



The
Shepherd
Centre



Impact Report | 2025

A world of choice, at every stage.



Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and connect. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and honour the enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages and communities.

As an organisation built on communication, we recognise the deep connection between language, identity and belonging. We're committed to learning alongside First Nations communities and strengthening culturally safe pathways so every child with hearing loss can thrive within their culture and community.



Local Wollongong artist Rob Naylor with Dr Aleisha Davis, CEO of The Shepherd Centre

About the artist and artwork

Community Connections is by artist Rob Naylor, a proud Yuin man raised on Dharawal country.

This artwork represents shared learning, cultural respect and the strength that comes from walking alongside one another.

At The Shepherd Centre, communication is how children discover their voice, families build confidence and communities come together. Communication is also about identity and belonging.

Community Connections is a two-panel artwork, with one half proudly displayed in our Wollongong Centre and the other in our preschool. It's a daily reminder that progress doesn't happen alone - it grows through relationships, respect and resilience.



Meet Luca and his family

Luca is our cover star and the youngest of three brothers, all born profoundly deaf, to parents Renata and Luiz.

With no family history of hearing loss, when their eldest son Rafael was born, the family's journey with The Shepherd Centre began.

With the support and confidence they gained through Rafael's journey, Renata and Luiz chose The Shepherd Centre again for their younger sons.

Today, Luca (7), Gabriel (11) and Rafael (13) reflect what's possible when early intervention grows with a child.

Read more about The Shepherd Centre's team-based early supports approach and the lifelong care that shapes communication, confidence and independence at every age on page 15.

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A message from our CEO

Hearing loss does not define a child's future. But the right support, at the right time, can open a world of possibility.

For more than 55 years, The Shepherd Centre has stood alongside families at one of life's most significant moments. The moment they are told their child is deaf. What follows is more than therapy. It is partnership. Evidence. Belief in what is possible.

In 2025, more than 900 children and young people accessed our specialist support across every stage of life. Behind that number are individual stories of resilience, growth and determination. Babies learning to listen. Children finding their voice in the classroom. Teenagers building confidence and identity. Young adults stepping into leadership.

Early intervention remains at the heart of our work. The evidence is clear. When support begins early and is delivered by skilled, coordinated teams, communication outcomes are stronger and opportunity expands.

Our responsibility does not end when school starts. Needs change. Technology evolves. Life becomes more complex. That is why our model continues beyond the early years, through school transitions, adolescence and into adulthood, ensuring children grow into confident and connected contributors to their communities.

This year, we strengthened our voice beyond our centres. We brought families' lived experiences directly to decision makers. We expanded global collaboration through HearHub and our partnership in Japan. We continued advocating

for funding certainty so access to early intervention is shaped by need, not circumstance.

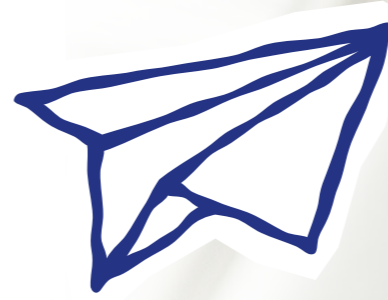
None of this happens without partnerships. To our families, thank you for your trust. To our donors and supporters, thank you for ensuring children can access services when it matters most. To our team, thank you for your care, expertise and dedication.

Together, we are building more than services. We are building a future where every child can listen, speak and shape their own world of choice.



Dr Aleisha Davis
Chief Executive Officer

PhD, GAICD, LSLS Cert.AVT
Emeritus, Certified Practicing
Speech Pathologist



Looking ahead

Read our CEO's thoughts for the future on page 44

“Our role is not simply to support children in the early years, but to remain a trusted source of care, connection and expertise throughout life.”





Dr Bruce Shepherd AM, wife Annette and children Penny and Danny

Our story

How it all started

The Shepherd Centre began with a simple belief: deaf children deserve every opportunity to learn, connect and thrive.

In 1970, Dr Bruce Shepherd AM and his wife Annette founded the organisation after their children, Penny and Danny, were born with profound hearing loss. At a time when Australian families had few options, they travelled overseas to learn about auditory verbal therapy, an approach focused on teaching listening and spoken language.

They returned with a vision for something Australia had never seen before: a team-based, wraparound, parent-coaching style early intervention model designed to shape lifelong outcomes for deaf children and open up a world of choice.

A model built differently

We were the first organisation in Australia to bring together paediatric audiology, family guidance and speech therapy into a multi-disciplinary wraparound early intervention model.

This approach places families at the centre of care. Through evidence-based therapy and parent coaching, children build strong communication skills while families gain the confidence and tools to support progress every day.

What began as a family-led initiative helped redefine early intervention for deaf children in Australia and continues to influence practice internationally.

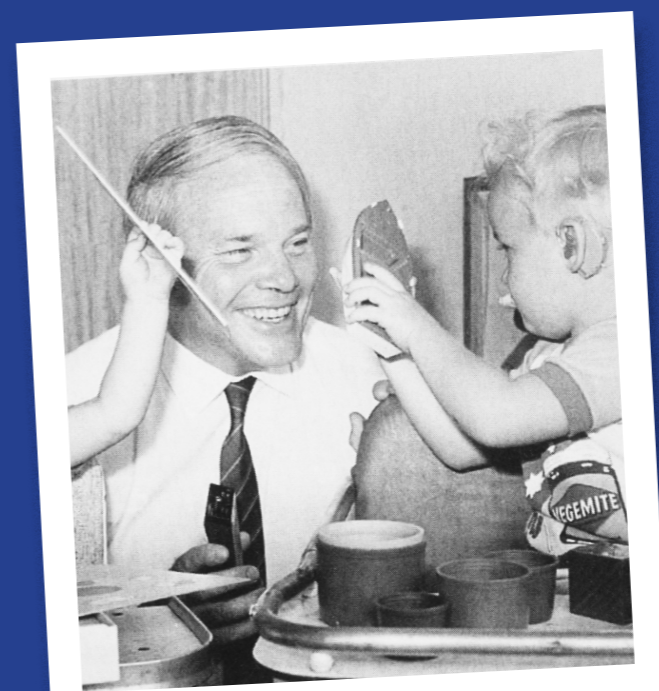
Our impact today

Over time, we have expanded beyond early childhood to support families across every stage of their lives.

In 2021, we welcomed Hear For You, extending our impact to deaf teenagers and young adults. In 2022, we launched HearHub, sharing decades of clinical expertise with professionals around the world.

Today, The Shepherd Centre's wraparound early intervention model is also recognised internationally as best practice. Governments, clinicians and organisations look to Australia for leadership in listening and spoken language outcomes. In Japan, a publicly funded early intervention program has been shaped by the approach pioneered here, extending The Shepherd Centre's impact far beyond Australian borders.

From diagnosis and early intervention, through school and throughout adulthood, we walk alongside families with expertise, care and community.



Dr Bruce Shepherd in the early days of The Shepherd Centre

Our identity and direction

Our Mission

We empower generations of children with hearing loss to listen, speak and have a voice.

Our Vision

A world of choice.

Our Purpose

Empower voice. Amplify possibility.

Our strategic pillars

Support our children and families to flourish

We support and grow strong families, developing their skills through guidance and coaching tailored to each unique family.

Influence change in the system

We innovate models of care and drive transformation and change for children with hearing loss around the globe.

Build a sustainable future

We have strong governance foundations, ensuring a sustainable future, deepening our impact, so that we are here to deliver our mission for generations to come.

Nurture our teams

We are an employer of choice, with skilled and engaged staff who are aligned with our mission and values.



