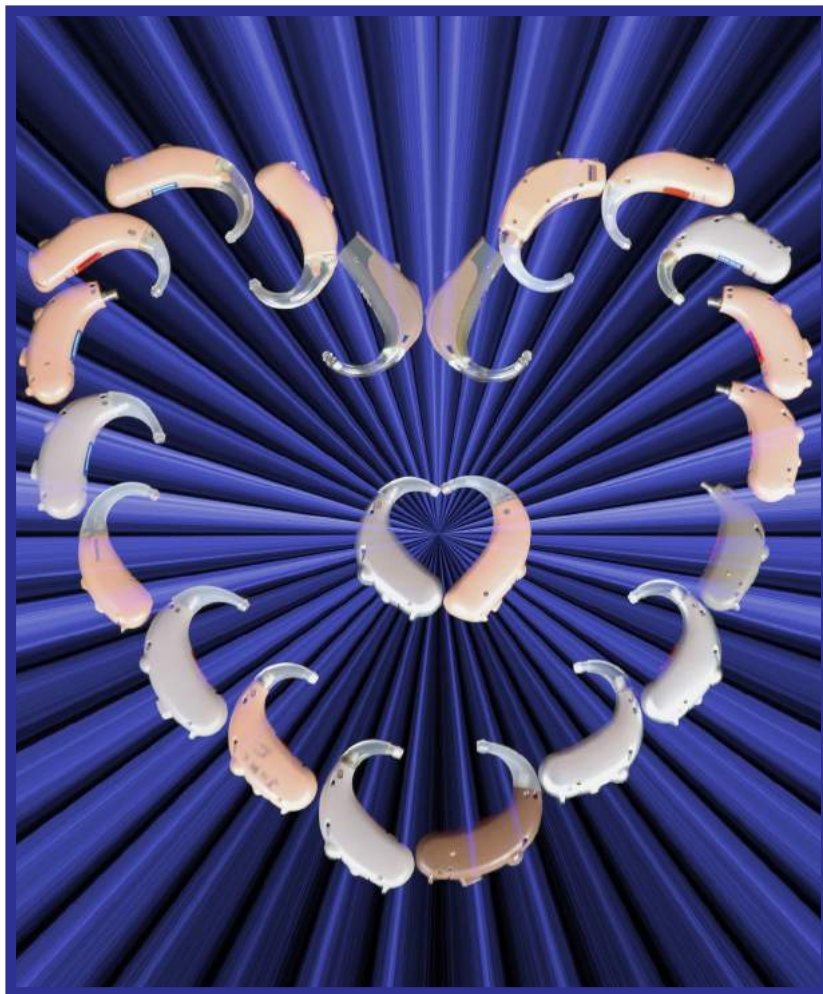


# the **NATIONAL** SPOTLIGHT

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*placing the*  
FOCUS ON  
**HEAR  
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2016

Edition 11

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# NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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## **Welcome to this edition of the National Spotlight!**

It's been an exciting time across the country as we celebrate Hearing Awareness Week (HAW). Almost 4 million Australians have a hearing condition that greatly impacts their everyday life in spite of being hidden. It's time more people understood the impact of hearing loss and tinnitus.

In Victoria, we launched Hearing Awareness Week at Federation Square with our hearing health colleagues from Vic Deaf, Deafness Foundation, Taralye and Australian Hearing. It was wonderful to see so many children hold the "I'm Listening" balloons in support of the National Break the Sound Barrier Campaign.

We have stories from across the branches about the various ways hearing health has been promoted, which I am sure you will enjoy. Also in this edition, we have a wonderful piece from Professor Anthony Hogan about the opportunity to improve the Office of Hearing Service support scheme.

In writing this, we are preparing for the BHA National Information Day and AGM. A day of informative topics and branch reunions will make this event memorable. We look forward to sharing our learnings in future editions.

I hope you enjoy this edition and best wishes to all,



**MICHELE BARRY**

News from our branches

# AROUND AUSTRALIA

## BHA CANBERRA

Late August always brings Hearing Awareness Week (HAW), and in a way, it is a time to reflect on the year so far because before long it will be all over. For those in Canberra, it has not been a statistically cold winter but the birds have found the frozen birdbath a problem on many occasions. As I write, the air is feeling warmer but I won't try and forecast what that means.

Once again, I am in great admiration for our two teachers, Carol and Linda,

as Sue convalesces after her breast cancer problems. I am trying to get myself fit for my second cataract op after a bout of flu. But enough of that, we have a lot to celebrate.

Hearing Awareness Week commenced with the ACT Deafness Resource Centre's EXPO for the hearing impaired. There was something for everyone, with audiologists to go round and the ACT Emergency Services (Fire Brigade) demonstrating powerful smoke alarms and how to throw a fire blanket onto a kitchen fire. Of course, there were stalls like ours,



**BHA Canberra Display  
manned by  
enthusiastic  
volunteers**

*Bill Leane, Judy Greenfield, Linda Dwyer, Tom Brimson, Cec Hill, Sue Daw (seated), Jan Harmer, Carol Taloni and Anthony Hogan*



advising patrons of what we do and encouraging them to take action if they thought they had a hearing loss. Hearing tests were conducted by Australian Hearing, Blamey and Saunders were having people walk around trying out their hearing aids and there were many other hearing loss related suppliers.

