

Local family involved in research project

Disability transport study

BY LUKE MILLER

A LAUNCESTON family is taking part in groundbreaking research that aims to shed new light on the day-to-day transport challenges faced by families of children with disabilities in Australia.

Researchers from Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia, and Monash University, are immersing themselves in the lives of several families to gain a deeper understanding of the impact transport arrangements have on their daily life. The researchers are set to conduct interviews with the families to learn about how they go about everyday transport.

In addition, the families are expected to keep video, photographic, and written diaries of their experiences.

Launceston parents Lucas and Rachael Parry are scheduled to participate in the study this week.

The Parry's three-year-old son Robbie has Angelman Syndrome, a rare genetic



GROUNDBREAKING: Trevallyn resident Rachael Parry with her three-year-old son Robbie and nine-month-old daughter Elizabeth, alongside Emma Clarkson, Helen Lindner, and Iris Maher. **Picture:** Paul Scambler

disorder that causes delayed development, absence of speech, and problems with movement and coordination. Ms Parry said the research subject was "something you don't think about until it happens to you".

She said there were two main difficulties the family faced when travelling. The first was getting Robbie into his seat which, until the family purchased a new car with double sliding doors, had proven difficult.

"We have a narrow garage, and when we had a sedan, its doors would make it very difficult to hold Robbie's entire body weight up at an angle, while also trying to get him into his seat," she said.

"It's hard on our bodies."

According to Ms Parry, car seats had proven to be an issue too, as many that had a suitable amount of restriction did not meet Australian standards.

"Some children with disabilities who are mobile, but

don't understand how to keep themselves safe, might try and get out of their car seats and climb around the car, and be a danger to the driver and passengers because they don't understand the importance of staying in their seat," she said.

That sentiment was echoed by MACA chief executive Helen Lindner.

"Our national survey revealed stark challenges, with more than half of parents reporting that their child had gotten out of their child restraint or their seatbelt while they were driving, and more than two-thirds of parents reported never receiving information on safely transporting their child," she said.

"We've had parents share with us harrowing stories of resorting to restraining their child with cable ties and duct tape because they felt they had no other choice."

Ms Lindner said the research would inform the development of new products and services, responding to real-world transport needs.





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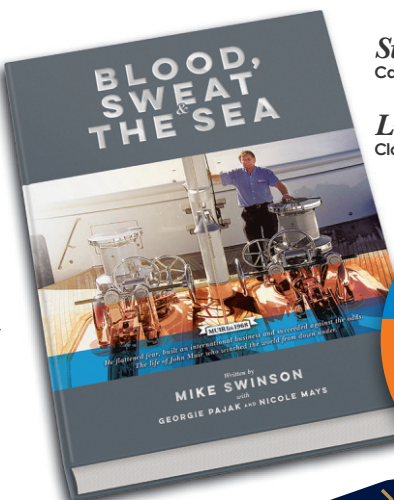


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