
Sound News

Parent Council for Deaf Education

Spring 2011



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President Report

Transitions can be stressful. My 12-year-old daughter, Anita, who is profoundly deaf and now has bilateral cochlear implants, is finishing her last year of primary school and is off to high school next year... a big transition for any child. From the age of three and a half Anita has been attending school five days a week – the first two years in the nursery hearing support class at Penshurst Public School and for the last seven years in a hearing support class at Burwood Public School.

At the annual review meeting for Anita's school support placement a couple of years ago the School Counsellor began with the question, "Have you thought about where Anita might go to High School?" Well I had – in fact I attended the Information Night at Strathfield South High School when Anita was only in Year 2. At that review meeting, the strong recommendation was for our family to consider Strathfield Girls High School for Anita. I'm not sure of the exact reason/s, but in that year I did glean the possibility that the hearing support unit at Strathfield South High School might be closing. This led me to do some advocacy wearing my PCDE, P&C Association and parent hats that ap-

pears to have paid off.

I went to the Strathfield Girls High School Information Night last year as well as this year, with the full intention of enrolling Anita there. However, Anita herself pressed for me to attend the Strathfield South High School Information Night, and obligingly I attended with her, also visiting the hearing support unit again. Incidentally, I did ask Anita why she wasn't keen to go to Strathfield Girls, and her reply was, "because they wear skirts". At the Strathfield South Information Night, I soon found out that the girls there also wear skirts. When I pointed this out to Anita on the night, her response was: "Yes, I already know"!

Anyhow at the conclusion of a Strathfield Girls parent tour, coincidentally the morning after the Strathfield South Information Night, and checking out future transfer possibilities with the Principal (if required), I scuttled my two year plan to enrol Anita as Strathfield Girls in favour of Strathfield South High School.

That was in March.... now the present: I arrived home the other night to find a "Notice: Proposed Development" sign outside our rented premises in Strathfield. It looks like our family will have to move soon because the property owner is preparing to knock down and rebuild. So another stressful transition is imminent (presumably completed before Anita starts high school). I'm sure all of you can relate to similar incidences of stressful transitions, but as Alexander Graham Bell (*inventor of the telephone and, pertinently to this publication, also a renowned teacher of the deaf*) said, "when one door closes, another one opens...".



President—Mark Burfield

Staff Report

In this edition we share parent stories and articles from professionals who care for children who are deaf with additional needs and the challenges that they encounter. We know you will be inspired and a little awed by the resilience and positivity that shines through their experiences. There is no doubt that a parent's ability to navigate the system, to find the right services or school for their child, can make a huge impact on the life and opportunities for their child. Transition from one service

or school to another can be a difficult time for any child. Mark's story above highlights this. These times are all the more stressful if your child has complex needs. In this edition we share just one example of how challenging this can be for a parent and child, who are new to "big school".

Cheers,

Kate Kennedy,

Coordinator, Information and Advocacy.



Parents, would you like to become a mentor to other parents just beginning their journey?

PCDE and the Deaf Society of NSW are needing to train up more parent mentors for the Parent to Parent Mentoring Program.

We are particularly need parents with children with a unilateral loss. We invite interested parents to contact

Teresa Thompson (02) 8833 3605 or Kate Kennedy (02) 9871 3049

Thoughts from a Trip to the USA...

It has been a busy few months at PCDE but I wanted to share some of my experiences gained on a trip to the US recently. In August I represented Deaf Children Australia and PCDE at the annual Hands and Voices Parent Leaders conference in Portland Maine, USA. Ann Porter of Aussie Deaf Kids also attended. It was an amazing opportunity to find out more about this fantastic parent organisation that is growing all around America (www.handsandvoices.com).

The conference brought together over 150 parents and professionals over 3 days to share research and information on building a strong parent voice, to build skills and to foster networks. The visit confirmed for me that we all want the best for our kids, regardless of where we live or the choices we make for our child. The problem is often that parents are constrained and governed by what information and services are available to them. We need to ensure that families get ALL the information about ALL options, so that they can make an informed choice – even if the service they might want is not up and running – it might be in the future if parents demand it.

I noted that most families I met at the conference used both sign and speech – hearing parents all seemed to be signing or learning to sign. This is certainly different from here in NSW. The reasons are many and varied, but perhaps one factor is that services in the US are available for both communication options from the start of the child's life. It also seemed to me that learning to sign was embraced much more positively there and in fact was a necessity for many, since technology that is available for free here, is expensive and costs the family directly in the US. Furthermore, due to health insurance requirement, cochlear implants are not actually available to the child until after the first year of that child's life. As a result, families are learning to sign in order to communicate with their deaf or hard of hearing child. Most US families I met had saved or were saving up for cochlear implants or hearing aids. They were shocked (and somewhat envious) to find out about the financial support that Aussie families get for technology. They do not have the safety net of



a public health system and rely on their own personal, often inadequate health insurance for access to technology that we take for granted.