There was also a program of interesting speakers in a looped area with captions (remote) available. As an aside, the value of the captioner being present was demonstrated a number of times as the remote captioner struggled to hear the audio.

The next day, we enjoyed the Rediscovering Music Program (as part of Hearing Awareness Week), arranged and presented by the Canberra Symphony Orchestra.

Kristen Sutcliffe, audiologist and bassoon player, did a marvellous job of presenting the program and ensuring that the audience had a most interesting time. Besides the wonderful music, Dr Valerie Looi of the Sydney Cochlear Implant Clinic/ Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children gave an interesting presentation on hearing aids and implants to 'hear' music.

You can see the full program on the top right. The afternoon saw a very popular section of the CSO, the percussion experts Veronica Bailey and Stephen Fitzgerald, who demonstrated their skill and invited audience participation. There is no doubt that hearing impaired people can still react very positively to rhythm and clever

**Thursday 25 August**  
**Day Long Rediscovering**  
**Music Extravaganza**

*Featuring a string quartet, guest speaker Dr Valerie Looi from the Sydney Cochlear Implant Clinic/Royal Institute for Deaf & Blind Children and a percussion duo with the chance for 'hands on' percussion experience.*

**10.15am-3:30pm**

**Aegean Room**

Hellenic Club, Matilda St Phillip

*Light morning tea and afternoon tea provided, lunch available at the Hellenic Club or bring your own.*

**Program for the day**

10.15-11.15 string quartet

11.15-11.30 morning tea

11.30-12.30 Guest Speaker Dr Valerie Looi

12.30-1.30 lunch

1.30-2.30 Percussion performance

2:30-3:30 Percussion Workshop

**'Rediscovering Music' program**

sounds produced by the artists with simple props (in some cases).

The next Rediscovering Music is Discovering Keyboards on the 28th October. Book in with Sue if you would like to attend, numbers are limited.

Our ad for badges in the previous Spotlight produced some orders and we thank all the BHA members for their support.

Patient Hospital Kits have also proved popular recently. We have recently fixed the price at \$20, the first increase since the launch of the Kit in 2009.

I think we would all like to congratulate Australian Hearing on the new real time Hearing Help

Service introduced over the HAW period.  
Finally, Sue and I are looking forward to catching up with BHA friends at the AGM in early October.

*Haydn Daw*

## BHA CENTRAL COAST

Woohoo! We have a new Tutor on the Central Coast. Congratulations and welcome Gay Grillmeier!

We are so pleased to have her as part of our team as she is exceptionally busy! Gay volunteers for U3A, sews costumes for the Gosford (Amateur) Dramatic Society, sings in a choir and swims.

She can now add teaching Hearing Loss Management to seniors at the Brentwood Retirement Village, where this photo was taken, to the list. We held the presentation with the members of her Group and I was able to tell them about the work that one needs to do to become a BHA Teacher. They found this very interesting and we all enjoyed a lovely morning tea together.

Gay is no stranger to the work of BHA. Her mother, Irene (Rene) Hedges, was deaf, communicated by lip reading and was a lip reading teacher with the Maroochydore Group. Gay's father, Athol, was very involved with the work of BHA Brisbane, becoming their President and later becoming National President of BHA.

Welcome Gay, and many thanks for your work to benefit our members.

### Hearing Awareness Week

About 50 people came together as our guests to celebrate Hearing Awareness Week on Wednesday morning, a day when the weather was not at all kind, with a strong wind lashing the rain. Our Expo was held in the beautiful Anglican Church, with many people involved in the hearing industry manning display tables and speaking to our guests in the break.

Following a welcome from Peter Moore (President of BHACC), we were entertained by children from the signing choir at Chertsey Primary School who beautifully performed four songs. There was not a dry eye in the house as kindy kids and older ones put their hearts into a lovely performance.

***L to R: Geraldine Plumb with Gay Grillmeier***



Our first speaker was Andrew Stewart from PrintACall, who spoke about the technology available to people with a hearing impairment. It was informative for all and he had many people at his display table with questions afterwards.

Next spoke Lindsay Gillespie, local audiologist and our Patron, with a presentation that illustrated the development of hearing aids from the 1800s to the present day, complete with slides. I found this fascinating and it was a wonderful history lesson seeing the many things done during the time period to assist people with a hearing loss. A particularly interesting device was a saloon chair where aids were fitted into the wings at the back. It occurred to me that Lindsay's presentation would be brilliant for a spot at a conference.

Our final speaker was Dr Celene McNeill, a fully qualified audiologist holding a bachelor of applied sciences in speech and hearing obtained at PUCC Brazil, a Masters of Audiology and a PhD in Meniere's disease from Macquarie University in Australia.

Celene has been working as an audiologist in Australia since 1989 and has broad professional experience as a clinician, researcher and speaker. She has previously spoken at our HAW Expos on tinnitus and people are always keen to hear about new developments and thoughts on this debilitating condition.