The Shepherd Centre team with Her Excellency the Hon. Ms Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia and Patron of The Shepherd Centre

Our values:



Integrity-led



Empowering



Courageous



Creative

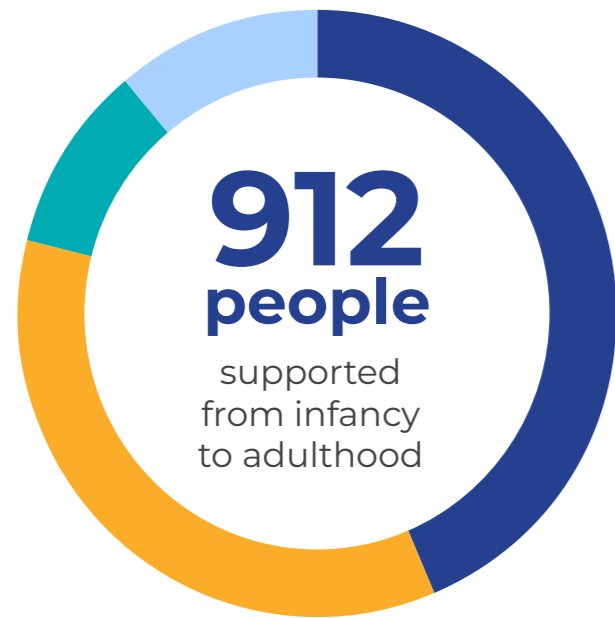


Compassionate



Innovative

2025 in numbers



398
young children
building strong foundations in the early years

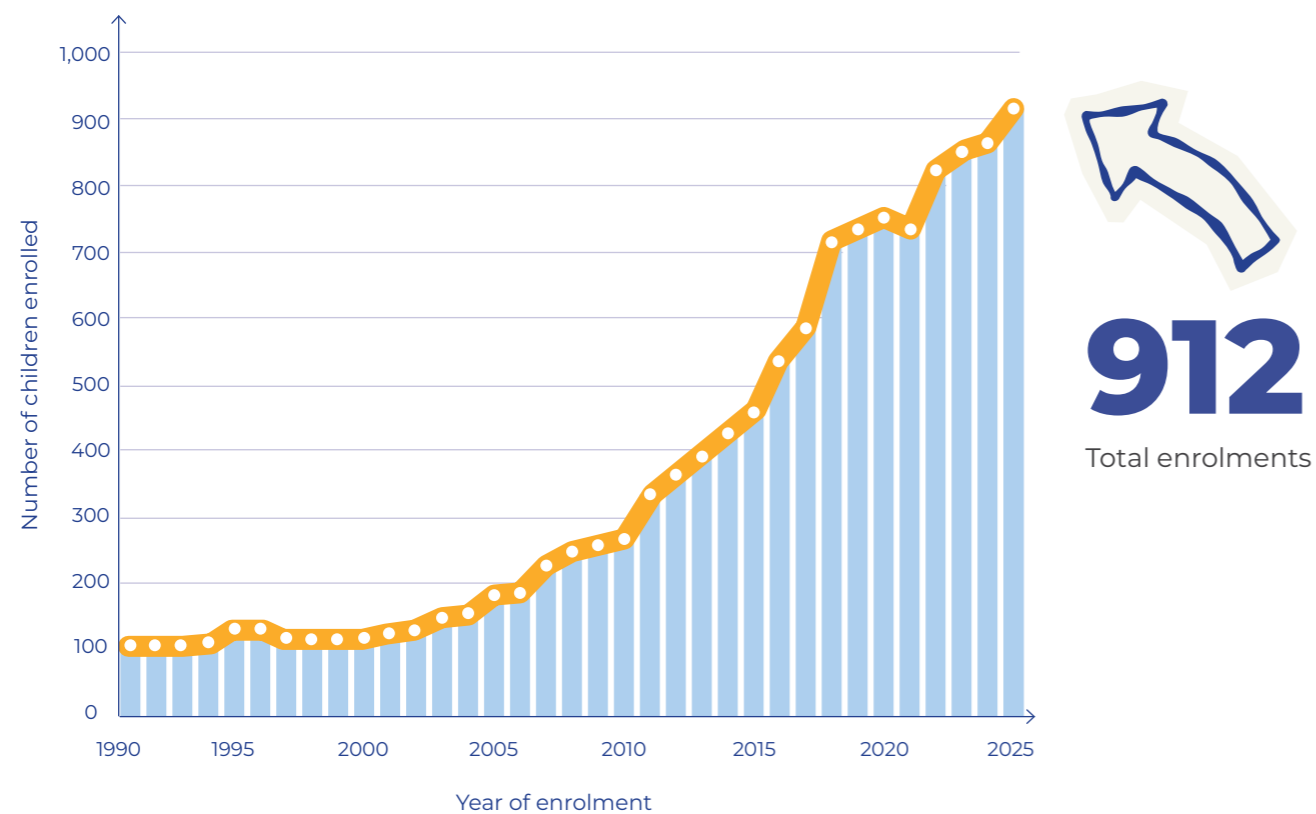
90
high school students
growing in confidence and independence

323
primary school students
supported to learn, connect and thrive

101
adults
staying connected through lifelong care

Growing demand for support

In 2025, 912 individuals and families sought support from The Shepherd Centre.



91
median language score

Children heading to school achieved language scores within the normal range for their age, building strong foundations for learning, confidence and life beyond school.

100%
school ready

Every child transitioning from early intervention was supported to take their next step into their chosen local school.

53
children

completed early intervention and started school ready to learn.

48
children

accessed life-changing cochlear implant surgeries supported via our First Sounds Cochlear Implant Program.

22
Hear For You mentors

guided the next generation of deaf children through lived experience, connection and leadership.

8

research presentations

shared at international conferences to help strengthen global practice.

4

new centres

in Launceston, Newcastle, Dapto and Engadine opened to offer specialist support closer to home.



Renata and her three sons: Rafael (13), Gabriel (11) and Luca (7)

A lifetime of support

Hearing loss shapes every stage of development, from a baby's first sounds to a young adult stepping into independence. At The Shepherd Centre, early intervention is the evidence-backed investment for lifelong communication outcomes.

As children grow, their needs change. Our specialist care continues through school and into adult life, strengthening outcomes for each individual.

Support at every stage

Every child's journey is different. Our model evolves as needs change, providing coordinated support across a lifelong pathway.



The early years

Our team-based early intervention model helps infants and young children build listening, language and social skills during the most critical period of brain development, laying strong foundations for communication and confidence.



The school years

As children grow, ongoing clinical care, mentoring and peer connection support learning, independence and participation both inside and outside the classroom.



Beyond the school years

Through personalised guidance, alumni programs and community connection, young adults continue to build independence, pursue their goals and shape their future.

At The Shepherd Centre, we specialise in listening and spoken language. We support families to explore communication options and make informed choices that feel right for their child and family.

One pathway does not, and should not, exclude another. We honour and respect all forms of communication, including Auslan (Australian Sign Language). Auslan is a rich language with deep cultural significance. We recognise its history and importance within the Deaf community, and its role in identity, connection and belonging.

Choice, care and transparency sit at the centre of our approach. We are committed to ensuring families feel informed, supported and empowered, whichever communication pathway they choose.

The early years

The early years are critical for building communication. With timely, wraparound support, children with hearing loss develop the listening and language skills they need to start school ready to connect and learn.



- ✓ **Listening and language** foundations strengthened
- ✓ Families become confident **communication partners**
- ✓ **Earlier intervention** maximises outcomes for kids

Early intervention creates strong foundations.



