

Better Hearing Australia

The National Spotlight

Placing the Focus on Hearing Loss



Better Hearing Australia (National) Inc.
www.betterhearingaustralia.org.au

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'Welcome to the 'BHA National Spotlight'

Better Hearing Australia Friends,

Welcome to the first 'electronic publication' of Better Hearing Australia (National) Inc. We have all enjoyed many years of the Better Hearing Journal, with dedicated contributors and Editors, who have the admiration and thanks of the Better Hearing Australia (BHA) community.

*At the BHA AGM in Sydney in 2013, it was agreed BHA would move to an electronic publication. Our Members and supporters have contributed to this first Edition, and collectively we bring to you the inaugural **Better Hearing Australia National Spotlight** with informative articles and BHA Branch news.*

BHA is a national consumer led organisation, assisting all people with hearing loss. As a national body we work together through our Branches to deliver supportive services, and promote awareness and advocacy in Australia. We are currently upgrading the national BHA website to further support Australians nation-wide, putting them in touch with our BHA Branches.

*We live in a changing world, accepting that change can be challenging. I hope you will continue to support Better Hearing Australia (National) Inc. Together we can achieve much as a consumer led organisation, supporting people through **our national voice**. Alone we could struggle. United we can be a force.*

*Please enjoy the **Better Hearing Australia National Spotlight**.*

Julie Edmonds

National President – Better Hearing Australia (National) Inc.

The Better Hearing Australia National Spotlight is the official publication of **BETTER HEARING AUSTRALIA (NATIONAL) INC.**, a National not for profit Incorporated Association with branches and members in each Australian State. We assist all people in Australia with a hearing impairment and work to enhance wellbeing by developing good communication and life solutions through the provision of education, support and advocacy. Should you wish to be a financial member of Better Hearing Australia Inc., please contact your branch in your State. Details are on the last page of this publication.

Opinions expressed in the BHA National Spotlight do not necessarily represent those of Better Hearing Australia (National) Inc. Publication of an advertisement does not imply endorsement by Better Hearing Australia (National) Inc. or its Branches.

From Letter to Email

How Communication Has Changed In 20 Years by Sue Daw

I have always believed good communication between our branches, our members and our teachers, is vital to keeping our unique organisation informed and strong. When I was approached to write an article about how communication had changed since I became involved with Better Hearing Australia, it gave me the opportunity for an enjoyable stroll down memory lane.

When I joined our Canberra lipreading class in 1994, I was keen to learn all I could about lipreading and hearing loss. I soon started the teacher training programme. We had few reference books, Sydney was a long way away and communication was by letter or telephone. I felt quite isolated.

I attended my first BHA Conference in 1996, which to my surprise was being held in Canberra, and it was a special one, celebrating 50 years. I only attended some sessions as I had to continue my classes. The teacher's sessions were run by Doug Peterson and Carole McCarthy, and I soaked up new information like a sponge. I met warm talented people from around Australia willing to share their knowledge with me.



This is when I met Gwen Illingworth, she signed me up for the Teachers Newsletter, which she posted out 6 times a year. I had no previous knowledge of this Newsletter. Another communication door had opened to me, I now had access to lesson material and I was starting to feel relaxed in my teaching role.

At that Conference I met Derik Ward, who edited the Better Hearing Journal, and I started to read the Journal with new eyes, as I had met people who contributed to it. So in 1996 I could now receive communication by letter, telephone, the Teachers' Newsletter and the BHA Journal. I also looked forward to attending future BHA conferences.

In 2001 at the Geelong Conference, I became a member of the BHA National Board as Vice President Services and Training. At our first Committee Meeting in the lovely terrace house that was the home of BHA Victoria, the subject of which fax machine I should have was discussed. There were some old fax machines, but apparently I needed one that could do a "broadcast", so Ted Drowley, our then National President, made the executive decision I was to have a new fax machine.

I had never used a fax machine, and I can still see Haydn with instruction book in hand and me typing in the branch fax numbers. **Haydn then read out that I would be able, by a push of a button, to send a fax to all the BHA Branches.** It was with beating heart I fed my first letter into the machine and pressed the button, and the little machine leapt into life. I listened with fascination as each number was answered with "hello, hello" then on hearing the fax whistle the recipient would realise a fax message was coming through. Occasionally an impatient husband would answer, and after a hesitation slam down the phone believing it a nuisance call. My poor machine would need to try again, I would often leave it to it.

When I would return the machine would hold a list of successful numbers, often not all had got through. I detected my fax machine felt it had let me down. **I would send faxes at night** because if a line was busy, or someone rang my home, things could get confusing. Often branches would forget to switch their machine to fax, I would ring those numbers the next day to ensure the message had got through. It was time consuming but it was progress in communication between our BHA branches. Over the years technology moved on again, with fewer faxes being received until finally none arrived. My fax needed a new home as it was happiest when busy, Roma now has my faithful fax machine as she still sends faxes.

In 2005 I accepted the role of National Coordinator of Teachers Network from Gwen Illingworth, which meant writing the National Teachers Newsletter. Teachers paid a fee for photocopying and mailing of the Newsletter. I was VP Services and Training, so at a National Committee Meeting it was decided National would cover costs of producing and posting Teachers Newsletters, to enable all our teachers to receive it.

By this time some of our teachers and BHA branches had email addresses. To reduce postage costs I mailed a form to all teachers asking if those with an email address would agree to have their Teachers Newsletter emailed. **I had an overwhelming response from those with email, which was encouraging.**

I then had to input all email addresses into my contacts list. My email provider was 'BigPond' and as I entered new email addresses I was amazed at the variety of providers our teachers used. Again it was another learning curve when I sent my first Teachers Newsletter by group email. It was a relief to find that with the press of a button it worked and was simple. This was another positive step forward in communicating with our teachers, branches and members. It made life so much easier. Over the years all Branches and a great number of teachers now use email. There are some who are not comfortable with this technology so these teachers still receive the Teachers' Newsletter by post.

