

Working together to develop the Early Childhood Hearing and talking Observations (ECHO) checklist with and for Early Childhood Educators

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Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children are affected by chronic middle ear infections that can have long-term impacts on the development of speech, language and listening skills (Su et al., 2019). Given the consistency and frequency with which Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) interact with children, they are uniquely placed to assist with the early identification of children with possible hearing and communication difficulties.

This project aimed to address the stated needs of ECEs at Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation by co-developing an observational checklist with ECEs to enable them to: 1) identify children with possible listening or communication difficulties; 2) facilitate conversations with caregivers about these possible difficulties; and 3) monitor children’s progress over time. A multidisciplinary team worked together to co-develop a prototype of Early Childhood Hearing and Talking Observation (ECHO) checklist. In feedback after trialling the ECHO prototype, ECEs indicated that it was easy to use and provided useful information to discuss concerns about children’s possible hearing and communication difficulties with colleagues and caregivers, complementing tools such as the PLUM and HATS (Ching et al. 2020a, Ching et al. 2020b). Further research and co-development are required to ensure that ECHO can assist ECEs across the sector with early identification of possible hearing and communication difficulties (and potential associated ear disease) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

References

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