

Tuesday 30 July 2019

## **Improved ear and hearing planned for children in Maningrida**

The Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation has welcomed Maningrida's participation in the Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) Hearing for Learning Initiative.

Hearing for Learning is an innovative approach to improving ear and hearing health among Aboriginal children.

The \$7.9m Initiative funded by a public private partnership between the Australian Government, leading philanthropic foundation The Balnaves Foundation and the Northern Territory Government, aims to train, employ and integrate community-based Ear Health Facilitators into health services and schools.

Hearing for Learning will deliver six weeks of on-country training, including Certificate II modules in Aboriginal Primary Health Care and clinical skills training, leading to ongoing employment of Ear Health Facilitators.

The goal is to establish reliable, sustainable, culturally appropriate services to ensure that every ear of every Aboriginal child is healthy and hearing every day.

More than half of children in Maningrida who were referred to the Northern Territory Hearing Services program had a middle ear condition and 49% had hearing loss.

Joint Chair of the Menzies Hearing for Learning Initiative Professor Amanda Leach says she is thrilled by the support received following the Mala'la Board's meeting in June.

She acknowledged that collaboration and co-design with communities is essential.

"One of our other research projects found an estimated nine out of ten Indigenous children in communities across the Northern Territory experience chronic ear disease and hearing impairment during their first three years of life."

"Chronic ear disease and associated hearing loss continues to disadvantage the majority of children's early learning, causing social isolation and a poor trajectory through school, with potential life-long consequences for employment and wellbeing," Prof Leach said.

Maningrida is one of 20 NT communities that will participate. Two pilot communities will commence in 2019, with the program being introduced to the remaining communities from 2020 to 2022.

Mala'la Chief Executive Officer Ray Matthews said the Board supported the program, which would no doubt benefit the Maningrida community.

Community consultation is currently underway to finalise support from additional communities by the end of 2019.

The Balnaves Foundation is a private philanthropic organisation established in 2006 by the Balnaves family to provide support to charitable enterprises across Australia. The Foundation disperses over \$3 million annually to organisations that aim to create a better

Australia through education, medicine and the arts, with a focus on young people, the disadvantaged and Indigenous Australia.

Find out more at [www.menzies.edu.au/hfli](http://www.menzies.edu.au/hfli) and follow the Hearing for Learning Initiative on Twitter @Hear4Learn or #Hearingforlearning.

**END**

**Available for comment:**

Professor Amanda Leach, Joint Chair of the Hearing for Learning Initiative – Menzies School of Health Research.

**Media contact:**

Paul Dale, senior communications officer

Phone: 0439 108 754 or (08) 8946 8658 | Email: [communications@menzies.edu.au](mailto:communications@menzies.edu.au)

**Menzies School of Health Research**

Menzies School of Health Research is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving Indigenous, global and tropical health. Menzies has a history of over 30 years of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, joining with partners across the Asia-Pacific as well as Indigenous communities across northern and central Australia. Menzies collaborates to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.