In the past I received Branch Newsletters by post and enjoyed reading them. I was amazed how busy and innovative our Branches were. Now Branches have their own websites and often include their Newsletters there for all to read. Today we attract new members to our Canberra classes from people visiting our website, which is great as trying to find free places to advertise our classes has always been difficult.

Technology has moved on once again, and it seems to me in a short space of time. People have laptop computers, smart phones and iPads, they communicate by using Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs. Instead of writing to friends people now text each other, and our National Board does not always need to travel to hold their meetings, they can sometime use Skype. Communication can be instant; I find it almost overwhelming. It is such a different picture to how it was twenty years ago.

My favourite way of communicating is face to face, closely followed by a chat on the phone, but I remember reading a Buddha quote that went something like –

“Don't be afraid of change as it is inevitable. Don't fight it, embrace it.”

If people had not accepted change in the past, **today I would have communicated with you in Morse code.** If I needed to send a message to Perth, I might have had to use a carrier pigeon. As I set it free I would have to whisper in its ear “Avoid flying near the Eyre Highway as I have seen many Wedge Tail Eagles, Black Kites and Nankeen Kestrels, along that dangerous pigeon flying route.”



I loved reading the Better Hearing Journal, but sadly we are moving to an electronic publication like many other organisations. **Don't be afraid, embrace this change and keep communicating with each other.**

Sue Daw OAM

Secretary BHA Canberra and BHA Aural Rehabilitation Teacher

PHOTO: Sue and Haydn Daw with their 'technology'.



Understanding Meniere's A BHA Member's Perspective

by Alison Cassell



Life was *'all in a whirl'*, as my husband, Doug, discovered only too well, following his Meniere's diagnosis in 2008. It is more serious than the clichéd 'seeing stars', being 'starry-eyed' or 'dizzy with success', the 'giddy' reaction after a high-speed rollercoaster ride, or the 'dizzy' blonde stereotype. You know the ones:

***She was so blonde...** She managed to trip over my cordless phone.
She tried to place a bag of M&M's in alphabetical order.
She took a ruler to bed, so she could see how long she slept.
It took her 2 hours to watch "60 Minutes".*

A vibrant burst of colour, exploding in a 'dizzying' spiral effect, is a commonly-used graphic representation of vertigo – the vestibular disorder producing the illusion of movement, a symptom of Meniere's Disease.

French physician, Prosper Meniere, described the symptoms of this 'dizzy terror' in 1861. Previously thought of as some sort of brain disturbance, it is often described as a change in fluid volume in the inner ear. Sometimes undetected, especially in children, Meniere's is a debilitating, chronic disorder affecting 1 in 600 Australians, 20% of whom have a close relative with the disease. **There is no medical cure, only management**, and 50% of patients develop bilateral Meniere's Disease (both ears), even many years later.

Meniere's can be hard to diagnose, as other conditions sometimes cause similar symptoms. As the cause of the disease is unknown, it is hard to predict who will be affected, though risk factors appear higher for Caucasians aged 20 - 60, those under a lot of stress, and those who eat a diet high in salt.

To understand Meniere's Disease, knowledge of the inner ear LABYRINTH system of fluid passages is vital. It includes both the organ of hearing, the cochlea, and the organs of balance, the semicircular canals and the utricle and the saccule. Excess fluid build-up in the inner ear is a condition known as Endolymphatic hydrops. With abnormal pressure fluctuations, the membranes dilate like a balloon, affecting balance. This can cause vertigo, sweating, nausea, vomiting, eye movement, dizziness and loss of balance.

As Stage 1/Stage 2 Meniere's Disease disrupts the mechanical function of the auditory system, that unique spiralling kaleidoscope is symbolic of the snail-shell shaped organ of hearing, the cochlea, that is minutely hair-lined. Progressive hearing loss results, be it loss in one ear or both ears, as does tinnitus, the sensation of ringing, roaring or 'swooshing' in the ears, currently affecting 17-20% adult population, and for which there is also no cure.

Fullness in the ear and pressure similar to an 'exploding head' are also a symptom of Meniere's, as is photophobia, the increased sensitivity to light in any form, severely aggravating the headaches and vertigo. Problems with visual or motor co-ordination can cause stumbling and clumsiness from disorientation and disequilibrium. As such, Meniere's sufferers carry an ID Card, to avoid being labelled as 'drunk'. In the worst case scenario, one can experience a TUMARKIN DROP, as Doug has done on two frightening occasions, falling suddenly without warning.

The pattern of symptoms can be varied, even in the same person, as Doug has found. Progress of the disease is also variable and unpredictable, with attacks typically lasting 2-4 hours, though people can be affected for 10 minutes, up to 10-12 hours. They come in clusters, often followed by extreme fatigue. There may be periods of remission between episodes – for weeks, months or years. 80% progress to STAGE 3, by which time only 50% hearing may remain, and is often fluctuating, vertigo is less frequent and may even disappear, nausea and dizziness are milder BUT the balance function is significantly and permanently impaired, specifically in a crowd situation, on escalators and in the dark.

The first line treatment for Meniere's sufferers is 'SALT SKIPPING', choosing low-salt foods with 120mg, or less, of sodium per 100g of food/liquid, as listed on the product's Nutrition Panel. For Doug, maintaining this low-salt diet has been vital in coping, and combatting his spectrum of Meniere's symptoms. Too much salt is toxic, inhibiting the body's ability to flush excess sodium when we drink water, causing the body to retain fluid, with consequent negative impact upon the inner ear balance system, resulting in dreaded, draining vertigo attacks. As a 'Super-Slick Salt-Savvy Sodium Spotter', there's no need to count the milligrams of salt consumed daily, just follow the '120mg' rule. There are many natural flavourings available to use instead of salt – herbs and spices, citrus, onion, chilli and garlic, for example – and Doug's palate has adapted over time.

