

MEDIA RELEASE

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Audio technician turned hearing expert helps families of deaf and hard-of-hearing children

SAE Creative Media Institute graduate, Chi Yhun Lo shares his story as a former audio technician who worked on live shows featuring Nick Cave, Missy Higgins and the Hooley Dooleys - leading to a career switch where he became an expert on deafness who recently secured almost one million dollars in grants to help families of children with hearing loss.

Chi graduated from SAE Sydney 15 years ago with a Diploma of Music Industry and Technical Production. It's this initial training, Chi says, that gave him the foundations for hearing loss and deafness research. "It was a really productive time creatively for me. I was recording and mixing, which I enjoyed as much as the writing and performing," Chi said.

"I completed my diploma at SAE, and subsequently I ended up working as an audio engineer with the Hooley Dooleys and also for large-scale events such as Sydney Festival.

"I was doing a lot of live gigs with musicians such as Nick Cave, Missy Higgins and Brian Wilson, but after a while I wasn't enjoying the long hours and touring. Moving tonnes of equipment at 4am in the morning was fine as a 20 year old, but I didn't want to do it when I was 50!" Chi said.

Chi's passion for audio led him to going on to study speech and hearing science; later exploring the benefits of music for deaf and hard-of-hearing children through a PhD. "My previous career in the music industry was important, as all the skills and knowledge in music and audio production, and understanding that from a technical and entertainment perspective had a significant impact on my research," Chi said.

The results of his PhD, Chi said, have been of great value. "It showed that communication and listening skills improved - even in noisy environments, which is the area of greatest concern for individuals with hearing loss. After all, when we socialise, we tend to make a lot of noise! Depressive symptoms in children also improved as a consequence of the music training as well; resulting in better self-confidence and wellbeing."



As a founder of a science camp for deaf and hard-of-hearing children and former Vice President and current Committee Member of a not-for-profit organisation, Parents of Deaf Children, Chi has continued to dedicate his life to supporting families of children with deafness and hearing loss. This more recently led to Chi securing a grant from Australian Research Council for \$500,000 to investigate ways to improve communication for children with hearing loss; and the National Disability Insurance Agency at just under \$300,000 for the Parents of Deaf Children charity. “Being a not-for-profit, you often worry about future cash-flow, so it was a huge relief to get those grants,” Chi said.

“I was brought on board to win these types of grants, so it was important to secure them so we can continue to make a difference, as we know that hearing loss for a child affects the whole family.

“The families and parents are the ones that make the big decisions for their children. It can be overwhelming for families, and Parents of Deaf Children are there to support them,” Chi added.

Deputy General Manager for SAE Australia, Dr Luke McMillan commended Chi for his achievements since graduating. “What Chi has achieved for the Parents of Deaf Children organisation is an inspiration to all our students at SAE. Chi’s research epitomises the tremendous value of creativity in solving complex and important issues,” Dr McMillan said.

On his career trajectory from audio student to hearing loss and deafness expert, Chi was candid. “There is never really an obvious pathway. For me, I did a whole range of different things until I fell in love with hearing and deafness - you’ve just got to find the right journey for you. I have been incredibly fortunate I get to combine my love for sound with research to improve communication and accessibility for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.”

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Imagery



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