



Welcome to **The Shepherd Centre**

A place where children with hearing loss are supported to discover their voice, their confidence and their place in the world, and where families are welcomed, supported and never alone.

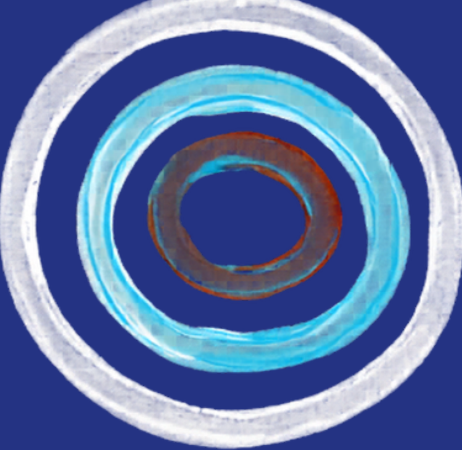
Empower voice. Amplify possibility.



The Shepherd Centre

Giving deaf children a voice





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we live, learn and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and honour the enduring cultures, knowledge and connections that have sustained communities for generations.

At The Shepherd Centre, listening means more than hearing. It means valuing stories, experiences and knowledge, respecting identity and culture, and building genuine relationships.

We are committed to equitable, culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Through First Voice, we are part of STORM (Systematically Together Overcoming Racism Model), the Indigenous-led alliance working to eliminate racism across the ear and hearing health sector.

We will continue to listen, learn and walk alongside communities so every child and family feels heard, respected and supported.

Artwork elements are from Community Connections, by artist Rob Naylor, a proud Yuin man raised on Dharawal Country. The artwork represents shared learning, cultural respect and the strength that comes from walking alongside one another.

Welcome



We're honoured to be part of your journey.

However this news arrived, and whatever you may be feeling right now, we want you to know that there is space for all of it.

Finding out your child has a hearing loss can bring many emotions; uncertainty, questions, worry, hope; and sometimes all of these feelings at once. There is no right way to feel, and there is no expectation that you should have everything figured out right away.

From the very beginning, we want you to know that you have a team beside you. More than just our expert team, you will meet other children and families who have walked your path before you. We are all here ready to support your family, answer questions, discuss different options and give you reassurance.

Today, all you need to know is that you are in the right place. We are here for you, every step of the way.

Meet Zahra and Jawad

When Jawad was diagnosed with profound hearing loss as a baby, parents, Nadia and Ihab, found themselves entering an unfamiliar world, they had never encountered childhood hearing loss before. They felt lost and overwhelmed by the amount of new information and questions, an experience many families may recognise. After connecting with The Shepherd Centre's Liverpool centre, Nadia felt that she and her family were no longer navigating the journey alone. Two years later, when Zahra received the same diagnosis, she knew exactly where to turn.

Zahra and Jawad both joined The Shepherd Centre at just a few weeks old and received support from their care team across their first five years. Through listening and spoken language therapy, audiology, family counselling, playgroups, music and school-readiness programs, they developed their communication, confidence and social skills. They loved visiting the centre and built warm, trusting relationships with a team that supported the whole family.

Today, Jawad and Zahra are bright, confident children who are proud of who they are. Jawad loves learning and is a thoughtful big brother, while Zahra is independent, social and always ready to give things a go.

They are thriving at school, building friendships and pursuing their own interests, showing families at the beginning of their own journey that, with the right support from an early age, deaf children can grow, learn and reach their potential.



Jawad (8) & Zahra (6)

Started by a family, for families

The Shepherd Centre provides much more than individual therapy. We bring together specialist listening and spoken language therapy, paediatric audiology and family support in one coordinated team, working towards the goals that matter most to your family.

For more than 55 years, The Shepherd Centre has supported children with hearing loss to build listening, spoken language and confidence. Today, we support more than 900 children and families, combining evidence-based care with compassionate support tailored to each child's needs and goals.

Our approach recognises that children learn and communicate throughout their whole day, not only during sessions. We coach caregivers to build their child's listening, language and confidence through everyday moments at home and in the community. We monitor progress, celebrate what is working and adapt support as each child's needs change, from diagnosis through the early years, transition to school and beyond.

