



President's Piece

It seems that almost universally Christmas is regarded as a very special time of the year. This sentiment is adopted across cultures and accepted by many religions as it focuses on getting together and having a good time by drawing families closer together.

In large part the actual reason for celebrating Christmas is overlooked, ignored or covered up. In some parts of Australia there are severe restraints and in some states of the USA it appears to be no longer legal to share the true meaning of Christmas.

For the EARS Inc. team, Christmas is a celebration of the personal relationship we have with Jesus and with each other and the calling that we have to share his love with as many people as we can.

I have been fortunate enough to do a little voluntary work this year in both Fiji and Malawi, which at this time are our principal fields of operation. PNG will become more of a highlight in 2019 but our volunteers are active there now.

It is truly remarkable to see the impact of our volunteers in these countries and the quality of the relationships they have with the people they are working with there. The esteem and the love in which the Malawian and Fijian people reciprocate is quite extraordinary.

You will see their names elsewhere in this newsletter so I won't list them here but it is an honour to know and work with you all and to see the blessings released by your tireless devotion to the expression of God's love for people, needy or otherwise.

Thank you to all of our supporters providing equipment, hearing aids, funding and most importantly prayer. We would be nowhere without you all.

Have a truly wonderful Christmas and may 2019 lead you on to bigger and greater things.

Seek Jesus, because he is the reason for the season.

David Pither, President, EARS Inc.



EARS Inc. is an Australian, not-for-profit association dedicated to reducing the incidence and impact of hearing impairment through training and equipping local individuals and agencies in developing countries.

We serve and empower people, irrespective of nationality, race, gender or religion, while showing the love of Jesus through our words and actions.

Our vision is for deaf and hearing impaired people in developing countries to have access to the hearing services they need to help them to reach their potential.

PNG project

This year has been an odd one for the Papua New Guinea project. Though the booth was finally built in Goroka (thanks to Mark Fry), the training encountered obstacles. The plan was for two students to complete the TAFE NSW Diploma of Audiometry, who will then train others.

Locals Jane and Desmond volunteered to enrol in TAFE's digital (distance education) audiometry course. Enrolment hasn't been smooth but Desmond has now begun his studies, while Jane is waiting on her funding to clear so she can commence the course.

I am assisting them with planning their online studies and applying for recognition of their prior learning. We are praying that PNG internet is not a big hassle for them as they work through this online course. Eventually we hope to develop an audiometry course in PNG.

We need volunteers to go to PNG to help with supervision of the practical components of the course and for some hearing clinics in Australia to be willing for them to observe and supervise practice during short visits to Australia.

Desmond recently attended the Pacific Disability Forum and spent a day visiting the hearing clinic in Fiji, a great opportunity for Desmond to meet the Fiji team and for him to see the kind of program we would like to eventually see in PNG.



Desmond met audiometrist Sevanaia during his visit to Fiji.



Dr Donna Carkeet, audiologist and EARS Inc. board member

Fiji project update

screenings every Thursday at the hospital. We have identified two children this year; one six month old was fitted with hearing aids.

- We also began fitting bone conductor aids this year to allow children born with no ear canals or who have chronic middle ear problems to have a device to enable them to hear.
- I have also been conducting training for the Audiometry screeners with Project heaven. We are planning continued training for next year with this group as well as training for some Ministry of health staff.



Terrance and Shabina checking ears at a special school screening day.

This year the Fiji project has continued to make great progress.

- Australian volunteer Mahes Satchi helped us review and improve our audiology clinic's administrative systems.
- We have followed up children who had not returned for some time.
- Terrance joined the team full-time this year and has been working on our databases, and has also taken on earmould making.
- Shabina is the head of the audiology department and the other full-time person. Between outpatient speech pathology and audiology assisting, teaching the hostel staff sign language one afternoon a week, and organising me on all my visits, she is always busy. Shabina said, "It has been a very productive and informative year. I have learnt how to make decisions and take the lead in achieving it." She added she has benefited greatly from the additional training she has received this year.
- The team has completed the assessment of all children in special schools. Follow-up has been important and many children have had multiple assessments due to middle ear problems and wax. Around 25 children have needed grommet surgery to resolve their middle ear pathologies and restore their hearing.
- Over 120 children were fitted with hearing aids in the special schools.
- The team has training to the teachers and parents.
- Shabina and Terrance conduct neonatal hearing screening



At an outreach visit, follow up is very important. Shabina ensures all school parents and teachers are well informed of the results.



