

Better Hearing Australia

# THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Placing the Focus on Hearing Loss



Better Hearing Australia (National) Inc

# Better Hearing Australia National Spotlight

Edition 9, March 2016

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## Message from your Better Hearing Australia Vice President



Michele Barry, Vice President, Better Hearing Australia (BHA) – Guest Editor

Welcome to this edition of the National Spotlight. I have enjoyed reading the many contributions and impressed with the range of activities around the country. It's wonderful that our work supporting people manage hearing is being recognised. I am delighted with the number of Press appearances that BHA has made since the start of the year.

It's an election year and time for us to ensure our local Federal MPs know that Hearing Health is a big deal for the many who require support. As a member of Deafness Forum of Australia, BHA will be a major contributor of an emerging public campaign to raise the issue of hearing in the community. Steve Williamson, CEO of the Deafness Forum has provided us with a piece about the importance of this campaign. The National Board will be addressing hearing issue and supporting the Deafness Forum campaign.

When drawing the public's attention to matters around hearing health care, the changes in service delivery required and outcomes. All service providers should be evaluated on their effectiveness in the community. Beyond hearing aid prescription, has the person in need been supported to manage hearing loss? Aural rehabilitation is well published as a catalyst for improved hearing outcomes.

I have recently returned from the Independent Audiology Australia conference. I together with the President of SHHH Christine Hunter were invited to be part of an important conference about Rehabilitation and Patient Centred Care. Christine and I were able to engage in grounded conversations about the experience of many people with hearing loss and their experience with audiological care. It was great to discuss our common interest in aural rehabilitation as well as challenges we face in this evolving landscape. We undertook to continue conversations about how BHA and SHHH may be able to work together to support our communities.

Many of the Audiologists asked my about BHA programs in local areas and gave wonderful feedback. I encourage your continual engagement with local practitioners. There is a great opportunity to develop mutually beneficial conversations.



I hope you enjoy this edition of the National Spotlight. Don't forget to Save the Date of 7<sup>th</sup> October for the BHA National event and AGM in Melbourne. Great agenda including, teacher's session, NDIS, Assistive Technology, branches and more.

As guest editor I would like to thank Jeannette Durlak our Office Manager in Victoria for all her work in collating the many contributions.

# Better Hearing Australia National Conference 2015

## ILLINGWORTH AWARD WINNERS FOR 2014

The National Board decided to award prizes to joint winners for 2014, and congratulations go to the two 'Peters' – Peter Cianchi from Canberra and Peter Moore from Central Coast.

### PETER CIANCHI

Peter Cianchi joined BHA Canberra 17 years ago for assistance with his own hearing loss, and was soon volunteering his time to help others who experience hearing difficulties. He had attended lipreading classes in the UK before coming to Australia, and realized the benefit of BHA's aural rehabilitation program. With an electronics background he is an expert in assistive listening devices (ALDs) and he puts this expertise to good use as a volunteer with BHA Canberra.



Peter's knowledge and enthusiasm have been invaluable to many people when hearing aids are not enough. He is very positive in his demonstrations of these devices in the BHA classes, during Hearing Awareness Training, in setting up loops for meetings and so on.

Peter has been active in promoting the activities of BHA Canberra at every opportunity. He volunteered to serve on the Planning Committee to work towards incorporation and has continued to serve on the committee of BHA Canberra since December 2012. His wise approach and sound advice have been invaluable to all other members of the committee.

He is a very keen supporter of the 'Rediscovering Music Program' in Canberra (a BHA Canberra and Canberra Symphony Orchestra initiative funded by Cochlear), which helps the hearing impaired to enjoy music again. As well, Peter is a staunch advocate for TV captioning, T-switches and audio loops, and is involved in allied organisations and support groups for tinnitus and cochlear implants.

In its submission for Peter Cianchi, BHA Canberra says that he 'does not seek reward or social recognition for any actions he may take. He is an unsung hero, at many times almost working under cover. He epitomizes the sort of person the Illingworth family established this award to recognize.'

### PETER MOORE

Peter Moore has been the President of BHA Central Coast for most years from 2006, as well as representing the branch on various committees of BHA and in allied organisations. Peter came to BHA for help when faced with total hearing loss and has been so grateful for the support of BHA that he has become a staunch volunteer for BHA. He is a public figure, speaking to others and the media not only about BHA but also about his personal journey of managing a hearing loss and cochlear implants. He helps to arrange expos and events in the Central Coast region, and travels to BHA National Conferences whenever possible.

Peter has been a Public Representative on Australian Government Hearing Services Consultative Committee 2009 to 2014. He is also a Volunteer Support Worker for Cochlear Implant Centre, advising prospective and Cochlear Implant patients.



BHA NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT – March 2016

Peter is a firm believer that our Hearing Management Groups help build confidence, self-esteem and prevent isolation, leading to better health outcomes, and he supports and publicizes the groups to the wider public.

As a BHA N.S.W. State Council Representative for Better Hearing Australia Central Coast Inc., he travelled from the Central Coast to Newcastle for meetings with ADHC, NDS and NDIA during the Hunter trial of NDIS. These meetings secured continued block funding for the N.S.W. BHA branches. Since then Peter has been guiding the BHA Central Coast committee through the rigours of the new NDIS Policies and Procedures, to ensure compliance with the NSW Disability Standards.

Peter has been a role model for all the committee, members and volunteers, always very enthusiastic, loyal and an outstanding achiever, and as such is a worthy recipient of the Illingworth Award for 2014.

Carole McCarthy

BHA Awards Coordinator

## Teacher Training Manual

Shona Fennell (Head of SOAR) presented the new and updated Teachers Training Manual.

This manual is available in colour (\$40) and B&W (\$12.60) is available through the Sydney branch's stock and I urge all who are involved in training new teachers to get a copy. It would be worth all Teachers having a copy as it includes new material which is very useful. The B&W manual was done for ease of expense and ease of photocopying any needed pages.

The updating of this new manual was done with close attention paid to the comments made during the Teachers' session at the 2013 Sydney conference.

Shona is to be congratulated for her fine work on the manual and I find working with the manual, where the information and assignments are all in the one book, much easier than before.

During this session we were advised that Shona had handed over the reins of SOAR to Joan Belle in Geelong. Thank you, Joan for taking on this role and I know you will do well. We also learnt that SOAR is to have a new name – it is now BHA Hearing Loss Management Centre (HLMC) and Joan's new title is National Training Coordinator.

Thanks also must go to Shona for her work as Head of SOAR. I am very appreciative of Shona's work in that position as she was always available to give a helping hand and a comment or two on any question.

Geraldine Plumb, Better Hearing Australia Central Coast



## Letters to the Editor

We welcome your feedback, comments and letters to the Editor. If you would like to contribute to the Editor please email [national@betterhearing.org.au](mailto:national@betterhearing.org.au)

Dear Sara,

I am always eager to receive the National Spotlight; I appreciate how much work goes into preparing such a publication. I believe it is an important communication tool for Better Hearing Australia. The quality over the years has been good and the December Issue by Guest Editor and VP Michelle is another welcome issue. Thank you, Michelle

Regards

Peter Massey

Secretary Treasurer, [Better Hearing Australia Brisbane Inc.](#)

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Dear Editor,

In reply to Karen Dempsey, Newcastle

I was very interested to read of Karen's experience with the NDIS, but not, alas, surprised.