As a not-for-profit organisation, our services are funded by the NDIS, Federal and State governments, and the generosity of our community. This means eligible families can access the specialist care their child needs at no cost.

Most importantly, we take the time to understand what matters to you. We provide care that is right for your child and build a strong partnership with your family, always at a pace that feels comfortable for you.

I joined The Shepherd Centre as a speech pathologist, and after 12 years leading our clinical teams, was honoured to become CEO. Over this time, I have met hundreds of families at every stage of their journey and witnessed the incredible possibilities that can unfold when children receive the right support early.

Every family's story begins differently, but what I have seen time and again is the strength, love and determination families bring as they find their way forward. It is a privilege to support families as they discover what is possible for their child.

This booklet introduces you to the people who will support your family, the first steps you may take together, and the many possibilities ahead. Please take your time reading it. When you are ready, we would love to welcome you into one of our centres to meet the team and learn how we can support your child and family.

Dr Aleisha Davis
CEO, The Shepherd Centre





Milly (13) & Edward (8)



What happens next

Your first steps with us

We know there is a lot to take in when you first learn your child has a hearing loss. This is why we believe the best place to begin is simply by getting to know each another.

Our first conversations are about you, your child and your family. We'll listen to your story, answer questions and start exploring the support that will help your child thrive. There's no need to prepare anything for your first appointment, and you're welcome to bring your other children along if that's easier for you. Our centres have play areas and family libraries where you can get comfortable and spend time together before and after too.

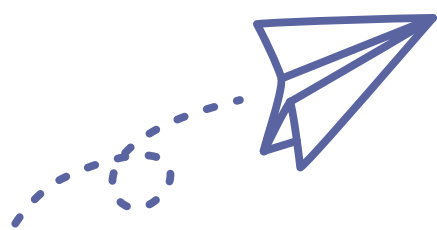
Sessions can happen in person at one of our centres, online, or a combination of both. Whichever works best for your family.

Many families begin their journey by joining Talk Together, our multi-week introductory group program designed to help parents learn, connect and feel supported from the very beginning.

Led by the specialists who will become part of your child's support team, Talk Together is a welcoming introduction to hearing loss, communication development and the experiences of other families who are walking a similar path.

There are no expectations. This is a place to ask questions, discover what is possible and build confidence one step at a time. A safe space to connect and build your community.

Every family's path is different, and we'll take things at a pace that feels right for you. Together, we'll help you navigate each next step with confidence.



Meet **your team**

Working together

From your very first appointment, you'll have a team around you who are committed to understanding your child and supporting your whole family.

Our specialists work together, sharing their expertise to build a complete picture of your child's strengths, needs and goals. By working as one team, we ensure you understand your options and can make informed decision with confidence.

At the heart of everything is our commitment to understanding your family, your child's individual development goals and working together to help your child reach their potential.

Your Client and Family Support Specialist (CFSS)

Often one of the first people you'll meet, your Client and Family Support Specialist works alongside your family from your first questions through every stage of your child's journey. They provide guidance, practical and emotional wellbeing support, plus connect you with services, resources and other families. They may also provide additional support services when these are recommended to help achieve your child's agreed goals.

Your Listening and Spoken Language Specialist / Therapist (LSL)

Our Listening and Spoken Language team, which includes certified speech pathologists, all have additional and ongoing specialist training in helping deaf children learn to listen and develop spoken language using hearing technology, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants. They work closely with your child and family through play based strategies based on real life situations, tailored to your child's age, interests and goals. They specialise in coaching parents of children with hearing loss to learn practical strategies to support their child's listening and language development at home.

Your Audiologist (AUD)

Your audiologist helps assess your child's hearing, including monitoring hearing technology, ensuring devices continue to provide the best possible sound for your child as they grow. They work closely with you and your care team, supporting your child's listening, language and overall developmental goals.



Jack (2) with Lisa, The Shepherd Centre

Our Circle of Care



Our Service Model



1

Core Services & Assessments

These evidence based services form the foundation of every family's journey with The Shepherd Centre.

This includes:

- Listening and Spoken Language Therapy
- Audiology Services
- Assessments & Progress Monitoring
- Reviews and Reporting
- Parent Education & Coaching
- Capacity Building
- Goal and Support Planning (GSP)
- Team-Based Wraparound Care

2

Goal Setting

We listen, learn and assess to understand your child and what matters most to your family.

