2020 ANNUAL REPORT EARBUS FOUNDATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALUES, MISSION & VISION

Earbus Foundation of Western Australia's mission is to reduce the incidence and impact of middle ear disease (Otitis media) in Aboriginal and at-risk children in Western Australia to achieve parity with non-Indigenous children.

The Foundation exists to support all children and their families who may be at risk of developing Otitis media or hearing loss.

Our Vision is that current and future generations of Indigenous children can succeed at school unhindered by the debilitating effects of Otitis media and its impacts upon their ability to learn and achieve their full potential.

Our Vision also extends to early detection, prevention and access to diagnostic services of hearing loss for newborn babies.

Our Core Values are the centre of all our internal and external interactions and are fundamental to everything we do. These values are the non-negotiable, unchanging heart of our organisation. We stress the critical importance of all employees living these values and representing these values to the public we serve.

BE OPEN & HONEST, BE LOYAL & SUPPORTIVE, BE BRILLIANT

CONTENTS

Chairperson Report	3
CEO Report	4
Facts About Otitis Media	8
Financial Snapshot	10
Director, Clinical Services	12
Program Reports	
Kimberley	18
Pilbara South	20
Central Pilbara	22
Pilbara East	24
Goldfields	26
Southwest	28
Metro	30
Esperance	32
Newborn Hearing Screening	34
Hear Today	36
Highlights 2020	38
Earbus Board of Directors	40
Team, Consultants & Volunteers	42
Sponsors and Supporters	44
Partners	45
Awards and Recognition	45



CHAIRPERSON REPORT

I first came in contact with the Earbus program in 2009 at Moorditj Noongar Community College in Midvale, during the time in which I was Manager Aboriginal Education in the Swan Education District.

I suffered from ear problems when I was young and my son also suffered from ear infections constantly as a young child. In my role in education I constantly promoted ear and eye health in schools. But unfortunately, when our parents and/ or caregivers got their children's ears checked, this was a hard issue because the closest Aboriginal Medical Service was in Mirrabooka or East Perth. Then they would have to be seen by an ENT for which there was a long waiting period. With our families moving around there was no follow up to ensure that they could attend the specialist appointment.

The Earbus program was a godsend for these families as a majority of the children had some sort of ear complaint which affected their attendance, learning ability and caused behaviour problems, because they couldn't clearly hear what was being said to them and follow instructions.

"The Earbus program was a godsend for these families"

With Earbus working through the school, students get tested, checked by the doctor and receive medication if needed and in some cases are seen by an ENT, with the doctor and ENT going to the school to see the students. There was no waiting period and if a procedure was needed it was done within six-eight weeks. The school staff and Earbus staff collaborated to ensure the families were kept up to date and had follow-up. The first ENT procedure list, which was at Swan District Hospital, was a success with all but one child attending their appointment and that child was seen in the next list; the school played a big role in getting the child and family to the hospital.

After 12 months the children's attendance increased, children's poor behaviour decreased and learning had improved. I then asked Earbus if they would go to five other schools in Midland where the families moved around, thus this is the early history of the program working in schools and communities throughout the state.

As the saying goes, from little things big things grow.

Sue Beath Kariyarra Elder Chairperson, Earbus Foundation

CEO REPORT

Like many organisations around the world, Earbus Foundation was presented with an unexpected stress test in 2020 – a stern examination of our purpose, our systems, our people and our resilience.

In reflecting on our achievements and our challenges I acknowledge the wider context within which our important work sits; we are grateful for the leadership and community spirit that saw the potentially devastating impacts of novel coronavirus managed and mitigated in Western Australia in particular, and across Australia. We protected ourselves and our community by conscientiously heeding health advice, behaving responsibly and caring for each other.

I pay particular tribute to the leadership of Aboriginal health and community organisations – many of whom we partner with – in keeping Aboriginal communities safe right across the country. Our early decision was to be guided by them in regards to each community's needs and to accept their leadership about how we could best assist. During the lockdown months of autumn and winter we managed to distribute free supplies of soap, sanitiser and tissues to many needy sites who were struggling to access these items. Due to generous sponsors we managed to replenish these supplies and kept up distribution throughout the year.

We were intrinsically well placed to deal with some of the COVID challenges and the heightened health measures; mask wearing, enhanced hygiene and

Paul Higginbotham, Earbus Foundation CEO

trum

"I pay particular tribute to the leadership of **Aboriginal health** and community organisations many of whom we partner with - in **keeping Aboriginal** communities safe right across the country. "

other adjustments were a natural extension of our existing focus on these aspects of health. Strict social distancing measures did change the way we delivered services and for most of Term 2 our staff worked from home and adhered to strict health monitoring measures while on Outreach trips.

Closed internal state borders presented an additional challenge, as did the massive reduction in air travel options; our Goldfields and Esperance teams clocked up a lot of driving kilometres in order to keep services running into those regions. We were particularly challenged by the internal border closures within the Kimberley and eventually sought and obtained biosecurity clearance to allow our clinicians and screeners to move freely and continue providing services.

With the support of new major sponsorships, we extended services in 2020 to Pilbara communities of Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Wakathuni, Bellary Springs, Newman and Jigalong. The support of Rio Tinto and BHP made these new ventures possible and resourced them appropriately.

The disruption to services and the reduced client numbers during the pandemic made it very difficult to interpret data in 2020 as we rely on consistency and persistence of treatment to produce changes in ear health outcomes. We were able, however, to present some overarching aggregated data and trend patterns at the inaugural State of The Ears event in September. Held at the State Theatre Centre, it responded to the Auditor-General's reported concerns in a May 2019 Report on Aboriginal children's ear health:

"Entities do not use existing data to build a clear picture of the prevalence of OM. Researchers, government entities and non-Government organisations (NGOs) all collect some data, but this is rarely shared. Without a coordinated and collaborative approach to data sharing it is difficult to evaluate what programs work best and where, and to provide an accurate picture of OM in the State."

State of The Ears tabled Earbus data and painted a picture of OM prevalence in the regions in which we work. There is scope for this to become an important multi-agency annual event. There is too little accountability and transparency in our field, particularly where taxpayer dollars are involved.

I commend this Annual Report to you with its detailed focus on data and outcomes. We appointed our former **Board Chair, Dr Carol Dowling, to the newly created position of Director of Research** as part of our continuing commitment to measuring and documenting our impact on Aboriginal children's lives and futures.



During 2020 we worked diligently and creatively to retain all staff, maintain financial viability and keep services running – I am proud to lead such remarkable staff. Their courage in the face of these challenges and their commitment to the work of helping Aboriginal children to hear and learn is inspirational.

In 2020 Ms Sue Beath took over as Chairperson of our Board, with Dr Julie Owen as her Deputy. It is the first time that both senior positons have been held by Aboriginal directors. **Our board membership was 50% Aboriginal this year** as Greg Narrier returned home from many years in the ACT and became a valuable addition to our Board. I thank all our Board Members for their contribution, counsel and support during a very demanding year. Ms Wendy Duncan segued from the Board into a role as our second Patron and it is wonderful to have her continuing involvement.

I thank all our corporate sponsors for their belief in what we do and their loyalty, many of them provided additional support in 2020 and it was deeply appreciated. I make especial mention of

Federal Member for Perth, Patrick Gorman MP with Earbus CEO Paul Higginbotham aboard the Metro Earbus the continuing generous support of the Neilson Foundation whose donation has given us the confidence and means to grow.

Our partnerships with Aboriginal Medical Services are pivotal and I offer our sincere thanks and admiration for the role they play in our work. We are honoured and humbled by their support and trust.

To all our stakeholders – schools, daycares, playgroups, Aboriginal Medical Services across the state, Starlight Children's Foundation, RFDS, and all our volunteers who share our passion for this work, a sincere thank you in this most challenging of years.

After a sobering, unanticipated year it is still too early to know what our "new normal" might look like in 2021. The only certainty is that our three core values of openness and honesty, loyalty and supportiveness and brilliance will anchor us, as always, to face the future with courage, boldness and resolve.

