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**Presentation: Hearing, Listening & Learning in Aboriginal Children**

Most hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (hereafter referred to as Aboriginal children) is a direct result of persistent and pervasive otitis media (OM), and is avoidable through prevention, and/or early identification and prompt treatment. Its high prevalence is linked to poorer educational outcomes, social and behavioural problems, and contributes to over-representation within the health, hearing rehabilitation, and criminal justice systems. High prevalence rates are likely to be due to a combination of social, economic and environmental factors, with risk factors including poverty, crowding, poor hygiene and nutrition, and passive exposure to tobacco smoke. While these factors are important to address within a longer-term context of “Closing the Gap” for Aboriginal people, effective pathways for early detection and comprehensive management of OM, hearing loss and downstream effects on listening and learning have considerable potential for reducing both the severity and the longer-term impacts of OM on Aboriginal children.

The aim of this presentation is to discuss the ways in which the Aboriginal Children's Hearing Health consortium aims to address this major public health problem. Critical elements are co-producing, implementing, and evaluating a community-based approach, strengthened partnerships within and across sectors, capacity-building, and shared governance. This approach is designed to avoid the pitfalls of creating a national programme that replicates existing challenges, including lack of genuine engagement with communities, and poor specificity of models of care. Instead, we aim to deliver a comprehensive approach to management along multiple points across Aboriginal children's lives.

**Biography**

Professor McMahon is the Head of the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University and Director of the HEAR Centre, which is a World Hearing Forum member and an informal WHO collaborating centre. Her research centres on understanding the barriers and facilitators to accessing and utilising hearing healthcare, and the design and implementation of effective care pathways. Catherine has worked closely with the World Health Organisation to develop and collate the evidence-base for the World Report on Hearing, and is a Commissioner on the Lancet Commission of Hearing Loss and co-chairs the “Innovation in Service Delivery” workgroup.