



Budget to help kids

\$30,000 lift for disabled

Samantha Maiden
National political editor

FAMILIES caring for disabled children have won access to up to \$30,000 a year in next month's Budget to help with early intervention and support.

The \$130 million boost to early intervention also includes new support for autism and delivers on an election pledge to offer a \$6000-a-year Better Start for Children payment from July.

The Sunday Mail can reveal that 9000 extra families will now be able to secure up to \$30,000 a year under the changes.

The Better Start for Children with a Disability payment will help eligible children with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, hearing and vision loss, fragile X-syndrome, deafness and blindness.

Total support will now include up to \$19,290 a year in carer payments, \$2900 in carer allowance, \$1200 in carer supplement and a \$1000 carer disability assistance payment, plus the new Better Start for Children disability payment of up to \$12,000, capped at \$6000 a year.

"Bringing up kids is hard enough, without the added challenges that can come with a disability," Mr Swan told *The Sunday Mail*.

Autism programs will also be expanded, after more children registered for the Helping Children with Autism package offered in previous budgets.

The scheme, first launched in 2008, provides eligible children with up to \$12,000 to secure early intervention including speech pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and psychology services.

While 9000 children were expected to benefit, more than 12,000 families have now secured support, with the Government boosting funding by \$30 million to help meet the cost.

The extra funding will help 3500 children into early learning programs including playgroups for children with autism spectrum disorders.

A backlash by mothers prompted the Government to dump plans to means test the 50 per cent childcare rebate.

maidens@news1td.com.au