I came away understanding more about why our system in NSW is skewed towards the “medical model”. The technology here are freely available and the services for habilitation and early intervention are well resourced and widely available. Given that access to sound and language opens many doors for deaf children, it makes sense that families, even Deaf parents, are going to grab the technology opportunity with both hands. In contrast, services for learning Auslan in NSW are just not available to families who may envisage their child growing up signing as well as speaking. Early intervention services do not offer a bilingual option or a level of service to support a family learning Auslan. Families must find their own way, studying at home or using technology such as RIDBC's Auslan Tutor. Families may learn by attending Auslan classes that their local high school at night, but in reality how viable or sustainable is this for new parents, already overwhelmed by all they have to learn and know about parenting a child with deafness?

Better Start for Children with a Disability is now up and running and we are waiting to learn if Auslan services can soon be on the service provider panel for services available through Better Start funding. If you would like to see this happen, please use your “hands and voices” to pass a message onto the federal government, via PCDE. Choice – let's lobby for more of it!!

Picture above shows Kate and Ann, “networking” with parents and professionals at the National Parent Leadership Conference, Portland Maine., August 2011. Note: Kate and Ann are now attending Weight Watchers as a result of this picture.

What's On?

National Week Of Deaf People Activities.

This annual week of activities is on again from 15th to 21st October, and again PCDE is collaborating with other organisations to celebrate and raise awareness of the Deaf community in NSW with a number of events:

Deaf Festival on Saturday 15th October

This year, on Saturday, 15th October 2011 Deaf Society are hosting a large event called the “Deaf Festival” in Parramatta. This inaugural festival is to be an inclusive, community celebration of the diversity of deaf and hard of hearing people.

The event will be hosted in partnership with Deaf Australia NSW and with the support of affiliated groups including PCDE.

There will be: Jumping castle, Family Activities, Children’s Circus Playground, Workshops, Information Stalls, Food Stalls (buy food and drinks) and much more.

When: 10:30am to 3:00pm

Where: On the southern bank of Parramatta River between the decking outside Scrumptious to Barry Wilde Bridge.
Between Church Street (Lennox Bridge) & Wilde Ave/Smith Street .

School Tour to Parliament House, Sydney, Wednesday 19th October:

FREE tour for deaf & hard of hearing students. Teachers, bring your students!

This will be a fun tour with a chance for students to experience Parliament and see how it works.

There will also be a chance to meet your local Member of Parliament.

10.30am—12.30pm (Morning Tea provided)

Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney

For more information or to book a place for your students on the tour contact Kate Kennedy at PCDE;

Email: pcde@bigpond.com

Phone: (02) 9871 3049 TTY: (02) 9871 3025

Panel Event at Parliament House, Wednesday 19th October

“ Life Stories– Experiences of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Young Adults”

Facilitated by James O’Loughlin.

Panellists: Rachael Ellis, Sherrie Beaver, Shirley Liu, Lloyd Williams, John Lui, Rania Saab

Arrive at 5.30pm for Launch of National Week of Deaf People, followed by refreshments and then Panel Discussion, starting at 6.30 to 8.00pm.

Venue: Theatrette, NSW Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney

To RSVP for this event please contact the Deaf Society of NSW at info@deafsociety.com or call (02) 8833 3600.



What's On?

PCDE Annual General Meeting:

When: Sunday, 13th November, 2011

Where: PCDE Boardroom, Dara House

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

361-365 North Rocks Road, North Rocks.

RSVP: By 7th November, 2011 to Gloria Simunovich

Ph: 02 9871 3049 or email : Gloria@pcde.org

All committee positions will be declared open at the meeting.



You're invited to the Australian Hearing Youth Technology Expo:

Do you know everything you would like about your hearing and the options available to you?

Light refreshments will be available and everyone who attends will go into the draw to win a lucky door prize.

When: Friday, 28th October, 2011

When: 1pm-4pm

Where: Australian Hearing

National Head Office

126 Greville St, Chatswood 2067

RSVP: By Calling Australian Hearing

Greville St Paediatric Centre on (02) 9412 6820



Low Fare Travel Sundays for Families

Every Sunday you can explore Sydney and surrounds with your family without spending a lot with Family Funday Sunday tickets.