**“keeping in touch nationally,”**

I was impressed by the way that everyone communicated together, by the professionalism of our speakers and by the work of our committee and tutors. A wonderful morning was had by all.

**Geraldine Plumb**  
*Tutor Co-ordinator,  
BHA Central Coast NSW Branch*

## **BHA SYDNEY**

This year is the 80th anniversary, or birthday (if you prefer), of Better Hearing Australia Sydney and we will be celebrating this with a special lunch on the 30th of September at the Burwood RSL Club. For eighty years, Better Hearing in Sydney has served people with hearing impairment or loss, as well as their families, friends and work colleagues.

Eighty years ago, were there hearing aids that people used? I don't know, but if there were, they would have been crude affairs with enormous batteries. Now we have minute, in the ear hearing aids that are highly refined technically, as well as other hearing aids that can be worn around the ear. Today's hearing aids are amazing compared to the hearing aids of yesteryear, or even fifty years ago. The advancement in technology is great and can help people with hearing loss enormously.

We use computers to confirm matters via e-mail, to inform people or companies about what is being done or what we want, or to keep in touch with distant members of our families. All of this new technology is very useful and when used properly, can notably enhance our lives and activities and interests.

Arguably, the downside is that we no longer talk directly to people enough, but I will leave this subject for another article. Maybe Better Hearing should include the use of modern technology as a lesson in its 'Hearing Loss Management' courses.

Hearing Awareness Week was held this year from the 21st August to the 27th of August. Better Hearing Sydney was invited to staff an information table at the Bunnings store in Seven Hills.

This invitation came from Ros Fotheringham, the daughter in law of one of our former long standing members, the late Ruth Fotheringham. John Steel and I manned the table and spoke with members of the public visiting Bunnings about hearing loss. Discussions covered hearing aids, facing the person with hearing difficulties when speaking to them and related matters.

We in Sydney greatly thank Bunnings at Seven Hills, as well as Ros Fotheringham, for this invitation and for all her support on the day.

One thing I have to acknowledge is that there is still a widely held hesitation to admitting one has hearing impairment or loss. Unfortunately, there also continues to be some stigma to wearing a hearing aid. I wear glasses, mainly for reading as well as long distance, but there is no stigma to wearing glasses. I wonder why we continue to have this archaic attitude to the wearing of hearing aids. To be blunt about it, **such a stigma is wrong.**

Hearing loss, like the lack of perfect sight, is simply a sensory deprivation. Modern technology, skill and knowledge is available to help us limit any disadvantage from this, or any other, sensory deprivation. We should rejoice when a person acknowledges

that they no longer have perfect hearing and begins to wear a hearing aid, or two. They are minimising their isolation and again becoming fully contributing and communicating members of their community and family. Those who have no hearing loss should simply adapt to the other person and communicate with them in the way that is best for them, without any complaint or stigma.

Our Sydney AGM was held on the 29th October 2016. We need more volunteers to join our Board of Management. Actually, we need more volunteers (full stop). Being on the board is not an easy task, but it is not onerous either, and making such a contribution to our organisation is a richly rewarding activity.

The more we, as a branch or a person, do, the more rewarding our contribution becomes. I am sure this goes for all branches, of which a few are growing. Some are essentially stationary, neither growing nor diminishing, while a few may be decreasing. Various branches may have differing priorities and projects, but underlying this, we are all here, (sorry here), to serve those people with hearing impairment, especially those who ask for our help.





This is our essential and fundamental purpose. Each branch forms a different part of the one body. The body works best when all the parts work together. As we approach our national AGM on the 7th October this year, please remember this.

On behalf of our Sydney branch, I have made contact with both our local Rotoract, and our local Leo Club. Rotoract is the 'younger set' of Rotary and Leo is the 'younger set' of Lions. I have put to both local branches of these worthy organisations the idea of working with Better Hearing Sydney. We'd like to form a Better Hearing younger set, here in Sydney, for a mixture of 18 to 30 year old young people, both those with hearing loss and those with no hearing difficulty.

Such a younger set will have enjoyable social functions and an active involvement with other activities that will benefit both the younger people and others with hearing loss. My other hope is that some of the young people that join may become our future leaders. I will keep our wider community of Better Hearing informed as to how this project goes, and hopefully grows. It is very early days, but I am hoping it will take off, to the benefit of both our organisation and the young people, especially those with hearing challenges.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the National Annual General Meeting on the 7th October, where I will represent Sydney and National. It is shaping up to be a very informative and great day. Equally as vital, it gives a chance to meet and get to know each other informally as well. I have always valued the 'social' or 'informal' side of such events, as it is here that we often get

new ideas and/or make the contacts that will help us in our futures. We should never underestimate the value of the social benefits of our various activities.

*Andrew D'A. E. Bush.*

## BHA TASMANIA



Welcome to spring!  
In Tasmania we've been forecast a warmer than usual season and our gardens are already full of daffodils.

During Hearing Awareness Week, there was much discussion amongst our members about coping with hearing loss and how much has changed in the last 30 years.

There's still more change needed but we have seen and experienced many improvements to enhance the quality of life for people with a hearing loss.

