



MEDIA RELEASE

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Kezia defies the odds with Senses help

When little Kezia Dias, of Mount Lawley, was born with Dandy-Walker Syndrome doctors gave her a 25 per cent chance of surviving past the age of nine months.

A year-and-a-half down the track, the lively and very determined youngster has defied all the odds and is referred to by her parents, Maria and Aldrin, and doting grandparents as their 'miracle baby'.

With support from Senses Foundation's Early Childhood Intervention program, Kezia is now learning basic life skills that will hopefully see her live a full and independent life.

For over a year Kezia has been enjoying includes regular home visits by a physiotherapist to help her develop muscle strength and balance. Senses' occupational therapist is also helping her hone her fine motor skills and learn ways to communicate.

Maria says doctors discovered a cerebellar cyst on her baby's brain when she was five months pregnant. While this helped her and Aldrin get used to the idea, nothing could prepare them for the challenges ahead.

In Kezia's case, the side effects of Dandy-Walker Syndrome include orofacial syndrome – she has a cleft of the soft palate which means she has to be fed by a tube – and a hearing impairment. In the early days she suffered from regular apnoea and her mobility is delayed.

"There are a lot of unknowns," explains Maria. "I don't know what we would have done without the help from Senses. It would have been very tough.

"If I ever have a question they are always happy to give us advice and they are always finding new toys and pieces of special equipment that will help stimulate Kezia's development.

"The silver lining is that Kezia is very determined, so if she wants to do something she probably will."

Senses' physiotherapist Melissa Evans says her work with the Dias family falls into two categories. In addition to working directly with Kezia to progress her development, a major part of her role is to show Maria and Aldrin how to help their daughter on a day to day basis.

Senses Foundation was formed in 2001 when the Royal WA Institute for the Blind - one of WA's oldest charities - amalgamated with the WA Deafblind Association.

It is now WA's primary advocate and service provider for people who are deafblind or blind with additional disabilities, providing highly specialised programs and services to improve communication, socialisation, mobility and quality of life for both adults and children.

The ECI program provides therapy services to preschool children who have vision impairment with another significant disability, or who are deafblind, in their own home.

More information: Leanne Pitcher, Media Liaison Officer, 0408 923 249.