For \$2.50 per person your family can enjoy a fun day out with unlimited travel on Sydney's buses, trains, ferries and light rail every Sunday. The ticket will even take you to Newcastle and Wollongong.

Tickets are available onboard buses, City Rail stations, Ferry ticket offices and authorised newsagents, selected 7-Elevens and convenience stores.

Family Funday Sunday tickets are not sold on board light rail, so you will need to pre-purchase your ticket from a ticket reseller before you board.

To read more about this great family offer please visit <http://www.131500.com.au/tickets/explore/family-fun>.

It also gives you ideas where to go and how to use the tickets for a great Family Funday Sunday out.



Profile: RIDBC Matilda Rose Centre, Waverley



In January 2011 Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children Matilda Rose Centre (RIDBC MRC) opened in Waverley to not only continue its specialised program for hearing impaired children with additional needs but to welcome hearing impaired children who live in the Eastern, Inner West and Southern Suburbs.



RIDBC MRC is located at 125 Birrel Street, Waverley which is within easy walking distance to Bondi Junction Shopping and transport precinct. It is housed in a beautiful; Victorian Terrace of grand proportions and the environment has been designed to emulate a homelike environment for the parents, caregivers and children who attend the Centre. This promotes a welcoming relaxed early learning environment. The Centre is based in the

grounds of The War Memorial Hospital Waverley which is an added bonus as the families are able to use the Kiosk and the delightful gardens.

The professional staff at RIDBC MRC are extremely well qualified to work with hearing impaired children. They have all had many years experience in working with severe to profound deaf children through their years of work at Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre prior to setting up The Matilda Rose Early Intervention Centre. All staff are well trained and experienced in Auditory Verbal Therapy. During the past 10 years the staff have worked with hearing impaired children with additional needs and have developed COMBINES Methodology which has adapted auditory verbal therapy to promote the ability of hearing impaired children who have additional needs to learn to listen using their cochlear implants and or hearing aids. It has been found through this work that with the exception of those who are compromised due to medical or physical conditions most children have learned to listen and many are able to speak but some have required augmentative systems of communication to express themselves. This means that the staff have become skilled at meeting the unique needs of this population including understanding sensory, physical and social emotional needs and the importance of introducing augmentative systems of communication as required. The COMBINES Methodology is Relationship Based, meaning that it 'starts where the child is at' and builds on the child's and family's strengths. The COMBINES Methodology relies on a trans disciplinary team that includes Teachers of the Deaf, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and support from audiologist, psychologist and orthoptist.

The Centre is extremely well resourced through RIDBC to ensure that staff have continuing education, technology, literature and early childhood resources available including adapted equipment for the sensory and physical needs of the children. This includes support and access to RIDBC's Jim Patrick Audiology Centre, The Assessment Team and visiting specialists when required e.g. orthoptist, psychologist etc. As RIDBC MRC is also supported through The Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre those children who have received cochlear implants through SCIC are able to receive audiological sup-

Profile: RIDBC Matilda Rose Centre, Waverley



port such as mapping at the Centre. The children and families find this invaluable as the children can have the support of their case manager during these mapping or assessment sessions.

Individual parent support can be designed through the team at RIDBCMRC. Parent support and education is provided through ongoing weekly sessions, parent interest groups, parent workshops, education programs and materials at RIDBC North Rocks.

Parents and or caregivers are encouraged to be pro-active during sessions with their children and are empowered by the team to become their child's case-manager.

Team members at RIDBC Matilda Rose work collaboratively not only with the child's family but also with other involved professionals such as teachers, therapists, paediatricians and ENTs. This is achieved through Individual Education Plan meetings, phone calls, emails communication books etc.

All children attending RIDBC MRC will receive one session per week with their case manager and as they are ready they also attend small structured group sessions. At times of transition to pre-school and or school the child and family are supported to ensure a smooth transition is achieved.

Parent/s or caregiver/s will be actively involved in all of the one on one sessions. The sessions are

designed to meet the individual needs of the child and their family. The sessions encourage relaxed interactive learning through listening during play so that what the child is learning has real meaning. The use of photos, videos and experience books are developed to ensure that the parents are able to more clearly understand, reinforce and expand the goals at home and in the community. The parents are then encouraged to find ways of expanding the learning. Often they will find ideas that are more appropriate and exciting for their child and family. The role of the case manager and other staff is to support, coach and encourage parents during this journey, that takes time, patience and effort whilst their child is learning to listen, communicate, play and learn.

The small structured group sessions are designed to promote the ability to interact and play with other children, expand language and communication, develop physical skills, problem solving and cognitive skills including pre-literacy and numeracy skills.