Carol and Gaylene were reminiscing about past events and how they affected Gaylene. When Gaylene first went to BHA in the 1980s, she was very secretive and teary about her hearing loss. As a young woman in her mid 20s, she was unable to assert herself and speak up for her needs and so as a result, many incidents made her cry.

Carol and Gaylene have shared so many experiences, first as teacher/student then later as friends and with others' involvement. Visits to public events, shopping centres, cafes and other entertainment have provided insight to exploring how these could improve for a person with a hearing loss. Carol is proud that with this transfer of knowledge, encouragement and self-assurance, Gaylene is more confident about asserting herself and voicing her requirements.

Many of our members enjoyed watching the Olympic Games and some commented on the inconsistency of the captioning. We noticed that there was a disparity in the quality of the captioning at different venues for various sports. We'd be interested to know if other members noticed or commented on this.

We were delighted to see that Georgia Love will be the next Bachelorette later this year. Georgia, formerly of WIN TV in Hobart, was the winner of the TV Newsreader Clear Speech Award in 2015. There has been a lot of publicity in local newspapers, social media and TV about the event and we wish Georgia all the very best in finding her very own Bachelor.

## BHA BRISBANE

The recruitment of our Business Manager, Tony Whelan, has been the most recent exciting thing to happen at Brisbane. We are very happy that Tony has fitted in so well with our small team.

Tony recently organised the Hearing Awareness Week Event, which was a captioned movie night supported by the Blue Room Cinebar who provided a 36 seat theatre at no cost. Invited

guests were treated to the movie, plus drinks and canapes served in a separate area where we showcased real-time captioning while I gave the welcome speech. The evening was a great success, with many suggesting we hold the event again.



**HAW at the Blue Room Cinebar with Board, staff, members and friends**



**BHA Board Secretary Peter Massey and Australian Hearing's Melissa McArdle**



**BHA President Carol-Anne Greensill uses live-captioning as she speaks about the importance of hearing becoming Australia's 10th national health priority**

Our support groups – Logan, Maryborough, Redcliffe and Redlands, continue to offer much needed community support and friendship. In my last report, I spoke about Jill Lindley who had been awarded a Highly Recommended Certificate for her 30 years of supporting the hearing impaired community.

I now have the pleasure in announcing that Peter and Jill Lindley have both been awarded the Metro South Health Board Chair's Award for Volunteer of the Year in recognition of their contribution to volunteering. The inaugural presentation of the Board Chair's Awards was 2015.



**Peter and Jill Lindley**

Peter and Jill were most appreciative of the recognition of Volunteers of the Year and felt that it was very fitting that it was held in the Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) Auditorium which is particularly 'communication friendly'. It incorporates an excellent audio induction loop used by Jill and real

time captioning for Peter, provided by Reporter's Ink's Sandy Clark.

In receiving their award, Peter and Jill recognised the hard work done by Evelyn Towers, Director of Audiology and her colleagues, working collaboratively with consumers to create a communication accessible environment at the PAH. They believe that the PAH has established a benchmark in this regard.



**Volunteer of the Year Award 2016**



**BHA Brisbane welcomes new Business Manager - Tony Whelan**

Tony has a professional background in Psychology and brings over 20 years experience in human services, both as a practitioner and in senior management roles. He has spent the last 12 years in the disability sector working across areas such as youth justice, housing and homelessness and refugee settlement, both in the public and not-for-profit arenas.



"It's an exciting time for Better Hearing Australia Brisbane and I'll be working closely with the Board over the next few months as we continue to deliver much needed support services and plan for the future of the organisation. I've had the opportunity to get to know some of our volunteers and members over the past few weeks and it's been a real pleasure to meet so many passionate and dedicated people."

'Banjo, Lions Hearing Dog and BHA Brisbane's unofficial mascot

Peter Massey, Board Secretary at BHA Brisbane, is pleased to announce the arrival of his new Lions Hearing Dog, Banjo. Banjo is a terrier-cross and like all Lions Hearing Dogs, was rescued from an animal refuge prior to commencing his training.

Lions search far and wide for dogs with the right temperament and attributes to become Hearing Dogs and they are assessed for their suitability before being accepted for training. Even so, a significant number of dogs will not take to their new role.

Known affectionately in the program as 'loveable drop-outs', these dogs are fostered out to new homes - none are returned to shelters.



**Banjo, aka 'Mr October', in the 2016 Lions Hearing Dog Calendar**

Lions Hearing Dogs are trained for general sounds and any special sounds a potential recipient may require. Similarly, the size, coat and other features of the dog can also be requested by the recipient and will be matched wherever possible. Banjo has been trained to respond to sounds such as alarm clocks, mobile phone alarms, call alerts (*yes, even if the recipient cannot "use" the phone, such calls can alert the recipient that something else might have arrived on the phone, eg email or SMS*), doorbell/knock, oven/kitchen timer and smoke alarm etc.

Typically, when a sound occurs the Hearing Dog identifies the sound and location, alerts the Owner by touching them and then leads them to the source of the sound.