> Paul Higginbotham Earbus CEO

"After a sobering, unanticipated year it is still too early to know what our "new normal" might look like in 2021. The only certainty is that our three core values of openness and honesty, loyalty and supportiveness and brilliance will anchor us, as always, to face the future with courage, boldness and resolve. "

Paul Higginbotham, Earbus CEO

FACTS OTITIS MEDIA

Aboriginal children have the worst ear health of any people in the world, with prevalence rates 10 times that of non-Indigenous children.¹

Ear disease often results in an avoidable hearing loss in early childhood, and children who can't hear, can't learn.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) specifies that rates of Otitis media above 4% in children constitutes a "massive public health problem" requiring urgent attention (WHO/CIBA Foundation, 1996).

Costs to the community of middle-ear disease (OM):

- lost well-being (estimated between \$1.05b and \$2.6b a year);
- productivity and other non-financial costs (\$67 m annually); and
- the total top-down health system expenditure on OM (\$391.6m a year in 2008).²

Costs to WA education systems arise from children suffering educational and developmental delays, low levels of literacy and numeracy, school absences, behaviour issues and disengagement, leading to increased risk of contact with the juvenile justice system. Around 74% of juveniles in detention in WA are Aboriginal children, a massive overrepresentation. High rates of recidivism can lead to life-long entanglement in the justice system.

Aboriginal children in Australia experience an average of 32 months of middle-ear infections between the ages of 0 and 5 years, compared to just three months for non-Aboriginal children.³

OM is highly treatable, but left undiagnosed and untreated it has multiple flow-on effects that ultimately perpetuate the very poverty that gives rise to the disease in the first place, thus continuing the cycle. With effective treatment, children can avoid sustained hearing loss and have their opportunities to learn and succeed at school fully restored.

As various Australian Senate Committees have heard:

"...hearing impairment is a significant contributor to the causal pathway that represents a failure basically of education and health to deal with those issues and they get picked up by the justice system...hearing loss may not cause criminal activity, when considering the stigmatizing effects of hearing impairment on self-concept, educational attainment and social skills, there is a causal link to criminal activity." ⁴

"There is a crisis in Aboriginal ear and hearing health in Australia. Aboriginal people suffer ear disease and hearing loss at up to ten times the rate of non-Aboriginal Australians, and arguably the highest rate of any people in the world" ⁵

REFERENCES:

- **1** Senate Inquiry of the 42nd Australian Parliament – "Hear Us: Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia" 2010 p xv
- **2** Report by Access Economics Pty Ltd for Glaxo Smith Kline, The Cost Burden of Otitis Media in Australia, February 2009
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, p134
- **4** http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ ctte/hearing_health/report/c08.htm#anc4
- **5** Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2010, p.xva

OPERATING RESULTS

In 2020 Earbus Foundation returned a net surplus of \$339,957, in excess of the original budget projection for the year of \$254,000. There was a potentially significant impact on budget projections as a result of the coronavirus pandemic with Audiology trips and Outreach trips being cancelled or rescheduled. For the first time Earbus Foundation had to produce a rolling budget to proactively track this turbulent financial environment.

Total cash income for 2020 (including GST) was \$4,332,583. Overall the budgetary position showed a considerable increase from 2019 due to additional sponsorships from Rio Tinto and BHP. Earbus Foundation sets a target Budget Profits to Earnings Ratio of 7%; this year's final P/E ratio was 8% as a result of the additional income. Variable costs also fell where trips were cancelled, although some fixed costs remained.

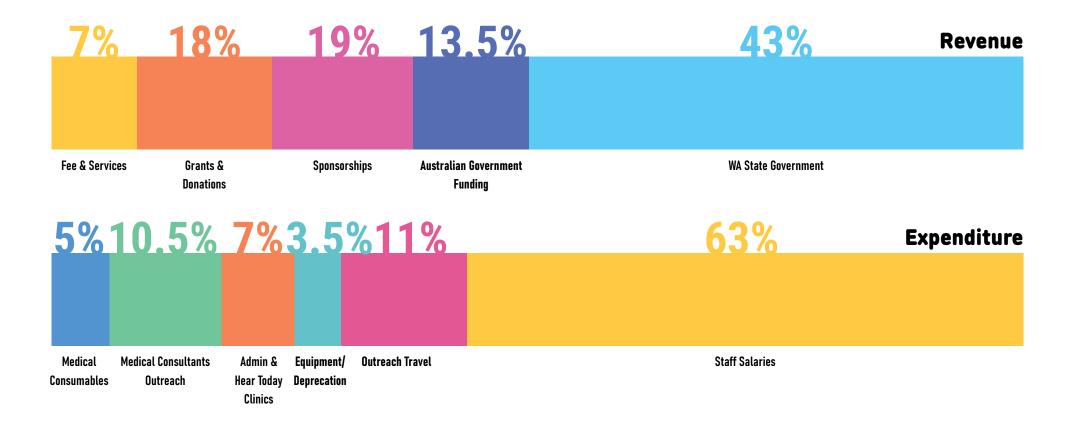
In most years since clinical services commenced Earbus Foundation has returned annual surpluses in line with, or exceeding, budget projections. Surplus accumulated funds are held as contingency to support long term stability, business reinvestment and eventually providing an option of establishing operational headquarters in proprietary premises.

CAPITAL ASSETS

Audiology and medical equipment was again funded by grants and donations from trusts and foundations throughout the year. In particular, the acquisition and importation of the new TOMi Scope technology was made possible through generous grants. With financial support from BHP and Rio Tinto we purchased and designed two new customised Earbuses; we also acquired a 4WD vehicle for use in South Pilbara operations. Total accumulated assets at end of 2020 are \$2,955,878.

FUNDING SOURCES

Earbus holds contracts with both state and federal governments, provides contracted Audiology services to WACHS, generates significant fee income from testing and assessment services at its Northbridge office (and elsewhere) and attracts philanthropic support from individuals and charitable trusts. The Neilson Foundation has been the largest individual contributor with generous and much appreciated donations of \$100,000 in each of the past four years. In 2020 Earbus Foundation submitted 30 grant applications of which 10 were successful with a total grant income of \$321,132 received. Among our new sponsors in 2020 we welcomed Rio Tinto, Woodside and BHP. Earbus Foundation's Annual Audited Financial Statements are lodged with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission and can be downloaded from their website at www.acnc.gov.au





DIRECTOR, CLINICAL SERVICES

2020 brought some challenges and opportunities for clinical staff working across our clinical programs. Earbus Audiologists, Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and Screeners worked collaboratively with many external partners to achieve outstanding results for so many children and families. It has been gratifying to recognise that many children accessing services through the Outreach programs, Newborn Hearing Screening and the Hear Today clinic would potentially not be engaged with these important hearing assessments and screening checks without the presence of Earbus Foundation.

To hear a child say "When I grow up I want to be an ear doctor" cannot help but inspire our teams to ensure that each child seen is treated with respect for culture, family and tradition and that children feel safe and secure attending any of our clinical services. I continue to believe that the Earbus Outreach program offers outcomes and results that need to be replicated across the rest of Australia. Our partner organisations are pivotal to these outcomes, with each bringing opportunities to learn from each other for the benefit of Western Australian children.

Despite the global pandemic which impacted on so many in 2020, Earbus Outreach teams were some of the only teams on the ground throughout the March to June period. Many communities approached us, requesting services continue as the isolation and shutdowns had negatively impacted on the health of children in community. As a result, our clinical teams both attended communities and arranged for the drop-off of vital soap, tissues and hygiene supplies so that families could protect themselves – supplies not being available in many regional towns. Our Covid-19 response was implemented early in March with additional cleaning of all surfaces in all clinics, social distancing and working-from-home requirements changing the way our staff and clients interacted both on the road, in our regional offices and also at our Northbridge clinic and Head Office.

This year we continued to support The University of Western Australia's Audiology Program and Social Work Programs, The University of Notre Dame, and Marr Mooditj Training Aboriginal Corporation

Dr Lara Shur, Director of Clinical Services and Earbus Foundation Co-Founder

with clinical placements and internships for the next generation of health care workers and professionals.

In addition to university students we have also continued to provide practicum placements for other professionals, primarily nursing students from across the country, attempting to improve their ear health skills.

"In addition to university students we have also continued to provide practicum placements for other professionals, primarily nursing students from across the country, attempting to improve their ear health skills."

