

## Section F: AUSTRALIAN HEARING - SUPPORTING KIDS AND FAMILIES

### CAYDEN

“Australian Hearing has been in my family’s lives since our youngest son was diagnosed deaf in 2008, just after he was born. The availability of Australian Hearing provided us with a sense that our child will be supported until he is grown up. The service and initial hearing aids, and later cochlear implants that he received has made it so much easier for us to help develop to his potential and increase the possibility for him to be independent in the future as an adult. This need is amplified as he was later diagnosed with severe autism and severe global development delays, requiring full time care. We hope that the privatisation of Australian Hearing does not increase an already heavy burden on us to provide for his future needs.” Alan - Cayden’s dad



### ANNABEL

Fortunately, we were referred to Australian Hearing at the end of our diagnosis appointment...We felt enormous relief knowing that there was a proven system in place to manage Annabel’s audiologic care; we did not feel knowledgeable enough (or indeed, emotionally ready) to investigate other audiology services. Learning about Australian Hearing was our first bit of ‘good news’ in what had been a turbulent and emotional few weeks.

Annabel will turn 3 this September. She is a little chatterbox with age-appropriate speech and language. She demands her hearing aids before her feet hit the floor every morning and is proud to show them off. I am so grateful to Australian Hearing for giving her the chance to hear. Claire - Annabel’s mum





### ISAAC

My name is Isaac. I am twelve years old and I am profoundly deaf. I wear a hearing aid and a Cochlear Implant to help me listen and speak.

Being profoundly deaf, I use Australian Hearing as a service. I was diagnosed Christmas Eve 2002 and in the following March, at ten months of age, I got my first hearing aids at the Croydon Australian Hearing centre here in Melbourne. My mum and dad were very excited to have this place to go for support and information about my hearing loss. My parents have leaned on Australian Hearing for all of my twelve years and have become friends with my audiologist too.

Please don't sell Australian Hearing because kids like me need it; parents like mine need the support to get their children the best equipment so they can live better lives.

Being able to hear brings freedom and confidence and the ability to reach our full potential. I can work when I'm older and help the country in the future. I want to be a zoologist and I think with my grades I can do that.

We need Australian Hearing, we are the best country in the world for helping hearing impaired people and if we loose Australian Hearing you will take away from my friends, family and myself the chance of being able to have a great life.

### BRIAN

I am profoundly deaf and have worn hearing aids since my diagnosis at 2 years of age. My son is moderately to profoundly deaf and was diagnosed when he was 3 weeks old. Brian's dad is third generation deaf person and wears hearing aids. We wanted Brian to be bilingual and therefore wanted him to be aided as soon as possible.

The first audiologist that managed Brian's case was 'deaf aware' and always ensured that an Auslan interpreter was available for the appointments. When Brian was 18 months old, the audiologist went on maternity leave. We decided to transfer Brian to another centre that is close to our work and that is when we met an audiologist who signs and was always happy to help or provide more information.

Before Brian started school in 2013, the audiologist was great support to our family in terms of managing the FM system and providing information about how to maximise auditory environment in schools. In Brian's class, there was another student who was using an FM system and therefore there were some issues of setting up the right channel so that both students could use the FM. The audiologist arranged on her day off to visit the school and show the teacher and support staff how to troubleshoot.

Our family has always been impressed with the service provided by the audiologists and the fact that they will always try and book Auslan interpreters for the appointments. Diana - Brian's mum



### LUCY

We have benefitted from the research that they [NAL] are doing into Auditory neuropathy as protocol for ANSD have changed even in our daughter's short life. The paediatric trained AH staff are great at putting together the puzzle that each little hearing impaired person throws at them. My daughter also has mild cerebral palsy which required regular physiotherapy on top of all the hearing impairment. My daughter is only 3 ½, so we are only at the beginning of the journey. The rawness and sense of grief and loss is gone but when that was there, we certainly needed to know that we were in safe hands. I

certainly didn't need the hard sell of hearing equipment on top of where we were. Scary thought as you are really very vulnerable. Natalie - Lucy's mum



### BAILEY

I have a twin brother Jeremy and we are 13 years old. My brother and I are both hearing impaired with Jeremy recently getting a cochlear implant...We have been involved in AHS since we were first diagnosed at 4 years old ... I have a deteriorating hearing loss and that means we sometimes go to AHS up to twice a week. We go there to get our hearing tested and our hearing aids fine tuned and adjusted to depending on our loss. They also provide me with equipment to help me with my education they also provide batteries, all for free. When my

hearing aids need fixing, we take it there and they fix them.

I am really worried if AHS gets sold, then children like me would not have access to the brilliant services that they currently provide. I feel I am very lucky to have all the help through them. It makes me feel sad that we may not have the support in the future and other little children won't have been as lucky as I have been so far. I am also scared that I will just see any audiologist, not one that actually knows me and cares.

