



VALERIE SWIFT

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

TELETHON KIDS EAR HEALTH TEAM

VAL'S RESEARCH

I started my working life in health as an Aboriginal Health Worker working alongside an Audiologist at a Great Southern primary school in a pilot project assessing children's hearing. I now feel that I've turned full circle, researching this same topic 30 years later.

I'm a member of the Urban Aboriginal Ear Health program working on the Epidemiology project. The project involves us yarning with families and undertaking assessments to determine how many babies living in south metro get ear infections, and why some are more likely to have ear infections than others. We also want to check if the babies have had their hearing tested soon after birth in hospital and if not, support them to get their babies in to be assessed.

WHAT DRIVES HER

I see research as being a valuable tool to improving services and I yearn to see things being done differently with my community - this is what drives me daily. I also know that loss of hearing due to ear infections is a big issue for Aboriginal children and adults and can attest to that from my own family and personal experience. I also see the research process as being very much about an opportunity to share knowledge and skills with the families I work with.

HER INSPIRATION

Every day I meet with Aboriginal women who have overcome significant racial barriers and adversity, who continue to provide a roof over their families' heads and a meal on the table each day. I find these women nothing short of inspirational.

I have many women in my immediate family who have inspired and continue to inspire me throughout my life, including my mother and my 5 older sisters. In my eyes, my mother was a powerful woman and determined leader. She gave birth to some of her children in the bush and raised most of them in the bush, living off the land to ensure that they weren't removed from her care, and succeeded in keeping her family together. Even though she could not read and write, she'd say to her children "Life will throw everything at you, just catch anything that will be useful. Let the rest go by."

VAL'S PEOPLE

I am a Menang woman, with extensive historical connections to Jerramungup in the Great Southern. I'm one of seventeen siblings who all grew up in this pioneering district, and have family connections throughout Noongar country right across to the Goldfields region and the Gnudgu people.