Consider for a moment.....**do you like sausages, bacon, ham, corned beef, meat pies and kidneys?** Canned and packet soups, anchovies, olives, capers, salad dressings, sauces and pickles? Not to be forgotten, who enjoys Vegemite, hard cheeses, potato crisps, bread and particular breakfast cereals? Sorry, these exorbitantly 'sodium-stacked' processed items are taboo for 'salt skippers', as are 'the delights of the deep'. Invertebrate molluscs and crustacea absorb some of the salt from seawater, so oysters, prawns, squid crayfish and scallops are **not** low salt.

By a process of trial and error, it was imperative Doug isolated his own specific attack triggers. Other suggested dietary measures include avoiding caffeine-containing fluids and food, and foods with a high sugar content or containing MSG. Alcohol intake should be limited and cigarettes and aspirin avoided.

Some people experience lifestyle help with stress management techniques, relaxation and positive thinking, hobbies and other attention diverting activities, and alternative therapies - yoga, massage, acupuncture, chiropractics and homoeopathy. Medication and surgical intervention are possible options, and the Vestibular Rehabilitation program, which Doug also undertook, served in retraining his brain through habituation to compensate very successfully in dizziness-inducing situations.

Importantly, there definitely **is** life after a Meniere's diagnosis. Bouquets go to the amazing Meniere's Australia (MA) Support Group, through whose extraordinary efforts; those afflicted are able to regain control of their lives. 'Knowledge is Power', so the wealth of information resources and counselling available from MA, to help handle consequent frustration and loss of self-confidence, ensures people diagnosed can get on with living, while eating well with 'Salt Skip' products and Low Salt recipe books are available.

Not to forget, in the heartache of hearing loss, the voluntary, community-based support group Better Hearing Australia, has become a lifeline for those such as Doug, with hearing damaged from the onset of Meniere's Disease. Formed in Victoria in 1932, Better Hearing provides valuable, much-needed education programs and continual support and help for the hearing impaired, their family and friends. The butterfly motif, universally adopted by the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities because these creatures themselves are deaf, perfectly reflects the 'spreading of wings' beyond disability, made possible through active involvement in BHA's valuable Hearing Loss Management sessions, embracing a range of simple, yet significant, survival strategies to enhance wellbeing and quality of life.

As Doug discerned, if **YOU** know what you're dealing with, then the '**what if**' fears and anxiety, and grief at an 'old' life lost, will leave. Life **CAN** be reclaimed and enjoyed!

***"Just start to sing as YOU tackle the thing
That 'couldn't be done' and YOU'LL do it."***

Alison Cassell - BHA Brisbane Branch

In conjunction with Meniere's Australia, and with sincere appreciation.

BHA Victoria's Carol Wilkinson to Present at Australia's first Universal Design Conference

Better Hearing Australia is proud to announce that BHA Victoria Branch will be presenting at Australia's first Universal Design Conference in Sydney in August. One of our esteemed Hearing Advisors, Carol Wilkinson will be presenting a paper about the elements of good design to **improve hearing in public spaces**, such as airports and shopping centres.

Universal design is a world-wide movement that aims to create environments, products, services, and technology that can be used by as many people as possible. It makes things more useable, accessible, safer and convenient for everyone. The main beneficiaries of universal design are those who are currently excluded, albeit inadvertently, by design – people with disabilities, older people and sometimes children and their parents. This Conference will focus on the built environment, which includes housing, public buildings, public spaces, parks, and transportation.

Hearing loss seems to be a forgotten disability in many ways, not the least when it comes to providing public facilities. When you consider that at least 20% of the population (and increasing) suffer from a hearing loss, with emerging hearing loss in younger groups, it is amazing there is not a greater awareness of providing an inclusive environment for people with hearing loss. **It is vital that planners, architects and building designers consider noise management to enhance universal design of public spaces.**

People are more likely to engage in public spaces and buildings which are comfortable to use. Difficulties could be avoided, or at least improved upon, if more consideration went into the design and inclusions, of various buildings and facilities. Carol's presentation will highlight things that can assist universal use of public spaces, and how it is much easier and more cost effective to include these initiatives at the design stage rather than retro fitting. An abstract of the presentation will be included in a future edition of the BHA National Spotlight.

Michele Barry
CEO – Victoria Branch



Better Hearing Australia Scholarship

Better Hearing Australia is establishing an annual BHA Scholarship, to be announced in the next BHA National Spotlight edition. The aim of the Scholarship is to assist people with hearing difficulties during learning years, by providing financial assistance for their educational needs. Hearing loss can result in a young person's inability to maintain a long-term commitment to schooling, which can give rise to the prospect of lesser employment opportunities and possibly lead to isolation and depression. Access to financial assistance at school or in further education may be crucial to a young person managing difficulties and achieving success. The Scholarship will be open to children/youths under the age of 26, but may not necessarily be confined to this age.

WHO WILL BENEFIT ?

In 2012 a family with a deaf child was required to relocate to the City to be near a school which catered for the child's special needs. The family suffered financial hardship from the move and were unable to pay for school uniforms, school photos and a school camp. This further isolated the child in their new environment. This is one situation where this Scholarship could have assisted both the child and family. Another example would be a youth wanting to further their education at university but unable to pay for books, membership of university clubs, and a laptop. Unlike many university students, young people with a hearing impairment can have difficulty accessing part-time jobs, as the number of suitable positions for people with a hearing condition, is limited.



Better Hearing Australia is pleased to announce that Word of Mouth Technology will be supporting the BHA Scholarship through the provision of Assistive Listening Devices.

HEARING awareness WEEK

All Ears for Hearing Awareness Week

Deafness and hearing impairment are often described as the 'invisible disability', as hearing aids tend not to be obvious and those affected are often isolated through lack of access to communications.

Hearing Awareness Week will be held from Sunday 24 August and aims to highlight the issues faced by people with hearing loss as the organisers, the Deafness Forum of Australia, continue to campaign for greater recognition for the issue.

