



Aboriginal children suffer in silence

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How loud is too loud in Toronto?

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I've never said 'I can't do this because I have hearing loss

Under bright-coloured headgear are two cochlear implants that help him interpret sounds, but profound hearing loss won't stop this young Queenslanders playing his best rugby. Ten years ago, Gold Coast parents Tracy and Dion made the "heartbreaking" decision for their five-year-old son Cruz to undergo cochlear implantation surgery.

You must register to use National Relay Service

If you are a NRS user and want to continue to use the service, you need to register before 20 April.

Australia's first Indigenous surgeon says identifying hearing loss would change lives

Identifying hearing loss and treating middle-ear infections in Indigenous children in their first four years would change lives forever, says Australia's first Indigenous surgeon, Dr Kelvin Kong.

Describing himself as a proud Worimi man, Dr Kong said early intervention – such as checking children's ears at every opportunity – would contribute to closing the gap in education, employment and health between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It would result in more children finishing school, getting jobs and fewer younger people ending up in juvenile justice and jail because they couldn't understand what was going on.



In a country that prides itself on inventing the Cochlear implant that has revolutionised the lives of babies born with severe or profound hearing loss, the rate of middle-ear infections causing hearing loss among Indigenous Australians was much worse than among non-Indigenous Australians, said Dr Kong, an ear, nose and throat surgeon in Newcastle, NSW.

Otitis media - infections and inflammation of the ears causing glue or runny ears – is the most common reason why all young Australian children see a doctor. It is chronic in Indigenous communities due to poverty, overcrowded housing and a mistrust of, or lack of access to, health services.

Yet Aboriginal children often suffered in silence, said Dr Kong. That is because, after an eardrum has burst from an ear infection, the pain goes away even if the perforation doesn't recover. Without a child complaining of ear pain, parents are unaware of the infection, which can get worse, causing hearing loss.

Chronic otitis media affects up to 70 per cent of children in remote communities.

The World Health Organisation considers it an emergency if the rate is greater than four per cent.

"Purely from a human rights point of view, [the belief that] a kid born in a first-world nation should have the same opportunity that every other child has is something I'm very passionate about."

The rate of ear disease for Indigenous people in cities was also higher than non-Indigenous Australians.

A report by the Australian Law Reform Commission found that as many as 95 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners had some form of hearing impairment. Yet early opportunities to identify hearing loss caused by repeated ear infections were “sliding door moments” that were often overlooked, said Dr Kong.

He quoted a colleague in Darwin whose mantra is: “Every ear, every opportunity, every time.” That sometimes meant taking a photo of an eardrum and sending it to a hospital to review.

His experience showed that those children who didn’t recover from a middle ear infection missed out on early education, speech, language and culture. “It is also the songlines, dance, and the interaction with your grandparents, and the fun, the laughter and the happiness that makes a complete child in so many ways,” he said.

“Where someone’s hard of hearing, they can suffer alarming injustice. They end up in jail. They go back to their friends and say, ‘What happened in there? Why am I locked up?’,” he wrote.

“They often misinterpret what’s going on. Our system is too busy to sit down with the Indigenous person with a hearing loss and ask; Do you need a hearing aid? Do you need people to speak louder? Can you speak English? Is English your first language?”

At school, a teenager with hearing loss may appear distracted. “Could they have gone down a different pathway? It can be a ‘sliding doors’ moment; which direction would make the Indigenous student head down without support or opportunity. If we focus more on access to hearing and understanding, then we’ll see outcomes change.”

He praised frontline community workers and programs like the [Hear our Heart Ear Bus Project](#) in Dubbo. It provides targeted screening, free access to specialists and works with schools. It was started after Dubbo residents identified that a growing number of children with otitis media were not being diagnosed or treated and were falling behind at school.

In schools, Hear our Heart teaches better ear health to prevent ear infections. Children with hearing loss and blocked ears are moved to the front, and the teachers wear microphones so their voices can be heard more easily.

Many Indigenous families avoided mainstream health services, said Dr Kong.

“Tackling hearing loss would require breaking down the silos between health, education and justice, and giving Indigenous and non-Indigenous community workers, GPs and teachers the skills to identify hearing loss early,” said Dr Kong. “Getting a hearing test is simple, but education and health care access for these kids requires a complex solution.”

