

MEDIA RELEASE

29 October, 2015

Program celebrates 10 years of healthy hearing and happy babies

THE prospects of babies born with hearing problems at the Toowoomba Hospital are much greater thanks to an effective screening program introduced 10 years ago.

The Healthy Hearing Program celebrated 10 years of screening newborn babies for hearing loss this month.

Since 6 October 2005, trained nurses and midwives have screened 19,000 sets of tiny ears at Toowoomba Hospital, as part of the state-wide program.

“The program identifies babies who have been born with a hearing loss to enable early intervention,” Special Care Nursery Associate Nurse Unit Manager and Healthy Hearing Program Co-ordinator Wendy Carlish said.

“Prior to this screening program, it was expected that if a baby was born with a hearing loss, then as an 18-year-old they would be reading at a grade four level and their maths skills would be at a grade six level.

“Now, if a child’s hearing problems are identified by the time they are six-months-old, they are more likely to develop these skills at the same level as their peers.”

The screening program works by gathering the baby’s auditory brainstem response to noises played through ear phones.

“The foundations of a baby’s learning and speech development are laid in the first six months of life, which makes it important to identify any impediment to that development quite early on,” Ms Carlish said.

The Healthy Hearing Program continues to develop and improve with hand-held hearing devices introduced in 2009 now allowing screeners to conduct tests at the bed-side or in the home. New and improved screening devices are currently being trialled and are expected to roll out across the state in the next 12 to 18 months.

Ends

Caption: Baby Peyton Behrendt, with her parents Kira and Robert Behrendt, takes part in a Healthy Hearing screening test conducted by Wendy Carlish on the 10th anniversary of the program.

MEDIA: Contact Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service Media Team 4699 8547, 0438 702 328 or DDHHS_media@health.qld.gov.au