Partner organisations such as Royal Flying Doctor Service, Starlight Children's Foundation, Aboriginal Medical Services - Bega Garnbirringu Health Service; Ord Valley Aborginal Health Service; South West Aboriginal Health Services; Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation and Yura Yungi Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation - Schools, Department for Child Protection and Family Support, WANSLEA, Leonora Pharmacy, Pilbara Pharmacy Services, Gumula Aboriginal Corporation, Guardian Pharmacy Tom Price and Jigalong Aboriginal Corporation have provided invaluable support to service delivery throughout the year. The achievements in terms of the management of ear health across the regions are shared by all who work closely for the benefit of children and communities.

Earbus has continued to provide Audiology support services to communities in Newman, South Hedland and the Kimberley under contract with WA Country Health Services (WACHS). This information sharing between organisations ensures we aren't duplicating services and that those requiring services are able to receive them in a timely way.

This year Earbus continued to support the Connecting Kids for Communities initiative in Kwinana. Staff at 6 Early Learning Centres were supported by Earbus Clinical staff to provide basic ear health screening to children under 4 years of age. Children requiring follow up treatment and educational support for ear health were seen by the Metro Earbus team to allow a seamless service provision to these families.

> **Dr Lara Shur** Director, Clinical Services



Earbus Nurse Audiometrist Dee Parker, Registered Nurse Michelle Andrews and Audiologist Belinda Porte Garcia unpack a vehicle for a clinical visit

100000

over 228,000^{km} flown on 188 flights

to make 649 visits to 121 schools and communities

providing 21,901 consults, including 12,184 ear checks 3,796 General or Nurse Practitioner consults 5,583 Audiologist consults, and 388 Ear, Nose & Throat consults

to **5,298** individuals

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

"Without this service I would be very fearful for ear health in our region and that it may capitulate quickly. Other services may visit once a term. If they miss a student on their one visit, that student may not be seen by ear specialists for six months or more, despite having serious hearing issues. More importantly, the trust relationship that Earbus has formed with the community requires enormous investments of time and energy. It is a relationship that is not easily formed and should be treasured when it comes to health issues in Indigenous communities."

> **Lewis Mulvey,** Principal, Yiyili Aboriginal Community School

PROGRAM REPORT KINBERLEY

The Kimberley team had some disruption to services with community closures across some sites from March to June 2020. Nevertheless, the team saw 1,012 children this year with 314 new children added to the program. The program ran across 14 sites spanning an area of 117,514 km². One of the communities we visit is primarily accessible by small plane as it is 4 hours from the nearest regional town by road.

Key to the success of the Earbus program in the Kimberley was the partnerships with Yura Yungi Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation (YYMS) in Halls Creek and Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service (OVAHS) in Kununurra. These Aboriginal Medical Services have exceptional staff who have supported the program on-the-ground and the improvements in ear health are as a result of these collaborative and positive partnerships.

The nurses through the Kimberley Population Health Unit of WA Country Health Services (WACHS) also provided ongoing continuity of care in some of the towns where Earbus provided services. WACHS manage the contract for the Kimberley program and it is important to acknowledge staff across the region.

"It was runny every day and when it was hot it used to come out from my ears. Earbus looked in my ears with that ear thing and it got better... I like going on the big bus. They check my ears every time I go there and I wash my hands with the little soap and then I go back to class and then we learn and read books and do writing and eat an apple and go on the swing."

> Seven year old child in the Kimberley, interviewed by Dr Carol Dowling

Our Kimberley-based team saw changes in personnel over the year and the assistance from Perth-based staff filled the gaps as they arose. We had two nurses fly in from Perth during the year, Nurse Practitioners, GP's and two Audiologists - some during clinical visits and others to assist the local team. Community engagement in the region went from strength to strength and in November, our Director of Research, Dr Carol Dowling, visited the region to capture the stories of Aboriginal participants, community members and other stakeholders in relation to ear health and the Earbus program. These interviews captured the overwhelming positive regard with which our program is viewed by those who receive the service.

2,669 ear checks were performed, 538 Audiology tests were undertaken and 514 additional GP consultations took place.

Dr Lara Shur Director, Clinical Services



PROGRAM REPORT PILBARA SOUTH

It has been an exciting year for the new South Pilbara Program, generously funded by Rio Tinto, which the community has embraced.

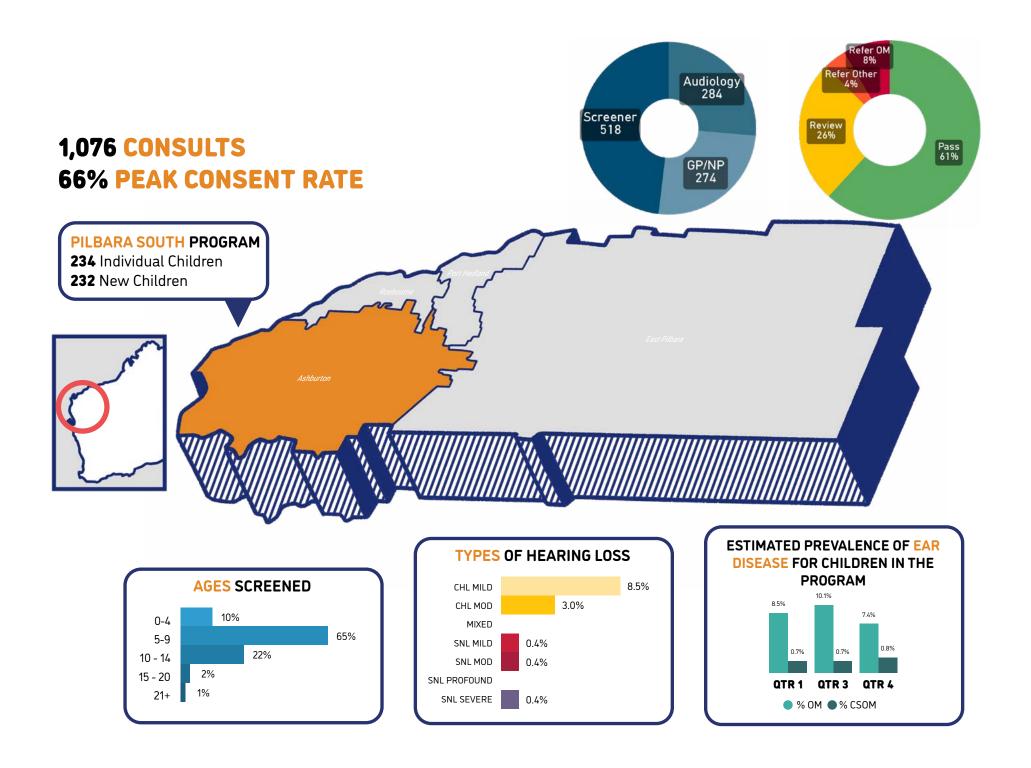
The arrival of the new South Pilbara bus, sponsored by Rio Tinto and Sunsuper, added to the excitement when the Earbus arrived to schools. The artworks designed by the children captured the fundamental message that the children, school staff and the community want to be involved in current and future generations of Indigenous children's success at school and beyond. They want every child to have equal opportunity to achieve their full potential unhindered by the debilitating effects of Otitis media as per Earbus Foundation of WA's vision.

The team, which consisted of Audiologists Dr Rachel Meddings and Kate Lau; Registered Nurse Catherine Zeevaarder, GP's Dr Karen Moller and Dr Sally Simpson; Nurse Practitioner Deirdre Louw and Administration Officer Jenna Cooper, worked well in partnership with Gumula Aboriginal Corporation. 518 ear checks were provided and results showed 11.5% Hearing Loss, 12.4% Otitis media and 1.3% Chronic Suppuritive Otitis media (CSOM), as well as 2.6% perforations. Since the program started there has been a marked improvement however it is projected, with an increase of the numbers of consents in 2021, more children with ear disease will be identified.