The special edition of the journal on Indigenous hearing included research, *Djaalinj Waakinj* (listening talking), by Aboriginal researchers in Western Australia tracking children in Perth. The first of its kind, it was initiated by urban Aboriginal people who felt the focus on more remote communities often meant urban communities were forgotten.

By [Julie Power](#) for [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

Queensland rugby union prop won't be sidelined by hearing loss

By [Melissa Maykin](#) for [ABC Gold Coast](#)

On any given day, 15-year-old Cruz Lemming can be found in the gym or on the footy field, earning his place on the Nudgee College rugby union open team.

Under bright-coloured headgear are two cochlear implants that help him interpret sounds, but profound hearing loss won't stop the prop playing his best rugby.

In 2019 and at just 14 years old, Cruz was selected in Queensland's 15 years and under rugby union side, catching the eye of keen Brisbane scouts who later offered him a scholarship to the private college.

"I've never been down on myself just because I have slightly worse hearing. I've got the devices that make me hear, and I am hearing normally," he said.

"I've never said 'I can't do this because I have hearing loss', I've always done what I wanted to."



Cruz Lemming says regular headgear protects his cochlear implants during games.

Ten years ago, Gold Coast parents Tracy and Dion Lemming made the "heartbreaking" decision for their five-year-old son Cruz to undergo cochlear implantation surgery.

Cruz's hearing had rapidly deteriorated over 18 months and while the technology would help him to hear and speak, Mrs Lemming said she felt torn.

"It's a bit scary when you're confronted with that. Cruz had a little bit of hearing left, but my husband and I both felt we were taking something off him," Ms Lemming said.

"Once you have an implant, you can't hear unless you have your implant on.

"We said to him, 'You're going to have this operation that will help you with your hearing so you can hear like everyone else. But when you don't have your hearing aids on, you won't be able to hear anything'."

"He cried and said 'Oh no, I will still hear mummy', and of course my husband and I broke down but long term we knew it was the best thing for him — but at the time mother's guilt takes over."

Pronouncing the letter S and high pitch sounds were a struggle for young Cruz, but he soon overcame these difficulties with the help of audiologists, Ms Lemming said.

"We had 'piders' in our house and not spiders. Those few months when he learnt to pronounce these things was a highlight," she said.

"When a little kid will ask 'What are those?', he will explain what it does, he's pretty good at educating people and it's never held him back but we've never made a big deal about it either."



Cruz says he often shares his story with anxious families and their young children who he connects with at not-for-profit specialist support centre Hear and Say.

"They will come in with questions like 'Will I be able to hear properly, will I be normal at school?'," Cruz said. "They see people like me and it gives them hope and it's good to see that they are hopeful. I'll catch people staring at my head but it's not a problem, it's not every day you come across it. Some people would get annoyed, but I don't care."

Hear and Say audiologist Greer McDonald, who has assisted Cruz and his family over many years, says her work involves optimising hearing levels, testing his implants, and ensuring he has spare devices.

"We have to be really mindful that it is technology and he does play a sport that is high risk, so we do like to keep a close eye on him," Ms McDonald said. "As much as we rehabilitate hearing to the best we can, there will still be concerns with certain areas like noise."



Hear and Say audiologist Greer McDonald

"This will be a lifelong journey for Cruz and me."

How loud you are allowed to be in Toronto



We've all been there. Trying to fall asleep while some loud noise outside is keeping us awake, whether it be construction, cars, music, or just a loud group of partiers. So how loud is too loud?

According to [Toronto's noise bylaws](#), amplified sound from music, speakers, or any other sort of broadcast can't exceed 55 dB at any point, or 50 dB between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. If that means nothing to you, dB (or decibels) is the measurement of sound intensity. A measurement of 50-55 dB would be about the volume of an average conversation at home. The general rule of thumb is if something is 10 dB higher, than that means it's twice as loud. A vacuum cleaner would be about 70dB and a train passing by is somewhere around 80dB.

Construction noise is probably the cause of most complaints as it can easily top 100 dB. Unfortunately for those hoping to sleep off those morning hangovers, all construction noise is permitted between the hours of 7 am-7 pm during the week. On Saturdays, that's pushed to 9 am-7 pm, and completely forbidden on Sundays and statutory holidays.

Power tools mostly follow the same rule as construction, except they can also be used from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. on Sundays and holidays. So unfortunately, if your neighbour revs up their snowblower at 9 a.m. on Christmas morning, they're still a jerk, but at least they're a jerk who follows the law.