This is very similar to problems noted with the "old Medicare Local" system; for the most part, those interviewing and referring on to "selected" service providers have little or no training in the needs of the Hearing Impaired, the services that will assist them or even how to effectively communicate with their HI clients. Karen at least had knowledge of her disability and needs; the majority of the HI are not so well prepared.

What can be done?

Recently Better Hearing Australia Brisbane Inc delivered four short workshops /presentations to Staff at the Old Dept of Communities, Children and Disabilities. Those attending were experienced staff but who had, prior to this initiative, never been offered (workplace) training in communication with, or the needs of, the HI. The response of the attendees was very positive indeed.

As the NDIS expands the need for the training of these central "interviewers" and those offering a referral service will be ongoing; they are unlikely to be any better prepared for assessing the needs of the HI than were those referred to above.

Better Hearing Australia Branches have within their membership those who are very well placed to offer such in-house workplace training; (employers usually are prepared to pay for such in-house presentations/training. )

I believe that whilst our primary focus has traditionally been directly with the HI, we should recognize that we might offer vital support indirectly as well by training and supporting these "referral- NDIS staff" and, indeed, educate them into the role and support that Better Hearing Australia offers.

Peter Massey

[Better Hearing Australia Brisbane Inc.](#)

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Hi Michele

I am Kerry Campbell from the Gold Coast Branch in Queensland. I am the founder of this Branch & also at present the Secretary/Treasurer. I have been campaigning for many, many years for the Arts Centre movie theatres (which are very popular) on the Gold Coast to show the occasional captioned movie. This has finally happened in so much they are now offering up to date technology caption equipment for movies that have caption ability. I was asked, along with the Gold Coast Mayor, to open & show the media how this all works. It was highly successful & advertised to the thousands of people who live here, especially those of us who are profoundly deaf & are now able to enjoy this type of entertainment. I will also send you a follow up report that was broadcast on ABC Radio.

See the article in 'In The Media' section.

Regards

Kerry Campbell

Better Hearing Australia Gold Coast Inc

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## SAVE THE DATE

**BHA NATIONAL EVENT AND AGM**

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2016 in Melbourne**

**Deaf Children's Australia**

**Cnr St Kilda Road and High Streets, Melbourne**

Don't miss a great opportunity to meet with BHA branch members and discuss matters of mutual importance in this changing world. Topics to include:

- Teacher session
- NDIS
- Assistive Technology
- Branch sessions
- Workshop future strategies, and
- The Annual General Meeting

A confirmed agenda and session list will be confirmed closer to the date.

## In the Media

The word is out! BHA branches are doing great things to support the community. Check out these items.

### Tenacity sees high-tech closed captions launched at Gold Coast arts centre

[ABC Gold Coast](#) Damian Larkins Updated 18 Jan 2016, 4:06pm

**Photo:** Arts Centre volunteer Kerry Campbell was behind the push to introduce the closed caption technology. (ABC Gold Coast: Damien Larkins)

One woman's determination has led to new closed caption technology to help hearing impaired people get out to the movies on the Gold Coast.

Getting out to the movies is one of life's little pleasures, but people who are hearing impaired can miss out on the enjoyment. This will open up a whole new ball game for all those people

Kerry Campbell, Arts Centre Gold Coast

Arts Centre Gold Coast volunteer Kerry Campbell, who is profoundly deaf, has been behind a push to introduce closed caption technology to the centre's theatre. Ms Campbell communicates mostly through use of a cochlear implant and lip reading. The 69-year-old said she knew she was losing her hearing in her fifties, but one fateful morning the problem came to a head.

"On September 11, 2001, I woke up in the morning and I had absolutely no hearing whatsoever," she said. "We put that down to a virus or something like that ... it's not uncommon that does happen." Despite the warning signs, it was still a shock. "But I'm the sort of person that gets up and goes," Ms Campbell said. "I had a little cry and realised this is another part of growing old."



**Photo:** The technology includes closed captions glasses, text-receiving boxes and headphones to help hearing impaired guests. (ABC Gold Coast: Damien Larkins)

Ms Campbell has volunteered at the Arts Centre Gold Coast for around 15 years and for the past six has been lobbying hard to provide closed caption technology. Now her hard work has paid off, with the new equipment being introduced.



The systems include closed caption boxes that sit in the cup holders on a pole that raises them to eye level and special glasses that display captions on the inside of the lenses.

The devices allow people with hearing impairments to read the dialogue and audio descriptions that they otherwise may have struggled to understand. Arts Centre general manager Destry Puia said the new system was part of a wider redevelopment of the precinct.



"Advances in technology, advances in my own learning and also Kerry's tenaciousness over a number of years have all culminated in the launch of the new equipment," he said.

Ms Campbell hopes the new technology will help the thousands of hearing impaired locals. "This will open up a whole new ball game for all those people," she said. "Now they will be able to come and enjoy the wonderful entertainment

and brilliant movies that are available here." The devices will be available at the box office for closed caption-compatible movies.

**Photo:** Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate helps Kerry Campbell launch the new technology. (ABC Gold Coast, Damien Larkins)

## Learn to lip-read with Better Hearing Australia classes

Clare Colley, Canberra Times February 1 2016

The words pat, bat, and mat might sound different when said out aloud, but would you be able to tell them apart if there was no sound? Meet the people who can thanks to lip-reading classes led by Better Hearing Australia.

Lip-reading teacher Sue Daw with class members David Urquhart and Linda Dwyer. *Photo: Graham Tidy*

Class member Linda Dwyer said she wouldn't still be working if it wasn't for the classes she started attending six years ago when she was exploring hearing aids. "I mostly noticed I couldn't hear my young daughter," she said. "I was struggling in a social situation; I was almost sitting on people's laps to hear what they were saying... it was embarrassing."



BHA's Canberra secretary and aural rehabilitation teacher Sue Daw, who leads the weekly sessions along with other volunteers, said each class focuses on one lip movement such as 'F' or 'V' with an explanation of how the speech movement is formed on the lips. The group then practices words starting with the consonants and makes up short sentences about a specific subject. Each class member then takes it in turn to mouth the sentence while the rest of the class writes down the words they can lip-read.

"Speech has evolved for hearing, not for lip-reading and because so many speech movements look similar it's a matter of being aware of that," Mrs Daw said. "This is a real survival skill." Each letter has a different frequency and with every person's hearing loss unique lip-reading can help people pick up the gaps in words they aren't able to hear.

Another class member David Urquhart said lip-reading skills were essential in places with a lot of background noise like restaurants. "If you watch people's lips and you know the context you pick up a lot more," he said. "If you're trying to lip-read and someone changes the topic you're often lost."

He initially went to the classes to support his wife Betty who is deaf in one ear, but found the classes useful for his own hearing loss as well as giving him a better understanding of his wife's condition.

Mrs Daw has had hearing loss all her life, but coming to terms with hearing loss later in life can be an isolating experience. Often people with hearing loss have been lip-reading without knowing it.

Ms Dwyer said she now plans to become a lip-reading teacher herself. "Without the lessons I wouldn't be as confident... especially for working," she said. "I was always scared that people will treat me as not as intelligent."

Unlike wearing glasses, hearing aids don't provide an instant change, and can initially be difficult to adjust to requiring much fine-tuning. Admitting to have hearing loss can also be difficult, and while all three say the stigma was improving, there was still a way to go to educate people about how to speak to someone with hearing loss. "Our classes are really the only place where people with a hearing loss can get together and all talk about it," Mrs Daw said.