Importantly, in the case of smoke or fire alarms, Hearing Dogs are trained NOT to lead a person to the source of that sound but have a special behaviour that identifies that particular sound and alerts the owner (often by dropping to the ground). Other special sounds/behaviours that a Hearing Dog might be trained to respond to include children and/or baby sounds such as crying.

Training may take six months or more, depending on the dog and the sounds/responses required for that particular recipient. Post-delivery, the dog (and the new owner) are further trained three times a week for three months, or longer if necessary, for all the required sound/behaviours, with the assistance of local Lions Club members. Hearing Dogs are assessed by the trainers after the three months and then annually thereafter. The whole process of training a Lions Hearing Dog is both time consuming and very expensive but Australian Lions Clubs support



the program directly through their local clubs and indirectly via a number of fund-raising programs such as the (famous) Lions Christmas Cakes and Puddings.

Banjo has become a common feature at the Brisbane BHA offices and can often be seen at various events and expos with Peter.



**Banjo is 'all ears' at the BHA office in Brisbane**

You can learn more about Lions Hearing Dogs on their website at [www.hearingdogs.asn.au](http://www.hearingdogs.asn.au) or through your local Lions Club.

## BHA GEELONG

### Funding

Once again, we have received funding from the Geelong's primary philanthropic funding organisation, Give Where You Live Foundation. We are very grateful for these funds as it allows us to continue supporting those with a hearing loss.

### Cochlear Support

In conjunction with Australian Hearing, we are trying to establish a Cochlear hearing support group that would operate in parallel with our current operations. This is a work in progress project and we aren't sure how this will work out, although we have high hopes.

### Mini-expo

We have received funding to conduct another mini- expo to be held at our West Geelong meeting rooms as part of Senior Citizens month. The Geelong City Council has been very supportive in the funding. We have already contacted a number of suppliers and other associated organisations who have shown great interest.

### Captioned phones

Trevor Montgomery from Captel and Lance Hatley from the National Relay Service held separate talks for our members to explain the latest technologies available for the captioned telephones.

### Hearing Awareness Week (HAW)

BHAG have been very involved in the organisation of the HAW activities for a number of years. The HAW committee includes representatives from the Geelong City Council, Surf Coast Shire Council, Vic Deaf, Australian Hearing, Deafness Foundation, M-Power and the Victorian Department of Education.

This year, the committee decided to trial hearing awareness signs in IGA supermarkets with the possibility of expanding to other supermarkets in the future. These self-standing signs were placed adjacent to the checkout register. One side encourages the shopper to let the staff know if they are having difficulty hearing, whilst the other side tells the staff how to help a customer with hearing difficulties.

Colourful pamphlets with simple cartoon pictures and minimum text were specifically designed and printed for this purpose.

In addition, Australian Hearing conducted hearing tests in the hearing testing van at various locations around Geelong.

BHAG manned an information table in front of the Australian Hearing van.

## BHA ADELAIDE

We've had a very busy month due to having to find new meeting rooms - not the easiest of tasks. SACOSS, where we have been meeting for the past few years, are having extensive renovations done and we can't use the rooms till next year. We weren't informed of this until August 12th and they explained that they had little warning themselves. However, rooms were found and we cleared out our things last Wednesday! Our class numbers are static, but still being attended by 10 to 12 people and Stan is presenting interesting topics.



For our July coffee morning, we had Nina Swiderski as our speaker.

Nina is the Principal Audiologist from SACIC (South Australian Cochlear Implant Centre) and she gave a very interesting and professional presentation on her work. We had about 28 people attend.

Kylie Diceri, a Senior Audiologist running her own business in Adelaide, led our August coffee morning. Kylie talked about hearing aids, demonstrated how to manage them and answered questions. This was also well attended with about 23 people present.



People still want to go over the basics! Kylie's talk was very helpful because we now have a project ready to present on the maintenance and care of hearing aids.

This project is a package for aged care services prepared by Shona. Hopefully it can be passed on to other branches soon if there is interest.



One of our members, Mary Spark (left), initiated a poster for young people warning about damage to ears caused by loud music.

This is not a HAW item but can be used as such, and we are hoping to get it into schools and public spaces like doctors' waiting rooms and libraries, although we now find that libraries are reluctant to take material.

We as a branch haven't done anything specific for HAW. Some of us will be attending a HAW captioned film run by a local government funded HAW committee.

We have our delegate, Barbara Munn, attending the Melbourne National AGM.



We hope to hear all the news via Barbara, who has been a very well liked and active member, as well as an ex committee member of our branch for many years.

Best wishes for the AGM from all our Adelaide members.

*Shona Fennell*

## BHA VICTORIA

### Higgins Community Service Awards

The Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP, a long-time supporter of Better Hearing Australia, held the inaugural Higgins Community Service Awards which were presented at the annual Christmas in July event on Wednesday 27 July 2016 at the Malvern Town Hall. At this occasion, members of the local community came together to recognise and celebrate the exceptional service of volunteers and the organisations they support.

Jan Sigley, from the Rotary Club of Toorak and the Recycled Sound project, was nominated for a Higgins Community volunteer award. Jan has worked tirelessly on the Recycled Sound project, which works alongside the Rotary Club of Toorak, Blamey Saunders hears and Better Hearing Australia VIC to collect hearing aids for the Victorian Hearing Aid Bank.