This boy excitedly raised both hands when he heard a sound when Sevanaia tested his hearing.



Donna sings and plays with the youngest child in Fiji to be fitted with hearing aids.

Fiji program through other eyes

Dr. Susan Hopf is a lecturer at the Department of Speech Pathology at Charles Sturt University, New South Wales. Dr. Hopf is a speech-language pathologist born and trained in Australia who moved to Fiji in 2009. Below is an excerpt from her article in ASHA Kiran, the Annual Newsletter of the Asian Indian Caucus (AIC), November 2018 - 'Building communication capacity: Letters from Fiji'. It provides a good summary of the Fiji program and its achievements in such a short time.

There are now regular Fijian audiology services available in Ba, Suva and Nadi. Frank Hilton Organisation (FHO) in Suva leads the way for audiology in Fiji. A successful partnership with EARS Inc., who provide training and equipment, has facilitated progress in audiology service development.

Audiologist, Dr. Donna Carkeet, from EARS Inc. visits from Australia around five times a year to continue to provide training to staff from not only FHO but for teachers, doctors, and hearing screeners from other organisations. She works to continue the development of the services offered as well as see complex paediatric cases.

FHO employs an audiometrist, Mr Sevanaia Ratumaitavuki two days per week as well as two Audiology Assistants (AAs). The AAs coordinate services for children up to 18 years of age who receive free audiological evaluations; including, visual reinforcement audiometry, auditory brainstem response (ABR) testing, and auditory steady state response testing. Hearing aid fitting, replacement ear moulds, hearing aid batteries, and repair and maintenance are also done at FHO.

In 2017-2018, the FHO audiology team completed screening of over a thousand children in special schools in Fiji and proceeded to test and fit hearing aids for over 100 children in Labasa, Savusavu, Rakiraki, Ba, Lautoka, Nadi, Sigatoka, Suva, and Nausori special schools. FHO AAs, in conjunction with the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, conducts neonatal screening, using Automated ABR, for premature or high-risk infants. An ear mould laboratory and basic repair services were also established at FHO with training by EARS Inc. volunteers.

EARS Inc. has had a number of other volunteer audiologists that have visited to assist in the project in Fiji. FHO through its partnership with EARS Inc. will continue to support partnerships

with government and non-government organisations (NGOs) that target capacity building (e.g., training AAs and nurses) and hearing loss identification (e.g., screening outreach programs to rural and remote regions of Fiji). FHO acknowledges that there is significant advocacy work to be done to reduce stigma associated with hearing loss and support members of the Deaf community in Fiji. Other audiological services are provided by a small handful of predominantly part-time service providers in Suva, Ba, and Nadi and at least three other international volunteer paediatric audiologists who visit Fiji regularly.

In Suva, Project Heaven provides basic audiometric assessment for adults and some school age children. They also provide eye and ear screening in primary schools. Recently, their staff have undergone further training and hope to expand this service again in the near future. They are also training more staff to be able to assist in audiometry for the two local ENT specialists in the next few months. This training has been provided by one of the local ENT's who is volunteer from South Korea, as well as the EARS Inc. audiologist. Mr Sevanaia Ratumaitavuki provides private services in Ba and two medical clinics in Suva.



If you would like an EARS Inc. donation box, or can help us distribute them to waiting rooms of hearing and medical clinics, please contact us.

Want to donate to the work of EARS?



So much of what we achieve is through generous donations of time, expertise and equipment from many organisations and individuals, but we always need more funds so we can do more.

- Trivia quizzes are a fun and easy way to raise money and an EARS Trivia Quiz Kit is available. Email admin@earsinc.org and we'll send it to you.
- Good at fundraising? Join our fundraising team.
- Donations are welcome! Go to www.earsinc.org/donate. A tax deductible option is through GiveNow.

IN TO AFRICA

In October, EARS board members David Pither, Wesley Ong and Peter Bartlett headed to Malawi (Africa) to visit the EARS Inc project there, and then to South Africa to attend the Coalition for Global Hearing Health Conference.