There have been outstanding collaborations, especially from Child and Community Health Nurse Sarah Johnston from Paraburdoo Hospital; Stacey Robinson from Nintirri and all the staff from Tom Price Primary School; North Tom Price Primary School; Tom Price SHS; Paraburdoo Primary School and Lucie Betteley from Wakathuni Play Group. These collaborations have proven vital to meeting the needs and improving health outcomes for the children within South Pilbara. 'We are very thankful to have the Earbus come to us and help keep our kids' ears healthy'

Parent, Pilbara South

Daniel Larranaga Program Manager, Pilbara



PROGRAM REPORT CENTRAL PILBARA

Although there was no dedicated bus in 2020 in the Central Pilbara, the excitement is in the air as the children from Newman and Jigalong are aware that there is one on the way thanks to BHP. The children have all been involved in designing the new bus art.

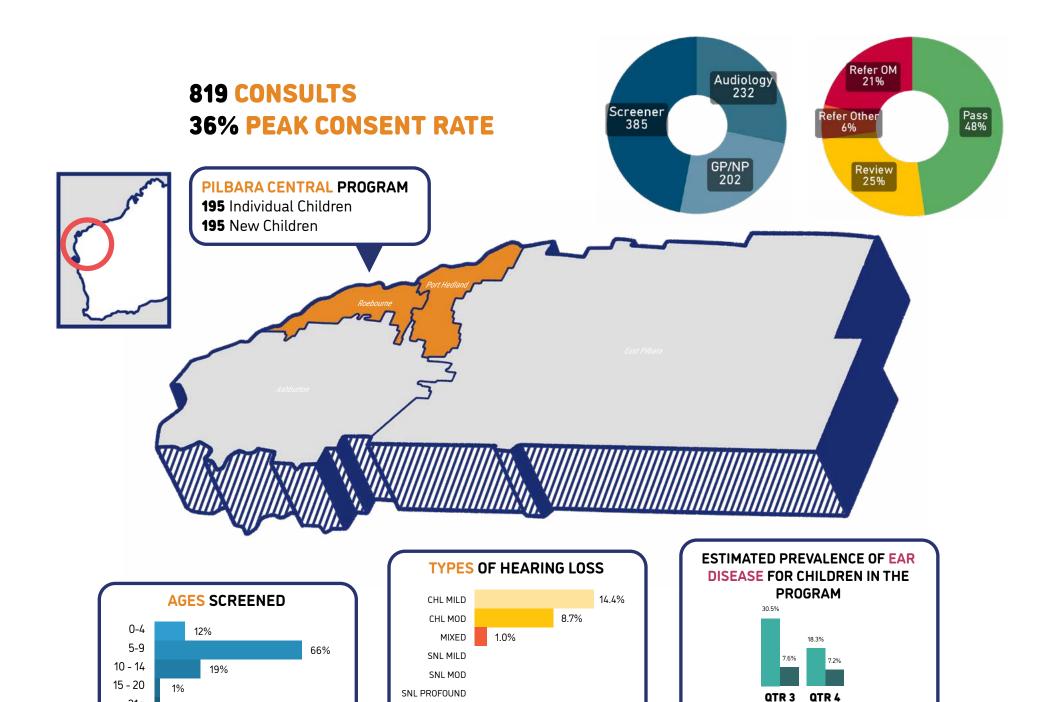
Central Pilbara is a new area to Earbus and has proven to be an area of high need. The program, generously funded by BHP, has paved the way for regular monthly visits. Earbus currently visits South Newman Primary School; Newman Primary School; Newman Senior High School and Jigalong Remote Community School.

In the short time that we have been there we have performed 385 ear checks. Within this small cohort there has been 23.1% Hearing loss, 25.1% Otitis Media, 8.2% Chronic Suppurative Otitis Media, 17.2% Perforations identified. It is projected that with increased engagement with schools and community there will be an increase in the number of consents and therefore an increase in the number of children identified with middle ear disease. This will enable the children to be treated early and have better ear health outcomes and better learning opportunities at school.

The team consisted of GP's Dr Karen Moller and Dr Sally Simpson; Nurse Practitioner Deirdre Louw; Registered Nurse Catherine Zeevaarder; Audiologists Dr Rachel Meddings and Kate Lau and a recently appointed Administration Officer, Jenna Cooper, who has family links throughout the Pilbara including in Jigalong. Earbus would also like to acknowledge Oasis Newman for support with accommodation. 'The Earbus team are so patient with our kids, especially if they feel scared and upset. They even come back another time to try again.'

Parent, Central Pilbara

Daniel Larranaga Program Manager, Pilbara



SNL SEVERE 0.5%

% OM % CSOM

21+

1%

PROGRAM REPORT PILBARA EAST

Pilbara East is a well established team that is firmly ingrained within communities. The team consisted of Audiologist Tim Kop; Nurse Practitioner Deirdre Louw; GP Dr Sally Simpson; Registered Nurse Michelle Andrew and Administration Officer Chontae Hayden. With ongoing support from ENT Professor Harvey Coates, the team have set a benchmark for delivering high standards of health care and education.

The Pilbara East team visit Baler Primary School; Cassia Primary School and Education Support Centre; Rose Nowers Child Care Centre; South Hedland Primary School; Strelley Remote Community School; Warralong Remote Community School; Yandeyarra Remote Community School; Nullagine Community; Marble Bar Community and Treloar Child Care Centre and recently we have engaged with Hedland Senior High.

While there is still a high incidence of ear disease across the region: 20.3% Hearing Loss, 18.6%

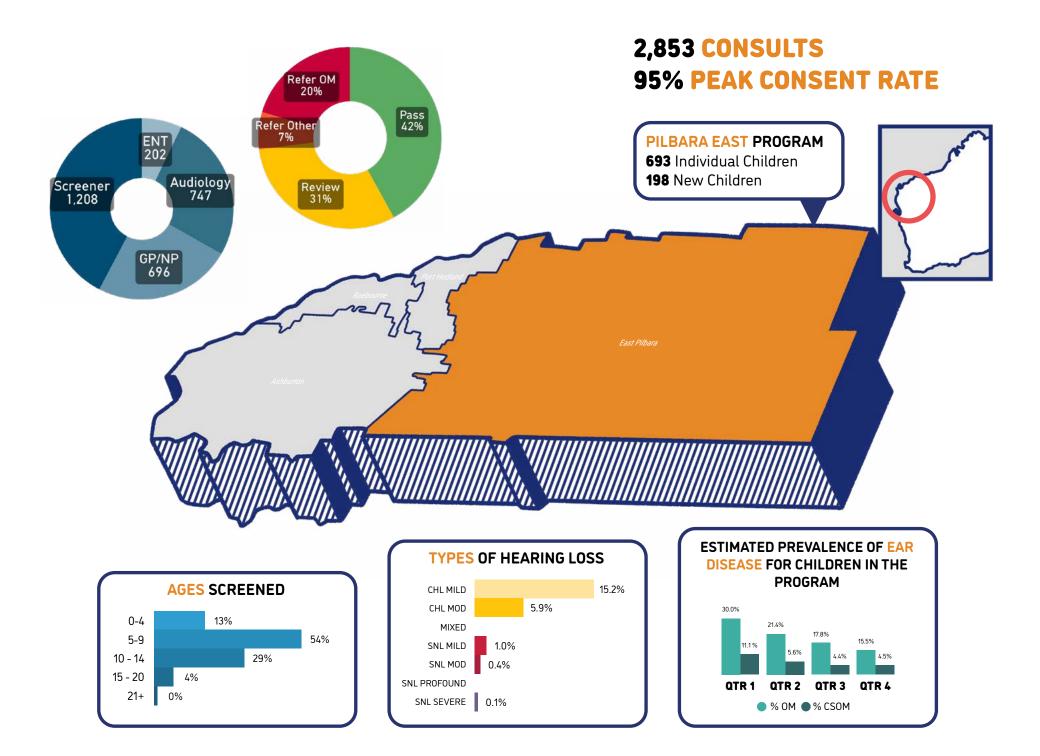
Otitis media, 5.3% Chronic Suppuritive Otitis media and 8.0% Perforations recorded from more than 1,200 screens this year, we have seen a marked improvement in pathology due to our regular visits. With Earbus' continued work in the the region we expect to see this trend continue.

This program is made possible thanks to the support of Fortescue Metal Group, Roy Hill Community Foundation and Atlas Iron. We also thank Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Health Service, Pilbara Pharmacy Services and Silverchain for their ongoing support.