2016 Higgins Community Service Award

Since the program began, Jan has organised collection points within various councils and enlisted the services for collection with other Rotary Clubs around Australia. These hearing aids are then checked and cleaned, the client is assessed and the hearing aid is programmed to suit the client's needs.

Tiffany Murphy (Taralye) with Maeve Barry





Training and support is also provided to the client to ensure they use the hearing aid to full capacity.

The team at Better Hearing Australia was very excited for Jan's nomination and truly believe that she is a worthy recipient. Congratulations!

### Hearing Awareness Week

The Victorian branch was kept busy during Hearing Awareness Week with lots of activities. HAW commenced on Sunday August 21st with a number of Hearing Support organisations at Federation Square.

This proved to be a popular event with hearing tests conducted and many people discussing their hearing needs at the stand.

Hearing tests were also conducted at the office of Sam Hibbins, Greens Member for Prahran, and an information session at the Wesley St Marks in Monash Council.



***Maxx ready for work - courtesy of VicDeaf***

***Zoe Williams***



***Steve McKean (Vic Deaf),  
Michele and Maeve Barry  
at the stand***





# Tasmania's BOOK REVIEW

## **THE SILENT BOOK** **by Bernadette. T.** **Wallis Mss**

*Bernadette Wallis, Missionary Sister of Service, is the author of a newly published book 'The Silent Book - A Deaf Family and the Disappearing Australian-Irish Sign Language'.*



This is Caroline's personal story, who herself has a hearing impairment and tinnitus.

She describes how she copes through happiness and song. Caroline is a member of the unique choir, Choir of High Hopes, and has now joined Thirsty Ground Choir, an offshoot of Scots Church in Hobart. Her story is about friendship, community and hope.

*The book is self-published and available at bookshops for \$22.*

It is an engrossing story, both deeply personal and historical, of the Australian-Irish sign language which is told through the experience of Bernadette's own Deaf family.

The story is embedded in the Australian landscape and its Aboriginal past. In writing this multi-layered story, Bernadette invites the reader into the vibrantly alert and alive silent world of her Deaf parents.

The book is available at the cost of \$30 and proceeds will go to the John Wallis Foundation. (Father John Wallis founded the Australian Missionary Sisters of Service Catholic Religious Order in Tasmania in 1944).

*The book is available from the John Pierce Centre 25-36 High Street, Prahran Vic 3181.*

## **A CHANGED AND** **UPLIFTED LIFE** **by Caroline** **Cochrane**

BY CAROL MCGHEE OAM

# Everyone has an accent... even you

*Your accent may be different from other people even if you live in the same city, town or country. It can depend on many things:*

WHERE YOU LIVE  
SCHOOLING  
FAMILY ORIGIN  
FRIENDS  
HOBBIES  
INTERESTS

I remember my Dad telling me that when he grew up in Edinburgh, Scotland in the 20s, everyone attending his school was born in the same area. Most people sounded alike and used similar language.

However, when a family moved into the area from England, his class was so excited because they had a new girl join their class. All the boys (aged about 10) fell in love with the newcomer, despite not understanding a thing she said. After some time, they got used to her accent and soon the novelty wore off, the exotic newcomer being just another member of their class. It is even possible her accent changed a little over time.

Probably when the little girl went home, she reverted to the accent the family spoke, automatically changing when she returned to school.

I had a similar experience when I started school in Australia. I was understood by others, but would misunderstand certain words, especially when it came to the Friday spelling tests. The teacher had marked the word 'piper' as incorrect with a big

red cross and I was most indignant, positive that I had spelt it correctly. The word read out had been 'paper', so it was not the spelling that confused me, rather the teacher's Australian accent.

One's accent defines us. It comes down to belonging. I worked hard at sounding the same or similar to my peers. The first time my Mum heard me speaking with school friends, she was surprised. I would switch accents when I spoke to her which I did not realise until it was pointed out.

Princess Mary of Denmark's Dad has a Scottish accent but when she lived in Tasmania she didn't pick it up, sounding Australian instead. Not long after marrying and moving to Denmark, her accent changed and now when she speaks English she has a Danish accent.

If we were to leave our native place for an extended period, our perception that the new accents around us were strange would only be temporary. Gradually, depending on our age, what job we are doing and how many



different sorts of people with different types of accents surround us, we will lose the sense that others have an accent and we will begin to fit in. Not all people do this to the same degree. Some remain intensely proud of their original accent, while others accommodate rapidly to a new environment by changing, so that they no longer 'stand out in the crowd'. Whether they do this consciously or not is open to debate and may differ from individual to individual. The change probably happens before we are aware of it.

Through my own observations, natives of Scotland, Germany, Holland and Italy for example do not seem to lose their original accent as easily as others. I do not think this is by choice and of course it often depends how old they were when they came to Australia.

My mother, who had a hearing impairment and was a good speech reader, was able to recognise different accents, and even differentiate between states of Australia.