"You're always scared you're going to be rejected... but once they say 'I've got a hearing loss' and the group accepts that then you can go forward." The sessions also give class members a chance to share knowledge and find out about different devices that can make life with easier like Rodger Pen microphones that transmit audio directly into hearing aids. Although it can be difficult to read the lips of someone with an accent, and candlelight dinners are out of the question, lip-reading has some advantages. "It makes you a better listener because you're actually concentrating on what the person is saying... which is almost a contradiction," Mr Urquhart said.

The hearing loss management classes will resume for 2016 on Tuesday February 2. They are held weekly on Tuesdays from 2pm to 4pm and 5.40pm to 7pm at the Grant Cameron Community Centre, Holder. In March the evening classes will resume at the Woden Hellenic Club. For more information phone 02 6251 4713 or email: [bhacanberra@gmail.com](mailto:bhacanberra@gmail.com).

## Hearing Loss Is A Big Deal

# Hearing Loss is a big deal

**Fact:** 4 million Australians have hearing loss. This is a big deal. The fact that this is likely to increase to 8.9 million Australians over the next 35 years is also a big deal. Sarah Duncan, National President of Better Hearing talks about the impact.

**N**ot being able to hear is a big deal. It means not being able to communicate or participate in activities of choice. For those of us who can hear we can only imagine what not hearing must be like.

As National President of Better Hearing Australia, I get a glimpse into the lives of those living with hearing loss every day. I see the social isolation, exclusion, frustration and missed opportunities in life. I am frustrated by the significant service gaps, poorer health outcomes and lower standards of living for those with a hearing loss. People with a hearing loss experience exclusion from the things that other Australians take for granted like working, studying, and interacting more broadly with society.

Hearing loss is an issue that becomes more prevalent as we age and one that individuals often find difficult to address. Many people will try to hide their hearing loss due to the stigma they feel, and many also experience discrimination due to their disability.

If you have a hearing loss in Australia it can be a minefield finding a

solution that meets your needs. This is not acceptable in 21st century Australia.

At Better Hearing Australia we are calling for a fairer hearing for people with a hearing loss.

Throughout its 80 year history Better Hearing Australia – Australia's only independent hearing management service, has been supporting people to find their individual answer to living with their hearing loss. BHA helps those Australians with a hearing loss to gain new skills and knowledge and to navigate their way through the maze of hearing services and technology and find a place where they can share experiences with those who understand.

Better Hearing Australia aims to improve community awareness about hearing loss, its impacts and how to prevent hearing loss. BHA is calling on all levels of Government to stop ignoring the impact of hearing loss across all Australian communities and to act to ensure all consumers are protected and receive affordable, trustworthy and appropriate services.

The impacts for people with a hearing loss are significant and include:

- Australians with a hearing loss are more likely to have poorer mental and physical health, including higher risk of heart attack, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure and higher mortality rates.
- People with a hearing loss have three more health conditions on average – including heart disease, Alzheimer's, arthritis or dementia – than those without a hearing loss.
- Australians with a hearing loss are more likely to withdraw from society because they feel stigmatised and many try to deny or hide their hearing loss.
- People with hearing loss often take up to 15 years to act on their hearing loss, and those with moderate to severe hearing loss are 15 times more likely to need help with daily living.

The 4 million Australians with a hearing loss deserve a fairer hearing.

**Further information regarding hearing health can be found at [www.betterhearingaustralia.org.au](http://www.betterhearingaustralia.org.au)**



## National Gallery's Tom Roberts' Auslan captioning app helps hearing impaired art-lovers

New technology is coming to the aid of hearing impaired art-lovers.

Clare Colley, Canberra Times, January 14 2016

Visiting an art gallery would seem a predominantly visual experience, but while most art-lovers can expand their knowledge with an audio tour, people who are deaf or hearing impaired usually miss out.

Thanks to new captioning and Auslan tours for the National Gallery's Tom Roberts' exhibition, art-lovers of all abilities can find out the secrets behind the masterpieces, all from the palm of their hand.



Haydn Daw using the Open Access Tour app to read captioning for the NGA's Tom Roberts' audio tour. *Photo: Graham Tidy*

The tours are available to download for free on the Open Access Tours app, alongside similar versions for some of Australia's most popular arts and cultural venues.

Hearing impaired gallery regular Haydn Daw said the captioning takes the pressure

off for visitors straining to hear audio commentary.

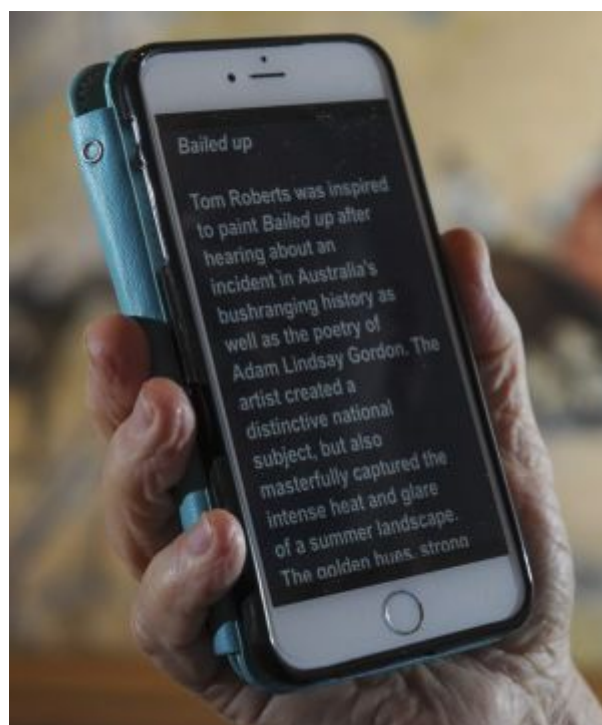
Hearing impaired and deaf art-lovers can find out more information about the artworks in the NGA's Tom Roberts' show thanks to the Open Access Tours app. *Photo: Graham Tidy*

"If you can read it it's so much more relaxing and you can get the story right," he said.

"These captions are quite detailed on each picture so they're very effective ... they're pre-recorded so they're accurate, they don't make bloopers like they do on television [captions]."

### Advertisement

Mr Daw relies on hearing aids because of age-related hearing loss worsened by his time in the navy; it makes hearing higher-pitched sounds, typically consonants in words, more difficult.



"It's really important that I have access to good audio and the captions or I may not hear properly," he said.

"It does affect my lifestyle if I go out in a group ... restaurants are the absolute nightmare ... you almost want to give up."

Mr Daw, who is also chairman of Better Hearing Australia's Canberra branch, said things were very different for himself and his hearing-impaired wife during gallery visits before the technology was made available.

"We'd always be struggling to hear what was being said ... it makes an enormous difference, if you can get the understanding and background the pictures, it makes the experience much more beneficial," he said.

"These sorts of things have made the deaf community just so much more independent."

Conexu, the company behind the tours, also translated the audio tour for the NGA's *Turner from the Tate* exhibition, along with more than 30 other tours for Australian venues since 2011.

The *Behind the Lines* exhibition at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House in 2013 also had the captioning and Auslan tours, which were also available on the museum's app.

But Mr Daw said there was still a way to go to improve accessibility at arts and cultural venues for the hearing impaired.

"One of the great problems we have is ... [with] hearing loops," he said.

"They're fantastic because the loop generates a magnetic field, which allows the speaker at the microphone to be heard directly in your hearing aids ... but in many places the loops don't work properly and there's no one on-site who knows what the problem is and a lot of the time they're switched off."

