



Emily getting ready for 2021 Loud Shirt Day

EMILY'S JOURNEY

In Australia, 2 in every 1000 babies are born with hearing loss. This happens for many different reasons. Our daughter, Emily was born on the first day of summer in 2012 at the Longreach Hospital and this is her hearing loss journey.

After a complication-free pregnancy and birth, my now husband, Sam and I were delighted to welcome our first child safely into the world. We were in that blissful newborn bubble and getting ready to go home from the hospital when Emily failed the newborn hearing test. I remember thinking at the time that her ears must just be blocked, or the machine isn't working properly. A week later we were back in Longreach to do a repeat test – with the same results. So, just a few days before Christmas we travelled to Brisbane to see an Audiologist at the Mater Children's Hospital. After more testing in January, it was confirmed that Emily had a profound loss in the left ear and a moderate to severe loss in the right ear. Specialists were then able to check her heel prick done at birth to see if there was any cause for the hearing loss before we went down the path of genetic testing (we had no family history of hearing loss).

It came back positive to CMV – Cytomegalovirus. Even after working as a Registered Nurse in the Central West district for four years at the time, I had never heard of it. CMV is a very common viral infection, with symptoms similar to that of a general cold or flu. Most adults have

had the infection at some point in their lives (normally as a child) and have no permanent effects from it. Once a person has contracted CMV, they will then carry it for life. However, like myself, if a woman develops the illness (primary infection) when pregnant, there is a high possibility that it will be passed onto the baby in utero, and they can be born with a permanent disability, most commonly hearing loss, poor eyesight and/or intellectual disability.

From there, Emily was fitted with pretty pink hearing aids in both ears at four months of age. I said to myself that day, I would protect her, give her the most fabulous opportunities and advocate for her until my last breath. A promise I will forever keep, even now as she grows into a fiercely independent, confident, resilient almost 10-year-old!

She was such a happy baby; however, her lack of different sounds and speech was evident. After 12 months of the hearing aids, it was decided that the left aid was not working as it should, due to the profound loss in that ear.

So just before her second birthday, she underwent surgery for a Cochlear Implant. Although a huge challenge and many tears (from her and I) to get her adapted to the new device, it was



April 2012- In Brisbane the day she got her hearing aids.

from there on we really noticed her speech improve and her little personality begin to shine. All the hopes and dreams that I had for her before she was born, which got a bit lost for a while, I could see again.

Fast forward to the start of 2021 and Emily underwent surgery for her second Cochlear Implant in the right ear. She is now in Grade 4 at Aramac State School and gets to experience a world full of sound! She loves socializing and would chat all day with absolutely anyone. She has the most beautiful handwriting and can spell better than me. She loves art and reading. Sam and I have since added three more gorgeous children to our family and Emily is the most caring big sister to them all. She loves bush life and helping on our sheep and cattle property, located 40km from Aramac.

Hear and Say is a not-for-profit organization that our family is very passionate about. They help children and adults with hearing loss learn to listen and speak. Since e-Kindy, Emily has received services from Hear and Say, including weekly telepractice sessions via Zoom with the amazing Listening and Spoken Language Specialists. We also travel regularly to the Townsville centre for appointments with the lovely Audiologists there. Living in a rural area, we have the most wonderful lifestyle; however, the isolation and distance to specialist care can be overwhelming. Hear and Say have always been a wonderful support to Emily and our family.

This is the fourth year that we have organized a fundraising event for Hear and Say in Aramac. It is our way of thanking Hear and Say and hopefully helping other children in rural and remote communities who face the challenges of living with hearing loss. Our Loud Shirt Day BBQ breakfast will be held on Friday 14th October 2022 down the main street of Aramac. Everyone dresses up in their loudest and brightest outfits and all funds raised from our raffles and food sales go straight to Hear and Say. We have had

unwavering support from the Aramac community and are forever grateful for this. Raising a child with hearing loss can be a hard journey but also an amazing one. We are incredibly lucky to have friends and family that would drop everything to help, especially in the first 12 months, which was a whirlwind of travelling away from home to the big city for so many different specialist appointments. The support and encouragement Emily receives from the principal and teachers at Aramac State School is so incredibly special and they always go above and beyond to make sure she is always supported through her disability.

To keep up to date with what is happening for our fundraiser you can like our Facebook page Aramac LOUD SHIRT DAY. We look forward to getting Loud for Emmy with you all in October!

Kerryn Geltsch

Aramac/Muttaburra branch



April 2021- Surgery for her second Cochlear Implant at the Mater Hospital in Townsville.



Emily with her siblings, Heidi, Henry and Taylor, helping out at lamb marking time on their property 'Scotstoun'.