The Occupational Therapist and the Physiotherapist are able to provide the necessary professional support to ensure that the children can learn to relax and develop loving relationships, regulate behaviour, attend to learn and develop friendships, be physically supported and develop movement to promote relationships, play and interactive learning. They are also vital for children who have additional needs to develop speech and or augmentative systems of communication.

RIDBC MRC welcomes all hearing impaired children and families to their centre in Waverley.



Written by Maree Rennie, Co-ordinator, RIDBC-MRC

Sarah's Journey with Nicholas and Matthew

By Sarah Threlfo, Jack and Nicholas' Mum.

Our story began in the summer of January 2006 with the premature birth of our triplet boys at 26.5 weeks- Nicholas weighing 950grams Luke weighing 820grams and Matthew weighing 740grams. We prepared for the worst and had all three boys baptised immediately. Sadly we lost Luke just after 24hours.

We spent our life in Newborn Intensive Care Unit for many months as Nicholas and Matthew continued to battle on, enduring many near fatal infections and surgeries.

By May, Nicholas and Matthew were both full term babies and were then assessed by the SWISH team at Sydney's Royal Woman's Hospital. Matthew was cleared by the team however we had to keep a watchful eye on his hearing development. Nicholas on the other hand struggled to pass the swish test. We left hospital at the end of May with both Nicholas and Matthew on home oxygen 24hrs a day and a myriad of appointment to varying specialist including an audiologist.

By August, after much testing Nicholas was diagnosed with auditory neuropathy, as well as, severe cerebral palsy. He was placed on a list for a cochlear implant and was fitted with hearing aids. We were also told that his hearing may improve as his ear canal developed. We just had to watch and wait and start looking at early intervention that would enable Nicholas to learn to be a good listener.

We were put in touch with the wonderful team at Matilda Rose-RIDBC an intervention centre in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. It was here that I came to meet the most supportive and caring staff and a network of parents that helped our family immensely. We started off bringing our children to a one to one session with the habilitationist. In our case Matthew had also been diagnosed with a mild hearing loss as well as cerebral palsy. He too was now attending the centre along with Nicholas.



During these one to one sessions we occasionally ran into other parents in passing. We would say hello and coo over each other's boys.

Sometimes the effort to get to the sessions were enormous and at times, all too much, as nearly all of the parents were not only dealing with children with a hearing loss but with cerebral palsy and many other undiagnosed medical conditions.

At last after two years of one to one sessions our boys were placed in group all together. We all breathed a sigh of relief as we could finally sit and listen to the boys interacting with each other and having a wonderful time communicating to the best of their ability. These sessions have been fabulous not only for the boys but also for the parents. We talk, listen, discuss, cry, despair and laugh (a lot). We all look forward to seeing each other every week and always try to catch up with each other in the school holiday. These parents have been an enormous support to me as they have and are walking in my shoes!

In the next coming months our boys will be completing their final terms at Matilda Rose-RIDBC. Transition to kindergarten has already begun for some of the boys. They are ready to take the next step! I'm not sure if we all are though! We have formed amazing bonds which I feel cannot be broken. We have mandered through many, many twists, turns and ups and downs of living, educating and loving a child or children with significant disabilities TOGETHER and for that I am eternally grateful.



Jacob's Story

By Maria Short, Jacob's Mum.

My son Jacob is 16 years old. He has Down Syndrome and a profound hearing loss.

Jacob was diagnosed at the age of 2 years old but no one could tell us why Jacob was hearing impaired, even though we spoke to many professionals, they could not give us an answer.

My husband and I were devastated to hear this news. We had handled the news that Jacob had Down Syndrome, but to be told he also had a profound hearing loss as well was shattering for our family.

The professionals suggested that Jacob could have a cochlear implant. My gut instinct said no way and we decided to continue on the road with communication using total communication and augmentative communication. We decided that his main language would be Auslan.

Communicating in Auslan relieved Jacob's frustrations. I enrolled Jacob at the Roberta Reid Preschool at North Rocks as I felt he needed to be immersed in Auslan. I felt he could learn to communicate with other children who were using Auslan, and felt this programme would be a great start for Jacob.

It was not meant to be, he needed more early intervention support which the preschool could not offer. We left the preschool, and I focused on teaching Jacob as much language as I could, using Auslan.

When Jacob was 5 I enrolled Jacob into a Transition to School programme. The transition went quite well, Jacob learnt skills that were needed for him to go to kindergarten.