Other sounds are completely forbidden. Unnecessary motor noises like revving engines or constant honking and persistent noise from animals such as barking or squawking are just a few examples.

[Toronto's Municipal Code](#) also states that for all other scenarios, "No person shall make, cause or permit noise, at any time, that is unreasonable noise and persistent noise." So even though it means they'll surely hate you for it, if your neighbour has been singing off key for the past hour, it's within your legal rights to have them finally shut up.

Of course, [noise exemption permits](#) can be obtained for situations such as concerts or other events with loud music, or construction outside of normal hours.

Part of the trouble of living in the city is how noisy it can be, so noise regulations are always something to keep in mind to protect yourself both from having to deal with head-splitting commotion and from having to deal with the awkward scenario of cops knocking on your door at midnight. As the city opens up, there will be more people on the street which means those noisy nights won't be ending anytime soon. It's a sign of a living city, but always feels like a nightmare when it wakes you from a dead slumber.

By Filipe Dimas writing for [BlogTO](#). Photo by Hector Vasquez



The Federal Government has released the Reform of the **Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport**: Consultation Regulation Impact Statement for consultation.

You or your organisation or those in your network might have expertise and wish to comment. There are a number of ways to provide feedback including written submissions, a dedicated phone line and online surveys.

To access the documentation, and to provide feedback [visit the website](#)

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You must register to use National Relay Service

If you are a NRS user and want to continue to use the service, you need to register before 20 April.

To register, you need to complete a form and provide a copy of a support document that has your name and address on it. You only need to register once.

- Online at <https://nrschat.nrscall.gov.au/nrs/registration>
- Users of NRS Chat and NRS Captions can also register from the NRS call pages
- The NRS Helpdesk can also post the form to you if needed.
- Download and print the registration form, complete it, then scan and email this along with your support document to helpdesk@relayservice.com.au

For more information about registering see [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

To stay up-to-date with the latest information about registration, sign up to receive [Accesshub News and Alerts](#).

If you need help to register or have any questions, please contact the [NRS Helpdesk](#).

Telethon Speech & Hearing's Mark Fitzpatrick wins Impact 25 Award



The Impact 25 awards were announced showcasing a diverse range of leaders making a difference, including the CEO of Telethon Speech & Hearing in Western Australia.

Whittled down from 400 nominations nationwide to a shortlist of 150, Mark Fitzpatrick is the only winner from Western Australia.

As CEO of Telethon Speech & Hearing, Mark has grown the organisation to support 3,000 children with a hearing loss, or speech and language delays, across WA.

As chair of First Voice, he seeks to improve outcomes for deaf children in Australia, NZ, UK, and South Africa, and is involved in national committees on the Medicare Benefits Scheme and Aboriginal ear health.

Mark Fitzpatrick has also been a Workpower director, member of the UWA Centre for Social Impact's Advisory Council, vice president of the WA Council of Social Service, and mentors people seeking to make a difference in the community.

"It is a great honour to be recognised as a winner in this year's Impact 25 awards.

"I am humbled to be listed amongst the high calibre of leaders nominated across the country but know this award does not belong to me alone.

"I stand beside an amazing group of people at Telethon Speech & Hearing whose passion, professionalism, and ongoing commitment to creating better outcomes for children and families across WA are unparalleled. They are the ones who have such a huge impact on so many families."



Telethon Speech & Hearing

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[Telethon Speech & Hearing](#) is a Western Australian based not-for-profit organisation, registered charity and independent school offering quality diagnostic, therapy, and support services for children with hearing loss and/or speech and language challenges.

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Benchmark of quality for person-centred care

The **Inspired by Ida** label is a benchmark of quality that demonstrates practitioners' and clinics' dedication to high-quality person-centred care.

To become Inspired, clinicians complete two online courses in person-centred methods and sign a [code of ethics](#) underscoring their commitment to person-centred care.



In the future, people with hearing loss will find clinics:

- whose staff have taken courses in person-centred methods
- that have signed a code of ethics confirming their commitment to person-centred care

Visit https://idainstitute.com/ida_community/inspired_by_ida/



Deafness Forum is a member of Ida Institute and distributes its information and resources freely in Australasia to consumers and hearing care professionals.

Hearing loss in fish - study

Higher levels of CO² affect the ability of fish to hear, according to a new study published by scientists from the University of Auckland, NIWA and James Cook University in Australia.