I have attached a photo of my brother and myself for you to see that we are REAL children. I am on the right. Bailey - 13 years old

### CHARLIE

Charlie has been aided since she was 4 weeks old, She has a severe - profound bilateral loss. Australian Hearing have provided our family with so much support and assistance making a very difficult time in our lives so much easier.

We are concerned that if AH is sold the streamlining of access to professionals and technology may be affected, as well as the possible financial impact to our family and many others.

We feel blessed to have this facility and would be devastated if things change.

Mel - Charlie's mum



## DAVID

David was diagnosed severely-profoundly deaf after his newborn hearing screen. We were referred straight to Australian Hearing. In those first busy months, they took care of everything - tested David's hearing periodically, fitted his aids, instructed us in how to use them, and even now, still see us frequently. They even sometimes come to our playgroup to conduct basic tests and fit new molds, so we didn't have to go to their office. At aged one, David was fitted with a cochlear implant, and ever since, Australian Hearing has maintained a thorough communication with the Royal Eye and Ear Hospital to keep everyone co-ordinated. They made our life so easy in that overwhelming time. For the sake of all families dealing with hearing loss, I urge you to give Australian Hearing priority to continue to deliver a high quality of care.

Therese - David's mum



## BENTLEY

Our son Bentley was born with Microtia and Atresia. He has no right ear or ear canal and therefore has a unilateral hearing loss. Bentley has been under the care of Australian Hearing since he was a baby. The consistency of care, professionalism, knowledge and understanding provided by Australian Hearing have been invaluable. We feel supported and know that Bentley's hearing and development is their utmost priority. Children with a hearing loss deserve equal access to learning. Our main concern about the proposed privatisation of AH is that hearing services will become profit driven. How can a service provide unbiased support when they are under pressure to meet targets and work within strict budgets? We feel that all children who access this service, including Bentley, will greatly suffer.

Carmen - Bentley's mum



## FELIX

We cannot begin to imagine how much more difficult our journey would have been without the services of Australian Hearing. Right when we were dealing with the devastating news of our newborn, Felix, being born deaf, they were there as a central body to assist us in determining the best future for our child. We didn't have to hunt for them. We didn't have to be concerned with their motives, their profitability requirements, or their bias. They were able to direct us to the ongoing services which would suit us best. They don't have to do the bulk of the work to assist Felix as they are not an early intervention service provider, but they guided and supported our family, and continue to do so, with definitive annual testing, supply of technology and spare parts, and unparalleled expertise. Jo - Felix's mum





### OLLIE and LILY

Australian Hearing has been in our lives for nearly 17 years now. Ollie first got aided when he was 3 and he is nearly 20 years old now. His younger sister, Lily became a client not long after, when she was diagnosed at 2 years old. She is now 17. In those early years, some weeks we virtually lived at Australian Hearing..

When my son was 15, he did not want to wear his hearing aids – he was at a mainstream school and the only hearing impaired student at the school. He just did not want to be different. I remember that he and I had some difficult weeks – we fought every day about this and our relationship was severely tested.

A visit to his audiologist at Australian Hearing was the breakthrough. They had always got on well and she was able to find a way through it with him. She went through what the problems were and how they could fix them. We left that appointment with a 15 year old who was much happier and who, in my eyes, had started a new phase of life - independence. It was the beginning of him becoming the client. It was also a turning point for me in learning to step away and trust that he will be ok. Trust was the key – I trusted the service and always have, with the hearing health of my children. I have always felt that he would be ok with the safety net of Australian Hearing services in place. Kate – Ollie & Lily's mum



### KAITLYN

My daughter is deaf and she can't hear without her hearing aids. She has progressive hearing loss and will one day get a cochlear implant. In America, where I'm from, this costs \$100,000.00. We can't afford that. Not many people can. If you privatise Australian Hearing, you're on your way to an unfair system like they have in the States. It won't happen overnight, but it will become more unequal over time. Australia has the best audiology services for children in the world. Don't change this.

### BONNY

I cannot express enough how vital the services Australian Hearing provide have been for me. Because of them, I am fortunate enough to have grown up with access to the best Hearing Aids and FM Systems. Without these services I would not be able to do half the things my hearing friends do - I would have to stay at home and save for thousands of dollars for the inevitable stream of hearing batteries, moulds and hearing tests that is my life.



The services Australian Hearing provide help make what could be a challenging impairment to my life, a mere characteristic of who I am. I certainly would not have had the opportunity to appear on Masterchef The Professionals, nor would I have grown up to have the confidence I do to face the world and fight for who I want to be. I know I am not alone in this.

Bonny - aged 25.