








-  Health and education workers need quality information and resources about how to prevent and manage ear disease and address hearing problems. The Indigenous EarInfoNet can provide you with this information.
-  The Indigenous EarInfoNet, an ear health and hearing web resource, is a 'one-stop shop' for people working with Indigenous children affected by otitis media (middle ear disease) and their families.



**Indigenous EarInfoNet**

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**EarInfoNetwork**

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- News & events
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- Funding
- Share your info
- Feedback
- EarInfoNet home

-  It will also support the Indigenous EarInfoNetwork to aid in information-sharing and collaboration in ear health and hearing.

# Australian Indigenous EarInfoNet and InfoNetwork

[www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/ears](http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/ears)

## The Indigenous EarInfoNet

An ear health and hearing web resource is now up and running. The resource is a 'one-stop shop' for people working with Indigenous children affected by otitis media (middle ear disease) and their families. It will also support a national network, the Indigenous EarInfoNetwork, to aid in information-sharing and collaboration in ear health and hearing. Development of the resource is being undertaken in consultation with Aboriginal ear health workers and other people working in this important area. The Indigenous EarInfoNet is located on the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet website (<http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/ears>).

## National Indigenous Ear InfoNetwork

People working in the area of Indigenous ear health and hearing often report that they feel they are working in isolation. And that they need to 're-invent the wheel' regularly when developing projects and resources for the management of ear disease and hearing loss. This resulted in the formation of an informal national network of people working in the field of Indigenous ear health and hearing so that they could share information, experiences, ideas, and resources. Network members come from various fields (including Aboriginal Health Workers, audiologists and audiometrists, teachers, medical officers, nurses, and more). The purpose of the EarInfoNetwork is to collectively address the complex issues of ear health and hearing through improving communication and the sharing of information and resources. Network members will primarily share information and resources by using email and Internet-based 'discussion boards'. Their contact details will be made available (with permission) so that communication can take place at any time.

## Background

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 eardrum perforation exceed 60%, and up to 50% of school children are eligible for hearing aids. Some Indigenous children have pus discharging from their ears for years. 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 eardrum are damaged. Hearing loss can affect a child's education and social relationships, and even job opportunities in adulthood. The reasons for the very high rates of ear disease are complex, but include poverty, poor housing, overcrowding and an over-stretched health care-system.

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. Unfortunately, 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. There is an urgent need to improve awareness of otitis media and hearing loss, and to provide useful information about how to tackle this complex problem. Health and education workers need quality information and resources about how to prevent and manage ear health and address hearing problems.

## Who are the Web Resource and the Network for?

The resource and Network are for policy-makers and project/program managers, medical officers (including GPs), nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers (AHWs)/ early childhood workers/ teachers and teacher aides/ audiologists and audiometrists/ speech pathologists/ researchers/ and families of Indigenous children affected by otitis media (particularly those living in remote communities). The resource will also be very useful for other people interested in Indigenous health, including students and the general public.

## Contents of the Indigenous EarInfoNet Web Resource

The web resource will include: reviews/ guidelines/ resources and equipment/ services, programs, projects and lessons/ policies and strategies/ publications/ and links. It will also include 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.

## Acknowledgements

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