Auslan captioning is also available on the NGA's own free Tom Roberts' app and on the audio tour headset devices, available for \$7 at the exhibition entrance.

The Open Access Tours app can be downloaded for free on the [Apple app store](#) and [Google Play store](#) for Android devices.



## The sound of silence: why hard-of-hearing retirees are without hearing aids

The Sydney Morning Herald, Kate Cowling, March 23, 2016

Hearing impaired retirees are suffering social exclusion and loneliness yet that situation is avoidable, writes Kate Cowling.



Pensioner Jan De Vries with his new hearing aid. *Photo: Wayne Taylor*

It's a problem that sounds simple enough to fix: your hearing starts to fade, so you're fitted with a pair of aids and hey presto, you can hear again.

However, for a raft of Australians it's far from that simple.

If you're eligible for a government subsidy, a pair of hearing aids may cost you less than battery changes for the remote control. However, if you're not, say because you're a self-funded retiree and don't hold a pensioner concession card, it can cost more than \$10,000 for the device alone, particularly if you're upsold to a top-of-the-line model.

It's not unheard of for retirees to see a hearing aid model that fits their budget and go to purchase it, only to be told that's inappropriate for their needs and only a far more expensive version would be adequate, says Michael O'Neill, chief executive of National Seniors Australia, who adds the cost of hearing aids is an issue that comes across his desk regularly.

"Upselling to a flasher model gives people concerns because they do see hearing aids advertised at attractive prices," he says, a practice referred to as "bait and switch".

When asked about upselling, Audiology Australia, the peak body for audiologists, says it has had no formal complaints.

Mr O'Neill stresses it may not be that the more expensive models are inappropriate, but the lack of price transparency makes retirees feel confused, something which can result in people simply going without. The consequences of that are social exclusion and loneliness, he says.

Given these issues, it's probably not surprising that retirees are looking for ways to get onto the pension primarily for the subsidised hearing aids.

But once again, even if you do qualify, it's not always a straightforward fix.

The devices themselves are not enough to repair your hearing. Stick a pair straight in your ears and your hearing may get worse. You may hear fuzziness, or the air conditioning may sound louder than the person sitting next to you or you may even experience pain. It's why many are thrown in drawers and hearing impaired people continue to suffer with silence. Shop around

A good audiologist can fix the above problems, but many pensioners don't realise they can shop around for one if their initial hearing problems aren't solved, says Michelle Barry, chief executive of Better Hearing Australia, a not-for-profit service that helps people who have hearing loss.

The Department of Health confirmed those on a pensioner concession card are also free to choose their audiologist(s), provided they are employed by a contracted service provider.

One of Better Hearing's clients, Melbourne-based Jan de Vries, 81, had recurrent issues with hearing, most recently manifesting in his being able to hear vowels but not consonants.

He went to a government-funded audiologist, found a device he liked, but balked at the \$8000 price tag (Mr De Vries was receiving only a partial subsidy). He asked if there was a cheaper model, in the \$4000 price range, but never got a call back.

However, Mr de Vries says he continued to receive bills for hearing aid maintenance and spare batteries (\$60 a year).

Mr de Vries has now been fitted with a device that he will receive in the next month.

His warning to other hearing impaired people is that the government process can be challenging, but it's worth shopping around.

"Buying a hearing aid is not very easy," he says. "There are people who try to sell it to you for a very high price."

The other issue he has is around the lack of transparency about what's available. "They don't seem to advertise well-known brands."

#### Your options

If you're a Pensioner Concession Card holder, a Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold Card holder or receive a sickness allowance from Centrelink, you're among the list of people who are eligible for a full or partial subsidy for your hearing tests and aids. You can apply for your voucher and begin the process.

However, if you are not, don't fret – there are ways you can get your hearing fixed without having to pay a five-figure fee.

Hearing aid banks repurpose working devices. Based on your circumstances, some are free, some you will pay a few hundred dollars for. Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Better Hearing Australia and Hear Service are among the groups that can help find suitable devices for people in this situation. The services are often run by volunteers and you often have to prove you are financially unable to buy hearing aids otherwise.

For the models that aren't free, people with hearing impairments are charged only for the cost of re-programming them, says Better Hearing's Ms Barry, but it's a fraction of the cost you may be up for if you bought a new one.

The Hearing Care Industry Association's Hearing Aid Bank also offers vouchers of up to \$1500 to people whose hearing has or is at risk of forcing them out of the workforce.

Some private health insurers cover the devices, consultations and maintenance costs, but it's rare for the full cost to be covered.

## Brain changes caused by hearing loss can be slowed

The Financial Review April 5 2016, Jill Margo

When you start losing some hearing you are not only losing sound: your brain is changing irreversibly. But all is not lost.



Professor David Ryugo, with an app he uses to detect noise level. If it's too loud, he'll try and remove himself. *Jessica Hromas*

Before David Ryugo sits down in a restaurant, he uses an app on his phone to measure the noise level. If it's too high he usually leaves. He doesn't do this because he is hard of hearing. Rather, he wants to avoid developing hearing problems. "Noise is like radiation or ultraviolet light," he says. "A little won't hurt but over time it accumulates and that's what's killing our ears."

Ryugo, professor of neuroscience at Sydney's Garvan Institute and professor emeritus in hearing and balance at Johns Hopkins in United States, says the last decade of a man's life is usually spent with hearing loss.

By the age of 70, some 75 per cent of men in industrialised countries will have significant hearing loss that not only affects their ability to communicate and their social relations, but causes changes in the brain that can't be reversed. The healthy human ear can hear an enormous range of sound, from softest whisper to a jet engine. Over this range it can determine very small changes from which the brain can make the finest distinctions.

When the brain is no longer receiving good stimulation, it alters its expectations and rewires itself. Some of the space it previously dedicated to hearing begins being used for other functions. Ryugo says the brain doesn't like a vacuum, and just as amputees suffer phantom limb pain, so hearing loss can give rise to phantom sounds such as tinnitus.

Knowing this, Ryugo takes every precaution he can. He carries earplugs in his pocket in case he is stuck in a noisy environment. If an ambulance speeds by with sirens blaring, he covers his ears with his hands. He does the same to muffle sound effects in the cinema and he no longer attends rock concerts.

## **Mind the vacuum cleaner**

It may sound excessive, but he is so conscious of the potential for cumulative damage that he will go to unusual lengths to protect his family, from covering the coffee grinder with a tea-cosy to testing how much noise a household appliance emits, before he buys it. "If you use a so-called 'super-quiet' vacuum cleaner for just 15 minutes, you've already done some damage," he says.

He's been protecting himself for more than 30 years and now has "pretty good" hearing for a man of 68. Regular checks have shown he has some loss in the high frequencies that can't be regained or restored with a hearing device.

Unlike vision which is regularly checked and corrected, few people have their hearing checked. The family doctor might look in their ears occasionally for infection or wax, but their actual hearing goes unmeasured.

He describes hearing as the hidden sense, and says losing it can be slow and imperceptible. In a corporate setting, a negotiator may begin to miss the tonal subtleties of a voice, without ever realising it. In bed, the same man may never know how much whispered pillow talk he's missing.

Typically, his partner will push and push until he agrees to have a hearing test. The test will detect noteworthy loss and then, Ryugo says, an extraordinary thing will happen. If he's an average man, he'll wait 10 years before acting on the advice to get a hearing aid fitted.

