

HEAR. LISTEN. YARN.

Hearing Australia: Our client stories

New hearing tools to help children like Tjandamurra thrive

For too many children like Tjandamurra, undetected hearing loss leads to delays in listening and communication skills. Parents and children can be frustrated, unable to communicate effectively in everyday life.

Now aged three, Tjandamarra has already experienced more than his share of hospitals and specialists. He experienced numerous ear infections and a burst ear drum before being diagnosed with chronic hearing issues. Tjandamurra struggled to hear and had difficulty learning to communicate well.

"I knew what to look for because of the experience I had with his older brother Rylan. We had such trouble getting him hearing help in the beginning - it took me years to get grommets for him," said Tjandamurra's Mum, Kaylah.

Kaylah says it was almost by chance that Tjandamurra's hearing journey took a leap. Having started playgroup at the Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council, within the first month there was a pop-up hearing clinic run at the playgroup. "We jumped at the chance to attend the clinic and haven't looked back."

At the pop-up clinic, Tjandamurra and Kaylah completed a new hearing assessment tool called the PLUM, developed by the National Acoustic Laboratories, the research division of Hearing Australia.

The PLUM assessment indicated a score of 18: well below the acceptable level of listening skill for a three-year-old. Wasting no time, Kaylah decided to get Tjandamurra fitted with a bone conduction hearing aid to provide immediate assistance. With this hearing technology, the world opened up for the vibrant boy. Tjandamurra is now wearing his hearing device and working with his regular speech therapist to improve on his speech and listening skills.

Within two weeks of getting his bone conduction hearing aid, the PLUM assessment was repeated. Tjandamurra achieved a score of 28, an increase of 10 points! While the score was still a little below his peers, the results showed the positive outcomes that could be achieved within a short time after the intervention and support.

Within a month, Tjandamurra had gone from a toddler with little-to-no speech to now being able to say 30 sentences. It's a huge jump in his development. Now that he can hear there is no looking back.

"I get tears when I speak about it, it's been such a long road," Kaylah said. "Now he can hear me clear as day and he even responds – it's so good to hear his voice. He has a little man voice."



Kaylah's advice to other parents concerned about their child's hearing is to ask for the PLUM and HATS assessment now – don't wait.

"You don't want to leave it. The earlier you can get your little one help the better." As a mum of eight, Kaylah has seen the difference early diagnosis and hearing device fitting can make on a child's hearing and overall development.

"Rylan (the older brother of Tjandamurra) was seven years old when he got grommets and now, at age 13, there are some speech and learning issues that might not have been there if we had gotten to it earlier."

If you are concerned about your child's hearing, ask a health or childcare worker for a PLUM and HATS assessment. The PLUM and HATS tools have been designed specifically to help detect hearing and speech problems in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. One in three* children are at risk of hearing problems before 6 years of age. Detecting and treating the problem early could improve the child's future.

For more information visit www.plumandhats.nal.gov.au or visit www.hearing.com.au.

*Reference: Kong & Coates: MJA Volume 191 Number 9,2 November 2009

Conditions apply under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program



