

# A Wedge in the Gap

Indigenous  
Gap



# Acknowledgement of Country

- I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands of the land on which we gather today. The Turrbal and Jagera people as well as pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and future.

# About Me

- I am a psychologist and educator who has spent 30 years working in the Northern Territory.
- My work has focussed on identifying and mitigating the impacts of widespread hearing loss among Indigenous people.



# OTITIS MEDIA - A DISEASE OF DISADVANTAGE

Most common reason children visit doctors

But some experience it earlier, longer more often

The socially and economically disadvantaged

- Crowded housing
- Poor nutrition
- Poor access to medical treatment
- Possible anatomical predispositions



We all live in this house



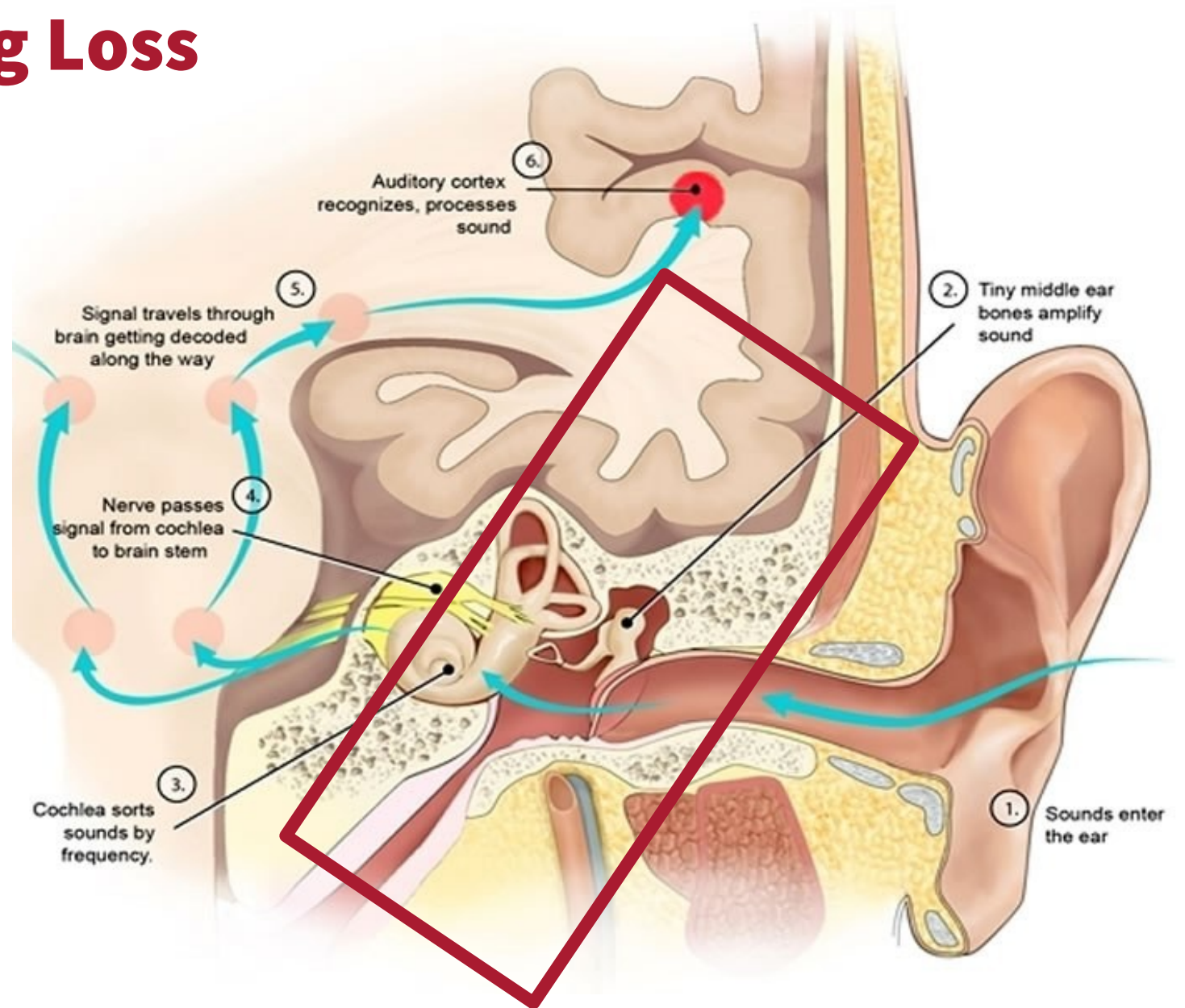
# Conductive Hearing Loss

Sound is conducted through the outer and middle ear.

Mist often caused by middle ear infections.

Often temporary but if damage to middle ear structures through repeated infections can be permanent.