We also acknowledge Australian Government funding through the Healthy Ears: Better Hearing, Better Listening program administered by Rural Health West. 'The Earbus mob found that my child had limited hearing. I'm so glad I saw them while my child was so young so we can do something about it!'

Parent, Pilbara East

Daniel Larranaga Program Manager, Pilbara



PROGRAM REPORT

2020 saw a change of approach for the Goldfields region. Instead of eight trips a year consisting of five days each in 2019, we aimed to implement 10 clinical trips of four days each. This approach improved consistency of treatment pathways especially for students with significant ear health concerns. The region was partially funded by Rural Health West via their 'Healthy Ears - Better Hearing, Better Listening Grant' as well as our long term regional partner AngloGold Ashanti, who also supported us this year by funding a parttime position for Kalgoorlie-based Screener, Carol Yarran. Further, our collaborative partnerships with WA Country Health Service (Goldfields), Bega Garnbirringu and WANSLEA ensured consistency of care for children in between clinical visits. Our sincerest appreciation to these partners for their contribution to this year's pleasing statistics.

This year the Goldfields program provided over 3,916 individual consults in the region to 11 sites, adding O'Connor Education Support School to the roster. This number included 2,094 screens, 929 Audiology consults, 810 GP/NP consults and 83 ENT consults delivered across nine school-based clinical trips; one by-appointment Park Up program delivered under Covid-19 restrictions during school closures and 10 weeks of regional screening. Rates of 17.5% Hearing Loss, 23.7% OM and 5.6% CSOM, all of which are reductions on 2019 figures, are slowly but surely approaching our target of the WHO benchmark.

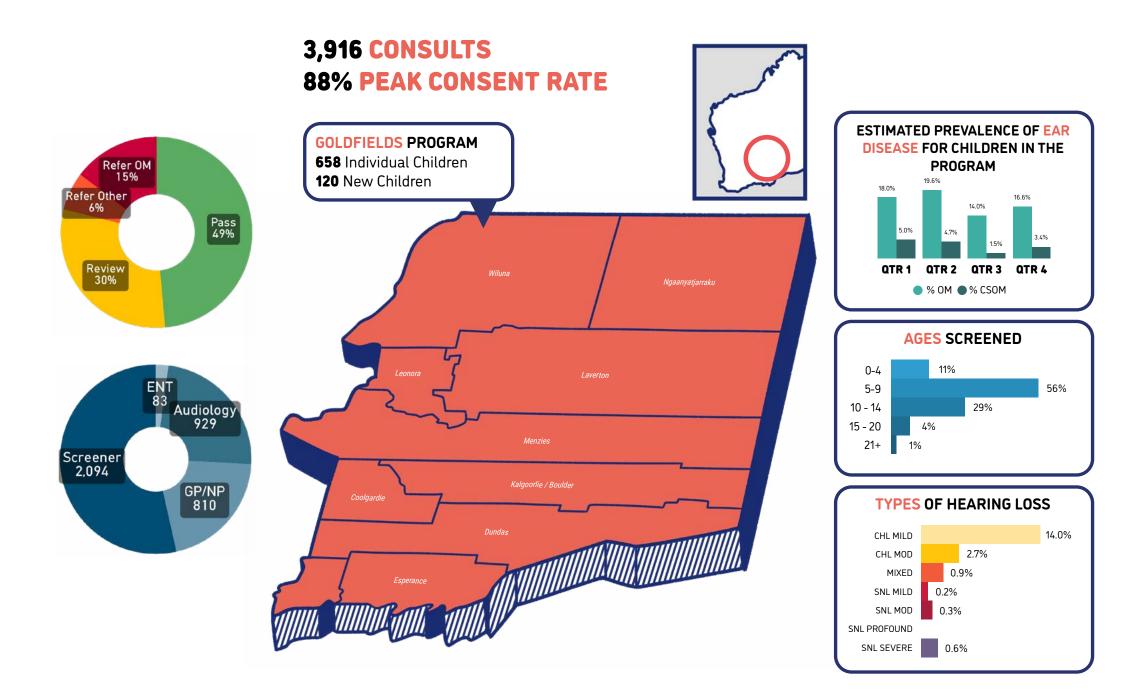
Strong community and parent engagement, reflected by the regional consent rate of 88% and surgical attendance rate of 100% at Kalgoorlie Health Campus, and those referred to Perth Children's Hospital, demonstrates the success of Earbus and our partners in this space.

Surgery and consistent follow up of children in the community has led to improved ear health and hearing outcomes and as a result children are more engaged in the classroom and able to participate in conversations and learning. With healthy ears, children are happy to attend school and confident to be part of the school community, when previously they may not have attended due to discharging ears. Throughout the year the team have been approached by school staff for support and education on the effective use of classroom-based hearing support aids and invited as guests to school concerts and events.

We thank Nurse Audiometrist Dee Parker, Audiologists Dr Rachel Meddings and Tim Kop; Registered Nurse Charlotte Radford; GP's Dr Karen Moller, Dr Damien Zilm and Dr Michael Cudjoe and ENT's Professor Harvey Coates A0 and Dr Anton Hinton-Bayre for their support of the Goldfields team and the region in 2020.

We also acknowledge the hard work, commitment and contribution of the Goldfields team consisting of Nurse Practitioner Deirdre Louw; Screener and Administration Officer Calvin Williams; Screener Carol Yarran; Audiologist Lucy Mitchell and Registered Nurse Sarah Watson, who is sadly leaving the role to continue her studies in Community Health. Sarah's impact has been invaluable and her absence will be felt.

> Jessica Bennett-Hullin Program Manager, Goldfields



PROGRAM REPORT SOUTHWEST

In 2020 the Southwest program welcomed Harvey, Brunswick Junction and St Anne's and Fairview Primary Schools, taking the total number of schools in the region region to 29 and increasing the number of children in the program to 1,086.

Despite the setbacks of 2020, we aligned our programs with the Department of Health's Covid-19 guidelines and maintained a service in the region, which enabled us to see high priority children and provide much needed continuity of care to those in need. It was also an opportunity to distribute hand sanitiser, soap and tissues to children and families at a time when there was very little available across the state.

Full service provision resumed in Term 3 with extra Screening, Audiology and Clinical visits. In total, the Southwest program completed over 158 visits across the region enabling us to perform 2,502 screens, 1,183 Audiology appointments and 327 GP/ NP consults in 2020. Our valued collaboration with South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) facilitated 8 referrals to ENT in the region. The consent rate of 85% remains a constant in the region despite the new schools to the program – this really couldn't be achieved without the ongoing support from the schools and their staff.

Looking back at the rates of Chronic Suppurative Otitis media (CSOM) in the region in 2018 when the program was initiated, a number of schools were above the World Health Organisation benchmark of 4%. In 2020, this rate has reduced to below 0.7% across the region that we serve.

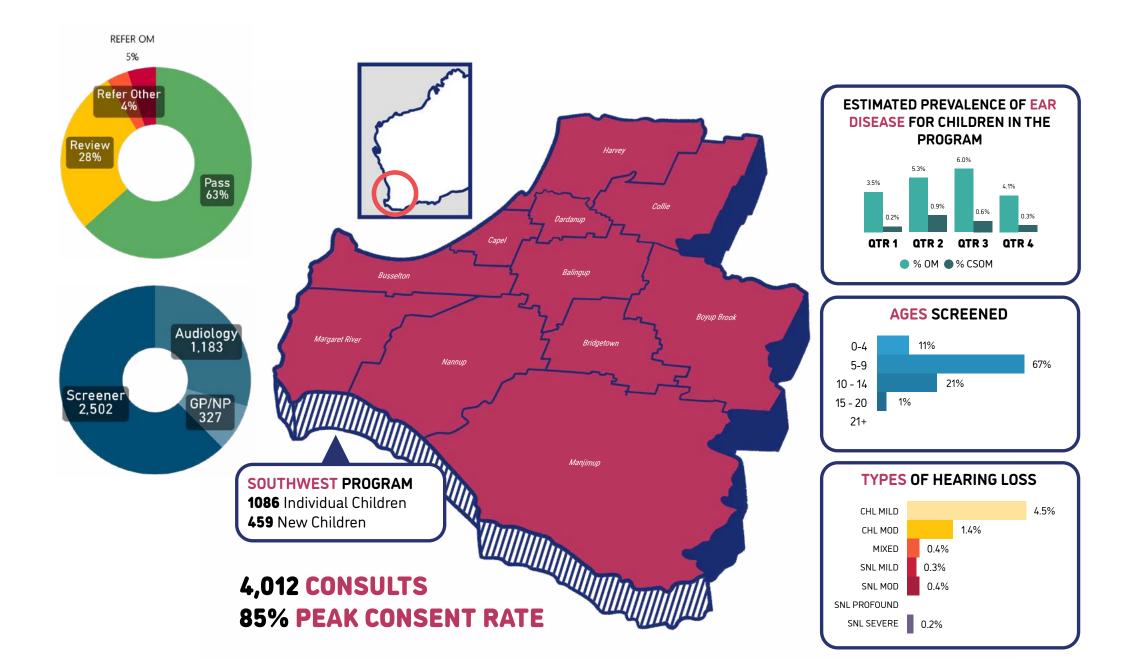
Our mission is to reduce the incidence of CSOM in Aboriginal and at-risk children in Western Australia to below 4%. The Southwest is a great example of how our team's persistence and continued care combined with the support of families, schools particularly Djidi Djidi Community School - and our amazing sponsors Alcoa, Aurizon, ATCO, Ian Potter Foundation, McCusker Foundation and Stan Perron Charitable Foundation can make a real difference.