Chester (1) and mum, Mim

A strong start for baby Chester

When Chester was just five weeks old, his family learnt he had moderate hearing loss. His parents Mim and Charles, arrived at The Shepherd Centre feeling worried, hopeful and full of questions.

"What I found at The Shepherd Centre was a real sense of community and this huge reassurance that Chester's life is still full of possibility," said Mim, Chester's mum.

"From the very beginning, The Shepherd Centre wrapped around our whole family. It wasn't just about Chester it was about helping us feel confident and capable too. They guided us through every decision, helping us understand why early intervention matters so much. They made everything feel

manageable and not overwhelming."

Mim's first appointment left a significant mark on her and her family.

"I walked in feeling unsure and walked out thinking... ok, we've got this."

"Seeing the older kids just being kids was everything. It made me realise that the dream every parent has for their child, to just be happy, is absolutely still possible for Chester."

Isla and Alaska, besties for life

For young cousins Isla and Alaska, The Shepherd Centre has long been part of their family's story. Their fathers, also both with hearing loss, were supported by The Shepherd Centre when they were children too.

"Isla's dad had such positive memories of The Shepherd Centre. He told her how much fun she was going to have, and he was right" said Katelyn, Isla's mum.

Years after their fathers first walked through the same doors, Isla and Alaska began their early intervention at age 3.

Isla and Alaska are inseparable, "they always want to be together," Katelyn said. "They love choosing matching hearing aid colours."

"Early, team-based care has made a powerful difference. Speech therapy, audiology and family support came together at a critical time for us," said Kristen, Alaska's mum.

"Before The Shepherd Centre, Isla could only string a few words together," Katelyn said. "Now she's five and holds full conversations. Her confidence has grown and she's so ready for school."

Isla and Alaska are two of 53 children who began primary school with confidence in 2026 after completing The Shepherd Centre's early intervention program, designed to support children from birth to age five.

Support does not end when school begins. As children grow into teenagers and then adults, listening needs continue to evolve. Regular hearing reviews and cochlear implant programming help keep sound clear, comfortable and matched to each stage of life, from the classroom to social settings, study, work and beyond.

For some families, the impact threads through generations.



Families enjoying our Acoustic Skills group

A village for every family

Our evidence-based group programs are where young children learn, explore and connect together. From Talk Together, music groups to parent workshops, these experiences bring families into a shared space of learning, support and trust, often resulting in lifelong friendships.

Children build communication and independence through playful guided, evidence-based activities. Parents also have the chance to learn alongside other parents who truly understand their journey.

Did you know?

Music is something we can all share.

Our Acoustic Skills music group creates a safe and joyful space where children experience sound, rhythm and language in a supportive environment. As they sing, play and interact, they are developing listening and language skills in a way that feels natural and fun.

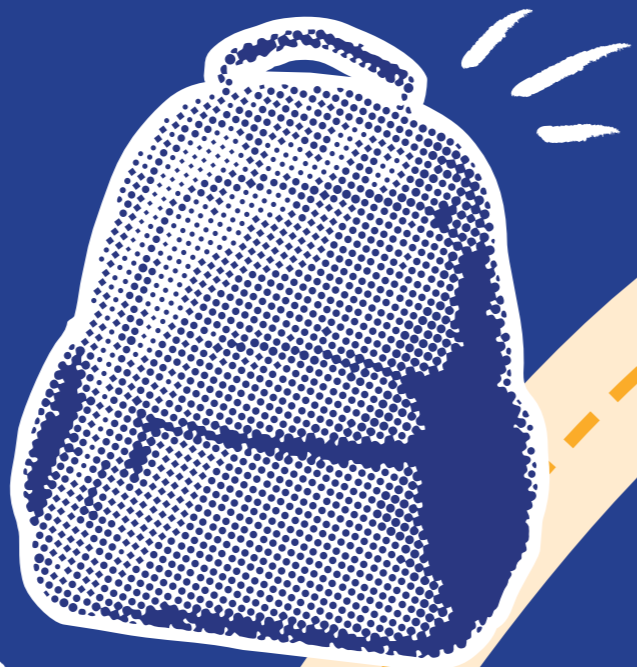
Led by registered music therapists, sessions strengthen communication, confidence and connection between children and their families. Through shared moments of music and play, parents and children build emotional bonds that support attachment, trust and early learning.

Music creates a shared space where children can be themselves. When children feel at ease, learning follows naturally.

The school years

The road to school readiness starts with early intervention. It prepares children for school and opens up a world of choice.

As children grow, ongoing hearing care supports learning and participation, while programs like Hear For You build resilience, self-advocacy and confidence through deaf mentors with lived experience.



- ✓ Young people build **identity and self-advocacy**
- ✓ **Hearing care** supports learning and participation
- ✓ **Belonging** strengthens wellbeing through transition years



Eden (11) sharing his story at our 2025 'off to school' celebration

Eden, from early intervention to entrepreneur

Eden was four weeks old when he was diagnosed with bilateral mild-to-moderate hearing loss.

He soon began early intervention at The Shepherd Centre, where those early years built the foundation for everything that followed.

"I was a stubborn kid," Eden laughs. "But Lisa, my speech therapist, always believed in me."

By the time he started school, Eden was ready. Not just with assistive technology that helped him hear clearly in a busy classroom, but with self-confidence that has allowed him to advocate for what he needs.

"I ask people to repeat things. I sit at the front. I just do it."

Through our Confident Kids 9-12 and Hear For You groups, he's also found connection and belonging.

"I made friends who actually got what it was like to be deaf. I wasn't sure about joining at first but when I got there, it turned out to be just what I needed."

Then Eden did something powerful. He took self-confidence to the next level. He reimaged it.

Eden launched Hibbitz, transforming recycled Jibbitz decorative charms for Croc shoes into colourful hearing aid accessories.

Today, Eden isn't just a young entrepreneur, he's a role model.

He's proof that early intervention does more than support children. It helps shape confident, creative contributors to the world around them.

"I've experienced the questions and attention that can come from wearing hearing aids. That's why I started Hibbitz. I want to help other kids feel confident and proud to wear theirs. If you love what they look like, you can feel more confident wearing them."

Hear For You is led by deaf mentors with lived experience.

Young adults who have navigated school, friendships and work with hearing loss, coach and guide the next generation through critical teenage years.

The programs build confidence, self-advocacy and lifelong connection.

Beyond the school years

Adulthood is where years of early intervention and ongoing support come into their own. Young adults return for hearing care and connection, with many stepping forward as mentors and role models for the next generation.

- ✓ **Alumni stay connected** through lifelong care
- ✓ **Early intervention** translates into education and career pathways
- ✓ **Lived experience guides** the next generation

Meet Max

Max has been part of The Shepherd Centre since he was a baby learning to hear with cochlear implants. Now an alumnus, mentor and staff member, he's the next generation of leadership.

His drive to give back is already making an impact.

He was recently named Sydney's Upper North Shore Young Volunteer of the Year.

Now studying Speech and Hearing at university, Max is encouraging other young people simply by showing what's possible.

His story shows how early intervention can evolve into mentorship, advocacy and future professional pathways.



Five questions with Max

1 When you think back to your younger self at The Shepherd Centre, what's the moment that stands out most for you?

Definitely singing the "hello" song before group sessions. I would have been about two or three and it's such a clear memory for me. We sang it every time.

2 You've grown from a kid learning to listen and speak into someone young people look up to. What's the story you always share with teens who feel unsure about their future?

I remind them it's completely normal to feel unsure. I share how I felt in high school compared to now at Uni so they know those feelings pass and things really do work out.

3 What's one challenge you faced because of your hearing loss that ended up shaping your confidence or direction in life?