"We need Australia to understand the various degrees of hearing loss and ear disorders and how to communicate effectively with people who are Deaf or hearing impaired," said David Brady, Chair of Deafness Forum of Australia.

"As technology advances, many people with hearing loss benefit from hearing aids and cochlear implants. These innovations have made a positive difference in the way they can communicate and enjoy their lives, but communication can be exhausting for a hearing impaired person, even with a hearing aid or cochlear implant."

One of the main consequences of hearing loss is a reduced capacity to communicate. The ability to listen and respond to speaking is reduced and, for some, the ability to speak is lost or impaired. These factors impact on a person's life chances through the reduced opportunity to equitably participate in education, to gain competitive skills and employment and to participate in relationships. The financial cost to the economy is also significant.

Hearing Awareness Week will see a range of promotional activities happen across the country, including 'silent' sports events, public exhibitions on hearing technologies, and hearing safety training by employers to alert people to the issues. Individuals and organisations are encouraged to create their own Hearing Awareness Week events.

The Hearing Awareness Week website has a range of helpful resources, including a hearing simulator, fact sheets and suggestions for organising your event. Visit www.hearingawarenessweek.org.au

Steve Williamson
Chief Executive
DEAFNESS FORUM of AUSTRALIA



2013 Better Hearing Australia Illingworth Award



WINNER: CAROL TALONI

The Illingworth Award, for **Most Outstanding Volunteer of the Year** with Better Hearing Australia, is presented each year at the BHA Conference or AGM. In Sydney in October, Carol Taloni of Canberra Branch was announced as the 2013 winner, and presented with a framed certificate and cheque. Funding for this Award is provided from the Illingworth Bequest's trust fund.

Submissions for this valuable Award are called for mid-year, and all Branches are encouraged to nominate a volunteer. Volunteers with Better Hearing Australia serve the organisation in many different ways. They may be Tutors or Board members, they may perform office work or run social functions, call to help out at a moment's notice, or have a regular volunteer commitment to their Branch. They may act as a speaker or presenter, providing talks to other organisations or clubs, or run sessions or courses on hearing loss at training institutions.

Volunteers are essential to enable Better Hearing Australia Branches to provide services to the hearing impaired in the community. It is most important to recognize their contribution each year, through awards such as the Illingworth Award.

Carol Taloni is one such excellent volunteer. She has volunteered for BHA Canberra for over 15 years, in a variety of roles, as well as volunteering to help people with hearing loss outside of BHA. Despite personal health issues, Carol has an amazing capacity to keep going and is highly motivated in the planning and execution of all her activities. She is a valued member of the Canberra Committee of Management, and she has planned, organized and run the BHA Canberra Christmas Party for 10 years.

Carol has a significant hearing loss and tinnitus, is a Life member of Australian Tinnitus Association NSW, and uses the knowledge she has gained to assist others with tinnitus and hearing loss, making time in the evenings as well as daytime to take telephone calls or meet with people. She visits people in hospital, and provides at her cost, Patient Hospital kits, and is always sensitive to the needs of others.

Carol is also a teacher with BHA Canberra, and has been teaching a Better Hearing group for over two years, while at the same time completing BHA's Aural Rehabilitation Course. **Carol is an enthusiastic and committed volunteer for Better Hearing Australia, and is a most deserving winner of the 2013 Illingworth Award; CONGRATULATIONS CAROL.**

Other nominees for the 2013 award included IAN RIMES, from BHA Central Coast, and JOSIE SIDOTI, from BHA Victoria. Ian joined BHA in 2002, becoming a member of Central Coast's Committee soon after, and its Treasurer in 2004. He has served the branch well in this capacity and has been a trustworthy and committed volunteer. Josie has been a member, tutor, and Board Member of BHA Victoria for many years, and was recently awarded Honorary Life Membership of BHA Victoria. Both Ian and Josie are to be congratulated on being nominated for the Illingworth Award.

I close by encouraging ALL BRANCHES to discuss this Award and start the process of selecting their nominee for 2014.

Carole McCarthy
BHA Awards Coordinator



PHOTO: Carol Taloni at the BHA Canberra 20th Celebrations with her Membership Medallion



***Princess flower*: new NRS film to target older people with hearing impairments**



Peter McCallum and Karina Warwick in a still from the new NRS film, *Princess flower*.

The new film '*Princess flower*' from the National Relay Service (NRS) encourages older people with hearing impairments to use the NRS **so they don't lose touch with family and friends**.

Directed by award-winning director Yannis Nikolakopoulos and produced by the National Relay Service, this is a beautiful and poignant tale of a young girl (played by seven-year-old Karina Warwick) and the bond with her granddad (veteran Australian actor Peter McAllum).

Older people with hearing loss can be a difficult target to reach with NRS services, as they may not want to acknowledge that they have issues with their hearing. In addition, they may not be connected with information channels or community organisations that could help them.

The film aims to use the accessible media form of an online video to reach not only the target audience of older people with hearing loss, but also their family members and friends – and convey a key message about the benefits of using NRS services: keeping in touch with friends and family is of vital importance.

The film is a follow-up to NRS's earlier acclaimed short film, *Quiet Signs of Love*, which has had over a million views on youtube, Vimeo and on the NRS website. *Quiet Signs of Love* is a compelling modern love story that promotes internet relay to young deaf Australians. *Princess flower* does not continue the same storyline, but instead shows another perspective on facilitating communication between people who love each other. It was created by the same writer, director and film company.

'Online videos are a great way to reach people,' commented Deborah Fullwood, Managing Director of NRS Outreach. 'The video can be sent on to loved ones to be viewed on tablet devices and mobile telephones, with a clear message, subtly told: losing your hearing doesn't mean losing phone contact with families.'

