



## **RACHEL NOLAN MP**

### **Member for Ipswich**

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#### **FREE HEARING TESTS FOR IPSWICH NEWBORNS**

The first stage success of the State Government's \$22 million Healthy Hearing Program to provide free hearing tests for all newborn babies in Queensland has been announced, the Member for Ipswich Rachel Nolan said today.

"It is estimated that up to 300 babies are born each year in Queensland with significant hearing loss. If hearing loss is detected early, and treatment begins before babies are six months old, these babies have a better chance of improved communication, health and education."

**Ms Nolan said she was pleased to advise that that Ipswich Hospital will be screening by the end of May.**

"The detection of hearing loss in a child's first year can be missed by parents and health professionals," Ms Nolan said.

"In Queensland, prior to the Government's commitment to introduce this innovative program, the average age of identification of hearing loss was approximately 30 months.

"Through an initial investment of about \$22 million over four years, babies in Queensland with hearing problems will have a better future," she said.

Ms Nolan said there was no national policy on universal hearing screening for newborn Australians, but the Queensland Government decided it was too important an area to wait any longer.

"By the end of 2006 all public hospitals with annual birthing rates of over 200 will be equipped to provide the free tests.

"From the end of 2006, some 50,000 babies born each year in Queensland's public and private hospitals will have access to free testing," she said.