

Benefits for the community and children include:

- Receive safe, culturally appropriate, reliable and expert clinical and education services for children who have ear and hearing problems.
- Explain how ear and hearing problems can affect their child's behaviour.
- Link the family with services to get the best help from the clinic, specialists and school.

Healthy ears and better hearing, improved learning, talking, communication, improved behaviour and school attendance.

Benefits for the selected Ear Health Facilitators include:

- Employment.
- Important and respected role in the community.
- Professional workforce development training to become workforce ready.
- Accredited training in Aboriginal Primary Health Care.
- High-quality training in ear health including; causes and prevention, how to use equipment, how to detect ear disease and hearing loss, how to liaise with community services to enter results in medical records, and how to link and follow the treatment of the children aged 0-16 years.

Funding partners



Australian Government
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RTO



PO Box 41096, Casuarina NT 0811 Australia
Phone: (08) 8946 8600 | Fax: (08) 8946 8464
Email: hearingforlearning@menzies.edu.au
Website: menzies.edu.au

Menzies School of Health Research

John Mathews Building (JMB)
Building 58, Royal Darwin Hospital Campus
Northern Territory, Australia 0810



Photo by Lauren Roberts, NT News

The Hearing for Learning Initiative

is an innovative community-based service enhancement model to address the crisis in ear and hearing health of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory: a Phase III stepped-wedge cluster randomised trial.

The goal of the Hearing for Learning Initiative is to work with communities to establish reliable, sustainable, culturally appropriate services that ensure that **every ear of every child is healthy and hearing every day.**

What crisis?

In remote communities, of every 10 Aboriginal children under 3 years of age:

- 9 out of 10 have ear problems.
- 2 out of 10 of these have “runny ears”.

Children with ear problems cannot hear properly, they have trouble listening and talking, and may behave badly because they misunderstand their parents, teachers, and friends. Children with hearing problems often don't want to go to school.

Workforce problems

“In some communities Primary Health Care Services only see ~13% of children who need follow-up for their ear problems.”

Much more is needed in the community to help get rid of ear and hearing problems.

Who will be involved in the Initiative?

- 20 Northern Territory remote, rural or urban communities will be enrolled by end of 2019.
- Two pilot communities started in 2019, 6 more communities will start in 2020, 8 in 2021, and 4 in 2022.
- Up to 100 casual Trainees and 40 part-time Ear Health Facilitators.
- 5000 children 0 to 16 years of age.

Each community will be invited to form a Community Reference Group to advise on how the Hearing for Learning Initiative should be run including:

- Who in their community could train to become an Ear Health Facilitator.
- Who in their community will be a champion for the Hearing for Learning Initiative.
- Who could be a mentor.
- What resources are in the community – space, equipment, computer, transport.

What is workforce innovation?

The Hearing for Learning Initiative will fund the employment of Trainees, support mentors and fund health services to employ selected Trainees as Ear Health Facilitators at the conclusion of training.

The Initiative will actively support integration of the Ear Health Facilitators into current services to create reliable, sustainable, integrated, culturally appropriate clinical and education services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have ear and hearing problems.

Roles and responsibilities of the Hearing for Learning Initiative Trainees are:

- To undertake six weeks of training including two accredited units in Cert II Aboriginal Primary Healthcare and clinical skills in ear and hearing health.
- Clinical – undertake ear and hearing assessments for children 0 to 16 years of age using video otoscopy, tympanometry, and a basic hearing test.
- Families – educate families about the impact of ear and hearing problems in children and what can be done about it.