His resistance, usually driven by a combination of vanity and denial, exists in ignorance of the fact that hearing loss is progressive and that he will continue to lose it.

Ryugo's work has shown intervention with a hearing aid can slow the loss and reduce the effects in the brain. He has demonstrated this in mice, and the model is now about to be tested in humans at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. The intervention stimulates the auditory system, which in turn prevents further unwanted brain changes.

## **Early-onset dementia**

Meanwhile, as the decade of denial passes, the resistant man's quality of life will deteriorate. Initially he will cope by avoiding noisy restaurants. Then he won't want to go to a dinner party he knows will be noisy. Eventually he won't feel like going out much. Gradually he'll become depressed, by which time he is at five times the risk of early-onset dementia.

By this stage he no longer urges others to "stop mumbling" or "speak clearly". He's even given up repeatedly asking "What?". He's retreated from grumpiness to isolation and as spontaneous communication is difficult, he'd rather read.

To people who have never protected their ears, Ryugo says start now. "If you've been to too many rock concerts, test for hearing loss and get it treated. Treatment consists of hearing aids, but you don't need the \$10,000 model. Get one for \$2000 because it will give your brain the sound stimulation it needs."

He says hearing aids do not work well in noisy environments because they directly address damage in the ear, not the consequent changes in the brain.

But there are solutions – such as pinning directional microphones on each guest around a table and then blue-toothing them to a hearing aid. Another option is for the hearing-impaired person to lay a microphone on their shoulder.

Some men wear high-end devices that are implanted on the ear drum and can't be seen from the outside. These suffer the same drawbacks in loud places and they require major surgery, but have a cosmetic advantage and are good for pillow talk.

While many older Australians struggle with their hearing, he says some decades ago, when researchers tested a tribe of indigenous rural Africans, they found people in their 70s had perfect hearing.

For Australians the big risk factors are industrial noise, disease, drugs, chemicals and head trauma. The cancer drug cisplatin, the common antibiotic gentamicin and some non-steroidal anti-inflammatories are also ototoxic – dangerous to hearing.

### **Gentamicin-compromised generation**

Ryugo says a generation of people in China now have compromised hearing due to gentamicin, which is ubiquitous, effective, and cheap. It is still used in some circumstances in Australia and America.

In Australia, youth damage their hearing by pumping music loudly and directly into their ears via buds or earphones. "We are now seeing people in their 20s in need of hearing aids. If you can hear the music from their ear buds, you know they are already hard of hearing!"

And they are not alone. Last year the World Health Organisation said 1.1 billion teenagers and young adults were at risk of hearing loss due to the unsafe use of personal audio devices and exposure to damaging sound levels at sporting events and entertainment venues such as bars and nightclubs.

But rock music is not the only culprit. Modern gyms have such loud music that class instructors often use microphones to be heard above the noise.

Even orchestral music can be an issue. Last week a viola player sued the Royal Opera House claiming the sound from the brass immediately behind him in the pit peaked at roughly the same decibels as a jet engine and left him with acoustic shock.

He claimed this occurred during rehearsals for Wagner's *Die Walküre* and with his hearing irreversibly damaged, his career was ruined.

If you think you have hearing loss, it's worth seeing an ear specialist. Even with significant loss, you can develop strategies to stay socially engaged.

A professional will allow you to "test drive" a hearing aid on loan because only you will know which one sounds best. You might need multiple fittings to adjust it correctly. This is part of the "reality test" to preserve what is left of your hearing.

Hearing aids work best in the quiet and Ryugo says it's important to have realistic expectations. The goal is to limit the progressive pathologic changes that occur in your brain and avoid social isolation.

But be alert, because although some audiologists are excellent, some are in it for profit and take advantage of vulnerable patients.

Contacting an advisory service, such as Better Hearing Australia, can be useful.



## A case for making hearing a national priority in Australia

Steve Williamson, CEO Deafness Forum of Australia



### Hearing impairment is highly stigmatised

The effects of reduced hearing are often misperceived by the affected people and significant others as interpersonal conflicts. People are reluctant to acknowledge hearing difficulties.

As a result of these barriers, people often do not seek professional help in order to improve their situation. While interventions such as hearing aids and cochlear implants enhance a person's ability to communicate, the majority of people with hearing loss (85%) do not have such devices.

### Today, one in six Australians is affected by hearing loss

With the damaging effects of noisy environments, young people's music listening habits, and an ageing population, hearing loss is projected to increase to **1 in every 4 Australians by 2050**. A significant component of acquired hearing loss (nearly 40%) is due to excessive noise exposure due to inappropriate recreational listening behaviours, and this is preventable.

Hearing loss is associated with increasing age, rising to **three in every four people aged over 70 years** and this statistic will worsen in the near future. 20% of the population has Tinnitus. For some it is so debilitating that it affects their family and social lifestyle and their employment.

Hyperacusis, specifically affecting people with noise-induced Tinnitus, causes some to become housebound, basically dropping out of society. Meniere's Disease, although not as common as Tinnitus, can also have devastating impact on a person's health. Acoustic Neuromas affect over 300 people each year in Australia.

Hearing loss does represent a significant and quantifiable economic cost and impact to Australia, one which far outweighs current expenditure. In particular, given our ageing population, and the need for all Australians to stay productive longer in their life, the key impact of hearing loss on lost productivity in the workforce must be viewed as a critical matter than can be addressed through targeted programs of expenditure.

Most importantly, given that a significant component of hearing loss is in fact preventable, there is a clear argument for identification of hearing loss as a National Health Priority – and for a cross-jurisdictional approach to awareness, prevention, and remediation of hearing loss. Such an approach would be consistent with the World Health Organisation's recommendations encouraging countries to establish national programs for prevention, and to raise awareness about the level and costs of hearing impairment.

### Impact on the nation

Hearing impairment or deafness is a grossly underestimated public health problem in Australia. Recognition of this, and the implementation of strategies to stem the rising incidence of acquired hearing loss, offers the potential of long-term significant savings to both the public health and social security budgets.

The Listen Hear report (Access Economics, 2006) identified the financial cost of hearing loss to the economy to be in the order of \$11bn per annum. Lost productivity, resulting from reduced workforce participation and early retirement of people with hearing loss contributed nearly 60% of costs.

The costs of informal carers, who provide assistance for people with hearing loss to communicate, was the second largest component, representing nearly 30% of the total costs. Losses from reduced taxation accounted for 8%, and healthcare services for a further 6%.

### **It is time that hearing became a national priority**

To achieve this, hearing health & well-being needs to be dealt with as a mainstream issue. The establishment of Australian 'National Health Priority Area(s)' by the government focusses attention on particular issues, raising their public profile and increasing research available to direct government policy. For example, diabetes was positioned as a Priority in 1996, and this has led to increased research focus and national strategies for diabetes management such as through the National Diabetes Strategy. Cancer control, cardiovascular health, injury prevention and control, mental health, diabetes, asthma, arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions, obesity and dementia are all important areas, so it is right that they are all part of the Health Priorities program. However, deafness and ear disorders are also important.

- Hearing health needs to be dealt with as a mainstream health issue.
- Hearing loss increases risk of depression, dementia, blood pressure and heart conditions.
- The Government has nine National Health Priorities Areas - Hearing health should become a Priority too.
- This will raise public profile, education, prevention, supports, and research to direct government policy.

The Commonwealth government has recognised the associated issues to some extent in respect of the Indigenous population at least, by adopting a policy principle to position ear health within a comprehensive, population-based approach to family, maternal and child health. Similar policy principles need to be adopted in respect of hearing health for the entire Australian population.