This includes:

- Short and long-term goals
- Collaborative planning
- Tailored strategies
- Family involvement

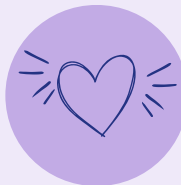
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Additional Supports

Additional supports may be recommended to help achieve child reach their goals. Not every family will need these services.

This may include:

- Cochlear Implant Services
- Community & School Visits
- Collaborative Care Co-Sessions
- Additional Assessments
- Social & Emotional Development
- Family Counselling & Wellbeing
- School Readiness Programs
- Group & Mentoring Programs



We are with you every step of the way.

Our wraparound approach ensures your child receives the right support, at the right time, to thrive at home, in school and in life.



Family-centred,
team-based care



Evidence-based
practice



Compassionate,
expert team



Better outcomes
together



2026, Renata and their three sons: Gabriel (11), Luca (7) and Rafael (13)

A lifetime of support

Every child's journey is unique, and the support they need will change as they grow. That's why our care evolves alongside your family. From the early years through school, adolescence and into young adulthood, so you'll always have a trusted team beside you.

As your child grows, we'll introduce specialists, programs and support designed for each stage of life, helping your child build communication, confidence and

independence. We'll be there to guide your family through each new milestone, celebrate progress together and adapt our support as your child's needs evolve.



2015, Renata with Rafa (2) Gabriel (6mth)



2021, parents Dannica and Michael with Teddy (3) and brother Hugo

A journey of hope: **Meet Teddy**

At three years old, Teddy loved sharks, nursery rhymes, and the colour yellow. He is curious, determined and full of personality. A little boy whose journey shows just how much is possible with the right support.

Teddy was born with CMV, a virus that can cause hearing loss. When parents, Dannica and Michael, first learned that Teddy had hearing loss in his left ear, they were devastated and unsure of what the future would look like.

“We were relying heavily on all of the professionals around us to help us understand what we needed to do,” Dannica remembers.

Over time, Teddy completely lost hearing in his left ear, and his family began exploring whether a cochlear implant could help him access sound. After carefully considering their options, Teddy had implant surgery in January 2024, and just two weeks later, his implant was switched on.

Teddy joined The Shepherd Centre for week for therapy, often with his big brother Hugo by his side. Together with his family and support team, Teddy built his listening and spoken language skills, one milestone at a time.

For Dannica, one moment captured the joy of Teddy's progress more than any other. “He sang ‘Five little monkeys jumping on the bed’, and you could clearly understand what Teddy was saying the whole time.”

It was a moment filled with pride, happiness and tears, a reminder of just how far Teddy had come and the possibilities ahead.

For Teddy's family, having a team beside them, especially through the early years, made an incredible difference. And for families who live further away like Teddy, online support helps ensure that expert care and connection remain within reach, wherever they are.

Ways to **start today**

The moments you share today help shape tomorrow

Long before your baby says their first word, they are already learning from you.

They are listening to the rhythm of your voice, watching your expressions and building their understanding of communication through every moment you share together.

The simple things you do every day; singing, reading, talking, playing and responding to your baby; are powerful opportunities to support listening and language development. Just as importantly, these moments strengthen the connection between you and your child.

Sing together

Try singing our Seven Sounds Songs. These simple, fun songs help your child learn to hear and produce different speech sounds.

You can also sing through everyday activities, such as washing the dishes, folding washing or getting your child dressed.

The different tones, rhythms and repetition in singing naturally support your baby's listening and language development.



Scan to listen to the
Seven Sounds Songs



- One cheeky monkey
- swinging in a tree,
- teasing Mr Crocodile,
- you can't catch me,
- you can't catch me!
- Along comes Mr Crocodile
- as quietly as can be...
- and SNAP!
- No more cheeky monkeys
- swinging in the tree!
- ee ee ee ee ee ee

Read together

- Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell.
- Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown.
- Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr.

Chatting throughout the day

Describe what you're doing as you feed, dress, bath or play with your baby. Everyday conversations help build listening and language.

Connect face-to-face

Hold your baby close, make eye contact and let them watch your face as you talk, sing and smile. Your voice, your expressions and the connection you share are the foundations from which communication grows.