One day, I asked one of my Mum's students if she had enjoyed her lesson, the lady replied saying she enjoyed the story my Mum read to them from the "Blew boook". I thought she was having

a laugh, mimicking my Mum's accent, until I realised the lady was profoundly deaf...she copied my Mum's speech by observing.

I find the part of teaching speech reading that entails studying speech sounds quite controversial. What accent should we use when teaching speech reading? Many of our teachers come from different countries – they do not all sound the same. I had a student who used to ask me to repeat things 'his way', once he realised one day during number practise that I said 'ninety nine' whilst he said 'nointy noine'.

What do you find the most difficult part of speech reading? Many people have answered this question saying it's perceived accents; others say it is the speed of speech. For me, the most helpful aid to speech reading is facial expressions and body language and of course, everyone speaking clearly, although that's wishful thinking.

It would be interesting to hear your comments, feel free to send them in and they may be featured in the next edition of Spotlight.

# BHA Sydney Inaugural Scholarship

BY BROOKE KRAUZE

Learning Support Teacher at ALCSC

*The hard of hearing students at All Saints Catholic Senior College were fortunate enough to be granted a scholarship of \$500 each this year, plus the donation of a Front Row to Go Soundfield Amplification System to the College.*

The scholarship has provided our students with the view that their hearing loss is not something to be ashamed of, nor should it impede their learning. The impact of this initiative is reflected in the actions and increased confidence of our students who are hard of hearing, and their willingness to seek educational support within the College. The students and staff of the College have been made more aware of the strategies that can be implemented to support the hard of hearing. One of the students followed up with testing for her hearing loss and is now wearing a hearing aid. Her response to being able to access the spoken language more clearly, instead of the sound of the fans, is quite magical.

A special thank you to Sr Judith, John Steele and Better Hearing Sydney for acknowledging and rewarding our College's effort to support the hard of hearing. Also Katy Britton from Sydney Catholic Schools, who initiated the scholarship application for our students to Better Hearing Sydney and David Fetterplace, College Principal at All

Saints Catholic Senior College who is also hard of hearing and an inspirational leader to our students.

The recipients of the Better Hearing Australia Sydney Inaugural Scholarship were Dhaif Daief, Freddy Aguilera, Christopher Karras and Lauren Dimitrakas. Some of the students have shared their experiences below:

## DHAIF:

I feel honoured to have received the Better Hearing Scholarship for 2016. It has really helped my confidence this year, prompted me to explore new technology for my hearing and financially supported my maths tutoring. With the increased confidence, I developed a greater awareness of my needs in the classroom and was able to discuss these openly with the audiologist at Australian Hearing. I decided to get the Phonak Roger Pen FM and have been using it in my classes. I think it will be really useful at university too.



The Soundfield systems are in the science lab, where I study biology, and in my english room. It is so much easier to concentrate in class when the Soundfield amplification system is being used. I used the money to support maths tutoring. This has helped me to understand the work and I feel happy about my maths going into my HSC.

I have also been so fortunate to have Mr Fetterplace, our Principal, support and guide me this year. He is such an amazing model for me and manages his deafness very well, making me feel that I can achieve anything. Next year I will be studying a health related course at the WSU. Thank you for awarding this scholarship to me.

### CHRIS:

I feel privileged to have received this scholarship from Better Hearing Sydney and it has made me feel less self-conscious about being hard of hearing. The money has been really helpful in finding good software for animation. With my increased knowledge of software, I hope that I will be accepted into a college to study animation in 2017.

### LAUREN:

I am feeling really excited as I leave school with increased self-confidence because of the Better Hearing Scholarship. I used the money you awarded to pay for my school fees as well as some study resources. When I was first awarded the scholarship I felt like I had a new identity. With my heightened awareness of hearing loss and the encouragement of Ms Krauze, I made an appointment with Australian Hearing and asked them to investigate my hearing. This had previously been done when I was nine years old. As a result of the testing, hearing aids were recommended and I now wear them regularly.

One incredible outcome for me has been that I can now hear the teacher, not just the fans! My increased knowledge of my hearing levels because of the scholarship has made an unbelievable difference to my life. Thank you Better Hearing Sydney.

### PETER - BIOLOGY TEACHER:

It has improved outcomes, both for myself and students. I know from student feedback that all students (not just the hearing impaired) feel that they can access whatever is being said. I am also a bit hard of hearing, so I understand what it feels like already. The fact that this system makes it easier for all to hear me is a good feeling and makes me feel more effective.



# Australia's system of publicly provided hearing services -



*...on a road to nowhere?* **BY ANTHONY HOGAN**

Our most recent research (n=15,000), shows that while sales of hearing aids in Australia are increasing, the actual use of such devices is decreasing. As you'd expect, the most frequent user of a device is a person who rates their hearing as fair to poor. However, the majority of people aged over 55 years rate their hearing positively, even if up to 1:2 technically have a hearing loss.

When we focus on social participation rather than measures of impairment, we find that some 10% of people aged over 55 years routinely experience regular difficulties communicating e.g. hearing in social settings.

Typically, they report poorer social and health outcomes than other people on almost every indicator available. Of those who rate their hearing as fair to poor, and who own a hearing aid, 42% still experienced difficulties hearing in social settings most, if not all the time.

