

LIZ DONNELLY

CHILDREN'S MEDIA SPECIALIST

I've always been interested in media for children. Many of my extended family members are either primary or kindergarten teachers, so I guess the focus on children is in the genes.

After my son, then aged 3, was diagnosed with glue ear I tried to find some educational resources to help him re-learn some common sounds. I quickly found that there was nothing suitable, especially not locally made, so I designed a programme to help Tom and other children in the same situation. *Eardrop's Journeys* is now a set of CDs developed to help preschoolers identify everyday sounds and increase their listening skills. They feature "Eardrop", a character who wanders about listening to the world around him.

We are so lucky in New Zealand that there are passionate producers making great children's television programmes. *Let's Get Inventin'* is a delight because it brings kids' bright ideas to life. *Amazing Extraordinary Friends* is fab because it's so nutty and the creators use technology well offscreen. I love watching these shows with my 7-year-old son — they're pitched just right.

Some children's programmes can be ruthless in terms of fast editing, anger within stories and too much "clutter" onscreen. Couple that with frenetic ads and children can quickly become stressed when they watch TV. Parents can alleviate some of the impact of this by, for example, watching alongside their child and commenting on what is being seen.

I never eat red meat. Ever since my 6th form geography trip to the meatworks when I was put off it. I still shudder. We started at the neatly packaged chops end of the factory and worked backwards on our tour. I was wholly unprepared for the step that went carcass-on-the-hook to cute, alive sheep-at-the-top-of-the-chute, and nearly fainted when I realised what I was staring at.

My mother comes out with some cracker comments — the most recent one that had my sister and I rolling on the floor was when she asked us how to spell SPQR.

I had a successful swimming career as a teenager, which included holding a New Zealand record for a respectable 10 years as part of the Auckland women's 4 x 100m freestyle relay team.

I first knew what love was when I met a guy who made me laugh so hard my lemonade came out my nose. I haven't stopped fancying class clowns since.

I was a singing telegram in my student days. I got the job through Student Job Search and was a one-gig wonder. Even worse, my one song was for my boyfriend's family. I sang a rendition of *Yesterday* by The Beatles in the middle of a crowded restaurant. It was pre-karaoke and people weren't used to that sort of thing. □

Liz Donnelly is a children's media specialist and former TVNZ children's programming director. Four years ago she created *Eardrop's Journeys*, a series of CDs to help preschool children develop better listening skills.