To see the *Princess Flower* video go to: <http://relayservice.gov.au/princess-flower/>

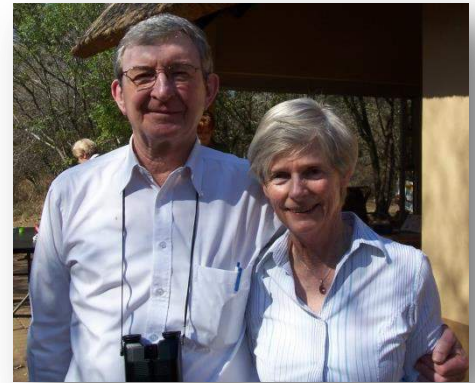
Hybrid Hearing System: giving you the full picture

Courtesy of Llewellyn Communications Pty Ltd

Being your own boss is many Australians' dream – but for retired property developer Dennis Gill, being self-employed meant he didn't have to accommodate insensitive bosses any more.

"I found the few bosses I have had were less than sympathetic to my deafness, so I spent most of my life self-employed," said Dennis, pictured here with his wife Moira.

Dennis was diagnosed with a hearing loss in 1970, and he became good at lip reading and following others' body language. He was fitted with hearing aids in the 1990s, but as his high-frequency hearing deteriorated, Dennis sought further help.



In 2009 Dennis was fitted with the first generation Cochlear™ Hybrid™ System, capable of operating as a hearing aid and cochlear implant system simultaneously. Natural hearing can be boosted by the hearing aid and complemented by the cochlear implant, providing a world of richer, crisper and cleaner sound^{1,2,3}.

The Cochlear Hybrid is designed for those with low frequency residual hearing accompanied by severe high-frequency hearing loss. It works by picking up sound and transmitting low frequencies to a hearing aid which amplifies sound, while sending the high frequency component to the cochlear implant. The high frequencies are converted to a series of electrical impulses which stimulate the hearing nerve directly.

High frequency loss has been likened to listening to an out-of-tune radio station – where finer details of sound such as consonant sounds, which enable you to identify and differentiate between words, are lost. High frequency sounds help you understand speech in noisy places such as restaurants or work meetings.

For Dennis, activities such as going to church or going to the cinema were an exercise in being the first through the door **"...so I could secure the premium seats.** It was only later in life that I found it easier to overcome my 'embarrassment' of being deaf and ask people to speak a little louder."

"The Hybrid cochlear implant has allowed me to listen to the birds again and I can hear the TV at a more comfortable volume level for the rest of the family. **More importantly I can hear the grandchildren so much better now, especially the younger ones, which is wonderful,**" he says.

Next generation Hybrid

Dennis now has the next generation Hybrid System, the Cochlear Nucleus® 6 Hybrid™. The Nucleus 6 Sound Processor is powered by a new custom designed microchip that enables automated sound technology. This intelligent sound management system is called SmartSound® iQ, enabling the device to automatically determine and then adapt to the type of sound environment the user is in – e.g. speech, noise, speech in noise, quiet, wind or music. These sounds have been considered as the most distinct hearing situations that some cochlear implant recipients identified as a challenge.

"The difference SmartSound iQ makes is quite amazing," Dennis says. **"If I step from a quiet environment to a noisy room, sounds suddenly appear softer rather than harsher."** "The device is also more compact, and ergonomically made with rechargeable batteries that are easy to handle. The Nucleus 6 is beautifully designed, making it more comfortable to wear."

For more information on Cochlear hearing solutions, please talk to your healthcare professional or visit www.cochlear.com/au, contact Cochlear on 1800 620 929, or email customerservice@cochlear.com.

1. Lenarz T, Stover T, Buechner A, Lesinski-Schiedat A, Patrick J, Pesch J. Hearing conservation surgery using the Hybrid-L electrode. Results from the first clinical trial at the Medical University of Hannover. Audiol Neurotol. 2009;14 Suppl 1:22-31. 2. Dunn CC, Perreau A, Gantz B, Tyler RS. Benefits of localization and speech perception with multiple noise sources in listeners with a short-electrode cochlear implant. J Am Acad Audiol. 2010 Jan;21(1):44-51. 3. El Fata F, James CJ, Laborde ML, Fraysse B. How much residual hearing is 'useful' for music perception with cochlear implants? Audiol Neurotol. 2009;14 Suppl 1:14-21

Better Hearing Australia 66th National Conference Sydney 2013

Behind the Scenes .. by Haydn Daw



The Sydney Conference was organised in collaboration with people from three BHA branches. Previously Sydney Branch had assisted Central Coast Branch to host a Conference on the coast at Wamberal. Central Coast wished to reciprocate and support Sydney in 2013. Canberra Branch also wanted to assist. We agreed to host the conference two years before the due date, and planning started almost immediately.

PHOTO: Some of the Sydney 2013 Organising Committee



A characteristic of the Organising Committee was they were passionate to host a Conference that would be interesting, of value, and an event that made delegates feel they had attended something worthwhile. Members of the Committee were volunteers and had skills that came to the fore during the planning. John and Robin Steel as members of Rotary had ideas on running Conferences, Jean Clark had ideas on Conference bookings, Marion Malins was a great Secretary, and so on. If a job had to be done, then someone would volunteer to do it.

'Not only did I learn along the way, I loved the experience of working with a group of people who had the same goal as me' - Geraldine Plumb

One of the decisions to be made early is on the venue and get this locked in. This is not an easy decision in a big city. We decided to go for a CBD venue (the Grace Hotel) even though we were conscious it may be on the expensive side for some delegates. We felt we were running a prestigious Conference and our ability to attract speakers would be enhanced if our venue was the right one. Based on that position we decided to subsidise meals (dinners) and extract the best rates we could from the hotel for delegates.

Decision making was easy among the Planning Committee. Consensus was the style of decision making; we could talk things through and arrive at sensible solutions. People got on and did things between meetings almost without exception.

Our planning of the general structure of the Conference was in place early and fine-tuned as speakers were locked in. This required managing as speakers may only be available on one day, or at a particular time, flexibility was required. This was assisted by us all being welded into a team over the course of the planning period. We also felt fortunate the 'Captioning Studio' were able to say they could look after us fairly early in the planning.