> Suzie Costello Program Manager, Southwest

"Our relationship with the Earbus Foundation continues to go from strength to strength. The team's unwavering focus on good ear health translates to better educational outcomes for our children, and ultimately the wider community.

The Earbus Foundation has filled a massive gap that previously existed in ear health and we are very proud of our partnership."

> **Tegan Davis, Principal,** Djidi Djidi Community School



PROGRAM REPORT

Thanks to the generous support of Ansvar Insurance, Impact100 WA and Impact100 Fremantle, 2020 saw our first fully equipped Metro Earbus on the road to service the East and South Metropolitan corridors.

Moorditj Noongar Community College students provided the colourful artwork for the bus.

The full roll out of the program was impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown in the first half of the year which also influenced take up rates and consent rates. By the end of 2020, 36 sites had engaged in the program and the Metro Earbus had made 116 visits to day-cares, kindergartens, young parent centres, family centres, and schools across the two regions.

In addition to these sites, the Metro Earbus also visited St Patrick's Community Support Centre. Our team engage with other health professionals to provide vital services to some of the most vulnerable members for the Fremantle community. We also continued to provide support to the Ears2Learn program this year, screening 167 children across seven centres. In 2020 over 1,120 children were screened across the entire Metro program. In total, Earbus performed 2,144 screens, 1,288 Audiology appointments and 585 GP/NP consults – a remarkable result which could not have been achieved without the effort and dedication of our team and endorsement from schools and communities in the areas in which we serve.

The number of new sites to the program and the impact of the Covid-19 naturally affected the consent rate in 2020, which dropped to 65%, as schools worked hard with limited time to gather permissions from parents and carers.

Whilst the estimated prevalence of Chronic Suppurative OM is well below the WHO benchmark of 4% at 1.4%, the estimated prevalence rates for Hearing Loss at 11.0% and OM at 16.3% are surprisingly high and reaffirm the need for a continued and targeted service in the region.

Overall 2020, has been a year of challenges and unexpected obstacles that we have worked through and overcome.

Suzie Costello

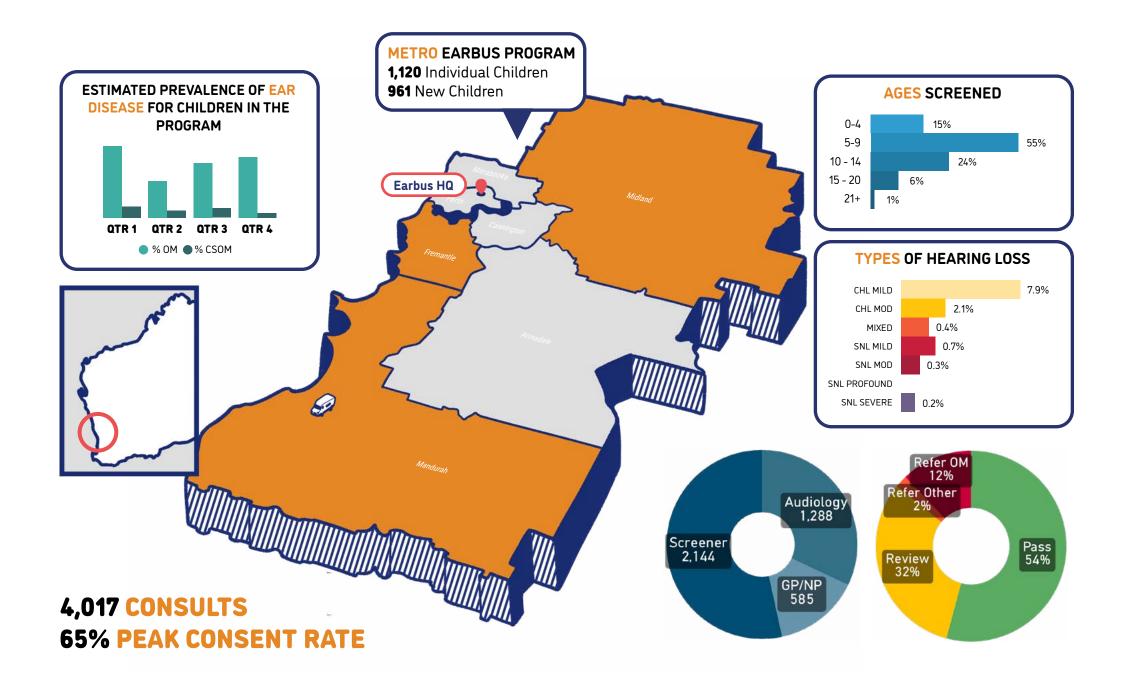
Program Manager, Metro

"Earbus Foundation has supported all of the children at Moorditj Noongar Community College. This has provided us with early detection of any ear issues, support with the management of chronic ear issues and the detection and treatment of ear infections which are highly prevalent at our school. Students are even provided with medications, if required.

Most importantly this support has directly resulted in improved outcomes for our students and greater achievement in the classroom. Due to the highly transient nature of our students, we are visited at least three times per term by Earbus Foundation to ensure that all students are supported.

We consider the relationship we have with Earbus Foundation to be vitally important to the successful management of the children in our care."