Jacob started school the following year when he was 6. It was a difficult first year, though probably harder for me than Jacob. I was in tears most days as I knew what he needed and the system did not seem to be able or willing to provide it. We moved Jacob several times in primary school to find the right fit for him and us.

All the way along throughout primary

school, I became Jacob's biggest advocate. I spent and continue to spend a lot of time encouraging the teachers. I wanted to convince them that Jacob was capable of so much more than what he was achieving in the classroom.

At a point in primary school, I felt Jacob needed modelling from regular children in the school and pushed for inclusion, as Jacob was a young boy who just wanted to be like other children. Jacob liked soccer, dancing and hanging out with boys his own age. So once again we moved him. This time everyone was very friendly and embraced Jacob as one of class. Jacob also had a fulltime aid that was Auslan proficient, and the teacher treated Jacob like all the other children in the class.

Jacob had his own spelling words and timetable on the board, Jacob was included in the music class, dance class and played soccer with the boys in his lunch hour. Jacob even went along to the school camps, excursions just like the regular children.

I watched Jacob's confidence, social skills and self esteem blossom in his last 2 years of primary school.

Then came the big decision of High School, where to go, what to do?

There was not much available for children like Jacob. I felt that a regular high school would be difficult for him.

He was non-verbal and I worried that he would be isolated and bullied.



I had not really considered a special school until the day I walked into William Rose School at Seven Hills. I felt so much care and dedication from the teachers. Everyone was friendly and helpful. We decided this would be a good school for Jacob.

Nothing is perfect. I was very surprised to know that Jacob's teachers were not proficient in Auslan and could only use basic Makaton. Over time the teachers are becoming more proficient with Auslan. As a parent, I have done my best to give them as much information to help them to help Jacob. To their credit, they have embraced new technologies to assist them in teaching. I have introduced the school to a technologies that I found helped Jacob, such as applications like "Auslan Tutor", "Tap to Talk", "Proloquo2go" etc. I have also pushed for Jacob to be giving opportunities to become independent. Life has improved for Jacob at school due the partnership with school and home. The road never ends though, I feel that I have a long way to go to ensure that he has the rich and fulfilling life that he deserves.

I believe that that if we push the disability aside and focus on the individual, then real change can happen. I wish that for my son's future.

Life After High School

Life after high school is an exciting and sometimes daunting prospect for young people. This transition can be more challenging for Deaf and hearing impaired students as they must encounter the “real world” and often find they struggle in learning and work environments that do fully not understand or accommodate their needs.

There are resources and supports available young people in tertiary education and work place environments . For students deciding on tertiary education, there are a number of pathways they can follow:

University

University can be accessed via a number of ways: on campus, by distance (correspondence) or on-line. Depending on ATAR results, the student will have access to a number of courses. University Open Days take place around August/September of each year. Your high school should be able to advise you of dates for these days, or visit the university website for more details. Courses vary from campus to campus and systems of study. A good starting point is to visit The Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) via www.uac.edu.au. This centre processes applications for admission to most at participating universities, (mainly located in NSW and the ACT). They also put out a book containing all university courses and the criteria for attendance:

<http://www.uac.edu.au/documents/undergraduate/table-of-courses.pdf>

Note that all universities have disability services that provide support students who are deaf or hearing impaired. Contact the university directly to determine what support the student can receive.

TAFE NSW

www.tafensw.edu.au

TAFE NSW is a key provider of vocational education and training in NSW, with a wide range of courses and pathways for students . Many of these courses are linked to industry and therefore offer a pathway for employment as well. Some of the courses can also be a stepping stone via TAFE into a university course.

To assist students with hearing loss, TAFE has a number of Teacher Consultants for the Deaf and hearing impaired. These specialized consultants are employed to provide information and support to students with hearing loss. They can be a valuable resource in making decisions about course choices for these students. Call 131601 to find out more or book a meeting with your local consultant to discuss TAFE options.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Apprenticeships and traineeship can provide students with paid employment whilst they attend TAFE weekly to study towards a qualification. The NSW Department of Education and Training coordinates the requirements for these traineeships. Visit their website below for extensive information, advice and support.

www.training.nsw.gov.au



Deaf Education Network (DEN)

Is owned and run by the Deaf Society of NSW. This service offers courses for both deaf and hearing people. These include sign language, general education and professional development skills. DEN also offers a variety of workplace training programs.

Visit www.deaf.nsw.edu.au for more information.

Life After High School

Transition To Work Program

Transition to Work is a NSW State Government initiative and is a good starting point for students with additional needs. Funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC), this service aims to assist year 12 school leavers who have a disability make the move from students to employees.