Listening in noisy environments has always been tough for me. Places like parties, food courts or even the car with music playing can make everyday listening harder than people realise. With so much noise happening at once, I've had to become a stronger self-advocate, asking people to speak up or face me when they talk. It took courage at first, but over time it built my confidence and helped shape the direction I've taken in life.

4 You're now studying Speech and Hearing. Was there a specific moment or person who made you think, "This is the path for me"?

When I was choosing what to do after school, I kept thinking about the huge impact The Shepherd Centre had on me. It made me realise how meaningful this work is, and I knew it was the right path.

5 And just for fun... what's something about you that always surprises people when they get to know you?

People are often surprised to learn I have a profound hearing loss. I don't always mention it unless it comes up, so when I do, especially in new friendships, I usually get a few shocked faces!

Friendly reminder: **Stay on track with your hearing health**



Hearing technology works best when it's regularly reviewed.

Whether you're a parent supporting your child, a teenager managing your own appointments, or an adult who hasn't checked in for a while, regular reviews matter.



If you have a cochlear implant

We recommend a review at least once a year. That includes listening checks, speech perception testing and a programming update (mapping).

As life changes, listening needs change too. Regular reviews help make sure an implant is still giving the best possible access to sound.



If you use hearing aids or other hearing devices

Regular check-ins, including an annual review, help ensure hearing stays clear and comfortable as needs change. Small adjustments can make a big difference to confidence in everyday listening.

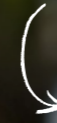


These appointments are about maintaining progress, protecting outcomes and staying confident in everyday listening.

If it's been more than 12 months since your last review, this might be a sign to book in. Call 1800 020 030 or email familycare@shepherdcentre.org.au.

We're here to support you at every stage.

Indi's journey from early intervention to two cochlear implants shows how continuous support can shape confidence and opportunity across a lifetime.



Powered by our people

Every outcome at The Shepherd Centre is powered by people. From teams who strengthen fundraising, advocacy, research and operations to the clinicians delivering specialist care, each role helps create the conditions for children and families to thrive.

Staff spotlight: Shahana

"I love working with young children and their families," Shahana said. "The parent-coaching approach really aligns with my purpose to empower parents to feel confident in supporting their child's communication journey."

With a background in medical science and a lifelong love of language, Shahana said joining The Shepherd Centre felt like fate.

Her days combine evidence-based therapy, play-based learning and close partnerships with families.

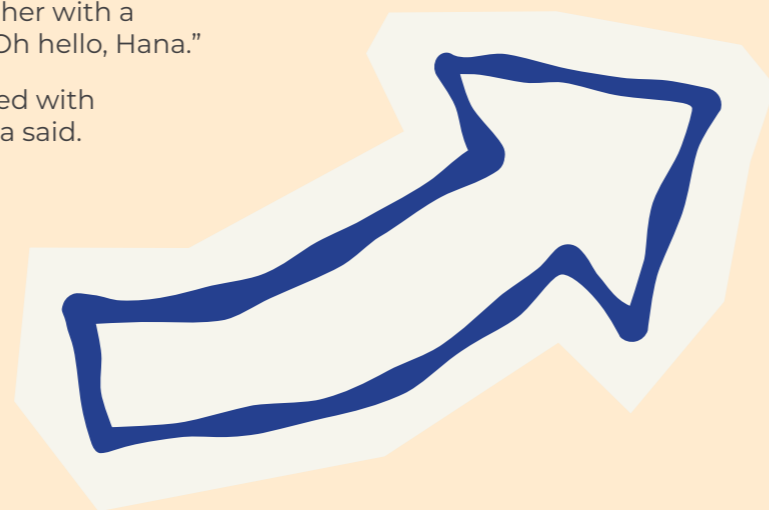
Carefully planned activities help children build listening, language and confidence through fun, meaningful moments.

"Walking alongside families through both the highs and lows, and celebrating each milestone, makes me feel incredibly grateful to do the work that I do."

One moment stayed with her this year. After months of steady progress, a little girl greeted her with a confident, "Oh hello, Hana."

"I almost cried with joy," Shahana said.

"The ability to communicate is a fundamental right, and I feel privileged to help families build that foundation from the very beginning."



Listening and Spoken Language Therapist Shahana, based at our Oran Park centre in New South Wales, reflects on the collaboration, skill and compassion that define The Shepherd Centre.



Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) therapy

Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) therapy is a specialised, evidence-based approach that supports deaf children to develop listening and spoken communication skills.

Becoming a certified Listening and Spoken Language Specialist (LSLS) takes three to five years, in addition to university, and involves advanced training, close mentorship and a rigorous certification process.

Worldwide, there are just over 1,100 certified LSLS professionals, with fewer than 100 based in Australia.

At The Shepherd Centre, families are supported by

a highly experienced team of clinicians with specialised training in paediatric hearing loss and listening and spoken language development.

This includes certified LSLS professionals, alongside clinicians who are actively working towards certification (LSL Therapists) and those building their expertise through structured supervision and ongoing professional development.

Twelve certified LSLS professionals currently work at The Shepherd Centre, representing approximately 15% of Australia's certified LSLS workforce.

Together, this depth of clinical expertise gives families access to one of the largest coordinated listening and spoken language teams in the country, working within a single, integrated model of care.



Eden (11) meeting The Hon. Kate Washington, Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion

Advocating for deaf children and their families

We continue to focus on advocacy because early intervention is time-critical and funding pathways are complex. Our aim is to remove barriers, strengthen systems and ensure families have real choice.



Bringing decision-makers closer to lived experience

We met with over 18 Members of Parliament, connecting leaders directly with deaf children and families. These conversations deepen understanding of early intervention and the need for sustained support across every stage of life.



Strengthening partnerships through First Voice

We continued to advocate here and globally through First Voice, a coalition spanning Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and South Africa.

We are committed to securing world-class early intervention and equitable access for children with hearing loss, no matter their circumstance.



Elevating young voices at Parliament House in Canberra

Together with First Voice partners and Cochlear, we co-hosted Power of Speech 2025.

Six children with cochlear implants, aged five to 13, shared their stories with confidence and humour, leaving a lasting impression on policymakers and guests.



Advocating for sustained funding

We continue to advocate for sustained State Government funding for the First Sounds Paediatric Cochlear Implant Program in NSW.

First Sounds is one of only two paediatric cochlear implant programs in NSW, and the only program in Australia that is not fully funded by the State Government.

