

Thursday, 29 June 2023

HELP FOR HEARING-IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN THE HUNTER

Children in the Hunter region suffering from hearing loss now have access to local, comprehensive clinical services with The Shepherd Centre's new mobile project, supported by a Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation grant of \$110,000.

Hearing loss is one of the most common disabilities in Australia, [rising from 1 in 1000 children affected at birth](#) to around 1 in 300 by the time these children are ready for school.

Australians living in regional areas are disadvantaged by lack of easy access to health care and this extends to hearing health services.

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation Chair, Jennifer Leslie, said The Shepherd Centre's initiative – the first specialised early intervention hearing loss service in the Hunter – is set to make a real difference for hearing-impaired children and their families.

“The Shepherd Centre's telehealth and mobile services will bring therapies to local hearing-impaired children in the Hunter, helping them to develop their speech and communication skills as well as emotional resilience,” said Ms Leslie.

“This new program will play a vital role in ensuring these children receive proper care and are empowered to reach their potential.

“The Shepherd Centre is experienced in supporting families across Australia. Their evidence-based approach, combined with the dedication of their highly skilled clinicians ensures that each child receives tailored and comprehensive support to thrive and succeed.”

Jessica Chambers, The Shepherd Centre's local clinician hired to oversee the new program, said that their new service ensures children have access to appropriate services, so that no child is left behind.

“Our new mobile and telehealth services are just the start of our journey in supporting children with hearing loss in the Hunter region,” Ms Chambers said.

“By bringing world-class therapies directly to their homes and utilising telehealth technology, we are removing barriers and expanding access to essential early-intervention support to the local communities, regardless of location.”

Danielle Lam, The Shepherd Centre's Principal of Digital and Regional Development, believes community connection is key in making lasting positive change.

Media release

"We are now able to offer innovative mobile and telehealth services, ensuring accessibility and providing extensive support to families in need," said Ms Lam.

"We have established strong connections within our community by fostering collaborative relationships and creating pathways between services, offering families a wide range of choices.

"We are deeply committed to regional growth and to positively impacting the lives of individuals and families.

"We are incredibly grateful for the generous support of Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, whose grant of \$110,000 has enabled us to establish this crucial program for children with hearing loss in the Hunter."

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About The Shepherd Centre

The Shepherd Centre (TSC) is a not-for-profit organisation providing clinical support and education for deaf children and their families. TSC specialise in development of listening, spoken language, social skills, literacy and emotional resilience, all areas where deaf children need intensive support.

About Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation provides more than \$1 million in grants each year to charitable projects aimed at improving the health and social wellbeing of vulnerable people in regional New South Wales. Since its establishment in 2003, the Foundation has provided more than \$26 million to some 550 community initiatives.