

NEWS

Upgrades at Carel du Toit Centre enhance support for hearing-impaired children

Lizahn Bowers | Published 1 week ago

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Representatives from the various groups who made the upgrades at the Carel du Toit Centre possible.

Image: Lizahn Bowers

The official unveiling of the newly renovated Carel du Toit Centre at Tygerberg Hospital marks a significant milestone for early intervention support for deaf and hearing-impaired children in the province.

The unveiling on Thursday, April 9, offered a first-hand look at how the improved facilities directly support the centre’s work in preparing children to enter mainstream schools and participate fully in society.

The renovation underscores the role of infrastructure in early childhood development, highlighting that without functional, purpose-built spaces, the impact of specialised intervention programmes was limited.

After years of heavy use, several areas needed upgrading to ensure the environment remained safe, modern, and suitable. The upgrades include larger, redesigned,

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"The impact is seen not only in the facilities, but in the futures of the children who benefit from them every day."





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Carel du Toit Centre speech therapist Barbara Kellett with Alexia Settie.
Image: Lizahn Bowers

The centre works with about 280 children from across the province. Together with its Children Heart and Talk (CHAT) Early Intervention Centre, it supports children through audiology services, speech and occupational therapy, parent coaching, and family-centred support.

Carel du Toit Trust director Louise Eksteen said the renovation was a continuation of a dream that began in 1973 with Professor Carel du Toit, who had a vision of a school where children with hearing loss could learn to speak to thrive.

"Since then, our demographics have changed, and so have our methods. We have moved from observational parent training to a far more engaging therapeutic approach. One that places families at the centre of the journey."

Ms Eksteen said that parent involvement was essential, as parents were the children's first teachers.

"Parent training and participation empower children to reach their potential. Every new space we have created is designed to strengthen this partnership. It reflects our commitment to our children, families, and the vision of Professor du Toit."





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Abukwe Ndala, with his sister Anezwa Buntsuntse and mother, Phumza Ndala in one of the renovated rooms.

Image: Lizahn Bowers

The launch also marked the return of Sue Petersen to the Rotary Club of Bristol Breakfast, whose personal journey has become closely linked to the centre. Her son, Hughan, was diagnosed as deaf at 14 months and became one of the earliest children in South Africa to receive cochlear implant support in the early 1990s.

Alexia Settie,2, was diagnosed with profound hearing loss at eight months old. Her mother, Asmine, said her daughter contracted meningitis and ended up in the hospital. She was put on medication and was on the mend, but after tests were done, it was discovered that she could not hear, which was a result of the meningitis.

"It was difficult for us in the beginning, and we were scared. We had to adapt as a family and help our other children understand what was going on and how we would need to move going forward," she said.

Since being at CHAT, Ms Settie said they had seen a big difference in their daughter, who had become withdrawn and quiet.

"She started opening up again, being playful and just enjoying being a child," she said.

Carel du Toit Trust's head of fundraising, Nicky Jacobs, said their work was ongoing, and they still faced essential maintenance needs, including roofing, plumbing, and long-term upkeep, costs often not covered by traditional funding.

Visit www.careldutoit.co.za for details on programmes, donations, and partnership opportunities.

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