The massive level of hearing loss among Indigenous people is because of this kind of ear infection driven conductive hearing loss.



What starts in difficulties  
hearing what is said,  
ends up in also having  
difficulties understanding  
what is heard



# Past and current effects of hearing loss

The legacy effects to past hearing loss . These can include

- Limited language and literacy
- Low confidence
- Limited knowledge
- Avoidance as way of coping

**Current hearing loss and/or auditory processing problems effect on communication**



# LONG TERM IMPACTS OF EARLY ONSET HEARING LOSS

Childhood  
Conductive  
Hearing Loss



Schooling

**EMPLOYMENT**

Health

**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL  
WELLBEING**

Criminal justice



# SCHOOLING

Children with hearing loss treated as having **BEHAVIOUR** problems

**DIFFICULTIES** learning

Poorer **ATTENDANCE**

Lower **ACHIEVEMENT**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rekk0tpWQyU>



# EMPLOYMENT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyzsfPbxlr8>

More  
**UNEMPLOYMENT**

Lower **INCOME**



**For more information on this watch:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aj20fGQMwYo>

**TRAINING** challenges

Difficulties with **CHANGE**

**COMMUNICATION**  
difficulties



# HEALTH

Adult hearing loss is associated with a greater risk of:

## Avoidance

Chronic disease

Limited health  
information

Wasted resources



Hearing loss **LIMITS ACCESS** to health services and communication and treatment outcomes when accessed.

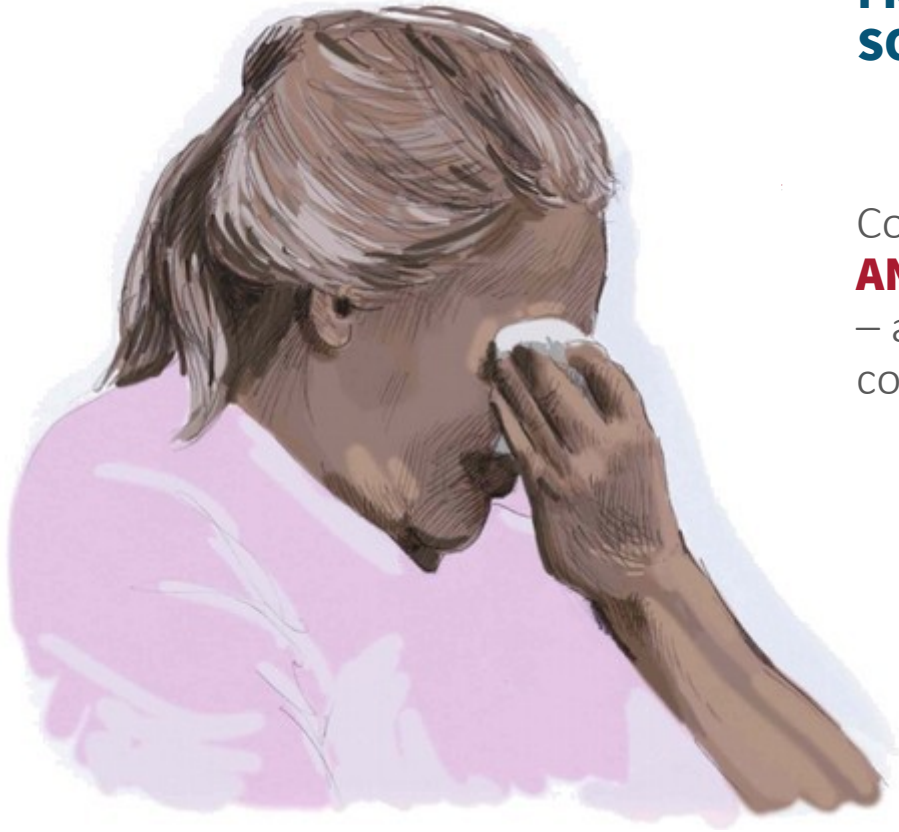




# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Those with hearing loss  
experience more  
**FRUSTRATION, STRESS,  
SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Coping strategies **FOSTER  
ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION**  
– anticipation and  
comparison



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zD\\_iifnzaeo&t=5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zD_iifnzaeo&t=5s)



# CRIMINAL JUSTICE

More often **ARRESTED, CONVICTED  
AND IMPRISONED**

Difficulties with **COMMUNICATION**  
with police, in court, in prison

Prison further **ISOLATES**



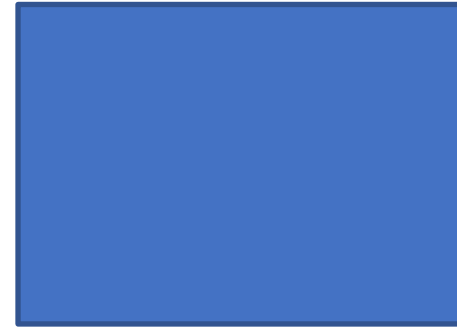
**94%** of Indigenous inmates in The NT  
found to have a **significant Hearing Loss**  
(21 decibels in better ear)

