

Thousands raised for local ear bus project

A DONATION of 300,000 Danish kroner means more Dubbo school students will be tested for serious but easily missed hearing problems.

For its first Australian grant, International hearing device company Oticon gave the equivalent of \$62,000 to the Dubbo charity Hear Our Heart Ear Bus Project.

The charity had applied for an Oticon grant last May but project co-ordinator Donna Rees had given up hope of a response when she picked up the mail last month.

"I was at the post office and I thought, here we go again, more 'thanks but no thanks'," she said.

Then a 300,000 figure jumped out from one letter, preceded by the DKK currency abbreviation.

Orana Mutual liaison officer Brenda Moon said she checked the conversion three times, just to make sure.

The Ear Bus Project seeks to raise awareness and test for common conditions such as otitis media, in which fluid trapped in the middle ear prevents the ear bones from working properly.

The project has not yet raised enough money to buy a dedicated bus to provide mobile testing and hearing support.

But the new funds from Oticon will go toward technol-



Donna Rees, Brenda Moon, Rachel Mills and Sue Went celebrate a 300,000 Danish kroner grant for Hear Our Heart Ear Bus Project.

Photo: LOUISE DONGES.

ogy such as video otoscopes, devices for inspecting ears which can then upload footage to GP's inboxes.

Ms Rees said diagnosing hearing problems that lack obvi-

ous symptoms would improve student's results, speech and behaviour.

"We say to always look at hearing first before you label students as an ADHD student or as

someone with behavioural disorders or even learning disorders," she said. The charity said it aims this year to gain more local partnerships with health and education sectors.