Humans are releasing more carbon into the atmosphere, resulting in warming of both the atmosphere and oceans. The sea absorbs around 30 per cent of CO² produced and increasing the amount of CO² absorbed causes the world's oceans to acidify.

The ability of fish to detect sound is critical for a variety of behaviours, including as a guide for fish settlement and movement near reefs, the selection of mates and to synchronise mating behaviour. Fish, such as snapper, 'hear' through paired small bone-like structures called otoliths which act like the human middle ear.

"We are not entirely sure how fish localise sound but they do," says University of Auckland Associate Professor Craig Radford. "Sound helps them locate their home reef for example so without accurate hearing, they cannot find their way home.

Dr Darren Parsons, from the University of Auckland said, "If fish morphology is unable to adapt, then there could be serious consequences for the structure and function of future aquatic communities."

From the [University of Auckland](#) at [Scoop Sci-tech](#)



The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC), one of Australia's oldest charities, has unveiled its new brand and positioning, relaunching as NextSense.

NextSense is a not-for-profit that provides dedicated, innovative and customised services aimed at breaking down barriers for children, adults and families of people with hearing or vision loss. The new brand unites RIDBC and its groups and services, including Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre, Renwick Centre research institute, and Tarayle and RIDBC schools and preschools.

At its core, the new brand identity is about enhancing futures.

The dots and waves of the new logo are inspired by soundwaves and braille dots, giving the brand tools to represent both hearing and vision. Bold, AAA-accessible colours make sure there's always a high contrast for people with vision loss. Next Sans—the new brand typeface—was also custom-made for maximum legibility.

Throughout the brand the photography, illustration, and tone of voice have all been developed to put people front-and-centre—telling the stories of children, adults, families, teachers, students, professionals and volunteers who enhance their future with NextSense.

Nicole Smith, NextSense Director Marketing & Communications, said, "From our comprehensive range of services, to the diversity of people we support, employ and communicate with, NextSense is many things to many people.

"So we've created a brand that is adaptable and accessible. That can speak to different people, in different ways, at different stages of their journey. And, most importantly, a brand that will always enhance their experience."

Chris Rehn, NextSense Chief Executive, said, "NextSense is dedicated to supporting people with hearing or vision loss, their families and communities.

"This evolution will enable us to support more Australians in their hearing and vision health journeys, uniting our full range of expertise and services under a single identity for the first time.

"It builds on our rich history and underlines our commitment to world-leading service, research, innovation, and educating the next generation of experts.

"In making this change, NextSense recognises that to support people the right way, we need to constantly challenge ourselves to lift the limits on what's possible."

NextSense operates from an extensive number of centres across Australia and connects with families in any corner of Australia through virtual support sessions or telepractice.

From [B&T Magazine](#)

UsherKids Australia presents

Effective Communication in Health Care

with Rachel Callander

Online Workshop Series
April 21, 22 & 23, 2021

usherkidsaustralia.com



UsherKids Australia presents a series of online workshops, Effective Communication in Health Care.

Deeply moving, inspiring, hopeful and practical, Rachel Callander delivers workshops that are revolutionising how people communicate with each other.

3-4:30pm (AEST) April 21st, 2021 Workshop 1. LANGUAGE: FIRST DO NO HARM

Our language shapes our landscape. The words we speak influence the behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs of ourselves and others. They can alienate and add trauma, or they can honour and empower. "I always think of those words and phrases as the scars they've left behind".
Rhee- Mother of a child with Cerebral Palsy

3-4:30pm (AEST) April 22nd, 2021 Workshop 2. STORY: CHARACTERS IN CONFLICT

The role you play in your own life story should be chosen deliberately and wisely. Too many of us are playing smaller, weaker parts – those of victims, or villains, or heroes without compassion. It affects how we relate to others, and it hampers our progress.

3-4:30pm (AEST) April 23rd, 2021 Workshop 3. IDENTITY: WHO YOU ARE MATTERS

Society has narrowed the scope of the word "normal" so significantly, that our dictionaries are left with the bland descriptive of "approximately average" and this average-ness has become the most common stick against which we measure ourselves and others. Best practice in healthcare requires an urgent self-review on our unconscious biases, and the labels we use for difference, diversity, and disability.