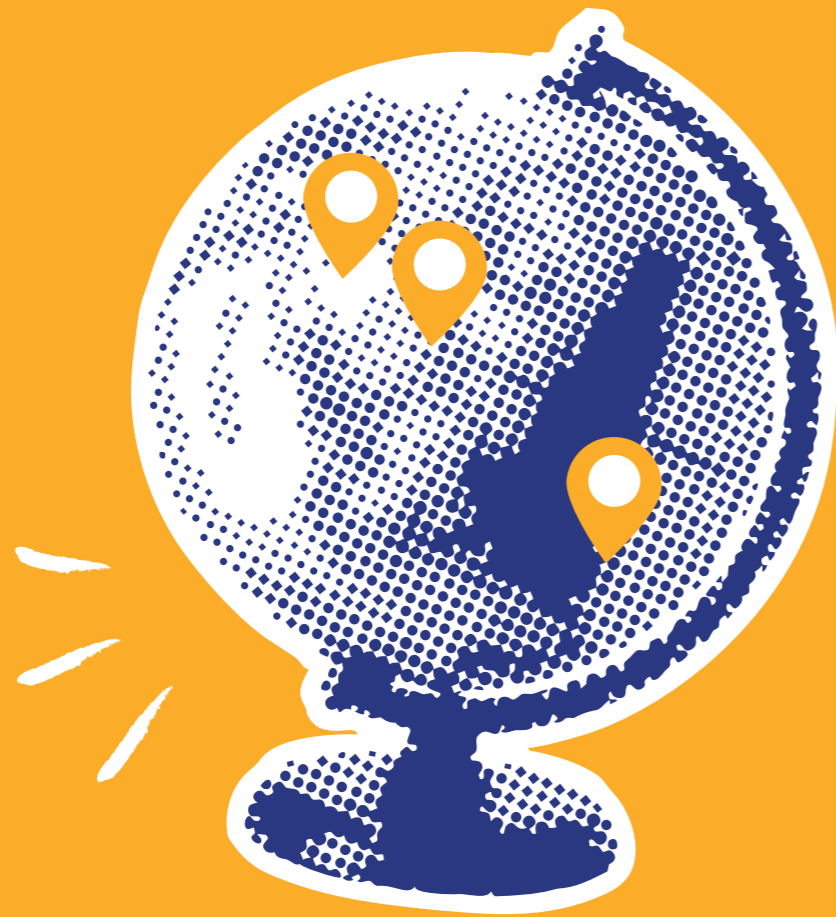
In 2025, after NDIS and Medicare contributions, donors generously contributed \$2,584,023 to ensure children could access this essential care following cochlear implant surgery.

For nearly 25 years, philanthropy has bridged this gap, with more than \$20 million raised to support this critical early intervention.

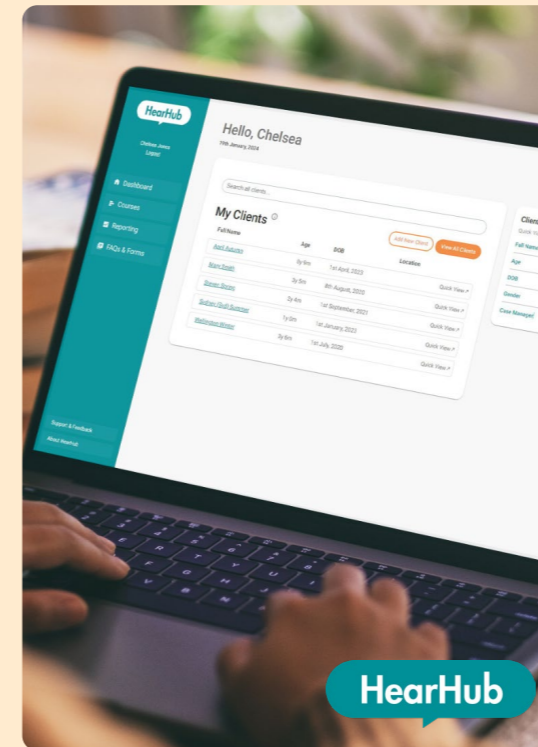
We will continue to advocate until families have the certainty and access they deserve.

From local to global

In 2025, The Shepherd Centre expanded its reach both across Australia and around the world. By strengthening access for families locally and sharing our expertise globally, we continue working toward a future where more children with hearing loss can access high-quality early intervention and ongoing care, wherever they live.



Scaling expertise globally through HearHub



Through HearHub, Australian expertise in listening and spoken language is strengthening early intervention practice internationally. By equipping clinicians beyond our centres, we are expanding access to evidence based support for children with hearing loss and helping build capability across the global hearing health community.

Launched in 2022, HearHub translates decades of clinical experience into practical tools, research informed strategies and real world insights drawn from The Shepherd Centre's team based model of care. Clinicians, educators and hearing health professionals use the platform to strengthen outcomes in their own communities, while contributing to a growing international exchange of knowledge and practice.

This work has been supported by significant funding from the Australian Government, helping expand HearHub and improve access to evidence based support for children with hearing loss, regardless of where they live.

HearHub 2025 at a glance



1044
children

supported through HearHub-enabled services globally.



8
countries

actively using HearHub across the world.



7
languages

The FLI-P resources are available in Japanese, Spanish, German, Danish, French, Malay and Italian.

Taking Australian expertise to Japan

Our partnership with Shizuoka Prefecture Hospital

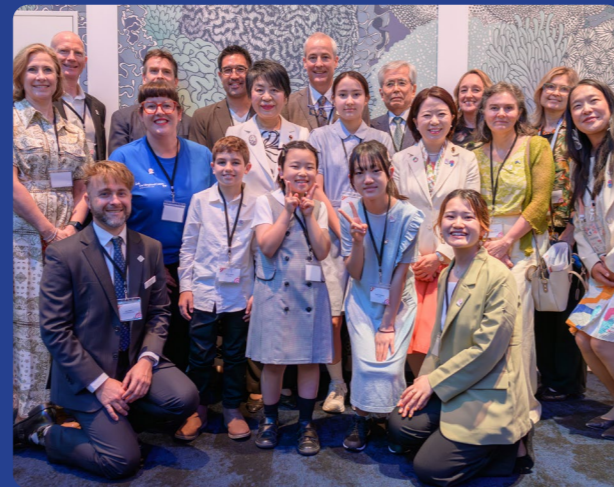
In August 2025, The Shepherd Centre helped establish Japan's first publicly funded early intervention program for deaf children through a formal partnership with Shizuoka Prefecture Hospital. Building on a decade-long relationship, this collaboration marks the first time our wraparound early intervention model has been delivered overseas.

Working alongside Japanese clinicians, our team is strengthening listening and spoken language outcomes for children with cochlear implants. In a country where diagnosis and access to specialist services are often delayed, this partnership represents a significant shift toward earlier, more coordinated support.

Supported by Shizuoka Prefecture Hospital, the Japanese Government and the Australia–Japan Foundation, the program reflects the power of international collaboration to reshape what's possible for children with hearing loss.

“We believe that it is necessary for us to do everything in our power to ensure that these children have words and language throughout their lives and to open up various possibilities for them,”

– said House of Representatives member for Shizuoka, Yoko Kamikawa.