Even though you may be disposed to ask a particular person to open the Conference, options have to be kept open until they commit. We consciously went for former Prime Minister John Howard, knowing if he said yes he would be most likely to attend. Even so, he was travelling overseas early the next morning after the Conference opening. When Sue and I were escorting Mr Howard from the hotel there was a group of 6 or 8 ladies in the foyer. On recognising our speaker they broke ranks and came over to speak to Mr Howard with respect, and he was generous in his response. **We felt in the company of a celebrity.**

Even though the planning process is long there is a great deal to be done in the final weeks as the detailed minute by minute planning is done. We feel that this was all worth it as on the day it went without too many obvious hitches.

'The Sydney Conference was an outstanding success. Thank you to the Planning Committee for your hard work and attention to detail, which was appreciated and enjoyed by all.' - Julie Edmonds

Funding is vital for a successful conference and organisers need to understand what government priorities are (for writing grant applications) and when the cycles begin and end for certain grants. This was something we learnt by trial and error to some extent. We were grateful to be able to talk on this subject to Sandra Kier on her return to Australia. There were some financial concerns faced by the Planning Committee but in the end we made a small profit which eased the tensions.

What did we learn? We learned there are some very competent and generous speakers in the community. No one was paid a fee for speaking. All our speakers were impressive and volunteers just like us. We felt honoured to be able to listen to their research results, experience and knowledge.

If I don't say the following I may not have any dinner. BHA conferences are important in bringing people together. Our teachers and other BHA members need the contact with each other and with leaders in the field in disciplines, they need to be updated on and have their knowledge expanded and updated. It is only by this professional interaction that we will grow and be able to maintain our expertise. Our Planning Committee had the satisfaction of knowing our Conference did exactly that. **Along the way we learnt to appreciate our colleagues and had some fun as well.** We were a committed team with a clear and single goal.

Haydn Daw



At our Conference this year, I was surprised at the increase in people with cochlear implants, more than at the previous conference, and a few double implantees. I was contemplating an implant in the near future, it was interesting and helpful to be able to hear the experiences of my BHA friends and receive first-hand information. Present were representatives from Cochlear and MED-EL companies who were very helpful. For me, the 2013 Conference was timely; I have since had an implant'. - Jill Samek

Sydney 2013 National Conference Organising Committee Members :

Sydney Branch – John and Robin Steel, Roma Wood, Leone Sperling, Carmen-Diana Malins, Marion Malins

Canberra Branch – Haydn and Sue Daw

Central Coast Branch – Jean Clark, Jill Samek, Geraldine Plumb

Better Hearing Australia

News from our Branches -

'Keeping in touch Nationally'



Welcome to the Branch News Section of the BHA National Spotlight, where our BHA Branches and their Groups share member news and experiences. Please contact your local Branch to become a member, and support Better Hearing Australia to assist the Australian community with a hearing loss.

Maryborough Group, Queensland

Maryborough Group co-ordinator, Judith Razworthy, was pleased to submit an article from Bruce Nelson, a BHA Maryborough Group member who was impressed with a meeting. Bruce felt he wanted to share his experience and feedback from that meeting.

Bruce wrote – *'I was amazed at the amount of information you have,'* a visitor with a cochlear implant said after a combined meeting with BHA Maryborough Group and newly formed Fraser Coast Cochlear Implant Support Group, on 25 February. That thought was echoed by almost all of the eight implantee visitors from Hervey Bay. One, a 17 month old toddler, kept his thoughts to himself.

Another visitor wondered why our information was not more generally available. *'You don't get it from the professionals,'* she said, *'you have to ask them the exact, specific question.'* As an example, some of the visitors were not familiar with the audio loop system or the uses of the telecoil. Many were not aware of the new Smoke Alarm Subsidy Scheme.

The normal high energy level of our meetings soared with interest, questions and participation from our visitors. Judy Raxworthy presented an impressive address covering use of a speech processor and its remote control, how to access available services and support organisations and networks for the deaf.

At a bingo game – during an ice breaker and exercise in lip-reading and finger spelling - one visitor was adamant she could not finger spell. From a difficult start she soon mastered the basics of finger spelling and went on to win the game!

The visit was the result of outreach work by Judy Raxworthy, Pat Phillips and Yvonne Loveday, among cochlear implantees in Hervey Bay. Hervey Bay is a city of some sixty thousand citizens but, sadly, it has no BHA Branch or group, the interest resulting from our members work indicates a big need. No doubt this would apply to most of our cities.

Bruce Nelson
Maryborough Group Member

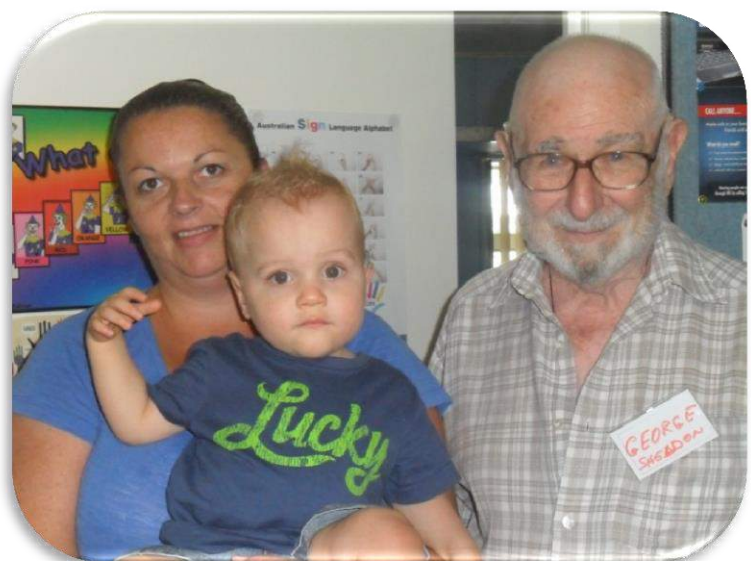


PHOTO: Proud mum Melissa Collins with Malik, the Groups youngest implantee and George Sheldon, the Groups oldest implantee

Geelong Branch, Victoria

Geelong longstanding and valued Tutor Norma O'Donnell has conducted BHA Lip Reading sessions on the Bellarine Peninsular for many years and has now retired. Norma wrote of her time with BHA –

'Don't Let The Deaf Cat Out of The Bag'

It's not easy to make a decision to retire. Great times were experienced, and memories made with the amazing people involved in this caring organisation BHA. Conferences come to mind that I attended in Tasmania, Perth, Adelaide & Melbourne.

