an overview of the general structure at Ruben's Place.

## PROGRAM OPTIONS

Ruben's Place offers a two-day per week program, Monday & Tuesday, and a three-day per week program, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Each program follows the NSW school calendar and runs for one year.

## TEAM AROUND THE CHILD

Each group typically has a 1:2 ratio supporting four participants these include a Lead Therapist (**Therapy Assistant Level 2**) and a Shadow Therapist (**Therapy Assistant Level 1**). Each participant's program is designed, monitored and updated by a Clinical Supervisor (**Early Childhood Professional**) throughout the year. Ruben's Place also has an on-site SLP (**Speech and Language Pathologist**) to provide consultation to teams on communication supports based on group and individual participant needs.

## ASSESSMENT and SUPPORT PROCESSES

Through an **initial intake and observation** process, participants are offered a spot to attend either program options. After the participants enrol into their stipulated program for the year, the **Clinical team (Early Childhood Professional)** conduct a **formal skills assessment** (including language and verbal behaviour assessment, adaptive skills assessment and/or functional behaviour assessment) to determine the **student's developmental skill level** and **barriers to their learning** to **develop an individualised program goals** for each student. Six hours of therapy supports a day include:

- **Direct supports** within the 1:2 staffing ratio in addition to;
- **Adjusted environmental supports** to promote engagement and learning,
- **Individual and group strategies** to proactively reduce behaviour of concern
- **Modelled communication** throughout the day and across all activities, and
- **Incidental teaching and learning opportunities** within a routine.



### INDIVIDUALISED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

The **clinical team** and therapy team meet with the **student's support network** to **collaborate** on the goals identified for the student and develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is a **personalized plan** or document that outlines the **student's short-term program goals, aligned with their long-term NDIS goals**. It includes the following components:

- Describes the student's current level of functional skills (identified through formal skill assessment) including their strengths and weaknesses (identified through direct observation and indirect assessments)
- Describes the identified barriers to learning functional skills in a group setting as well as includes input from support network regarding their concerns, priorities, and goals
- Outlines the SMART goals which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound
- Outlines the therapy support or changes in the environment, program, or instruction that are necessary for the student to make progress toward their goals
- Specifies how and when the student's progress toward their goals will be measured and reported to the student's support network.

### APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS THERAPY (ABA)

ABA is a **compassionate, person-centric, scientific, and data-driven approach** to understanding behaviour of an individual and how it is influenced by the environment. While ABA focuses on various teaching strategies (including discrete trial teaching and natural environmental teaching) designed to **increase socially important skills**, it also focuses on **compassionate and evidence-based approaches** to teaching skills in way that is unique and comprehensible by each child.

ABA, as a discipline employs **objective data to inform our decision-making**. The data collected in each session provides **direct measures of performance** to **determine progress**. Programs and behaviour support strategies are designed to work towards goals and objectives, as discussed with the support network as well as external service providers, through a **collaborative approach**. We collect data and perform integrity checks to ensure therapists are implementing programs as they were designed.

ABA aims to **improve socially significant behaviours** by using evidence-based teaching techniques such as **positive reinforcement, prompting, shaping, and chaining** among many others. These techniques have been shown to be effective when working with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to **teach new adaptive skills, promote independence, reduce behaviours of concern and thereby, improve quality of life**.



## JUSTIFICATION FOR ABA GROUP INTERVENTION SERVICES

Developing the ability to learn from others prepares children for a lifetime of healthier interactions in all aspects of life. The ability to learn through **observation and engagement in a group teaching setting** is an integral part of successful **participation in a group setting** and the ability to function within society. Remaining in a group, attending to a group leader, taking cues from those around them, following schedules, taking responsibility for personal daily routines, following social norms, communicating with others and demonstrating leisure skills are important components of successful participation in a classroom setting.

For children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders, these foundational learning skills do not come easily. The core, defining characteristics of ASD include functional difficulties in the areas of social interaction and communication, which inhibit the individual's ability to learn in the same way as their neurotypical peers.

Early intervention strategies often employ intensive 1:1 instruction to support children with ASD in developing the ability to learn. While this intervention can be an important step in the learning process, other strategies should also be taught that **generalize the skills learned in 1:1 intervention to group setting**. Student supports begin with 1:2 staffing ratio, with the goal of **fading these supports** to 1:3 or 1:4 across the year, depending on student progress and ongoing support needs.

The ability to **independently participate in an inclusive group learning setting allows the child the opportunity to successfully integrate into a school environment** and further in the community and achieve the best possible long-term outcomes. To be able to successfully participate in such a setting, the child requires intensive support now, in their early years. This support will enable the child to acquire the **necessary pre-requisite skills needed to learn and participate** in typical educational settings, opening the door to many possibilities and a wealth of **significant long-term gains**.

Lastly, intervention programs based on ABA are consistent with the NDIS Act that recommends **"the support will be, or is likely to be, effective and beneficial for the participant, having regard to current good practice"**. Ruben's Place takes a collaborative approach by aligning our student goals with NDIS family goals.

If you have any questions or comments on the content of this report, please feel free to contact our Executive Administrator, Nadia Panetta either by emailing [nadia.panetta@woodbury.org.au](mailto:nadia.panetta@woodbury.org.au), or by phone on (02) 9639 6152.



## PROGRAM ROUTINE AT RUBEN'S PLACE

Following is a general outline of the daily routine at Ruben's Place.

- 9:00 AM** Student Arrival
- Free play opportunities
  - Trust and rapport building
- 9:30 AM** Transition to a Specified Learning Area
- Participation in morning group
  - Morning tea and eating
- 10:30 AM** Toileting
- Structured play & naturalistic learning opportunities
- 11:00 AM** Transition to a specified learning area
- Group and individual learning goals
- 12:30 PM** Lunch and Eating
- 1:00 PM** Free and Structured Play and Naturalistic Learning Opportunities
- 2:00 PM** Group and Individual Learning Goals
- 2:30 PM** Toileting and Pack Up
- 3:00 PM** Student Departure