

Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

AUSTRALIAN HEARING

**Inquiry into the 2017-18 Annual Reports of the Department of Health
and Australian Hearing**

22 February 2019

Type of Question: On notice

Chair: Mr Zimmerman

Question:

Mr ZAPPIA: How many of those 750 families are Indigenous children?

Answer:

As at 31 January 2019 a total of 20 families had indicated that their child was of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

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Question:

CHAIR: You might want to take this on notice. The annual report also mentions that the acoustic laboratories have commenced three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects and developed 350 hearing assessment systems for a nationwide study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people. We'd be interested in information about those projects and how they potentially impact policy and also whether any new funding has been provided or is planned for further research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and hearing issues.

Answer:

The three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research projects listed in the Australian Hearing Annual Report for 2017-18 are as follows:

- the Parent-evaluated Listening & Understanding Measure project. This project will develop and validate measures of listening and speaking abilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-5 years based on parent reports. This new tool is intended to be used in the \$30 million hearing assessment program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children announced in the 2017-18 Budget and by health professionals
- the automated audiometer (AutoAud) project. This project will test the useability of the National Acoustic Laboratories' computer based automatic audiometer system for use in various locations, including in rural and remote locations, and
- the Prevalence of Hearing Loss and Spatial Processing Disorder in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Adolescents in Juvenile Justice Centres project. This project will help determine the prevalence of hearing loss, spatial processing disorder and self-reported hearing issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents in juvenile justice centres. This project is important given the role of hearing loss and associated issues in engagement with the criminal justice system and is sponsored by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Australian Hearing notes that there is increasing research into the hearing health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that on 27 February 2019 the Australian Government announced \$160 million over ten years for an Indigenous Health Research Fund as part of the Medical Research Future Fund. Ending avoidable deafness is one of the three flagship

priorities of the Fund. Australian Hearing and the National Acoustics Laboratories will explore this opportunity to deliver additional high quality research to close the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ear and hearing health.