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## Free Grommet Surgery Aids Aboriginal Kids in Perth

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A new program in Perth's southern suburbs provides free grommet surgery for Aboriginal children, bypassing long public hospital waitlists to address hearing issues.

A groundbreaking initiative in Perth's southern suburbs is transforming lives by offering free grommet surgery to Aboriginal children, tackling chronic ear issues that often lead to hearing loss. As reported by WA Today on July 30, 2025, dozens of young patients have benefited from this program, which circumvents the lengthy waitlists in Western Australia's public health system. Grommet surgery, a procedure involving the insertion of small

ventilation tubes into the eardrum, helps drain fluid and restore hearing, addressing conditions like otitis media (middle ear infection) that disproportionately affect Aboriginal communities.

The program, supported by the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme (IAHP), is delivered through Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs). These services prioritize culturally sensitive care, ensuring families feel supported throughout the process. According to the Australian Government Department of Health, the IAHP funds targeted health initiatives, including ear health programs, to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A spokesperson from an ACCHS in Perth noted that the surgery has “significantly improved children’s quality of life, enabling better school performance and social engagement.” The procedure, typically lasting 10-15 minutes under general anesthetic, allows most children to return home the same day, with recovery often complete within days.

Associate Professor George Sim, a pediatric Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) surgeon at St John of God Murdoch Hospital, emphasized the importance of early intervention. “Untreated ear infections can cause developmental delays, particularly in speech and learning,” he told WA Today, highlighting the program’s role in reducing these risks. The initiative also alleviates pressure on public hospitals, where wait times for non-urgent ENT procedures can exceed a year, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

By providing rapid access to surgery, the program ensures Aboriginal children receive timely care, addressing a critical health disparity. The QPS has called for continued funding to expand such initiatives, noting that 165 road fatalities this year underscore the need for efficient public services. Community leaders and health advocates are urging sustained investment to maintain this vital support for vulnerable families.