Dedicated teachers and tutors inspired me along the way – Carol McCarthy and Jacki O'Calligan, and Gwen Illingworth's National Teachers' Newsletter with invaluable information and connection for Tutors.

This began in 1984 at a Volunteers' Forum in Bendigo where I met Melva Freeland. She wanted to retire from her position of 'Better Hearing' tutor, and introduced me to her class members and group work.

The end result was that under Melva's guidance and regular train trips to Head Office Prahran Melbourne, I completed the 2 years Certificate Course and managed Bendigo, Kangaroo Flat and Castlemaine groups.

Since moving to Geelong in 1990, I have held 'Better Hearing' sessions for varying times in Portarlington, Geelong, St. Leonards, Drysdale and Queenscliffe for 15 years.

Now I will step back and immerse myself in crafts and quilting, choir singing, walking the beach track, and maybe some travel!

Norma O'Donnell

PHOTO: Norma's Retirement Presentation in Drysdale. Norma is behind the flowers.



Central Coast Branch, NSW

Following an enjoyable time at the 2013 National Conference we returned to business as usual and held our AGM on 21st November. Election of officers saw Peter Moore return as President; Jeannine Asciak, Toukley Group tutor, joined the Committee and was elected as Vice President; Frank Lamaro and Rita Devine returned to positions of Treasurer and A/Secretary. Alan Devine joined as the NDIS representative to assist make sense of the NDIS program. I can only wish him the best of British luck! Speaking of the NDIS program, the Committee has spent a large part of their meetings on that topic.

The AGM was followed by Christmas celebrations and wind up of the year. Groups returned to sessions at the beginning of this term, delighted to see each other, to catch up and exchange news. I really enjoy the spirit of friendship that permeates the air on the first day back after the Christmas holidays.

Seniors' Week is on the horizon and we hope to have a table at a community function to speak with people. I would love to hear how other branches are participating in this great event.

Geraldine Plumb - Tutor Coordinator

Canberra Branch, ACT



We are all looking forward to receiving our first electronic newsletter or magazine. The name will be important. I am not very creative, so have been unable to come up with anything that grabs my attention let alone anyone else's. Thinking caps on.

2014 seems to have started with a bang. 31 December was the end of our financial year so the Committee has been busy making decisions about the Annual Report and the accounts, which have just been audited. As it is our first Annual Report we are making a special effort.

Classes are underway and well patronised. We have also had our first 'Rediscovering Music' program. It

was a great success and featured the Harp played by Laura Tanata and the program introduced by Kristen Sutcliffe. The music was well chosen and most people knew the melodies, even of the classics. Sponsored by Cochlea and the Canberra Symphony Orchestra we are fortunate to participate in this program.

This program is important for people who have found music difficult to hear following their hearing loss, particularly those with a cochlear implant. The relaxed atmosphere, the ability to ask questions and to move around to find the best listening position, help many people 'rediscover music'.



PHOTO: Laura playing the harp; with the audience looking on.

Sadly we lost a stalwart member Fay Price early this year. Fay was an active person and a very successful Cochlear user. A lady of strong views, Fay was very vocal about the benefits or joining a group like ours. At the end, she knew she was leaving us and instructed her family that she wanted BHA Canberra to be named as the beneficiary 'in lieu of flowers'. Her gesture and her family's acceptance of it resulted in us receiving \$780 in donations in her memory.

PHOTO: Fay (on the right) winning the Easter Raffle in 2011.



We have a number of projects on the go and need to focus our attention so that we can attend to them one at a time. We have set the date of May 10, 2014 as the date for our AGM and will be sending out notices early April. We have received a number of orders this year for Patient Hospital Kits from hospitals in WA, Victoria, ACT and we spoke to the volunteers in the Calvary John James Hospital a week ago. We are considering updating the tie-on sign with a similar sign (using donations given in memory of Fay) to that used in Hotels and Motels to hang on the door ('make up my room' or 'privacy please').

Haydn Daw – Canberra Branch

Victoria Branch



This year started with a sprint as we continued to support and find the right solutions for Victorians with hearing related issues. Not being able to hear means not being able to communicate with those around you, making it challenging to engage in daily activities. The cost of hearing related issues is felt at a personal level by many Australians. Due to eligibility criteria for government services, and the high cost of private services, many Victorians with a hearing loss are unable to access audiological and clinical assistance. This leads to unemployment, social isolation and health issues.

Better Hearing Australia (Victoria) Inc (BHA) is uniquely placed as an independent provider of services to address the needs of Victoria's population affected by hearing related issues. The organisation's professionally trained staff provide Hearing Management Services incorporating Information, Advisory/ Consultation Service and Independent Living Training Service, the Victorian Hearing Aid Bank and Tinnitus Management Services.

As an independent organisation, Better Hearing Australia Victoria is well placed to address the gaps in existing services and address service system failures that lead to issues such as high rates of assistive technology abandonment.

To address some of these issues, we have embarked on three major projects this year.