# A WEDGE IN THE GAP

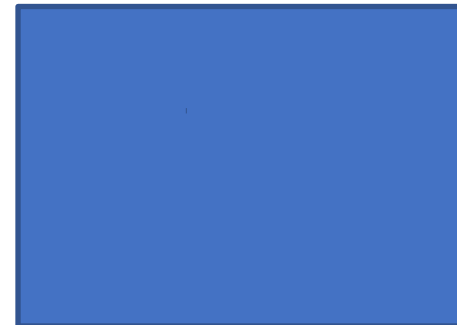
Programs to address Indigenous disadvantage to not consider hearing loss

Programs often fail to engage or obstruct outcomes

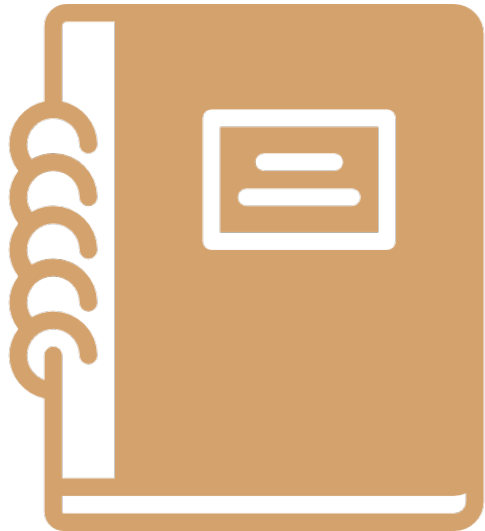
What can be done ?



Widespread early onset hearing loss



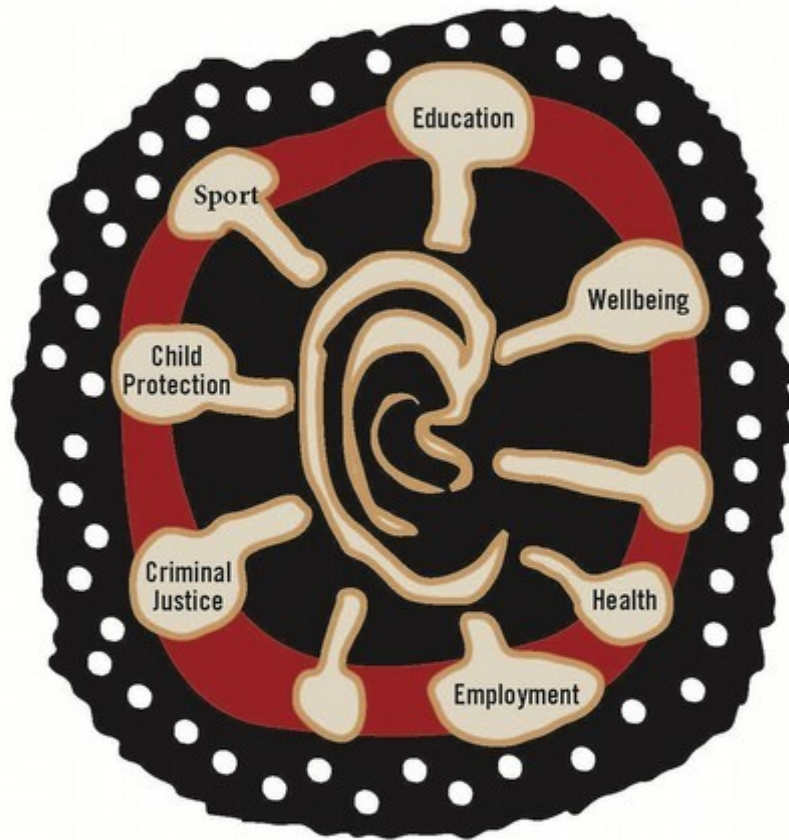
# RECOMENDATION OF THE 2017 AMA INDIGENOUS HEALTH REPORT CARD



“A national approach to developing hearing loss-responsive communication strategies in all government and non-government agencies providing services to Indigenous people including - but not limited to - health, mental health, justice, and employment services.”

# HEARING LOSS Responsive Communications Training

Sector specific training



Prepare those providing services to Indigenous people to

- Understand hearing loss and its impacts
- How to communicate more effectively
- How to create culturally familiar processes by collaborating with local people



# For more information

- Dr Damien Howard
- Email
- [www.phoenixtraining.online](http://www.phoenixtraining.online)