Malawi

Audiologists Peter and Rebecca Bartlett lived in Malawi for six years establishing a comprehensive audiology clinic and training program on the African Bible College campus in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi. Since moving home to Australia in 2016, both Peter and Rebecca have visited the project as well as continuing to oversee the project.

This was the first trip to Malawi for EARS president David Pither. It was also Wes' first trip to see an EARS Inc. project 'in the flesh'.

They arrived in Lilongwe in time for the marriage of two of the audiology clinic staff and the unique experience of a true Malawian wedding - with a lot of drums! They were also able to experience worship in a Malawian church and see a bit of the country before starting work.

David assisted in the ear mould laboratory to see how procedures could be improved, and was able to resolve the programming issues that they were

experiencing with bone conductor hearing aids.

Pete of course had a lot to catch up on and review with the current staff and volunteers as well as picking up new volunteers and completing necessary paperwork.

Wes assisted in the clinic. "The clinic is functioning as both an educational facility and, in many ways, a conventional clinic. The clinic is extremely well equipped with diagnostic equipment and sound booths, even exceeding some Australian clinics I've seen," commented Wes. and also presented to the African Business Institute.

David, Wes, Pete and the team from the hearing clinic went to a school near Kamuzu Central Hospital in Condor as part of the Operation Smile outreach. They were testing children having cleft palate operations. Unfortunately the mobile hearing testing van wouldn't start so the trailer couldn't be utilised. As there was no electricity and no trailer the team was only able to do otoscopy, tympanometry and otoacoustic emissions testing and Pete had to spend the day resolving the issues with the hearing assessment trailer with the mechanic Richard as the local staff member who normally would handle this was ill.

The next days the local team and overseas volunteers conducted an all-day (and part of the night) outreach day in



Fletcher and Maropa's wedding - Peter Bartlett, David, Fletcher, Maropa, Robyn Casey, Wes

Mponela. Over 250 people registered – most of them were sitting on the ground waiting when the team arrived. Wes said, "Outreach trips is where the real 'charity' part takes place. A venture outside the ABC palace shows you the true living conditions and needs of the country and its people. Having 250 people waiting for hearing services all day is intense!" Although it was a great response to the advertising of free hearing tests, the team was very understaffed and there were some generator issues that made the waiting time very long. In the end, all the people were seen and Pete ended up driving back to Lilongwe in the dark with no headlights.

The next day Peter preached in ABC Chapel and then he and Wes met with Dr Madimbo about Bachelor of Science in Audiology. They are hopeful the registration of this course will be finally achieved in December.

(Continued on page 5)



Ian (left) and Lois Grant (above) teaching Physics module for the students and staff enrolled in the BSc Audiology

(Continued from page 4)

CGHH conference, University of Cape Town

Peter, Wes and David all attended the Coalition for Global Hearing Health (CGHH) conference in Capetown. This conference was held two days prior to the World Congress of Audiology which they all attended also.

It was an amazing time of meeting with other likeminded professionals and locals from many countries who work in hearing health and education of the hearing impaired in many developing countries.

Peter is a part of the CGHH Best Practices Committee, David is on the Technology Committee, and Donna (who was not there) belongs to the Training and Education Committee. Both David and Pete were able to meet with their committees while in Capetown.

Peter Bartlett and Helen Brough both presented papers at both the CGHH conference and the World Congress of Audiology. They also had an EARS Inc information table where other organisations could learn about our work.

David ran his earmould making workshop which has become a popular event at the annual CGHH conference.

As well as the learning in the sessions at these conferences, the social networking was extremely valuable. Other highlights were Wes going nuts on the drums alongside local African performers, and Fletcher (one of the Malawian audiologists) was able to be introduced to Harvey Dillon, Paul Hickey and Jason Ridgeway (all Australian Audiology celebrities) so he was quite thrilled.