We invite all health care professionals, especially those caring for children with Usher syndrome in Australia to take part in this three-part workshop series to assist in their communication with families. Parents and carers are also encouraged to join us and share your insights into this important topic.

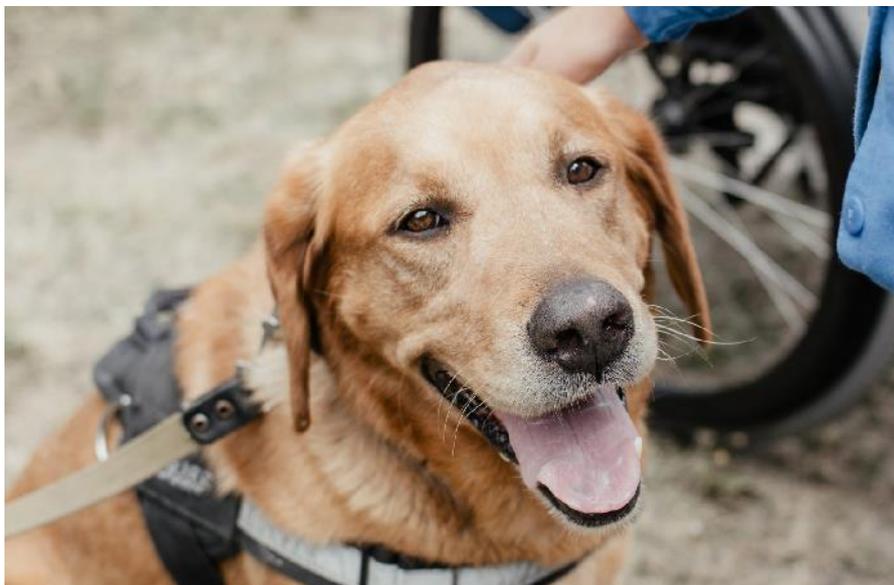
Registration is \$90 for professional attendance to all three workshops and free for parents and carers of children with Ushers syndrome. Find out more and [register here](#)

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Assistance animals – a nationally consistent approach

To improve certainty for people with disability using assistance animals, the Commonwealth, state and territory governments are working together to develop options for a nationally consistent approach to the regulation and accreditation of assistance animals.



The Commonwealth Department of Social Services wants to hear the views of organisations and individuals involved with assistance animals.

In this [survey](#), you will be asked some general questions about you and/or your organisation. Answering these questions is optional.

You will be asked questions specifically related to assistance animals. Depending on whether you are a person using assistance animal, a carer, a service provider, a trainer or another interested party, some survey questions may be more important to you than others. For this reason, the survey will allow you to answer some questions and not the others. There is also a free text space for any additional comment you may want to provide.

If you are experiencing issues with completing the survey and you require support, please email sector.engagement@dss.gov.au.

Under the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) it is unlawful to discriminate against a person with disability who is using an assistance animal. State and territory governments are responsible for the regulation and accreditation of assistance animals in each jurisdiction, including the standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an assistance animal in a public place. Differences in state and territory laws and policies regarding assistance animals have resulted in a range of issues for people with disability who use assistance animals in areas such as travel, accommodation and access to premises.

Please note, in this survey the Department of Social Services is interested in the issues arising from differences in assistance animal regulation and legislation between states and territories. Therefore, questions relate to experiences when visiting states or territories outside of where the assistance animal is registered.



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Educators of Deaf Students Association

A special hello to all the NSW Educators of Deaf Students Association who are now reading One in Six via their group Facebook page!

Know someone who would like to get One in Six?

Drop us a line: hello@deafnessforum.org.au

We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay respect to them and their cultures, and to elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the challenge of overcoming high levels of ear health issues among First Nation people and its role in Closing the Gap. We acknowledge the risk to indigenous sign languages of disappearing and the importance of Auslan.

People with disability have and continue to be subjected to isolation, exploitation, violence, and abuse in institutions. We thank the Australian Parliament for its bipartisan support of a Royal Commission into the evil committed on people with disability.

Items in Deafness Forum communications may incorporate or summarise views, standards or recommendations of third parties, which is assembled in good faith but does not necessarily reflect the considered views of Deafness Forum or indicate commitment to a particular course of action. We make no representation or warranty about the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of any third-party information. We want to be newsworthy and interesting and our aim is to be balanced and to represent views from throughout our community sector, but this might not be reflected in particular editions or in a short time period. Content may be edited for style and length.