Better Hearing Australia is a partner with Deafness Forum of Australia in pressing the case for hearing health & well-being to become Australia's next National Health Priority.

## Hear Our Stories

### THOUGHTS ON LIFE

There were four of us in our pod – that came from our mother tree.

There we were well protected and tended  
And we didn't really want anything to change –  
But that's not how the world works, is it?

There came a time when our pod dropped off the tree  
and lay dying on the ground.  
Then one day the pod popped open, as it should –  
and we all rolled out to find our destiny.

Isabella and Flora and dear Donald rolled away in the breeze  
And I never saw them again –  
as sometimes we lose those who are so dear to us –  
they have other lives to lead, other trees to make...

But I just sat there, day in and day out, until one day  
a storm came and washed the dirt over me.  
It was dark and cold in this new world –  
Why did I have to leave my comfortable, familiar pod?

The rains came, the winds blew and the months rolled by.  
And then I felt a kind of tingling, very slowly my skin split  
and a tiny shoot started to grow.

Me, this was me, but somehow a new me –  
I'm different, but the same.  
You know, it hurts to become different, but...  
This new me is young and green –  
Not old and dry and useless.

As the days went by, my tiny head pushed through the earth  
And lo! there was light and air and - life.  
I raced along the road my destiny had decreed  
Climbing higher ever higher

Now I am a handsome young sapling  
and near the great old tree from where I came.

One day, I too, will send my childer within their pods  
To make a new world, a wonderful better place to be.

Mary Silk, Better Hearing Australia, Wagga Wagga

## Hear Our Stories

### Where should you sit in a social situation and why?

Having a hearing loss can make communicating difficult especially in noisy situations. My friends know that I have a hearing loss and when we go out for a chatty lunch they always say "Sue where would you like to sit?" They are always happy to change seats too if I find I have made the wrong choice or a very noisy group comes and sits right near our table.

I have little hearing in my right ear so I usually seat my husband on my right side as he knows how to get my attention if I have not heard him or someone is trying to talk to me on that side and I am ignoring them because I have not heard them.

If we are in a large group and the table is rectangular, I like to sit at the end of the table so I can move my head so my 'left hearing aid' faces the people on my right side. I also like a round table, if it is not too large, as I can see people's faces to lipread them.

I choose to sit in a quiet area of a cafe or restaurant, away from the coffee machine, the kitchen, especially if it is open plan, and the music outlet. I usually ask to have the music off, explaining why. If they have quiet outdoor seating, I will choose that area.

In the past I had omnidirectional hearing aids that only have one microphone which theoretically amplified sounds equally from all directions. I found sitting with my back to the wall in a restaurant worked best with these aids. Now I have hearing aids with directional microphones, I sit with my back to the room so the microphones facing forward will pick up the louder voices at our table and the microphones facing backwards will shut off the restaurant noise.

Everyone's hearing loss is different and different hearing aids have different functions so be brave, experiment to see how your hearing aids work best in these challenging noisy situations. Try turning down the volume. Read your instruction book. Have a chat to your audiologist for advice on how to get the best results from your hearing aids.

Bon Appetite!

I would like to thank audiologist Dr William Vass for his advice.

Sue Daw OAM, Better Hearing Australia Canberra



*Sue with left ear to the conversation.*

## News from our Better Hearing Australia Branches

*'Keeping in touch nationally'*

Welcome to the Branch News Section which includes branch and group updates and provides a wonderful opportunity for other members and branches to find out what has been happening.

### BHA Adelaide

We are trying something different this session. We submitted a Case Study to the Department of Community of Health and Wellbeing during the holiday break and it has been accepted - that means it will be published in a folio of Case Studies and distributed to various relevant groups. We gave ours the title of *Support and Strategies for People with Hearing Loss in the Community*.

In the Case Study we highlighted our project for communication strategies with student doctors and Hearing Impaired patients, carried out over the past four years. This has now been taken over by the University. Our proposal to introduce a program for staff and carers in aged care facilities to train them to maintain and operate hearing aids correctly for the residents was outlined and we explained our education program in our support group which includes lip reading skills, strategies for hearing loss management and information about hearing aids, devices, general discussion and so on.

The Case Study has been accepted and will be published with other submissions later in the year. In the meantime we are working towards having a register of audiologists for aged care facilities to contact if needed and to having the training program for hearing aid maintenance included in the staff preparation program. We will train the staff first and after that we expect the staff to train subsequent employees. We can give the aged care facilities the program to run themselves.

The communication with hearing impaired patients program is one we hope to introduce to the nursing faculties in universities. We are hoping the relevant institutions will take over the program and include it in their curriculum as a matter of course.

We have the programs available and can simply hand them over. We do not envisage doing the training ourselves although we could if necessary. We no longer have the volunteers to take on the work due to our ageing members if however, we do have some willing to visit on a limited basis. Our branch social activities and coffee mornings are still well attended.

Our monthly lip reading class will operate as usual. We are hoping to run a series of short HLM classes in the evening to attract younger people but this is still to be organised and advertised.

This class will be taken by one of our tutors.

We are keen to have BHA information used in South Australia and feel the work we do must be generated as widely as possible. Ross Womersley, CEO of SACOSS, has listened to some of our aims and has very generously agreed to let us have one of the SACOSS rooms at no cost, for our training purposes. He has also passed on some helpful contact names.

There are other ideas being mooted and we will pass these on when we have more to say about them.





Our Coffee Morning on February 17th, our first for this year, was reserved for information about the Case Study, and was attended by nineteen people. All were supportive when they heard about the proposals mentioned in the Case Study.

Shona Fennell, BHA Adelaide Inc.

## **BHA Brisbane**

Hello from Brisbane to all members around Australia.

I would have spoken to some members (Hello Roma), most recently at the National Conference over in Freemantle and brought them up to speed with regards to what has been happening in Brisbane. So where to begin?

The past few years have been challenging to say the least. Even before the NDIS was mooted, we realised that BHA Brisbane had to evolve and improve services to the hearing impaired community.

We have started to get involved with social media and one of our volunteers monitors Facebook and we contracted a Web designer Gavin Roche who was recommended by BHA Victoria and we are happy with the new Website.

We are grateful for all of our Board Members and staff who have supported us during this enormous change especially Peter Massey, Sue Brown and Gail Heffernan. We have also gained two new Board members, Mirella Prasad and Michael Blewer who both work for the Bank of Qld and greatly value their expertise. You will all get to hear about Mirella who has joined the National Board and has accepted the position of Treasurer.

Good fortune smiled on BHA when the Government restored funding for 3.5years. This was a great relief but the process made us realise that BHA Brisbane had to change and develop a fee for service model as we cannot rely on future Government funding. We are now in the process of recruiting a Business Manager with the first round of interviews on the 1<sup>st</sup> March. Hopefully we are going down the right path and I will keep you all informed.

There are two special volunteers who I wish to mention;

Peter Massey has just been awarded a 2016 Local Legends award for contribution to his local community. Peter is the facilitator of the Better Hearing Australia Logan Support Group for the Hearing Impaired. The Support Group meet once a month at the Logan North Library at Springwood. Sometimes the group have had speakers attend the meetings and talk about various subjects. Lip Reading exercises, speech preservation and communication are some to the activities that are covered at the meetings. A social morning tea is also an important part of the meeting. The August meeting is a Picnic in the Park. This is a wonderful social event and is enjoyed by the entire group, their family and friends.