Statistics like these begin to make me wonder if there is something about our model of hearing services that is not

working? This concern is heightened when we learn that while 15% of over 55s reported owning a hearing aid, 1 in 3 rarely, if ever, used their device! Of further concern is the fact that 86% of our sample was receiving a Commonwealth Government pension, suggesting that most of this population received a hearing aid that was at least partially funded by the tax payer. This data suggests that the cost to tax payers of device non-usage is in the vicinity of up to \$1 billion for each cycle of hearing aids end-users receive.

So we have a publicly funded system that provides a service routinely not adequately, or holistically, addressing the needs of many of its clients, as well as being associated with annual significant costs to society. This sounds to me like a system that is in urgent need of reform, especially when low cost, low tech and social solutions exist for many hearing problems. Our existing device-centric model of hearing services has been in operation for about 70 years. Maybe it's time for an update? **What do you think?**

*In memory of*

# Josie Sidoti

***It is with great sadness and a heavy heart that we advise of the passing of Josie Sidoti, who passed away on September 2nd 2016.***

Josie Sidoti dedicated most of her adult life to supporting the lives of people with hearing loss. This commitment resulted in Josie becoming a member and then joining the board of Better Hearing Australia (VIC). In 2005-2007, Josie served as President of BHA and as a Board Member up until July 2016.

Josie was a much loved board member and friend to many. She will be truly missed. In her honour, here is a brief story she had prepared about her cochlear implants.

## ***"MY DECISION TO HAVE A COCHLEAR IMPLANT"***

My hearing loss started about 60 years ago and it has been a long battle. I found it very difficult to study as a mothercraft nurse and lost a lot of confidence, although I did pass all my exams. My hearing loss - 'otosclerosis' - is a bone disease in the middle ear. I had two operations: one a success and the other a complete failure. I battled on, married and had four children. At this time, my good ear started to deteriorate. I became very isolated and insecure, in addition to finding it hard to communicate. I tried every hearing aid on the market until I heard about Better Hearing and decided to go



along to see what was on offer. I didn't realise what an impact this decision would have on my life. Becoming a member and joining lip reading classes was a great education and helped me realise I wasn't the only person in the world with hearing loss.

I learnt many skills in coping with my deteriorating deafness. In 1995, I began a two-year diploma course and a one-year hearing advisor course at Better Hearing, under the guidance of Carole McCarthy - a great teacher. I could then help and support others with similar problems to mine. During this time, I was finally diagnosed as eligible for a cochlear implant. The decision was easy, as I felt I had nothing to lose and went ahead with the successful 1995 operation. With renewed confidence I became an ambassador, a tutor, a foster carer and a member of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital Consumer Advisory Committee and Stonnington Council Disability Access Committee.

# James joins the board

## *and reviews his hearing health*

James Caws was attracted to the role of board member for BHA (Vic) by a desire to contribute to the direction and future success of an organisation with a strong social conscience that isn't focused on generating profit for shareholders.

Having worn many different hats in the web development industry for over a decade, James, who is currently a process improvement manager in the rail and property sector for a government entity, joined the board in November 2015. Whilst he was new to the disability of hearing loss, as a young boy James and his family fostered a disabled boy so he was aware from an early age of the difficulties those with disabilities face day-to-day.

Upon joining the board James got his hearing tested.

"The result was quite a surprise. I can't say that I feel like I have any sort of hearing loss, but the result clearly showed that I'd lost some hearing ability in the upper frequencies," he said.

James' slight hearing impairment is typical of noise induced hearing loss.

"If anything, I'd say I've been to less nightclubs and gigs than the average



person. I've never worked in a noisy job, but have always enjoyed listening to music through headphones. For me to have suffered noise induced hearing loss just shows how fragile hearing really is."

The hearing test result got James interested in understanding just how loud the everyday noises around us are. He visited the app store on his phone and downloaded a number of free sound meters.

"Whilst they are not scientifically calibrated and there's some variance between them, the readings are generally similar and very interesting.



They make you think when you're in a loud environment about how long you should be exposing your ears to it. Some of the high readings I've gotten in everyday situations alone, really make you think just how damaging typical, well known loud places like concerts can be. I am definitely more conscious now about my hearing and am taking steps to avoid worsening the loss."

James strongly believes in all of the services that BHA (Vic) offers, but he is particularly proud of the Victorian Hearing Aid Bank (VHAB). The VHAB, which takes donated and disused hearing aids then cleans and refurbishes them, brings hearing assistive technology to the people who need it most but can't afford it.

"Technology is a great equaliser, but it can sometimes come at a cost that is prohibitive to the most vulnerable," James said.

"Imagine that you suffer hearing loss but can't afford a good hearing aid and as a result you feel excluded from society, are unable to secure a job and therefore are prevented from living a full life. A hearing aid from the VHAB can change that and that's immensely warming to know."

IF YOU  
HAVE  
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LOSS**  
WE CAN  
HELP



# YOUR BETTER HEARING AUSTRALIA BRANCHES

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# YOUR BETTER HEARING AUSTRALIA BRANCHES

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