



9 January 2018

Include a hearing test in your 'Back to School' checklist

Shoes, uniform, books and lunch box are common items on the 'back to school' checklist, however one item is usually missed. With the incidence of permanent hearing loss doubling by the time a child reaches school age, Hear and Say believes a hearing test should be added to the top of the annual 'back to school' check list.

Between 9 and 12 children per 10,000 will be born with a moderate or greater hearing loss in both ears, with another 23 children per 10,000 acquiring a hearing loss by the age of 17 through an accident, illness or other causes (*Australian Hearing, 2014*). The higher incidence of hearing loss as a child gets older means there is a real possibility that as many as 15% of primary school children may be affected by some level of hearing loss (*Hearing loss in Schools Study, 2005*).

Hear and Say's Clinical Director, Emma Rushbrooke, explains that an annual hearing test prior to starting back at school is as important as buying that all important pair of new school shoes, and could even be extended to include the entire family as a part of the 'back to school and work' preparation.

"In the very busy first weeks of school, issues a child might be experiencing, such as hearing loss, can sometimes go undetected. Optimal hearing is critical for listening, speech and language development, and age appropriate learning and communication skills. Even a temporary hearing loss can impact on a child's ability to listen and learn in the classroom. Untreated hearing loss in school-aged children can result in poor academic performance as well as developmental, behavioural and social-emotional problems.

"I would recommend that, if a parent has any concerns about their child's development, it is worth getting a hearing test done first - just to be sure. This can be done by contacting their local GP or call us at Hear and Say on 07 3850 2111 to discuss how we can help." said Ms Rushbrooke.

Hear and Say has been operating across Queensland for more than 25 years. Helping babies, children and young adults who have developmental issues or concerns in the areas of hearing, language or speech. Since 2015, Hear and Say has delivered the 'Hear to Learn' school hearing screening program, which is conducted at schools across Queensland throughout the school year. For more information on Hear and Say's programs go to www.hearandsay.com.au

Hear and Say's ten common warning signs of hearing problems are:

- Parental, caregiver or teacher concern about the child's hearing ability
- Speech or language delay or difficulty
- Inappropriate responses to requests or questions e.g. child often says 'what?' or 'huh?'
- Difficulty hearing in one or both ears when on the phone
- Not startling to very loud sounds or asking for the volume to be turned up on electronic devices
- Unable to detect what direction sounds are coming from
- Inattentiveness, daydreaming
- Frequently asks for repetition or has difficulty following directions
- Watching others for visual cues
- Academic difficulties and/or behavioural problems

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For more details, or to arrange an interview contact Lois Shuttleworth, Public Relations Specialist, Hear and Say at lois.shuttleworth@hearandsay.com.au or 0481 212 420

About Hear and Say

Established in 1992 by Dr Dimity Dornan AO, Hear and Say today provides services and programs to over 2,000 children, young adults and families across five centres as well as e-Auditory-Verbal Therapy and e-Audiology programs reaching out to rural and remote families. Hear and Say also provides a school hearing screening program and paediatric hearing services, as a child's hearing can change over time so therefore needs to be closely monitored.

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 can learn 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.