Speakers from Power of Speech at the Osaka World Expo

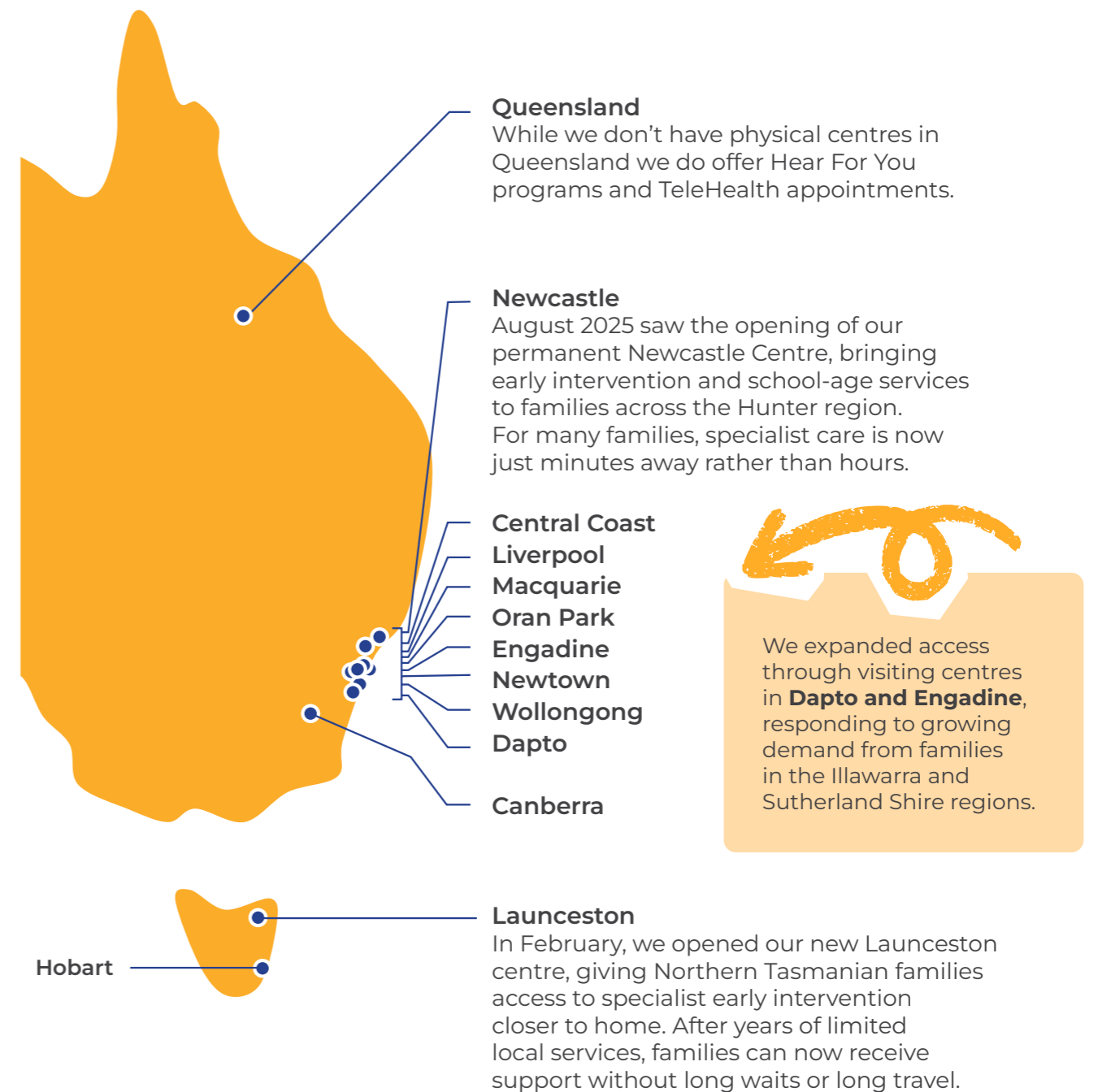
Power of Speech at the Osaka World Expo

Our work also reached a global policy audience at the Osaka World Expo through *Power of Speech: A World of Hearing, A World of Choice*. Leaders, clinicians and families from Japan and Australia came together to hear firsthand how early intervention shapes confidence, communication and independence.

Through powerful storytelling, including by our very own Oliver (pictured), alongside other children, young adults and expert insights, the event reinforced the role of early support in transforming lifelong outcomes. Representatives from Japanese and Australian governments leading hospitals attended, strengthening international collaboration and elevating early intervention on the global stage.

Expanding access closer to home

For many communities, geography can shape how quickly a deaf child can receive specialist care. In 2025, we reduced these barriers by bringing coordinated support closer to home.



Why philanthropy matters

Australia leads the world in identifying hearing loss early through universal newborn hearing screening. But early detection isn't always matched by early action.

Hearing loss is one of the few things identified at birth where timely, intensive early intervention can shape lifelong outcomes

Evidence shows early intervention strengthens communication, builds independence and reduces the need for future supports.

When care is delayed, children miss the critical window for sound and language development.

There's only a short window when the brain is most ready to develop sound and language. Support needs to start early, stay consistent and be delivered by highly skilled teams to make the most of this opportunity.

Government funding plays an important role, but it doesn't entirely cover the true cost of specialist early intervention. In the most critical early stages, each hour of evidence-based support costs more than \$100 above NDIS funding.

Philanthropy bridges the gap between diagnosis and support to make up these funds.

Philanthropy doesn't just fund services, it changes children's lives. It helps children build communication, confidence and connection.

Every act of generosity helps more deaf children learn, connect and thrive. Every donation helps a child reach their potential.



In 2025, our community raised

\$6,538,770

ensuring children could access care when it matters most

Some words from our donors

Every donor's reason for giving is unique. Here's what inspired some of our supporters in 2025.

"The reasons I am a regular supporter are because The Shepherd Centre has such a clear focus, to respond professionally and passionately so as to give deaf children a voice."

John K, donating since 2022.

"We have profound deafness in our family. The Shepherd Centre is so important in helping future generations."

Lynnette B, donating since 2022.

"I am impressed with the personal warmth of the team. I attended the 2025 'Off To School' showcase and I loved the opportunity to better understand the role The Shepherd Centre plays in the lives of children, their parents and even their extended families."

Tina P, donating since 2015.



A friendship that grew into a lifelong legacy

Helen has been a devoted supporter of The Shepherd Centre for nearly five decades. Her connection began through a lifelong school friendship with co-founder Annette Shepherd, and shaped by a shared belief in creating opportunities for deaf children.

Helen made her first donation in 1978, inspired by Annette's determination to change what was possible for families in Australia.

“Supporting The Shepherd Centre has always felt personal,” said Helen. “It’s a way of continuing Annette’s belief that every child deserves the chance to find their voice.”

Today, Helen's legacy continues through a gift in her Will, ensuring future generations of children with hearing loss receive the support they need to thrive. Her story is a powerful reminder that generosity can create impact far beyond a lifetime.



Helen Devenish-Mearns donating since 1978

You don't need a personal connection to know that giving to The Shepherd Centre is changing lives.



To find out more about our Gifts in Wills partners, simply scan the QR code or call 1800 020 030



With gratitude to our major supporters



- Allan and Leonie Shaw
- Australia-Japan Foundation
- Bankstown RSL
- BR & JR Trust
- Brenda Fairlie
- Cabravale Club Resort
- Campbell & George
- Canley Heights RSL
- Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL
- Cecilia Kilkeary Foundation
- Central Coast Leagues Club
- Collegians Rugby League Football Club
- Collier Charitable Fund
- CommBank Staff Foundation
- Community Building Partnership Program
- Crookes Family Foundation
- Daniel McAlary
- David & Fee Hancock Foundation
- David Gardner and Margaret Bartholomew
- Department of Industry, Science & Resources
- Dick and Pip Smith Foundation
- Dicker Data
- DOOLEYS Lidcombe Catholic Club
- Dr Hugh Torode
- Estate of the late Pamela Suttor
- Estate of the late Patricia Campbell Hain
- Illawarra Master Builders Club Ltd
- IOOF Centre for Educational & Medical Research
- Jabra
- James N Kirby Foundation
- Jeanette Craven
- Jessica & Wallace Hore Charitable Foundation
- John James Foundation
- Katz Family Foundation
- Lisa Joel
- Lynn Yager
- Mazda Foundation
- Mekong Mounties
- Mingara Recreation Club
- MKH Properties
- Motors & Webster Trucks Foundation
- Mounties Group
- North Ryde RSL
- Officeworks
- Origin Energy
- Perpetual Foundation - J & G Bedwell Endowment
- Perpetual Foundation - The JB Bedwell Endowment
- Reg and Sally Richardson
- Rossi Foundation
- San Giovanni Battista Association - South Coast
- Skipper-Jacobs Charitable Trust
- South Hurstville RSL
- St Johns Park Bowling Club Limited
- Sutherland Shire Council
- Tasmanian Government
- The Children's Help Foundation
- The Honda Foundation
- The Shepherd Foundation
- Vibe Dance
- Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation
- W D Booth Charitable Trust
- Yvonne Le Fort





Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC at The Shepherd Centre meeting baby Violante

Our patron and ambassadors

Our patron

Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC (pictured above) continues to serve as Patron of The Shepherd Centre following her appointment as Australia's 28th Governor-General on 1 July 2024.