Peter Freeman Principal, Moorditj Noongar Community College



PROGRAM REPORT ESPERANCE

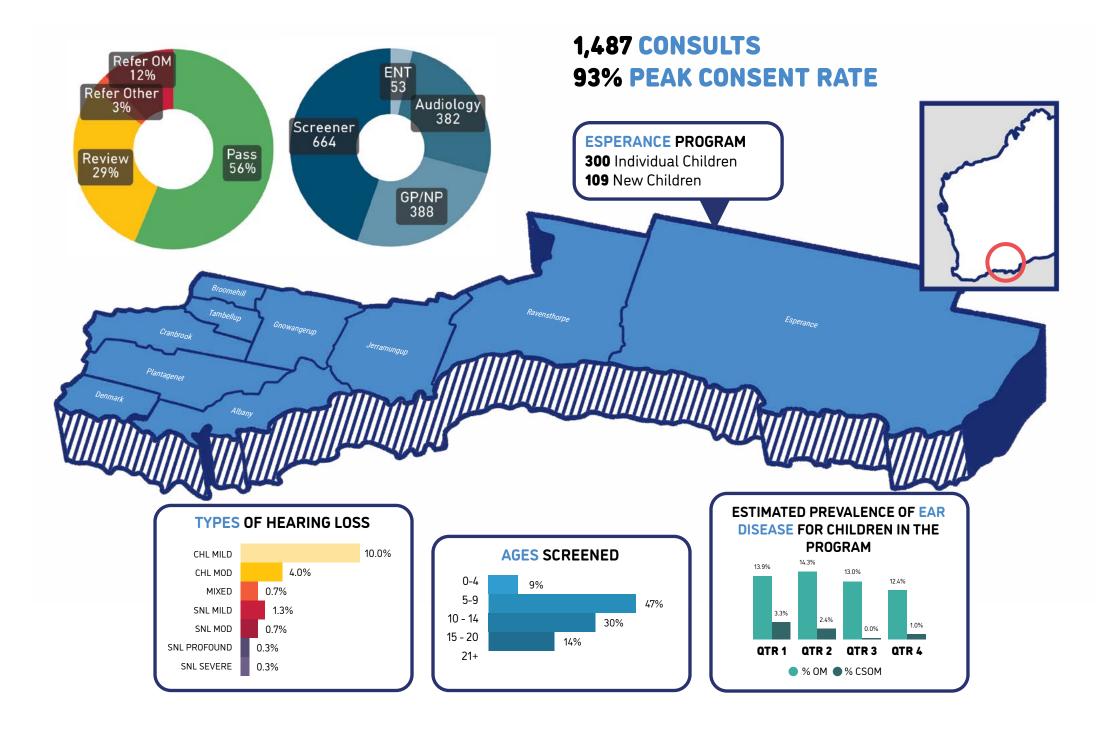
In 2020 Earbus completed six trips of four days each to the Esperance-Norseman region, partially funded by Rural Health West via their 'Healthy Ears – Better Hearing Better Listening Grant' and further supported by IGO Ltd. Regular and consistent trips enabled the Esperance-Norseman team to monitor children with significant ear health concerns. A revised itinerary format saw the team fly into Kalgoorlie and drive the Goldfields Earbus down to Esperance, stopping into Norseman on the way. This format provided a venue to control Audiological testing and improved recognition and awareness of Earbus in the region.

In total, the program reached 300 individual children during five school based outreach trips and one Covid-19 Park Up clinic. We provided 1,487 total consults, encompassing 664 screens, 382 Audiology tests, 388 GP/NP consults and 53 ENT consults. Prevalence of Otitis media (OM) for the region was 17% and we saw a significant decrease in the rates of Hearing Loss, which was down 15% against 2019 rates, and CSOM, which reduced to below the WHO benchmark of 4%. 109 new children were screened in 2020 significantly reduced from the 2019 rate due to Covid-19, however the regional consent rate exceeded 93% at the end of 2020, the highest consent rate for any Earbus outreach program. This identifies the ongoing efforts and support from schools in the region as well as Community Health nurses, Aboriginal Liaison Officers and clinicians from WACHS, who advocate for our services.

Due to the successful engagement of the team during clinical visits, we were approached by Wongutha CAPS in October 2020 requesting an interactive workshop on ear health for their students. The following month, Nurse Audiometrist Dee Parker and Registered Nurse and Earbus Outreach Manager Daniel Larranaga provided a workshop to over 39 young people from 13 different communities in Western Australia including Kalumburu, Kununurra, Doon Doon, Warmun, Yiyili, Fitzroy, Looma, Broome, Derby, Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, Norseman and Perth. The feedback from the workshop was outstanding and some of the participants said they felt confident they now knew the signs of Otitis media for when they start their own families, and as such, their children would be strong and healthy. These workshops were possible to thanks to support from 100 Women.

These outcomes would not have been possible without our clinical team, consisting of Registered Nurse Charlotte Radford; GP Dr Karen Moller, Nurse Audiometrist Dee Parker, Audiologist Lucy Mitchell; ENT Dr David Hall and of course the dedication and contribution of the Esperance team - Audiologist Belinda Porte Garcia; Administration Officer Jenna Cooper, Nurse Practitioner Deirdre Louw and Registered Nurse Catherine Zeevaarder.

> Jessica Bennett-Hullin Program Manager, Esperance





An Earbus Newborn Hearing Screener tests an infant at one of the private maternity hospitals we partner with across WA

PROGRAM REPORT **NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING**

In 2020 the Newborn Hearing Screening Program performed 7,448 screens on babies birthed across seven private hospitals in the Perth Metropolitan area, Bunbury and Geraldton through our partnerships with St John of God (SJOG) Health Care and Ramsay Health Care. Our screening also included Metropolitan homebirths and some babies born in public hospitals in both Metropolitan and rural WA as required.

Our team of 11 dedicated and experienced staff, the majority of whom have worked in the program for many years, continue to provide a high-quality, caring and professional service to WA infants and their families. This year, EFWA worked in collaboration with SJOG Subiaco to create a parent education resource - a series of 60 second video clips answering parents most common questions about newborn hearing screening.

From August 2019 to March 2020, EFWA asked Newborn Hearing Screening Program families to complete a Parent Satisfaction Survey. The data collected from this showed parents felt supported by our current service arrangements, including resources, and that we were addressing the needs of the majority of infants and parents of infants with hearing impairments.

From October 2015 to March 2020 Health Outcomes International (HOI) independently evaluated the Private Hospital Newborn Hearing Screening Program (NBHS). Key Findings Included:

- NBHS Program met all 15 screening target indicators.
- NBHS Program delivered by EFWA was appropriate, effective and efficient in the conduct of newborn hearing screening.
- The organisational culture at EFWA was a client-centric, productive, collaborative environment which in turn supported efficiency.

The program exceeded all National Key Performance Indicators in 2020, including:

- Screening >97% of all eligible babies identified for screening within 30 days of birth – EFWA average 99.90%; those babies not screened within 30 days of birth are identified, tracked and screened as they become eligible.
- <4% test positive for potential Permanent Childhood Hearing Impairment (PCHI) – EFWA 0.66%.

Of the 47 babies referred for diagnostic assessment in 2020, 12 were diagnosed with PCHI, and 6 with conductive hearing loss.

*note for Joondalup data – Joondalup Private Maternity ward was closed April to December.

Glenda Spain-Dixon Program Manager, Newborn Hearing Screening



HEAR TODAY

Hear Today is a family-centred clinic where our team of six qualified and experienced Audiologists provide expert and ethical hearing and ear health care. Specialising in Paediatric Audiology, including hearing assessments for children with disabilities and additional needs, our panel of Audiologists are well qualified to provide high-quality, professional care for WA children and their families.

Extending beyond the Perth Metropolitan area, Hear Today also provides support to children and families who are initially seen by our Outreach teams and require more intensive testing or followup appointments to monitor ear health concerns.

To support the Hear Today clinic and provide additional resources for families, we have developed a Hear Today website with comprehensive information about our Paediatric Audiology services. The website provides parents with information about many topics including

Screener Chontae Hayden, a young Noongar woman, performs otoscopy on a patient speech and language milestones, Infant Diagnostic Testing and Unilateral Hearing Loss (UHL). www.heartoday.org.au

In 2020, the Hear Today Clinic continued to expand its services with the addition of (Central) Auditory Processing Assessments (APD) for children aged 6-14.

The Hear Today clinic received 47 child referrals for Infant Diagnostic Assessments following the Newborn Hearing Screening. Of these, 12 had permanent hearing loss in one or both ears. Six additional families have ongoing conductive hearing loss which continues to be monitored.

More than 650 appointments were seen in the clinic with 298 children attending for full paediatric hearing assessments. The majority of these children were referred through the Newborn Hearing Screening Program, word of mouth and by finding service information via our new website.

Glenda Spain-Dixon Program Manager, Paediatric Hearing Clinic

PARENT FEEDBACK

"I could not be happier with the service and support that I have received from everyone at Earbus; you all went above and beyond to make us feel comfortable and supported from the moment I made my first phone call asking for help to the welcoming we received when we came to Perth but it continues with the visit to our son's school in our home town.

We cannot thank you all enough. The email support every few weeks helps to remind us that we are supported and not forgotten.

Thank you all for everything."

