




Deadly Kids | Deadly Futures 2023-2024 Action Plan


The action plan priorities:



Service delivery improvements:
Enhance the services and support provided to children and families to manage the impacts of middle ear disease and associated hearing loss.



Workforce development:
Enable healthcare professionals and educators to provide appropriate support and services to children.



Prevention and health promotion:
Empower families, communities and local service providers to increase the protective factors and reduce the risk factors associated with middle ear disease.



Data collection and research:
Build the evidence base to improve the planning, delivery and effectiveness of services.

Commitment

Deadly Kids | Deadly Futures is Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Ear and Hearing Health Framework 2016-2026. It was released in March 2016 by the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Minister for Education. The 10 year framework is a collaborative health, early childhood development and education policy aimed to prevent and manage the impacts of conductive hearing loss due to middle ear disease for current and future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people across Queensland.

A Public Health Priority

Conductive hearing loss due to middle ear disease is a priority health condition because it can lead to long-term developmental problems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The condition can affect school readiness, communication skills, learning abilities and educational outcomes. The impacts can be lifelong, affecting the trajectory of children’s lives into adolescence and adulthood.

Collaboration

Deadly Kids | Deadly Futures is supported by a collaboration of government and non-government agencies across the health, early childhood and schooling sectors – represented by the logos at the bottom of this page. These agencies are committed to working together to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland have healthy ears and can listen, learn and reach their full potential.

Implementation

Each year an Action Plan is released outlining what government and non-government service providers in Queensland will do to reduce the prevalence, severity and impacts of middle ear disease and associated hearing loss for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. This 2023-2024 Action Plan is the eighth such annual plan to be released.



2023-2024 actions



Hearing Health Collaborations

Achieving DKDF outcomes requires collaboration between agencies within and beyond the DKDF partnership. The projects listed below demonstrate this collaborative approach, ranging from joint funding and governance through to data-sharing and support for implementation. The projects are listed under their lead agencies, although it must be recognised that none of these projects can be delivered effectively by any agency alone.

Lead Agency: Queensland Department of Education

Schooling Projects. The Queensland Department of Education (DoE) supports equitable access to and participation in learning for students with hearing loss. Data indicates that medical and audiological management is important but does not automatically produce improved learning outcomes. Tailored supports and curriculum adjustments are essential to overcome potential impacts on oral language and literacy development, learning outcomes, attendance and wellbeing. Strong partnerships between education and hearing health partners ensure schools understand student hearing needs and can walk with families as they navigate health services.

Over the next 12 months, Queensland DoE will continue to establish and embed partnerships with hearing health providers in identified communities with high First Nations enrolment. Schools will be supported to develop a whole school approach to hearing, with wrap-around support for school staff and families to ensure students are able to hear, listen and learn. This will build on DoE's Hearing Pathways initiative which supports schools in vulnerable areas with high First Nations enrolment to address identified barriers to a) early identification of hearing loss b) the significant impact of hearing loss on classroom learning.

Hearing Pathways currently enables hearing screening in schools as well as targeted hearing health assessment and referrals to specialist services through partnerships with:

- the Healthy Hearing Program (delivered by Children's Health Queensland)
- a number of Hospital and Health Services
- Hear and Say, and
- Sound Scouts.

During 2023/24 other projects will be investigated in collaboration with the Deadly Ears Program and Hearing Australia's Listen to Learn Program.

Kindy Inclusion Service. The DoE provides funding to four specialist organisations (Hear & Say, Autism Qld, SPELD Qld and Down Syndrome Qld) to provide practical support and information to early childhood educators about appropriate educational adjustments, expectations and experiences for children with suspected or diagnosed disability and/or complex support needs. The Kindy Inclusion Service aims to increase educators' confidence in creating inclusive learning environments, through universal and targeted supports tailored to meet the needs of the kindergarten service. This service support approved kindergartens in long day care settings, sessional kindergartens; and state delivered kindergartens.

Lead Agencies: Queensland Health with the Department of Housing

Qld Healthy Housing Program. The Queensland Healthy Housing program is being piloted in Yarrabah and the Torres Strait island of Badu. The program is a partnership between Queensland Health, Energy and Public Works, the Dept of Housing, Shire Councils, health services and communities. It has three broad aims: improving health; creating healthier homes, and building capacity in Councils and communities. The program has achieved significant results in both pilot locations and has been extended until June 2024.

Lead Agency: Children's Health Queensland

Hearing Screening Services. School hearing screening programs across Qld are delivered by individual health services with no overarching guidance framework or coordination. As a result, there is considerable variation in the availability and nature of screening in schools, and in the management of clinical data that could guide service planning. Over 2023/24 the Deadly Ears Program will work with other services and stakeholders to explore options for improving the coordination and consistency of school hearing screening services, particularly in at risk communities such as those with high proportions of First Nations children.

Strengthening ENT services for First Nations children in central Queensland. The Deadly Ears Program is exploring options for improving access to ENT services for First Nations children in the central Queensland region. This work builds on the Program's existing service in Woorabinda and will include investigation of telehealth, targeted outreach services and other options to support local health services in meeting the ear health needs of children who would otherwise have limited access to specialist services.

Lead Agency: Hearing Australia

Hearing Assessment Program – Early Ears. The national Hearing Assessment Program – Early Ears (HAP-EE) is being implemented by Hearing Australia to (1) provide diagnostic hearing assessment and follow-up treatment; (2) strengthen management of ear health in primary care; and (3) increase community awareness about the importance of ear and hearing health. The HAP-EE program is being supported in Queensland by a range of DKDF agencies.

Lead Agency: TAFE NSW

The EarTrain Program. TAFE NSW is funded by the Australian Government to deliver the EarTrain national training in Indigenous ear and hearing health. DKDF agencies are collaborating with the TAFE through its State Advisory Group to ensure the training meets the needs of health services and clinicians in Queensland.

Lead Agencies: University of NSW with Queensland Health

The DrumBeat.ai Project. Queensland Health is collaborating with the University of Sydney to support the development of artificial intelligence (AI) that can help clinicians diagnose ear disease using video otoscopy. Following provision of CHQ data in FY2021/22 and the subsequent successful training and testing of the algorithm, this year the project will progress to clinical trials to test the algorithm's effectiveness as a clinical decision-support tool.

Lead Agency: the National Acoustics Laboratories

Hearing health outcomes for First Nations children. At present there is no clear evidence on a) the impacts of hearing loss on First Nations children or their families; b) which of these impacts are most important to families and stakeholders, or c) what supports, or combination of supports, help achieve the best outcomes for children and families. The National Acoustics Laboratory is undertaking research to address this gap by investigating the views and priorities of families, caregivers and children themselves. The work will be a partnership with communities, health services and education providers in selected locations in Queensland and other jurisdictions.

