

HEAR. LISTEN. YARN.

PLUM and HATS Success Story

Shaira and Caleb

This is a story of two children that shows how the PLUM and HATS can be used to support yarnning with parents and carers and guide decisions to meet the needs of each child.

Shaira and Caleb were both seen by clinicians at the Deadly Ears Program, which is an ear and hearing service that works in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland. When appropriate and with consent, Deadly Ears refers children and their families who may benefit from a hearing aid to Hearing Australia. In this instance, Shaira and her family, and Caleb and his family were seen through a telehealth service.

Both Shaira and Caleb were two and a half years old. Both have had middle ear problems, and it was unclear how long each child has had these problems.

When the Hearing Australia audiologist first met Shaira and her parents by telehealth, they talked about Shaira's hearing and completed a PLUM and HATS.

Shaira had a PLUM score of 35, and a HATS score of 45. These showed that her communication and listening skills were on track for her age. The audiologist was able to assure the parents that Shaira was doing well, even though she had some ear trouble. The audiologist recommended continued primary health care for her ears, and that she has a PLUM & HATS review in 3 months' time to check that her listening and communication skills were continuing to develop.

The Hearing Australia audiologist next saw Caleb and his parents by telehealth, and as part of the session completed the PLUM and HATS. Caleb had a PLUM score of 21 and a HATS score of 15, which indicated that his listening and communication skills were not on track. The audiologist explained to Caleb's parents that he may have a hearing problem that has affected his listening and communication skills. To help Caleb to hear better, she showed Caleb's parents a bone conductor hearing aid and explained how this would help Caleb to hear when his ears were blocked up. Caleb's parents decided to try the device.

"He immediately brightened up, and for the first time in the appointment used his voice and started giggling: a sure indication that he did have a significant hearing loss," the audiologist reflected.

Caleb's parents decided they would use the device, as it would help Caleb listen and understand better during story time and when they talk to him at home.

"The PLUM and HATS tools have been really useful for telehealth appointments. They are a lovely way to explore with a parent how their child is listening and talking at home," the audiologist said.

The use of the PLUM and HATS supports clinicians to have a meaningful yarn with each family about their child's listening and talking skills, that leads into making decisions for each child.

Shaira's parents were assured that her listening and talking skills were on track, that her ear trouble had not so far caused a delay in her development. This also led into a discussion around monitoring her ear health and skills development.

On the other hand, the use of the PLUM and HATS with Caleb revealed that he needed help. Rapid action was taken to fit a hearing aid, and his parents could see for themselves that it helped Caleb to hear better, find his voice and enjoy family stories.

*Names have been changed to protect patient identities.