

Zoe's Story



Deafness is one of the most common disabilities diagnosed at birth. For the one in every 1,000 Australians born with hearing loss every year, not being able to hear or communicate is a real possibility.

Zoe Brissett says that she is one of the lucky ones. Zoe was diagnosed with hearing loss and cerebral palsy not long after she was born. For any family, learning their child has a disability brings a lot of questions and unknowns about the future. This was certainly the case for Zoe's family – but once they found 'early intervention' through The Shepherd Centre, the future looked a lot brighter.

Zoe received hearing aids at 2 years of age and, with the help of The Shepherd Centre therapists, learned how to listen and speak. This support enabled her to attend mainstream schools, eventually leading to gaining a Diploma in Media & Communications at TAFE and the achievement of a Bachelor of Arts in Communications (Social Inquiry) at UTS.



Zoe says, "I am able to hear the sounds of nature as I explore the great outdoors – it doesn't sound like much but it's music to my ears. I now work full time in a job I love and have participated in board and advisory roles in the disability sector. I've travelled far and wide and even had the opportunity to volunteer as a special education assistant in Vietnam.

Without early intervention, my life would have been very different. None of these things would have been possible without the support of The Shepherd Centre, and my family's determination - it's the reason I am able to do the things that I do today.

Sadly however, for every 'me' – every child with a hearing loss who is or has been supported by early intervention – there's another child who doesn't have access to these services. They face a future without sound."

In 2018, Zoe Brissett connected The Shepherd Centre with her workplace, Salesforce. Loud Shirt Day mirrored Salesforce's 'Hawaiian Shirt Fridays', a casual dress policy for the end of the week, so it was easy for the team to get on board. Salesforce held afternoon cocktail party in their office on Loud Shirt Day and together with The Shepherd Centre arranged raffles, Loud Shirt Day styling sessions and the opportunity for Salesforce staff to learn more about the importance of Early Intervention for children with hearing loss.

The Salesforce event was a great fundraiser for The Shepherd Centre and has led to the two organisations working closely together.

Zoe Brissett is a graduate of The Shepherd Centre and is a Marketing Enablement Executive at Salesforce Asia Pacific, the ANZ Regional Lead for Abilityforce, an employee led group for people of all abilities and is also an Advisory Member on the Disability Council of NSW.