"Fast and efficient service... I managed to get an appointment straight away and from the word go, we were treated as individuals rather than just another number passing through. The Audiologists were amazing with Mr. Ants in his pants and made us feel right at home. Thank you for providing such a great, individualised service !!! "

Dr Rachel Meddings performs a paediatric hearing assesment on an infant at our Hear Today Clinic in Northbridge



HIGHLIGHTS 2020

JANUARY

Harvey Coates Research Fellowship funded in partnership with Griffith University





MARCH

Earbus Foundation **wins** Sunsuper's national Dreams for A Better World **award** in Brisbane

MAY

Earbus delivers thousands of sanitiser, soap and tissue supplies to regional communities and schools to assist during Covid-19



FEBRUARY

New programs underway in South Pilbara and Metro region

APRIL

New Board of Directors has **50% Aboriginal representation** and both senior leadership roles

JUNE

Dr Carol Dowling appointed to new role as Director of Research

JULY

BHP funds **new Pilbara program** to Newman and Jigalong

AUGUST

Local Screener based in Kalgoorlie to

support Goldfields Earbus program



SEPTEMBER

Inaugural **State of the Ears** event launched at State Theatre Centre. **Elder Smoking Ceremony** for Metro and South Pilbara



OCTOBER

New ultrasound diagnostic technology, **TOMi Scope**, arrives from USA



NOVEMBER

Work commences on **Central Pilbara Earbus**

EARBUS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRPERSON

Ms Sue Beath has been involved with Earbus for over a decade, initially in her role as Manager of Indigenous Education for the WA Education Department. Sue has worked in both urban and regional settings supporting thousands of Aboriginal children and overseeing AIEO staff supporting those children in classrooms. Sue joined the Earbus Foundation Board of Directors in 2019 and became Chairperson in April 2020.

Specialty Areas of Expertise: Education, Health, Aboriginal Culture, History and Communities

DEPUTY-CHAIR

Dr Julie Owen is originally from Adelaide but has lived and worked in regional WA for 30 years. She has extensive qualifications, experience and engagement in Aboriginal health, education and women's issues. Julie has teaching qualifications, a Masters in Population Health and counselling degree and was the first Aboriginal graduate from UWA's School of Population Health, completing a PhD in Aboriginal Health. This is Julie's second appointment as a Board member, re-joining the Board in April 2019 and becoming Deputy-Chair in April 2020.

Specialty Areas of Expertise: Education, Health, Aboriginal Culture, History and Communities

SECRETARY

Dr Michelle Pearce has a background in primary and secondary teaching with a Masters degree and a PhD in Special Education. Dr Pearce has dedicated much of her career to teaching children with disabilities and learning difficulties. She was Principal of Tamworth Base Hospital School before moving to WA in 1999. Michelle worked as K-12 Special Education consultant for gifted and talented students and those with disabilities and learning difficulties in 140 AISWA schools including independent Aboriginal schools in remote areas. Michelle has lectured in Special Education at Curtin and Notre Dame universities. She has been a Board member since 2018.

Specialty Areas of Expertise: Special Education, Disability, Early Learning, Evaluation and Research

TREASURER

Mr Steve Shur is an Insurance Broker with 44 years' industry experience. From 1989 to 2000 he ran Stephen Shur Investments in South Africa, a successful general insurance brokerage in Johannesburg. He migrated to Australia in 2000 and is currently senior Account Executive at Trident Insurance Group. Steve holds a Diploma of Financial Services and is responsible for advising his clients on insurance cover and their legal obligations and risks. A founding member of Earbus Foundation, Steve's second stint on the Board commenced in April 2020.

Specialty Areas of Expertise: Finance, Governance, Insurance Risk, Corporate Relations

BOARD MEMBER

Mr Paul Higginbotham is originally a Teacher of the Deaf, working in the field of hearing impairment since 1982. Paul holds multiple education degrees, has held senior leadership roles since 1991 and in 2012 was the recipient of the Harry Blackmore Award for outstanding leadership in the field of childhood hearing impairment. After 15 years successfully transforming a Perth-based NGO into a centre of excellence, he co-founded Earbus Foundation in April 2013 and was Board Chair until April 2015. Paul is the inaugural Chief Executive Officer of Earbus Foundation.

Specialty Areas of Expertise: Education, Health, Aboriginal Culture, History and Communities

BOARD MEMBER

Mr Greg Narrier has had a long career working in the area of Aboriginal issues including work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission that took him to Canberra in the 1990s. He has spent recent years teaching young Indigenous offenders to drive and gain their driving licences in order to support their rehabilitation and reengagement. Returning to his Noongar roots, Greg joined the Earbus Foundation board as soon as he took up WA residence again in July 2020.

Specialty Areas of Expertise: Aboriginal Culture, History and Communities, Governance, Education and Training



EARBUS TEAM, CONSULTANTS & VOLUNTEERS

Earbus acknowledges the dedication and commitment of our board, leadership team, staff, volunteers, interns and consultants in working towards our mission of reducing the incidence and impact of Otitis media (OM) in Aboriginal and at-risk children in Western Australia to achieve parity with non-Indigenous children, particularly given the challenges faced by us all in 2020.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ms Sue Beath Chair Dr Julie Owen Deputy-Chair Dr Michelle Pearce Secretary Mr Steve Shur Treasurer Mr Paul Higginbotham Mr Greg Narrier

STAFF

LEADERSHIP

Jessica Bennett-Hullin Program Manager, Outreach Suzie Costello Program Manager, Outreach Karen Hickling Partnerships Manager Paul Higginbotham Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder Caris Jalla Program Manager and Special Projects Daniel Larranaga Program Manager, Outreach Konrad Mills IT and Data Management Dr Lara Shur Director, Clinical Services and Co-Founder Glenda Spain-Dixon Program Manager, Newborn Hearing Screening & Paediatric Hearing Clinic

ADMINISTRATION

Rachel Fisher Accounts Clerk Chontae Hayden Data Entry & Screener Kassy Hayden Coordinator Office Systems and Logistics Scott Higginbotham Marketing Design Silvana Principe Office Administration Shirley South Office Administration Marijana Taras Office Administration Calvin Williams Data Entry & Screener

SCREENING & TREATMENT

Deanne Allen NBHS Screener Michelle Andrew Registered Nurse, Pilbara Jenna Cooper Data Entry Lauren Costello NBHS Screener Amanda Del Dosso NBHS Screener Kelsey Farrer Screener, Kimberley Ameilia Fox NBHS Screener **Deb Howe** NBHS Screener Symone Ishak NBHS Screener Ros Lander NBHS Screener **Deirdre Louw** Nurse Practitioner Shonte McCorry Administration Officer, Kimberley Shohreh Meshgin NBHS Screener Wesley Norman Screener & Health Worker, Kimberley Dee Parker Training & Quality Standards & Co-Founder Charlotte Radford Registered Nurse, Kimberley Breanna Roberts Screener, Kimberley Anja Sloan NBHS Screener Marie Stagoll NBHS Screener Janine Tassicker NBHS Screener Kelly Trow NBHS Screener **Chloe Turner** Data & Administration Officer, Kimberley Sarah Watson Registered Nurse, Goldfields Jammima West Screener Southwest **Carol Yarran** Screener, Goldfields **Catherine Zeevaarder** Registered Nurse, South Pilbara

AUDIOLOGY

Tim Kop Graduate Audiologist Kate Lau Audiologist Dr Rachel Meddings Audiologist Lucy Mitchell Graduate Audiologist Belinda Porte Garcia Audiologist

CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Altheon Ink Graphic Design Services Diane Boyce Bookkeeping Jason MacLaurin SC Joan Garaffolo Cleaning Services Stephen Kane Maintenance and Repairs Orba Travel Simply Green Salary Packaging Provider The Travel Authority

VOLUNTEERS

de Rene Clark Volunteer Wendy Gidney Volunteer Mary Kavanagh Volunteer David Lim Volunteer James Mapaye Volunteer Andrea Panton Volunteer

INTERNS

Anri Barnard Intern Stuart McLean Intern

SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS



Paypal Giving Fund

Young George

Gruyere Management Pty Ltd

PARTNERS









AWARDS & RECOGNITION

2016

Prime Super WA Community Group of the Year Award

2017

AIM WA West Business Pinnacle Awards - Emerging Business Excellence

2018

Telstra Business Awards - Social Change Maker (WA) Award

2019

Impact100 WA Major Grant Award Winner Impact100 Fremantle Major Grant Award Winner

2020

Sunsuper Dreams of a Better World National Winner Australian Charity Awards - Outstanding Achievement Winner



Earbus Foundation of Western Australia

122 Aberdeen Street Northbridge WA 6003 **Contact Us**

(08) 9328 4574 admin@earbus.org www.earbus.org.au