Her Excellency's leadership reflects many of the values that shape our work every day. A strong advocate for social cohesion, care, kindness and respect.

She champions a future where young people feel connected, supported and able to thrive.

Through her ongoing connection with The Shepherd Centre, Her Excellency elevates the importance of early intervention and lifelong care for children with hearing loss. We're deeply grateful for her continued encouragement, advocacy and belief in creating a world of choice for every child.

Our ambassadors

Our ambassadors amplify The Shepherd Centre's mission. Their voice, influence and lived experience, raises awareness, champion choices for families and shapes an inclusive future for children and young people with hearing loss.



John Mangos

One of Australia's best-known media personalities, John Mangos brings decades of storytelling and public engagement experience to The Shepherd Centre. A longtime supporter, he uses his voice to raise awareness, mentor the next generation and help amplify the stories of children and families.



The Hon Brendan Nelson AO

Former Leader of the Federal Opposition and a close friend of founder Dr Bruce Shepherd AM, He brings strategic insight and national influence to The Shepherd Centre. His longstanding connection and advocacy help strengthen relationships across government, policy and industry.



Professor Jim Patrick AO

Chief Scientist at Cochlear Limited and a world authority on cochlear implants, Professor Jim Patrick has dedicated his life to advancing hearing health. His deep scientific expertise and commitment to innovation help guide The Shepherd Centre's clinical vision and global impact.



Olivia Andersen

A deaf alumna of The Shepherd Centre and founder of Hear For You, Olivia Andersen brings lived experience and leadership to her ambassador role. Her journey from early intervention to national youth advocacy reflects what's possible and continues to inspire young people and families.



Monique Morely

Actor and model Monique Morely uses her public profile to challenge stigma and elevate awareness of hearing loss. As an ambassador, she helps broaden The Shepherd Centre's reach, connecting new audiences to our mission and championing inclusion.

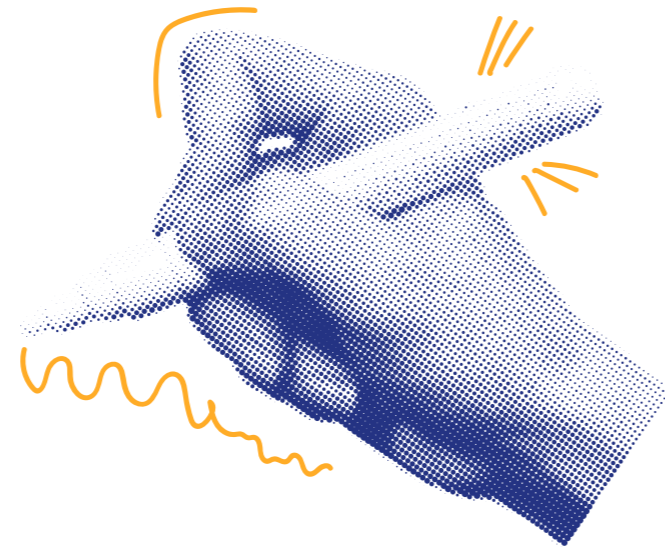


Shannon Wells

Shannon's entrepreneur, Director of Airlines of Tasmania, father of three, and advocate for hearing healthcare. Following his son's diagnosis with hearing loss and subsequent cochlear implants, he and his family found support through The Shepherd Centre, and now works to bring services closer to Tasmanian families.

Our board

Our Board combines strategic leadership, sector expertise and lived experience to guide The Shepherd Centre's future. Their governance, insight and stewardship ensure our model continues to evolve, expand access and deliver lasting impact for children and families now and into the future.



Susan Turner-Kapsanis

BA (Hons)/LLB MEL GAICD

Chair

Susan's connection with The Shepherd Centre began in 2001 when her son Alex became the first baby diagnosed with hearing loss following the introduction of the SWISH newborn screening program in NSW. She brings significant legal and business expertise, alongside lived experience, to support stronger outcomes for families.



Colleen Chapman

BComm MBT GAICD FCPA

Director

Colleen is Director of Governance, Analytics and Relationships at ACT Insurance Authority, with extensive experience in finance and organisational change. Her personal connection to hearing loss began in 2004 when her son was born with severe hearing loss, and brings lived experience and a passion for strong governance and sustainable impact.



Prof. Robert (Bob) Cowan

BSc (Hons), MBA, PhD, DipAud, GrDip(TechMgt), GrC(HlthEcon), GAICD FAudA, FICRA, FAAA

Director

Professor Bob Cowan is a globally respected expert in audiology and hearing sciences, with decades of experience in clinical research and innovation. Director of HEARnet Clinical Studies and Principal Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne, he brings scientific expertise and a lifelong commitment to advancing outcomes for people with hearing loss.



Elise Taylor

BSc LSL M Psych Ed, EMBA GAICD, FCEDP ACOP

Director

With more than 25 years' experience across health, disability and parenting services, Elise brings sector expertise and clinical insight. Currently General Manager Strategy, Quality and Risk at Cerebral Palsy Alliance, her background as a psychologist strengthens our focus on quality, risk and evidence-based care.



Dan Jarvis

MBA BBusST (HRM)

Director

Dan is an experienced HR leader with deep knowledge of Australian employment law and organisational transformation. Having lost his hearing at 18 months old and later receiving a cochlear implant, he brings lived experience alongside professional insight. He's bilingual in English and Auslan.



Adrian Falk

B Ec (Econometrics and Marketing)

Director

Adrian is an internationally experienced PR and marketing professional, bringing expertise in communications strategy and media engagement. As the father of Eden, featured on page 19, Adrian combines professional knowledge with personal connection to strengthen The Shepherd Centre's voice and influence.



Chris Chase

B Bus (Finance and Accounting) CPA

Director

With over 15 years in banking and funds management, Chris brings commercial expertise in growth, partnerships and sustainability to the Board, having previously served on The Shepherd Centre's Finance Advisory Committee. As a father of three, his daughter Milla's bilateral cochlear implants give him a personal connection to the organisation's mission and the life-changing impact of early intervention.

Our committees

Our committees bring expertise across research, digital innovation and financial stewardship, strengthening the decisions that shape outcomes for children and families.

Digital Advisory Committee (DAC)

The DAC provides strategic advice on digital innovation, cybersecurity and long-term technology planning, helping ensure our services remain modern, secure and accessible.

Members

David Glover
Co-founder and
Director, Gigz Pty Ltd

Julian Doyle
Chief Information Officer,
Peregrine Corporation

Luke Kiely
Chief Information Security
Officer, GetBusy Plc

Julian Doyle
Chief Information Officer,
Viva Energy

Research Advisory Committee (RAC)

Our RAC strengthens the clinical and research foundations of our work, bringing together leaders in audiology, hearing science and allied health to guide evidence-based practice.

Members

Professor Robert Cowan (Chair)
Director, HEARnet
Clinical Studies and
Principal Research Fellow,
University of Melbourne

Professor Jim Patrick AO
Chief Scientist,
Cochlear Limited

Assoc. Professor Alison Purcell
University of Sydney,
Sydney Children's
Hospital Network

Professor Greg Leigh AO
Macquarie University
hearing research leader

Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FAR)

The FAR Committee provides oversight across financial governance, risk management and sustainability, ensuring strong stewardship of resources.