Peter is starting a Better Hearing Australia Redcliffe Support Group for the Hearing Impaired. The first meeting will be held on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016 and will be held once a month at the Redcliffe Library.



Peter Massey, Secretary / Treasurer, Better Hearing Australia Brisbane

Another outstanding volunteer is Jill Lindley who has just been awarded a Highly Recommended, Certificate for her 30 years of supporting those with a hearing impairment and involvement in the Redlands Hearing Impaired Support Group since it began in 2001. Jill and Peter Lindley were the original instigators and facilitators of this group which also meets monthly at the Donald Simpson Community Centre Cleveland.

People like Jill and Peter deserve to be recognised for their dedication to the hearing impaired community. Our support groups which include Logan, Maryborough and Redlands continue to be a vital part of BHA Brisbane.

Regards,

Carol-Anne Greensill



## BHA Canberra

This year has started with a bang! It all began with an email from Phil Harper of CONEXU asking if I could go into the National Gallery of Australia and demonstrate the 'Open Access Tours APP' for the Tom Roberts Exhibition, for a journalist and photographer from the Canberra Times. As the forecast was for 39C and we had a fair bit on I was not all that keen but agreed. I was to be in the foyer at 3pm but the press were late. I found the Gallery staff and the press were very conducive to a positive atmosphere. The 'shoot' and what turned out to be a longer interview than I had expected was very productive. We had a significant coverage (print and photo) in the Canberra Times.

I hasten to add that Phil has also organised a free tour of the Tom Roberts exhibition for the hearing impaired and Deaf using the APP on the 5 March.

I took the opportunity to inform the reporter of BHA's other work including the Hearing Loss Management sessions. The reporter thought that learning to lipread would make an interesting article so a week later they arrived at our place to interview Sue and 2 other members of the lipreading class, David Urquhart and Linda Dwyer. This was a very positive session and the reporter took part in the lipreading flash card session and other lipreading exercises and a good time was had by all. About a week later there was another significant piece in the paper with all our contact details and mentioning the sessions.



It just so happened that on this day we also had a notice in the Chronicle and also in the 'Fridge Door' section of the Canberra Times. This has resulted in overflowing classes. Sue is taking the evening class and Carol a very large afternoon class!

*Left : Our two overworked teachers, Sue Daw and Carol Taloni*

It is worth asking the question of how all this press activity happened. I was lucky that Phil contacted me to do the 'app' demo. It was fortunate that I was able to relate to the

reporter (who had a hearing impaired Mother) and tell her about BHA's other activities. So keep talking about BHA. Keep your contacts on-side, and show a willingness to be involved, even when it may not be all that convenient or of obvious direct benefit. You never know where the links are going to lead. As a result of our exposure we have had enquiries about lipreading from NSW and Queensland which we have passed on to the relevant BHA branches.

We will be reprinting the 'In Case of Emergency' card soon. Please let us know if you would like some with your contact details on them for use at EXPOs and other PR opportunities.

Haydn Daw, Better Hearing Australia Canberra

## BHA Newcastle

Classes have resumed for 2016 and participants are enjoying the new classroom which now has a large electronic whiteboard installed and the good news is that air-conditioning will be installed within a few weeks and the trusty old fan and heater can be retired. The classroom looks nothing like the old one with all the new modern additions, we are now sharing our room with Hunter Area Health IT research department and they are responsible for all the new equipment.

We have had some enquiries about classes and hopefully we will see some new faces in attendance very soon.

Our country groups have also resumed for 2016 and classes are held in East Maitland, Taree and Coffs Harbour.

We will be meeting with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare in the coming weeks to discuss our future and our funding situation especially as the NDIA gains momentum throughout NSW and this will impact on how Better Hearing Branches in NSW will be able to operate.

Several people have had the CapTel phone installed in their homes and are finding it very helpful with phone calls now much easier. It is also working very well in the office and we can now monitor calls and handle those pesky telemarketers much easier, the answering machine on the CapTel is a bonus especially for people with a hearing loss as they can now read the messages instead of trying to listen to them.



*The photo is of Newcastle Branch tutor Oriel De Fina with two of her pupils  
- Pat and Kathy taken in front of the new electronic whiteboard in our renovated classroom.*

Karen Dempsey, Better Hearing Australia Newcastle



## BHA Geelong

Joan and Bob Belle along with Pat Cairns met recently with Christine Couzens MLA for the Geelong Region, who is also involved with 'Family & Community Development'.

The meeting held in our room at 'Geelong West Senior Citizens' Club' provided an opportunity to familiarize her with the work and history of 'Better Hearing Australia's' Geelong Branch, and also that of 'Better Hearing Australia'.

It was rather daunting to learn that until our 2015 Mini Expo which she was invited to attend, she had never heard of us and had no idea that we are the only free 'hearing loss rehabilitation group' in the Geelong region.

She was astonished to learn that:

- hearing loss was not recognized by NDIS
- deafness & hearing loss were so prevalent – 33,000 in our region/3.55 million nationally
- hearing loss sufferers 18-60/65 years had to bear costs themselves
- there was so little community awareness and understanding of hearing loss that so few HL sufferers were taking advantage of the free support offered by 'Better Hearing Australia' Geelong Branch, and that the 'City of Greater Geelong' actually charged BHAGB rental for our meeting room.

Her promise to "speak to the Council about this" has resulted in a substantial reduction in rent.

She also offered the services of her local office for printing & photocopying, which of course was gratefully accepted.

In all, a productive and enjoyable meeting, and BHAGB looks forward to working with Christine in the future!

Pat Cairns - Better Hearing Australia Geelong Branch, Promotions Officer

## BHA Tasmania

The Tasmania Branch began Communication classes for the year in February. There are several new students including some with cochlear implants. Classes have been well received with Carol receiving positive responses on their content and outcome. A constant comment from past students is that the skills they learnt at classes are transferrable to, and assist them cope with their everyday activities.

Promotion of our Branch is important and we try to do that through community newspapers, DHHS News and Announcements, public speaking engagements, brochures and information provided to medical professionals, and word of mouth. We actively seek good publicity and are always trying to publicise our Branch.

Carol recently wrote an article about our triple celebration day - Clear Speech Awards, Lipreading Challenge results and our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for the Order of Australia magazine. It resulted in a lot of positive comments and feedback for our Branch.

Carol will be the guest speaker at the Lindisfarne School for seniors with an audience of 50 to 60 people. In addition to speaking she'll be screening a DVD – "Lost and Sound". In adjoining room the Australian Hearing Centre will be conducting free hearing tests.

Gaylene Dale, Better Hearing Australia Tasmania



## BHA Sydney

Sydney continues to teach a number of "Hearing Loss Management" classes and courses across the greater Sydney area. For many years our classes have been promoted mainly through the local newspapers appropriate to the area in which our classes are held. Regretfully, the Sydney branch is no longer receiving the support from these local newspapers and we are needing to find other and more successful means and ways of promoting our classes. The writer is very interested in hearing from the other BHA branches that teach how they promote their classes locally. Other branches can send this information to the writer of this article at our Sydney e-mail address; BHASyd@Ozemail.com.au

In Sydney we have discussed working with and teaching through the various Community and Evening Colleges. This would require our teachers to have Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, and for Better Hearing Australia to become a RTO (Registered Training Organisation). It would require our national body to have its teacher training course registered with the Australian Qualification Framework or AQF, as well as the curricula of our courses. There could be some decided benefits to pursuing this. Better Hearing Australia and our branches would retain total control over our teaching and our courses, and the Community and Evening Colleges would include our courses in their manuals, which are distributed to all letterboxes in each college area. For the various branches that teach, this may well be a sensible and beneficial way of widening our promotions, and gaining many more class participants. It would be good to know what other teaching branches think of this possibility.