Project One: Launching our Strategic Priorities

1. That all people with a hearing related issue are able to access appropriate and equitable services.

Evidence indicates many people with a hearing loss are not able to access appropriate resources and strategies to effectively manage their disability, leading to social isolation, underemployment and a range of other negative health and social implications. Many people are unable to afford the simple assistive technology that would enable them to effectively manage their hearing loss. BHA will focus its reach to those groups who are most at risk of not accessing services such as low income earners, the underemployed, new arrivals and other unfunded individuals. BHA will be a voice for all Victorians affected by hearing loss, advocating for equity of access to appropriate solutions and assistive technology.

2. Raise the community's awareness of the impact of hearing loss, opportunities to prevent and address hearing related issues.

Early intervention in hearing loss and prevention of hearing loss has the potential to improve the health outcomes and economic participation for a significant proportion of the Victorian population. There is evidence of emerging groups impacted by preventable hearing loss. BHA will undertake an active role in promoting awareness of the issues associated with hearing loss and its prevention; this will include awareness raising campaigns, health screening strategies and early intervention programs.

3. Actively engaging in, and promote research about, hearing related issues that increases knowledge impact and supports improved evidence based service delivery.

Hearing related issues have a significant impact upon health outcomes and economic participation across the Victorian community. Effectively research that investigates the social and economic impact of this health issue will improve understanding of the policy and service delivery interventions required. BHA will undertake research that will drive how we deliver our services to maximise outcomes for individuals and ensure evidence based approaches drive operational activities.

Project 2: A New Website

BHA Victoria Branch has launched a new look website targeted at people with hearing related issues and a wide range of stakeholders. Check it out :

www.betterhearing.org.au



Project 3. Tinnitus Management Seminar

The first of what we hope will be many tinnitus seminars, was held on 2nd March at Better Hearing House in Prahran. The two hour seminar was an opportunity for tinnitus sufferers and their partners, family and friends, to learn more about this annoying and sometimes debilitating problem.

A combination of information and interaction gave participants a chance to better understand the issues and talk to other sufferers and professionals about management strategies and on-going assistance. The feedback was excellent, with participants indicating they would like more access to similar sessions. BHA Victoria Branch will continue to run these seminars and is investigating other options for helping tinnitus sufferers.

Although this first seminar was held on a Sunday morning, we hope to offer a variety of days and times in the future.

Anyone interested in attending a Tinnitus seminar should call BHA Victoria Branch on:

1300 BHA VIC (1300242842)

Thank you to the team at BHA Victoria Branch for a great start to 2014, with more exciting initiatives to follow.

Regards to all,

Michele Barry

CEO - Victoria Branch

Tasmania Branch



Tasmania Branch had a busy 2013, producing the very successful BHA Lip Reading Competition DVD and actively participating in the 2013 TV and Radio Clear Speech Awards, with a special function and morning tea presentation for over 60 members and friends. Pictured left with their Awards is Brent Costello (Win TV) winner of the Sports Award, and Peter Gee (ABC) winner of the TV Clear Speech Award, as well as the winner of the radio award.

PHOTO AT RIGHT: Carol McGhee OAM, Producer of the 2013 Lip reading DVD presenting Tina Williams with her trophy for 3rd place in the Tasmanian section of the awards.



Newcastle Branch - NSW

Newcastle Branch will be taking part in the 2014 Senior's Festival, the theme **"Live Life"** will encourage people to get involved and try something new. We hosted a Morning Tea and Open Day and titled our event **"Are you experiencing hearing loss and need support, don't be alone with your hearing loss"**. The event was publicised in the Newcastle City Council colourful brochure distributed throughout the Newcastle region, which is an excellent way of getting the message to people that **Better Hearing Australia can help**.



Congratulations to Bob Nagel, who has now completed his training as a tutor and plans are underway to promote and increase members in Bob's East Maitland group, once he returns from his upcoming surgery. Classes are held in a picturesque setting at the East Maitland Library which overlooks parkland and has a café attached.

Newcastle is one of the trial sites for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and with the scheme gathering momentum, there are some changes facing our NSW Branches. We currently receive funding through the Department of Human Services, Ageing, Disability and Homecare, however that funding will cease from 30 June 2015, which means Newcastle Branch is facing an uncertain future once funding stops. We have been attending seminars and workshops as we try to work out how to survive and keep our doors open, without Better Hearing Australia there is no other organisation providing the valuable services we do to the hearing impaired people of the community.

Karen Dempsey

West Australia Branch

The West Australia Branch has a new home. The West Australian Branch is now operating from 53 Curtin Ave Cottesloe, at the WA Foundation for Deaf Children building. There is a new BHAWA Committee and new website at www.betterhearingaustraliawa.org We thank all our members and BHA Branches for their support during the past year.

With thanks to U3A Film Group support, filming has begun in WA for the **2014 National BHA Lip Reading DVD Competition**. The WA Branch looks forward to contributing to this valuable BHA resource and competition.

Member Contributions for the 'BHA National Spotlight'

Branches and Members are encouraged to continue to contribute articles to BHA's new national publication. Items such as Letters, 'Opinion' pieces, poems, and personal stories are always welcome, and will be included based, of course, on the decision of the Editor and Editing Team.

Previously once a year 'Prose' and 'Poetry' items have been judged and the winners of the Literary Awards announced in the March edition for the previous year. The National Board is reviewing the policy related to awards, so no winners have been announced in this edition, with any awards for contributions to the BHA National Spotlight to be announced in September. This will bring these awards in line with all other awards, which are all presented at the Conference/AGM in October. So keep on writing, and **send your contributions before the closing date for the June edition, which is May 15th 2014**. Please send contributions to jedmonds.betterhearingwa@gmail.com and keep articles and news to 600 words or less as an attached WORD document, with any images to be attached separately.

The BHA National (Inc) Annual General Meeting will be held in Adelaide in 2014.

The BHA National Conference will be held in Perth in 2015.

Your Better Hearing Australia

ACT

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Maryborough Group - Email judyrax@tadaust.org.au

Logan Group – meet at Logan North Library

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Tweed Heads Group – Contact, Margaret Attwood

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