To learn more about eligibility for ADHC's Transition to Work program please visit www.adhc.nsw.gov.au - Eligibility Assessment for School Leavers.



NOVA Transition is part of a group of programs that are run by **NOVA Employment & Training Inc.** NOVA is one of the largest specialist employment agencies in Australia and since 1990 has provided job seeking and post placement support to people who have a disability.

You can find out more about NOVA at www.novaemployment.com

Deaf Society of NSW

The Deaf Society of NSW's employment service is the only specialist employment service in NSW for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing. The Employment Service provides job search assistance for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

These include:

One-to-one job search help (with staff who know both Auslan and English), including help with resume writing/updating, job applications, goal setting, employer contact and career guidance:

- pre-vocational training programs to increase skills in resume writing, interview techniques, workplace practices and communication techniques
- job interview preparation workshops ,unlimited use of the internet, email, TTY and other facilities at the Deaf Society's Employment Room.
- Auslan interpreting during job interviews
- Access to employer incentives under the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF), including: Auslan interpreting in the workplace,workplace modifications,Deaf awareness training

Contact the DSNSW Employment Services team on:

Ph (voice): (02) 8833 3600 TTY: (02) 8833 3671 Fax: (02) 8833 3699 Email: employment@deafsociety.com

Employment Assistance Fund

The Employment Assistance Fund helps people with disability and mental health condition by providing financial assistance to purchase a range of work-related modifications and services for people who are about to start a job or who are currently working, as well as those who require assistance to find and prepare for work.

The Fund may reimburse the cost of work-related modifications and services including, but not limited to:

- the cost of modifications to the physical work environment
- modifications to work vehicles
- adaptive equipment for the workplace
- information and communication devices
- Auslan interpreting
- specialist services for employees with specific learning disorders and mental health conditions
- disability awareness training
- Deafness awareness training, and
- mental health first aid training.

Visit www.jobaccess.gov.au or contact a JobAccess adviser on 1800 464 800 for further information.

Update from Australian Hearing

The new financial year has brought the launch of some exciting new technology at Australian Hearing. On the 1st of July we introduced the Aquaris waterproof hearing aid and a new very small high power hearing aid called the Pure Carat to our hearing aid range. Some new assistive devices have also become available and include the Siemens MiniTEK Bluetooth streamer and remote control, a new iPod/iPhone compatible alarm clock, and a visual smoke alarm system.

Channel Ten found the Aquaris waterproof hearing aid exciting enough to feature on their national news! There is a link on our Australian Hearing Facebook page to the clip. As a result of this recent television report, families are starting to enquire about how their children can get this new hearing aid. The Aquaris is not part of our fully subsidised range, however families can “top up”/contribute to the cost of the hearing aid.



If you are eligible for a change of device this hearing aid can be purchased at Australian Hearing “top up” price (for more information on changeover eligibility talk to your family audiologist). Alternatively, it can be purchased at a recommended retail price (RRP) if you are not eligible for a change of device and do not wish to wait.

Some things to consider:

- Aquaris is currently suitable for mild and moderate hearing losses.
- It has no direct FM connection available. To access an FM system connection, families must also purchase a MiniTEK remote control which has a connection for a MicroLink FM receiver.
- Those who have Phonak Naida aids and use Sound Recover to improve high frequency speech perception ability need to be aware that Aquaris does NOT have Sound Recover technology

- For these and other reasons some families may wish to keep their regular hearing aids and purchase the Aquaris at the RRP as a “spare” or extra aid for activities around/in water.
- If you chose to purchase the Aquaris as a “spare” then both your main aids and the Aquaris are covered for maintenance under your regular Hearing Services Charge (HSC) payment.

If you are interested your family audiologist will be happy to discuss this with you.

The Pure Carat

This hearing aid has what we call “receiver in the canal” technology which allows us to make hearing aids a lot smaller and reduce whistling/feedback at the same time. This technology is already available as the “Pure” but the new “Pure Carat” is higher powered and has a telecoil built in. This is a great “top up” option for children with more severe losses who wish to have a more cosmetically appealing hearing aid and still be able to access built in telecoil and be able to use an FM via a neckloop receiver. The miniTEK is also compatible with this new hearing aid.



What is the MiniTEK?

Some people may already be familiar with the TEK remote control and wireless streamer. This is compatible with most of the hearing aids in our Siemens range. We now have a new smaller version which introduces some new features not previously available!

The miniTEK is great news for children wanting a small cosmetically appealing hearing aid. In the past we often had to advise that having a smaller aid meant no access to telecoil or FM systems. Now you can connect an FM receiver to the base of this remote control and wire-

lessly stream the signal to both hearing aids. The miniTEK can receive telecoil signals such as room loops and wirelessly stream these to the hearing aids.