Every conversation, every cuddle, every story and every song helps your child learn about and connect with the world around them.

Confidence built on experience

The Shepherd Centre was founded in 1970 by Dr Bruce Shepherd AM and his wife Annette after they experienced first-hand the uncertainty of raising two deaf children. Unable to find a program in Australia that would teach their children to listen and speak, they set out to create one.

Their belief was simple but powerful: with early support, the right opportunities and a family-centred approach, deaf children can develop listening and spoken language, thrive in their communities and reach their full potential.

More than 55 years later, that same belief continues to guide everything we do. We combine evidence-based care with personalised support, working alongside families to help every child reach their full potential. With decades of experience, you can feel confident your child is supported by a team that understands both the science and the journey.



Helping children thrive

School readiness: We support children through our early intervention program to prepare for their transition to primary school.

91 median language score: in 2025, children heading to school achieved language scores within the normal range for their age, building strong foundations for learning, confidence and life beyond school.



Trusted by families

55+ years supporting children with hearing loss and their families.

912 children and families supported in 2025.



Expert care, working together

10+ Certified Listening and Spoken Language Specialists (LSLS) and a staff development program supporting further education and training.

Your wraparound care team includes audiologists, counsellors, Listening and Spoken Language Specialists / Therapists and other qualified professionals, working together to support your child and family.

Scan to explore our Impact Reports and learn more about the difference our specialist services make for children with hearing loss and their families.



More information, when you need it

More support is here when you're ready

This booklet is your first introduction to The Shepherd Centre and the people who will walk alongside your family.

For now, we hope it gives you a sense of what to expect, who will support you, and the first steps you may take together.

As your journey continues, there will be many opportunities to learn more. From your child's ongoing support and the years ahead, to practical information about your care and the words and terms you may hear along the way.

We know every family takes in information differently, and every family's journey is unique. We will be here to provide guidance and answer your questions, when you are ready.

Visit our [YouTube](#) page to meet other families who have been where you are today



Your voice and experience matters

We are committed to listening to families and learning from your experiences. Whether you'd like to share what's worked well for your family, raise a concern or suggest ways we can improve, your feedback is important to us.

Every family has the right to provide feedback and have it handled respectfully, fairly, confidentially and promptly.

You can:

- Speak with your clinician
- Email feedbackandcomplaints@shepherdcentre.org.au
- Call us on (02) 9370 4400
- Scan the QR code to learn more about our feedback process, including how to contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.



Visit our website to find out more on how to share feedback or lodge a complaint

Should my child learn Auslan too?

The decision to learn Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is a personal one and depends on your family's goals and your child's needs. Many children grow up learning more than one language, and for some families, Auslan is an important part of their communication journey.

At The Shepherd Centre, our focus is on developing listening and spoken language skills. While we don't teach Auslan, we work closely with Auslan interpreters, local Deaf communities and specialist providers who do.

Whatever you decide, we're here to provide information, answer your questions and support you in making the decision that's right for your child and family.



Norah (6) and Mum, Judy



Funding and **the NDIS**

Navigating funding can sometimes feel overwhelming, particularly if you're new to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). **Our team is here to guide you** and help you understand the possible support available.

As a registered NDIS provider we can assist you with information and support before planning meetings so you feel informed and prepared.

Depending on your child's NDIS plan and individual agreed goals, funding may be available for services such as:

- Listening and spoken language therapy
- Audiology
- Client and family support
- Psychology and wellbeing support
- Groups and programs
- School and transition support
- Parent coaching and education

Whether you're applying for the first time or preparing for a plan review, your team can help you feel ready.

We're here to answer questions and help you make informed decisions at every stage.

Keep in touch

We're here for every step ahead

Wherever your journey leads, we'll be here to support your family as your child discovers their voice, builds confidence and finds their place in the world.

Our locations

ACT

Rivett, Canberra

NSW

Central Coast, Dapto, Liverpool, Macquarie University, Newcastle, Newtown, Oran Park, Wollongong

TAS

Hobart, Launceston



Scan for all centre addresses
and contact details.

Ways to reach us



(02) 9370 4400



enquiries@shepherdcentre.org.au



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linkedin.com/company/the-shepherd-centre/



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