

LET'S HEAR IT FOR A TELETHON STAR

JOEL KELLY

FOR the first year of her life Hailey Ardagh could not hear, but she has been making up for lost time every since.

The seven-year-old is now rarely without a ukulele in hand and has built confidence by public speaking.

Hailey's next challenge will be impressing WA audiences after today's announcement she will be one of this year's Little Telethon Stars.

She was born with profound bilateral hearing loss and joined the Telethon Speech and Hearing Early Intervention Program.

Around her first birthday she received bilateral cochlear implants – and the gift of hearing.

"When they 'switched on' her hearing, Hailey responded straight away," her mother, Jo Ardagh, said.

"It wasn't an over-the-top reaction. It was almost as if she went, 'Oh, great, I can hear that now'. She wasn't startled at all."

Now a thriving Year 3 student, Hailey admits she still enjoys a bit of quiet during her favourite school activity, silent reading.

When she is not at school, she enjoys working on her clay sculptures, doing gymnastics and adding to her collection of



Bright spark: Little Telethon Star Hailey Ardagh, 7, is excited to be playing a big part in this year's charity event. Picture: Ross Swanborough



70-odd Beanie Boo soft toys. Hailey said she was excited to be this year's Little Telethon Star. "I've been in the paper before, but never on TV," she said.

Hailey's older sister, So-

phie, also has profound hearing loss and cochlear implants.

Hailey said her family, especially her big sister, were the most important people in her life, "because I love them so much and they always look after me".

Hailey's mum said the little battler had come a long way in overcoming her disability.

"I would not have expected she would have been able to do

public speaking or speak as well as she does," Ms Ardagh said. "When your child is diagnosed with a disability like this you sort of think the worst, but to see her excel at all these things makes me very proud."

Cody Colmer, 6, who was born with a spinal condition that requires him to wear a torso brace, is also a Little Telethon Star for 2016. Telethon is on October 15-16.

Safety switch shock

JOE SPAGNOLO

ONE in five electrical safety switches in public housing are defective – yet a program to check and fix them is not due to be completed before 2020.

A WA Housing Authority inspection of "residual-current devices" or RCDs, which instantly break an electric circuit to prevent serious harm from electric shock, at 305 properties found that 66 electrical safety switches were defective.

The authority also confirmed that just 305 out of 42,000 government-owned properties had been inspected as part of the \$26 million Electrical Safety Device Program, which is not due to be finalised until December 2020.

In addition to the program, routine inspection of government properties also occurred – involving a "simple check to ensure the (electrical safety) devices are working as expected". In the past two years, these routine checks resulted in 207 new safe-

ty switches installed and almost 3000 safety switches being replaced.

The Opposition wants the more thorough checks undertaken as part of the Electrical Safety Device Program to be done sooner than the 2020 deadline.

Labor housing spokesman Fran Logan said the Government was inspecting properties so slowly that at the current rate it would take "more than 50 years to complete the safety checks". "It's disgraceful that thousands of people are no doubt living in potential death traps," he said.

Housing Minister Brendon Grylls said it was the start of a four-year process.

"This first segment was always intended to be a pilot program with just two regions targeted," he said.

"The inspections to date have provided valuable insights that will ensure the successful rollout of the full inspection program to commence later this year."



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