MiniTEK also allows connection to mobile phones, TV, Stereo, computers, iPods and iPads. The hearing aid microphone can be programmed to provide a reduction in background noise to better enjoy the sound from these devices.



Our new assistive listening devices

iLuv Vibe Plus is an Alarm clock/Radio with speaker and vibrating shaker for under the pillow that is compatible with iPod/iPhone. The speaker allows music to be played from your iPhone or iPod whilst also charging the device. The vibrating bed shaker could be ideal for the deep sleepers in your household that you struggle to wake in the morning!



Written by Simone Punch.

Australian Hearing Clinical Leader

Parents' Survival HSC/IB Guide

The following advice on how parents can survive the HSC/IB comes from the
Redlands Year 12 Students of 2008

- “ Trust me with studies”
- “ Do not nag”
- “ Allow us to have priority over other siblings”
- “ Don't stress more than the child”
- “ Let us work together to devise a good work/social balance”
- “ Be supportive and caring”
- “ Take a break when you need it”
- “ Give children their space”
- “ Offer constructive criticism”
- “ Have a calendar showing assessments, exams, excursions and good times”
- “ Do not apply pressure close to crucial periods”
- “ Trust in what I think, I know best about my work and what to do , how much, when; it's on my shoulders”
- “ The HSC is not that important and no matter what happens, it's not the end of the world”
- “ Support me no matter what”
- “ Be proud of me”
- “ Give me enough relaxation time”
- “ Don't make me feel that if I don't do well I will basically have a crap life”
- “ Stress free environment”
- “ Food”
- “ Be there for us when you need us-give us all the support we need”
- “ Let me keep up hobbies”
- “ Support my football and drive me to games and trainings”
- “ Let me achieve my personal best by supporting me with work and life and general”
- “ Back off and listen”
- “ Positive reinforcement”
- “ Don't ask too many questions”
- “ Don't keep coming into my room when I am working and ask questions”
- “ Tell siblings to stay away from me”
- “ Weekends are partly for relaxing”
- “ Realise that I cannot come to every family meal”
- “ If you scream at me it will make me do exactly the opposite of what you want”
- “ Be interested”
- “ Smile”
- “ I know it is important, I don't need to be reminded all the time”
- “ Show love n stuff”
- “ Let me have my chill out time”
- “ We're already stressed out—don't add to it”
- “Monitor my progress and make sure I do my work”
- “ Reward me for good work/progress”
- “ Be considerate of the stress I am under and be appropriate in the actions taken towards punishment”
- “ Realise I am not an idiot and I now I need to study”
- “ Help with the work when I ask you”
- “ If I am studying don't try to start pointless conversations”
- “ Stop acting like you know /understand everything”
- “ The angrier you get the angrier we get”
- “ I promise I'll get it done”
- “ Get excited about good marks”
- “ Don't bitch and moan about keeping my room clean”
- “ Put up with bitchy moods”
- “ Don't ask me how my day went, after 17 years I think we've established the answer will always be the same”

Transition into “Big School” from Early Intervention, a Parent Perspective.

Parent Council for Deaf Education has recently submitted to the an inquiry by the NSW Legislative Council’s Standing Committee on Transition Support of Students with complex needs. We welcome this inquiry as an opportunity for parents of deaf children with additional needs to share with the government, the frustrations and difficulties faced by the child and family around transition points. These could be moving to primary, high school or into life after school. Case studies made up our submission and below with the parent’s permission, we share one of these stories with you:

Transition from early intervention services and preschool, to mainstream primary school:

David is 6 years old. He is profoundly deaf and wears a cochlear Implant and hearing aid. David also has mild cerebral palsy.

We had been told he was profoundly deaf shortly after leaving hospital, he had hearing aids 4 weeks later and we started early intervention of speech and language at 6 weeks. He was also doing regular physiotherapy and at 3yo started occupational therapy.

Just after he turned 3 he started a preschool which he attended for 3 years. He and our family had access to a special needs teacher every day he was at preschool who worked closely with our early intervention provider. There was daily communication about his progress in verbal and written form.

After two years of information gathering, research, and talking to other families, my husband and I finally decided that the mainstream public school system would be the best for David and started meetings with our chosen school and DET. David was given 10 hours of support a week based on his hearing and physical needs. This is divided into 3 hours of Itinerant Teacher of the Deaf support and 7 hours of a teacher's Aid per week.

