

The Indigenous EarInfoNet

www.earinfonet.org.au

The development and coordination of the Indigenous *EarInfoNet* is being undertaken by Menzies School of Health Research and the Australian Indigenous *HealthInfoNet*. The development is guided by a national Reference Group and the Indigenous *EarInfoNetwork*, an informal national network of people working in the field of Indigenous ear health and hearing.

Development of the *EarInfoNet* recognises the urgent need to improve approaches to otitis media and hearing loss, which are serious public health problems for Indigenous Australians. According to the World Health Organization, rates of ongoing middle ear infection with eardrum perforation and discharge (chronic suppurative otitis media) that affect more than 4% of the population represent a serious public health problem. In some remote Indigenous communities, rates of ear drum perforation exceed 60%, and up to 50% of children have been found to have educationally significant hearing loss and would benefit from sound amplification. This impairs hearing in the short term, and affects essential early childhood development (particularly speech development). It can also lead to permanent hearing loss if parts of the middle ear and ear drum are damaged.

There is a large body of knowledge about how best to prevent, diagnose, treat and manage middle ear disease and associated communication and learning problems, but many people involved in the area of Indigenous ear health, hearing and education work in remote areas of Australia and do not have ready access to good quality information and resources.

The *EarInfoNet* provides a rich and unique evidence base and includes facilities for information exchange. The resource includes reviews; guidelines; resources and equipment; programs, projects and lessons; policies and strategies; publications; and links. It also includes information about research activity, funding opportunities, organisations, agencies and individuals working in the field, news and events and training programs.

The resource has been designed to cater to an audience of mixed cultural and educational backgrounds. Some people will not have ready access to the Internet and so the resource will actively encourage the downloading of material for use by Indigenous families and communities.

Australian Indigenous Ear/InfoNet proposed budget

Option 1: Full-time project officer at MSHR

	Year 1 (2010)	Year 2 (2011)	Year 3 (2012)	Year 4 (2013)	Year 5 (2014)
MSHR costs	136,940	140,490	146,590	147,890	152,960
AIH costs	34,000	35,340	37,250	38,920	40,670
Total costs	\$170,940	\$175,830	\$183,840	\$186,810	\$193,630

Option 2: Half-time project officer at MSHR

	Year 1 (2010)	Year 2 (2011)	Year 3 (2012)	Year 4 (2013)	Year 5 (2014)
MSHR costs	70,360	71,550	75,250	76,550	81,260
AIH costs	34,000	35,340	37,250	38,920	40,670
Total costs	\$104,360	\$106,890	\$112,500	\$115,470	\$122,290

MSHR- Menzies School of Health Research

AIH- Australian Indigenous Health/InfoNet

Budget notes

A proportion of the MSHR and AIH funds would be used to employ the staff necessary to coordinate, consolidate, expand and promote the current Ear/InfoNet. The salary funds provide for the employment of a full time coordinator (option 1), or a half time coordinator (option 2) by MSHR and for a total of 0.29 FTE by AIH.

Salary costs include mandatory oncosts (including superannuation, payroll tax, workers compensation, and leave payments). The salary costs provide for salary increases set out under the relevant agreements.

Operating costs provide for:

- travel and accommodation;
- administrative costs (telephone, postage, photocopying, etc.);
- computers and software;
- printing;
- promotional activities and materials;
- conference registration, etc.; and
- resource production.

The budget also includes project service charges from MSHR and AIH.