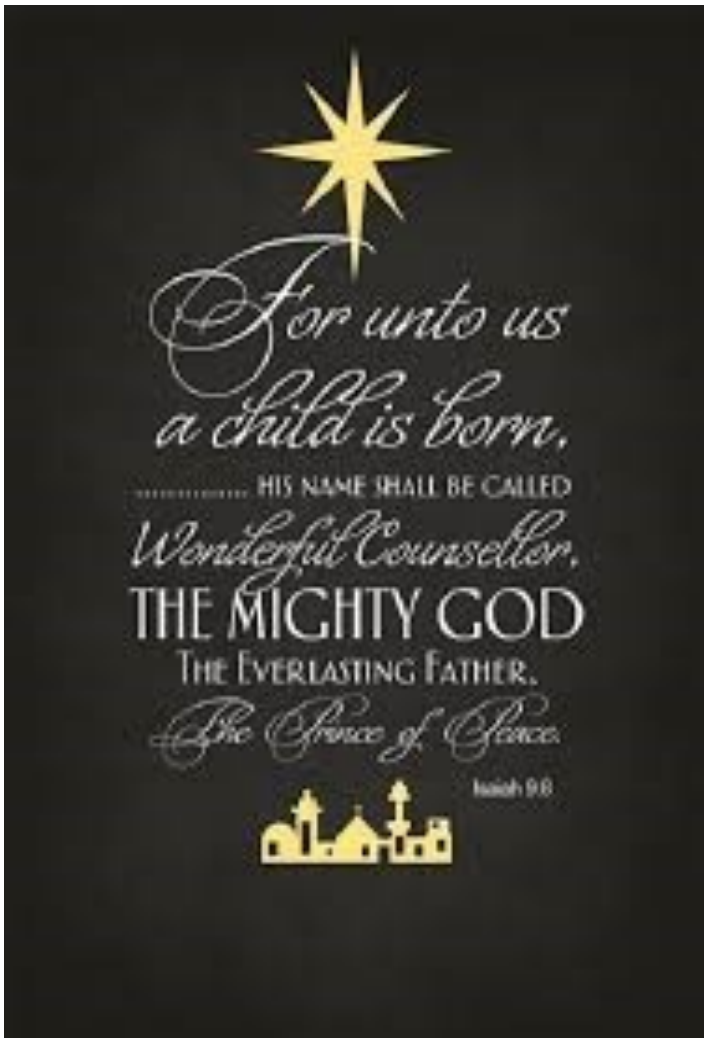
Staff and students of ABC Hearing Clinic and Training Centre



Waiting on the ground in the morning sun for ear and hearing care outreach clinic in Mponela. 250 people registered that day.



Time out during the CGHH conference: (L to R) Wes Ong, Dr Karen Goodman from Sick Kids Hospital in Canada, Peter Bartlett, Glenys Abrahams, Teacher of the Deaf associated with University of Queensland Hear & Say Centre, and David Pither



Help us help people hear

If you'd like to help us achieve our mission...

- **Become a member** of EARS. See our website for membership forms.
- **Donate money.** Tax-deductible donations can be made through the GiveNow link on the Donate page on our website. Maybe consider a bequest to EARS.
- **Donate audiological equipment and hearing aids** (second hand is fine).
- **Volunteer.** We need hearing professionals to provide training and hearing services overseas. Technicians are also needed to check and calibrate equipment.
- **Join our prayer support team.** Contact our coordinator Jan Bebbington: janbebbington@bigpond.com.



E: admin@earsinc.org

W: www.earsinc.org

T: David Pither, President +61 (0) 3 9654 5511

A: Suite 302, 220 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000, Australia

Volunteer opportunities

If you are interested in volunteering overseas, let us know and let's make a plan! If you would like to be involved but are not able to travel at the moment, please still get in contact with us. We'll add your name on our database and let you know about opportunities that arise in the future. Please note that overseas volunteers must fund their own travel. We will assist as much as we can with accommodation and other expenses.

EARS Inc. also needs volunteers to assist with organisational tasks and fundraising within Australia.

Fiji

- Trainers for audiometry
- Speech Pathologists, teachers of the deaf and other allied health professionals.

Papua New Guinea

- Trainers for audiometry
- Supervision for Audiometry Diploma students

Malawi, Africa

- Short term and long term clinical work and clinical supervision
- Teachers for audiology units in BSc Audiology course
- Speech Pathologists and teachers of the deaf are also needed.

Australia

- Coordinator of donated equipment and hearing aids
- Website manager
- Administration assistance
- Accountant
- Online support for audiology/audiometry students
- Observation & supervision in Australian clinics for PNG audiometry students

All enquiries to Judith Francis, EARS Inc. Volunteer

Co-ordinator: judy@earsinc.org.



Keep in touch with latest EARS happenings by becoming a 'friend' on the EARS Inc. Facebook page.