We thought David was ready for school. We thought we were ready for school. We could never have imagined how unprepared we were for the difference between early intervention and preschool, and school.

We have an itinerant teacher of the deaf, who keeps a communication book for us but that is the only information that is actually given to us.

David was our first child off to school and it was only from other parents in the playground who already had children at school that we learned that "the school don't tell you anything, but don't worry, you'll hear as soon as something goes wrong". We had gone from hearing how David had coped with every day at preschool to only hearing when there was a problem, which leaves a huge area of uncertainty in between.

In reality David has had trouble coping both with listening and trying to write at the same time in a mainstream classroom environment. He had gone from a very supportive learning environment to having to manage on his own for much of the week. This was and is difficult for him.

We were also unprepared for the other class parents’ attitude towards the help that David was getting. We had always tried to treat our son just like any other kid and tried to make him completely included in his community. We had never really talked about his disability and only discussed it with other parents when they asked a direct question. We were really surprised and unsure how to react when parents wanted to know "well, why does David get extra help?" and why shouldn't their child who was having trouble reading get help? Equating hearing impairment with slow readers or other learning difficulties.

We struggled. We wanted David to fit into the mainstream system and we wanted

him to be like every other kid, but we know he's not. We wanted to stand back and trust the education system, we didn't want to interfere but we didn't know what was going on.

Some things that might have helped:

- In the transition before going to school, David was invited to sit in on kindergarten classes to familiarise himself with class routines and expectations. Looking back now it would have been really helpful if there had been a facility for parents to sit in and watch how the class actually worked rather than just being told the general idea of how it works.
- Kindergarten teachers are dealing with a lot of new students and anxious parents but perhaps in the case of children with additional needs or disabilities, I would suggest that a fairly standard multiple choice form could be filled in by the teacher weekly to help parents understand how their child is coping with the class environment - reading, numbers, handwriting, library etc as well as social situations such as drop off, recess and lunch.
- Preschools and early intervention providers need to be very clear with parents about the changes that will take place in schools. Parents need to be told explicitly that they will not receive the same regular updates on their child’s progress .

By Leesa C, Mum of David.

Profile: Chris Rehn, CEO RIDBC



Chris has recently joined RIDBC as their new CEO.

Here Chris shares some insights about his life experiences

Childhood memory...

I recall driving past RIDBC as a child about 5 years old on a daily basis. Back then I had no understanding of either hearing or vision loss but knew that there was this one place at North Rocks that did!

Inspiration....

Work from “utopia” or the solution backwards to where you are today, not the other way round. People will always tell you the 1000 reasons why you can’t do something starting

from where you are today!

Getting it right for the child and family, People put their trust in us to deliver the best possible services and this is a privilege that we cannot take lightly.

Parenting....

Still a mystery to me, but working on it every day and most nights!

Marriage....

I am blessed to have a beautiful bride who also is the most amazing friend and mother.

Children....

3 is my limit. The love of a child is like nothing else in this world. You’re a child for such a small part of your life, don’t rush to become an adult.

My Parents always told me....

There is always two sides to every story

I wish I had....

A few more hours in the day

I wish I hadn’t....

Tried accounting as a career

Career highlight....

I think all aspects of my career to date have been special in their own way. Even roles that I have not excelled in have been valuable in my development thus far. Seeing some of the amazing outcomes in hearing and vision loss achieved through early detection, quality intervention, access to technology and great parenting tells me miracles do happen, its great to work in an environment where you see such positive outcomes for children. Gaining the current position was worth the 7 year wait!

Life Lesson....

Nothing is impossible. Hard work and a focus gets you there.

Technology...

Can deliver some amazing things in so many different ways. But technology needs people to work.

I see the impact wonderful technology can have in the lives of children with vision and / or hearing impairments daily however some real

“wow” moments have come from seeing those with additional disabilities use technology such as eye gaze

Switches to communicate with people.

And my 2 year old took to the Iphone way too quickly compared to her father!

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) is Australia’s major independent special educator. RIDBC’s primary purpose is to provide high quality educational services to children who have significant hearing and/or vision impairment, including children who have additional disabilities. In affiliation with the University of Newcastle, RIDBC conducts a centre for research and professional development (The Renwick Centre) in the education of children with impaired hearing or vision.



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Our mission:

‘To empower parents in NSW to support their children who are deaf or hearing impaired in reaching their full potential through information, support networks and representation.’

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Sound News is produced by Parent Council for Deaf Education to inform and educate families with a child who is deaf or hearing impaired.

Enquiries, comments and suggestions are welcome.

Note: We use the term ‘deaf’ to mean all types of deafness. Copyright.

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