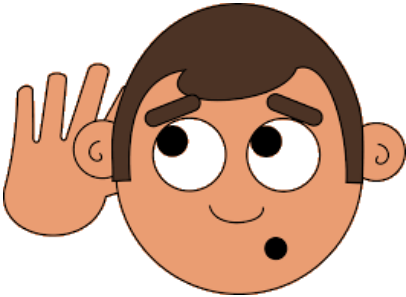


The Hearing for Learning Initiative



- 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* (HfLI) 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 have ear problems
- 2 of these have “runny ears”
- **only 1 will have healthy 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.

The fly-in fly-out hearing specialists are essential, but there are thousands of children on waiting lists for hearing tests and ear surgery.

“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.

The Hearing for Learning Initiative – Research Question

Does **workforce innovation** create more effective, efficient services and improve ear health and education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote, rural and urban communities?

What is workforce innovation?

The *Hearing for Learning Initiative* will fund employment, certificate II training in ear and hearing clinical and education skills, mentoring and integration of community-based **Ear and Hearing Clinical and Education Support Officers (EHCSOs).**

The *Hearing for Learning Initiative* will support communities and services to integrate the Ear and Hearing

Clinical and Education Support Officers 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.

Who can be involved in the HfLI?

Over the 4-year HfLI evaluation period

- **20** remote, rural or urban communities
- **40** Ear and Hearing Clinical and Education Support Officers (@0.5FTE)
- **5000** children 0 to 16 year of age

Each community will be invited to join a workshop to advise on how to run the Hearing for Learning Initiative.

- Who in their community could become an Ear and Hearing Clinical and Education Support Officer
- Who in their community will be the champion for the *Hearing for Learning Initiative*
- Where should the work be done
- Who will be the supervisor
- Who will be a mentor
- What resources are already in community – equipment, computer, transport

Roles and responsibilities of the Hearing for Learning Initiative support officers are

- To undertake certificate II training in community-based evaluation research
- To undertake certificate II training in ear and hearing clinical and education support
- Clinical – undertake ear assessments for all children using otoscopy and tympanometry, assist case management and follow-up
- Education – assist the teaching of children with hearing problems
- Families – educate families about the impact of ear and hearing problems in children and what they can do about it

Benefits for families and children

A community expert **Ear and Hearing Clinical and Education Support Officer** to

- provide 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, listening, talking, playing and learning.
- explain how to detect, treat and manage ear and hearing problems
- link the family with services to get the best help from the clinic, specialists and school.

Benefits for Ear and Hearing Health Clinical and Education Support Officers

- Employment
- Important and respected role in their community
- Professional workforce development training to become workforce ready
- Certificate II training in child health and education evaluation research
- Certificate II training in ear and hearing checks, how to use equipment, write up and discuss results with the child's doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Health Practitioner, and inform the child's family and teacher of their ear and hearing needs, make follow-up appointments.

Benefits for the Community

- Each community can have a say about how to best run the program through workshops and membership of the Community Steering Group to the *Hearing for Learning Initiative*
- Culturally safe, reliable, efficient, effective ear and hearing services for children
- Employment, training, mentoring and support of community members as Ear and Hearing Clinical and Education Support Officers
- Intensive in-service training for health service providers, teachers and others
- Community data on how many children have ear and hearing problems, how many children receive a care plan,

how many improve or need ongoing help (and more).

Funding partners



- Menzies
- The Balnaves Foundation
- Northern Territory Government
- Federal Government Department of Health



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

Menzies School of Health Research (HQ)

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