This year Sydney will celebrate its eightieth (80th) year of operation, serving the people of Sydney who have hearing impairment or loss. Our city of greater Sydney is near to having a population of five million people. In 1936 the total population of the whole of New South Wales was nearing two million six hundred and fifty thousand people. Sydney had six o'clock closing in 1936, whilst now many areas have hotels open until 2:00 am. In 1936 Sydney had trams, and the last tram ran in 1960, being replaced by buses. Also since 1936 Sydney has become a thoroughly multi-cultural city. In 1936 most of its population had their origins in the United Kingdom, with very few people from any other country.

Resulting from this change are serious questions. Better Hearing Australia Sydney only has classes in the English language. We do not teach our "Hearing Loss Management" classes in any other language. The serious question that this raises is, *why not?* Twenty-six percent of the people living in Sydney are from a non- English speaking background, and the same percent were born overseas. Our national organisation and our Sydney branch both need to take heed of this situation, and need to serve those amongst these two groups who are hearing impaired. This may require new initiatives on behalf of our national body, and on behalf of our branches. This is a real challenge.

I leave these thoughts with you all. I do think we may need to think quite seriously about our future and put some of these issues on the agenda for a national meeting, or conference. What is our future as an organisation? What existing challenges, and what new challenges, are we prepared to research, and then take on, for the benefit of the one in six or one in five amongst the Australian people who are hearing impaired? How will we assist these people in the future, and how will we help their families, their friends, their work colleagues? Perhaps the question to ask first is, "what are their needs, and which of these can and should we help them with?"

What a challenge!

Andrew D'A. E. Bush, Better Hearing Australia Sydney

## BHA Victoria

The start of the year has been hectic as we continue to support the community with our hearing loss management sessions across the wider metro region.

### Preparing For the Future

The Victoria Board have commenced a new Strategic Planning process as we prepare to support emerging needs in our community.



Board Members, (From Left) Peter Young, Kaye Gooch, Michele Barry, CEO, James Caws, Victoria Didenko, John King, Georgie Stayches, President and Jeannette Durlak, Office Manager

### How BHA Enriched Elizabeth's Life

Michele Barry, CEO and Jeannette Durlak, Office Administrator recently met with Elizabeth and her niece Jennifer at Elizabeth's accommodation in Carlton. We were delighted to hear about Elizabeth's experiences and how the skill of lip reading was one that she used even now.

It has been quite a few years since Elizabeth Saunders was working in St Kilda Road as a dental nurse. It was at this time that she came across the Better Hearing Australia Lip reading classes. Elizabeth took on the classes and really enjoyed lip reading. Elizabeth made some wonderful friends with people who are synonymous with BHA's rich history.

After completing the Lip Reading classes Elizabeth decided to become a lip reading tutor which she did for many years.

Recently Elizabeth moved into a residential care facility in Carlton and it was at this time that Elizabeth needed to clear out her house. Elizabeth, along with her niece Jennifer, cleared out the house and has kindly donated the meticulously kept tutoring plans and BHA memorabilia to our Victorian office. We will look at how to best display the memorabilia from Elizabeth.

A heartfelt Thank You to Elizabeth and her niece Jennifer for donating the lip reading tutor plans and books



## Your Better Hearing Australia Branches

### ACT

#### **CANBERRA**

PO Box 546, Jamieson ACT 2614  
Sue Daw, Phone / Fax: 02 6251 4713  
Email: [hdaw@bigpond.com](mailto:hdaw@bigpond.com)  
Website: [canberra.betterhearingaustralia.org.au](http://canberra.betterhearingaustralia.org.au)

### NEW SOUTH WALES

#### **SYDNEY**

29 Burwood Road, Concord NSW 2137  
Phone: 02 9744 0167 Fax: 02 9744 7492  
TTY: 02 9744 0124  
Email: [bhasyd@ozemail.com.au](mailto:bhasyd@ozemail.com.au)  
Website: [betterhearingsydney.org.au](http://betterhearingsydney.org.au)

#### **Grenfell Group**

Email: [pjillh@yahoo.com.au](mailto:pjillh@yahoo.com.au)

Phone: 02 6343 1166

#### **CENTRAL COAST**

PO Box 3717, Wamberal NSW 2260  
Phone: 02 4321 0275 Fax: 02 4321 0682  
Email: [bhacc@harbourisp.net.au](mailto:bhacc@harbourisp.net.au)  
Website: [centralcoast.betterhearingaustralia.org.au](http://centralcoast.betterhearingaustralia.org.au)

#### **NEWCASTLE**

61 Christo Road, Waratah NSW 2298  
PO Box 275, Waratah NSW 2298  
Phone / TTY: 02 4968 8050 Fax: 02 4968 8663  
Email: [bhanewc@gmail.com](mailto:bhanewc@gmail.com)

### Groups

Coffs Harbour

Taree

East Maitland

#### **WAGGA WAGGA**

PO Box 5156, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650  
Phone: 02 6925 2002  
Email: [bhawagga@gmail.com](mailto:bhawagga@gmail.com)

### QUEENSLAND

#### **BRISBANE**

21 Vulture Street, West End QLD 4101  
PO Box 5334, West End QLD 4101  
Phone / TTY: 07 3844 5065 Fax: 07 3846 5260  
Email: [bhabris@bigpond.com](mailto:bhabris@bigpond.com)  
Website: [bhabrisbane.org.au](http://bhabrisbane.org.au)

### Groups

Maryborough - Email: [judyra48@gmail.com](mailto:judyra48@gmail.com)

Logan - Meet at Logan North Library

#### **GOLD COAST**

PO Box 3667 Australia Fair, Southport QLD 4215  
Phone / Fax: 07 5572 8186

### Groups

Tweed Heads - Contact Margaret Attwood

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

#### **ADELAIDE**

#### **C / SACOSS**

47 King William Road, Unley SA 5061  
Email: [admin@betterhearingadelaide.com.au](mailto:admin@betterhearingadelaide.com.au)  
Website: [betterhearingadelaide.com.au](http://betterhearingadelaide.com.au)

### TASMANIA

#### **TASMANIA**

4 / 32 Bayfield Street, Rosny Park TAS 7018  
PO Box 96, Rosny Park TAS 7018  
Phone: 03 62444 5570  
Email: [betterhearingtas@inet.net.au](mailto:betterhearingtas@inet.net.au)

### VICTORIA

#### **VICTORIA**

5 High Street, Prahran VIC 3181  
Phone: 03 9510 1577 Fax: 03 9510 6076  
TTY: 03 9510 3499  
Email: [victoria@betterhearing.org.au](mailto:victoria@betterhearing.org.au)  
Website: [betterhearing.org.au](http://betterhearing.org.au)

#### **GEELONG**

89 Autumn Street, Geelong West VIC 3218  
Phone: 03 5278 8300 Fax: 03 5278 8233  
Email: [bhageel@ncable.net.au](mailto:bhageel@ncable.net.au)

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

#### **WEST AUSTRALIA**

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### Groups

Bunbury - Meet at St Augustine Uniting Church, Bunbury  
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### BHA NATIONAL

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