

Media Release



11 December 2023

Inclusive Sensory Santa Sessions Launched

Embrace the magic of Christmas, as the beloved Santa's Cave in Port Broughton on Yorke Peninsula introduces 'Sensory' sessions this festive season, a first for many regional South Australian families.

In an initiative to make Christmas cheer accessible to all, Barunga West Council is proud to announce that this year, children with autism and/or sensory processing disorder will have the opportunity to meet Santa in a serene and sensory-adjusted setting. These special sessions cater to those who require a gentle environment, free from what can be overwhelming noise and crowds, offering a peaceful experience with Santa.

Australia's first Assistant Minister for Autism, Hon Emily Bourke MLC, who was born and raised on a farm near Maitland on the Yorke Peninsula, will be a special guest of Santa's in Port Broughton on Tuesday, December 12.

Ms Bourke, who was last year appointed to the newly established role of Assistant Minister for Autism by South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas, will join a Sensory session at Santa's Cave with students from Port Broughton Area School.

"The Holiday period and family traditions such as visiting Santa should be enjoyed by all South Australians who are wanting to participate. It is wonderful to see, especially in our regions, inclusive events taking place so that everybody can enjoy this special time of year," Ms Bourke said.

In a move towards greater inclusivity during the festive season, regional areas are now beginning to adopt the Sensory Santa sessions that have been growing in popularity in metropolitan centres.

Sensory Santa, sometimes referred to as "Silent Santa" is an opportunity for children with autism and/or sensory processing disorder to visit Santa in a quiet and welcoming, sensory-friendly environment. The time set aside for Sensory Santa is exclusive for children who need sensory sensitive environments and their families.

Barunga West Council first offered a 'Sensory Hour' in its Santa's Cave at Port Broughton's Town Hall in 2022 and remains committed to continuing this initiative. The low sensory, quiet viewing experience will offer reduced crowds, noise and other distractions to help make a difference to families whose children may find it challenging in a heightened sensory environment.

Media Release



Barunga West Mayor Leonie Kerley said the Sensory Santa initiative is all about making holiday experiences accessible in a quiet and welcoming environment.

“Join us in fostering a festive season where every child can have their special moment with Santa, in an environment that suits them best,” she said.

There will be a Sensory Hour at Santa's Cave in Port Broughton on Monday, 18 December 2023 from 10am to 11am. Bookings are essential and can be made by contacting Barunga West Council at: barunga@barungawest.sa.gov.au

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Media Notes:

Students from Port Broughton Area School will be at Santa's Cave from 11:30am. The Assistant Minister for Autism is due from midday. The Mayor will be in attendance.

- Date: Tuesday, 12 December 2023
- Time: 11:30am to 12:30pm
- Location: Santa's Cave inside the Port Broughton Town Hall.
- Photographic, filming and interview opportunities.

Professional imagery and video footage from the Sensory Santa session will be available for media use on the day.

Video footage will include interview grabs.

How To Access Media Materials:

Imagery and video footage will be available from around 2pm on Tuesday, 12 December via the following Dropbox link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/lkzmykp4w6zd77pm1wvoy/h?rlkey=kzrnjracrz5jld4qqs898ke0q&dl=0>