

Media Release

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Grant unlocks potential for deaf children across Queensland

More children with hearing loss in Queensland will be empowered to reach their full learning potential, after Hear and Say received a grant for half a million dollars from the state's Masonic charity.

Hand Heart Pocket the Charity of Freemasons Queensland will cover the funding gap to deliver critical early intervention services, ensuring continuity of support for deaf children throughout Queensland for the next year.

Hear and Say Chief Executive Officer Chris McCarthy said that without this funding, Queensland children could miss out on vital services and programs that build their potential.

"We are extremely grateful for this funding from Hand Heart Pocket, which has come at a critical time to help cover our funding gap as we await the full financial impact of the National Disability Insurance Scheme roll-out later this year," Mr McCarthy said.

"More children and their families are turning to us than ever before, and this funding is vital for continuing our services, delivering the essential listening and spoken language therapy required to enable a child to hear, speak and live to their potential."

"It can take up to six years to teach a profoundly deaf child to listen, process language, and speak, using the latest technology and an Auditory-Verbal Therapy approach, so it's vital that our services remain accessible – for children to be ready for mainstream schooling," Mr McCarthy said.

Hand Heart Pocket's generosity will mean that 200 children across the state will continue to have access to Hear and Say's Audiology Services, and 300 children can take part in the Early Intervention Program at their centres in Brisbane, Townsville, Toowoomba and on the Sunshine and Gold Coasts.

Hear and Say Vice-Patron and rugby league legend Wally Lewis whose daughter Jamie-Lee Lewis, was one of the first six children to be supported by the organisation, attended the funding announcement, to highlight the importance of improving life outcomes for these children.

"It's amazing to think just how many families will be touched by this significant contribution. Jamie-Lee is living proof that it is possible for deaf children to go on to lead a normal life and take on whatever they put their mind to," Mr Lewis said.

Brisbane Freemason Gary Golding similarly approved, having supported the service along with Enoggera Masonic Lodge at a local level for many years.

"Our granddaughter Audrey was born profoundly deaf and with the support of Hear and Say, at three-and-a-half, had mastered the language skills of a five-year-old," Mr Golding said.

"As Freemasons we are incredibly proud that this grant has been made on our behalf, to impact children with hearing disabilities right across the state."

Hand Heart Pocket Chief Executive Officer Gary Mark said providing sustainable support to organisations that have limited access to other funding sources was their focus.

"The commitment shown by Hear and Say to give deaf children the precious gifts of sound and speech aligns with Hand Heart Pocket's values which are about empowering people to lead better lives," he said.

"We are delighted that this partnership will ensure more children in Queensland have a future which will not be limited by their hearing loss."

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About Hand Heart Pocket

As an independent charity founded by the Freemasons of Queensland, Hand Heart Pocket helps in areas of state-wide and local need that have limited access to other funding. We work with other charities to identify and fund initiatives that have real, life-changing potential. We also collaborate with Masonic Lodges across Queensland and help individuals in times of extreme need to get them back on their feet. We use our funds wisely to give a hand up and to build potential.

For more information about Hand Heart Pocket, visit www.handheartpocket.org.au

About Hear and Say

Established in 1992 by Dr Dimity Dornan AO, Hear and Say today provides services and programs to children, young adults and families across six centres as well as e-Auditory-Verbal Therapy and eAudiology programs reaching out rural and remote families. Hear and Say also provides School Hearing Screening Program and paediatric hearing services - as a child's hearing can change over time.

Our aim is to help all children to hear, listen and speak so they can attend a regular school, have wider career choices and can more fully participate in their community. Hear and Say interfaces state-of-the-art hearing technology (digital hearing aids and implantable technology such as cochlear implants) with the Auditory-Verbal Therapy approach.

As a not-for-profit organisation Hear and Say must raise more than \$10,000 each year, for up to five years, to fill the funding gap so that one child with hearing loss to listen and speak. Hear and Say is committed to using clinical research to measure outcomes and its success lies in the vital role that parents/caregivers play in teaching their children to listen and speak.

For more information about Hear and Say visit, www.hearandsay.com.au

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