Members

Colleen Chapman (Chair)
Governance and
analytics leader at ACT
Insurance Authority

Elise Taylor
Strategy, Quality and
Risk executive, Cerebral
Palsy Alliance

Chris Chase
Investment and corporate
development executive

Cosmas Kapsanis
Corporate financial
adviser and lecturer,
Macquarie University

John Kean
Founding partner, W+I.K
(now Crowe Horwath)

Governance in focus

Strong outcomes for children and families are grounded in sound governance, disciplined financial management and a clear focus on sustainability.

In 2025, we continued to manage the organisation with care and transparency, ensuring every dollar entrusted to us supported our purpose. Our approach balances immediate service delivery with long-term sustainability, recognising that intervention has the greatest impact when it is delivered early, consistently and to a high standard.

Throughout the year, the Board, DAC, FAR, RAC and management team maintained strong oversight of audit, risk and compliance in a complex funding environment.

This included responding to ongoing NDIS changes, rising costs and the need to invest in systems, people and infrastructure that support safe, evidence-based care.

We'll continue to advocate for funding models that recognise the time-critical nature of early intervention and the long-term value it delivers to children, families and the wider community.

Together, we're working toward a future where access to early intervention is shaped by need, not circumstance, and every deaf child can reach their potential.



Lanie Champion
Chief Operating Officer

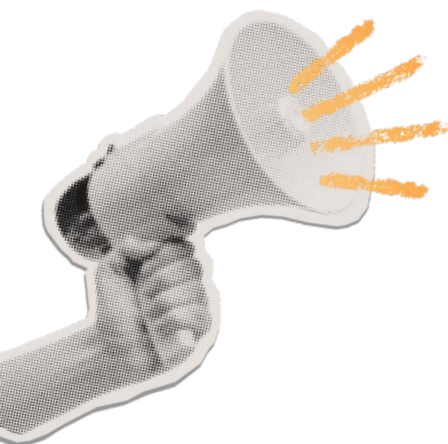
Lanie Champion,
Chief Operating Officer



Our Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Commitment

At The Shepherd Centre, we prioritise social impact and governance. We empower children with hearing loss through inclusive support and uphold transparency and ethical standards. Our advocacy alongside the NDIS ensures children have choice and control over their care programs.

We maintain strong oversight by our Board of Directors and foster accountability at all levels of the organisation. Through our ESG efforts, we aim to continue making a lasting, positive difference in the lives of those we support while contributing to the well-being of our planet and society.



Looking ahead: a final note from our CEO

As children grow, their needs change. And so does the way we support them, adapting over time to match their age and stage.

At The Shepherd Centre, early intervention is just the beginning. It's the continuity of care and connection that follows that makes the difference. We are here for families in the early years, through school transitions, into adolescence and adulthood. Hearing health does not stop at school entry, and neither do we.

Because progress isn't always a straight line. Sometimes it is steady growth. Occasionally it is a check in appointment, a device review, a mentoring conversation or a familiar face when life shifts again. What remains constant is our commitment to walk alongside each family through every moment and milestone.

We will continue to strengthen our groups where so many of you say you have built lifelong friends, alumni pathways to bring you all back together

and community spaces so children and young people feel connected with their peers. Through Hear For You, we will support teenagers to find confidence and belonging. We will stay engaged with young adults as they step into study, work and independence. And we will continue advocating for funding and policy reforms that recognise the lifelong nature of hearing health care.

In the years ahead, we'll continue to scale our impact responsibly, sharing expertise while keeping people at the centre of every decision. We'll keep working with government and partners to advocate for simpler pathways.

Most importantly, we'll keep listening to families. Families shape how we evolve, how we improve and how we measure success. Their experiences guide us.

To our children and young people, thank you for your determination and spirit. You remind us every day why this work matters.

To our families, thank you for your trust and courage. It is a privilege to support you.

To our donors, partners and supporters, thank you for ensuring children can access timely, specialist care when it matters most.

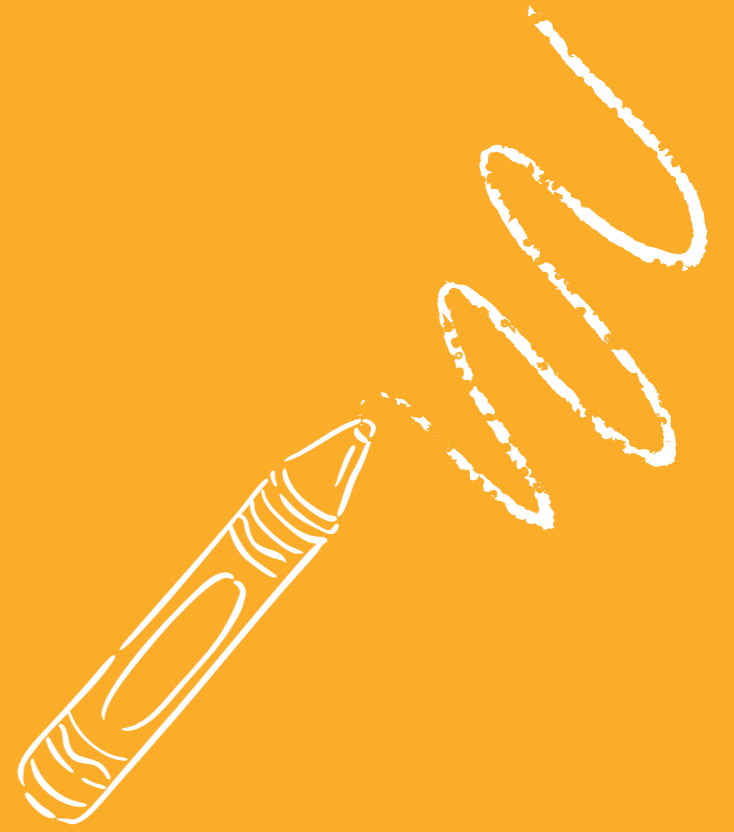
The future we are building is not defined by a single year. It is built through continuity, partnership and a shared belief that every child deserves the opportunity to listen, learn and connect. Together we can ensure every deaf child can reach their full potential. Here's to 2026!



Dr Aleisha Davis
Chief Executive Officer

“Together we can ensure every deaf child can reach their full potential.”





*Every child's progress
is powered by a
community that believes
in what's possible.*

Whether you give today,
volunteer your time or
leave a lasting legacy in
your Will, there are many
ways to help children with
hearing loss access the
care they need to learn,
connect and thrive.

Together, we are creating
a world of choice for
every child and young
person we support.

*Learn how you can
create impact*



The Shepherd Centre is a not-for-profit charity, registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) by the Australian Tax Office, and a registered NDIS provider (ABN 61 000 699 927).

Give today

A donation today helps deliver specialist family-centred programs and the resources children need to build listening, language and confidence from the very beginning.

Regular monthly giving also provides stability, allowing our teams to plan ahead and reach more families when support matters most.

Give for the future

A gift in your Will helps ensure children with hearing loss can continue to access world-leading early intervention, and other supports, long into the future. Legacy giving reflects a deep belief in possibility, helping shape outcomes not just for today's families, but for those yet to begin their journey.

Give your time and voice

Volunteers, fundraisers and advocates play a powerful role in helping families feel supported and seen. By sharing your time, skills or story, you help raise awareness of hearing loss and expand the community that stands behind every child's journey. Fundraise by hosting an event or sign up for Loud Shirt Day, where every dollar goes directly to supporting deaf children.

Give through partnership

Corporate partners, trusts and foundations help scale innovation, research and access to care. Together, we're strengthening systems, expanding reach and shaping a future where more children can learn, connect and participate fully in the world around them.



The Shepherd Centre

Giving deaf children a voice



T – 1800 020 030

E – enquiries@shepherdcentre.org.au

shepherdcentre.org.au

