

the **NATIONAL** SPOTLIGHT



JULY
2016

Edition 10



**BETTER
HEARING
AUSTRALIA**

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NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT



MICHELE BARRY

Welcome to the National Spotlight.

I would like to introduce Kasia Kosidlo our new editor who has produced a wonderful edition.

We have been busy at the National Board preparing for the BHA Information Day and AGM on Friday 7th October. Our National patron Graeme Clark has accepted our invitation to be there and the emerging agenda offers something for all.



***Michele Barry
and Graeme
Clark***

So far, we have a guest speaker from the NDIA, Word of Mouth to show us the latest in Hearing Assistive Technology, the latest in Tinnitus, Branch sessions, Teacher sessions, Future planning and more. At 4pm we will also have the National AGM. Please try and be in Melbourne for this event if you can, it's a wonderful opportunity to catch up with friends from around the country and feel free to

extend this invitation to anyone who is interested in Hearing Health issues.

Better Hearing Australia is proud to be part of the Break the Sound Barrier campaign lead by the Deafness Forum of Australia. There are four million Australians with hearing conditions, yet many people go without the services they need to be part of the community. This campaign aims to highlight the hidden impact of hearing loss. Please see a wonderful piece by Victoria Didenko who suffers from Tinnitus, she has chosen to share her story as part of the campaign.

We also have a wonderful piece from Sue Daw OAM and extracts from two wonderful presentations from the Audiology Australia conference by Sue Clutterbuck and Carol Wilkinson. Information from around Australia highlights great achievements and new activities including those during Hearing Awareness Week.

Nominations for the Illingworth award are also open - please nominate to recognise those who give so much.

Hearing Awareness Week is almost here and in this edition you will find a summary of National events - please ensure you take photos to share in the next edition of National Spotlight. The closing dates for contributions is 1 Sept 2016.

Regards to all,
Michele

October 7th 2016
**BHA National
Information Day**

Everyone welcome - free event



**Don't miss a great opportunity to
gather and learn about important
Hearing Health topics**

TOPICS TO INCLUDE:

- *Assistive technology for Hearing*
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)*
- *The latest in Tinnitus research*
- *Future strategies and more*

An agenda + session list will be confirmed closer to the date

- + **4PM Annual General Meeting**
- + **Special Guest, BHA Patron Graeme Clark**

*Deaf Children Australia,
Cnr High Street and St Kilda Road, Melbourne
For the latest agenda: betterhearingaustralia.org.au*

News from our branches

AROUND AUSTRALIA

BHA CANBERRA

Our Hearing Loss Management sessions or classes continue to be well supported. Lipreading as the descriptor seems to be well understood by the interested public. We are finding that the number of hits on our website by people looking for aural rehabilitation is working and it is an important contributor to our numbers. Quite a few of these requests for information or assistance are attracted by the term 'lipreading'.

We are also fortunate to have had one of our members, Renuka Raghurama, volunteer to work on our website and improve the presentation.

You will have all seen the Deafness Forum political campaign to make hearing health a higher priority; 'Break the Sound Barrier'. They are doing some very impressive work and we are very keen to support them as it could have a strong positive effect on Australians with a hearing loss.

On the 24 March 2016 BHA Canberra presented a plaque to the Canberra Theatre Company to mark 10 years of captioned performances at the Theatre. In early 2005 the first live captioned performance of a play in Australia took place at the Canberra Theatre. Nari Jennings of The Captioning Studio was the writer of the captioning. Of course hearing impaired people all over Australia are grateful for the work done by

Minister Chris Bourke with the plaque presented to The Canberra Theatre by Sue Daw OAM on behalf of BHA Canberra with Theatre staff present



the Captioning Studio in advancing captioning for the benefit of those with a hearing loss.

St Vincent's Private Hospital in Melbourne now has BHA Patient Hospital Kits in stock.

We have completed the transfer of lip Reading Competition videos to DVD. We now have a copy of all competitions from 1987 to 2014 (26 in number) on a Hard Disk Drive (HDD) and also all the scripts (answers) and all the work sheets (entry forms) in the folders so that any person wanting to use one or more of the competitions has them all in the same HDD. We will be going out to Branches very soon asking for firm orders for a set of the 26 competitions on a HDD.

The Toshiba HDDs cost around \$70 and we will buy them and load them up and mail them to Branches or teachers who order a copy for a total price of \$100 (posted). We sincerely thank Bob Pillifeant for converting the older Videos to DVD for us.

On the 2nd April Sue Daw had a visit from the Fire Brigade. She was a beneficiary of a collaboration between the ACT Fire Service and the ACT Deafness Resource Centre where 'shake awake' smoke alarms have been installed in a number of Deaf and hearing impaired homes to make the occupants safe if there is a fire. The system is quite sophisticated and the two sensors fitted talk to each other via blue tooth to ensure that the warning reaches the shake awake under the pillow.

Our first Rediscovering Music session for the year was a great success with over 70 people attending the two sessions. An unusual pairing of the Harp and Tuba was very successful and appreciated by all attendees. We thank the CSO and the ACT Government which has now taken over the funding for this series of concerts.

If anyone is going to be in Canberra for Hearing Awareness Week be sure to contact us to obtain details of the full day music program at the Hellenic Club in Woden.



L: Station Officer Peter Coble explaining how the system works before installation

R: Bjorn Pfeiffer (Tuba), Kristen Sutcliffe (Compere) and Meriel Owen (Harp)



Finally we have held our AGM for 2015 and now have a Committee of eight once again and we thank Betty Edwards and William Leane for taking on this responsibility with our existing Committee. Despite the efforts of the ACNC to cut red tape we still have to report to both the ACT Government and the ACNC.

Haydn Daw

BHA CENTRAL COAST

In February this year BHACC moved from 59 Mann Street, Gosford, to an office within Chertseydale Community Cottage. The Cottage is located on the site of Chertsey Primary School in Willow Street, Springfield. The BHACC office is open from 10:00am to 2:00pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays during school terms and may be contacted by phoning (02) 4321 0275 or emailing bhacc@harbourisp.net.au

Newly accredited Central Coast Tutor
BHACC is pleased to announce that Gay Grillmeier, a member, has passed her assignments and achieved her Aural Rehabilitation Certificate. Gay will be presented with her Certificate at a special morning tea.

Hearing Awareness Week Expo
The time for our annual Hearing Awareness Expo is drawing close and the committee has been working hard to bring many things together for our morning event. We are holding it on the 24th August in the Anglican Church in Gosford. We have held many Expos there in the past for HAW and it is

**R: Chertseydale Community Cottage
where BHACC is now located**

where we hold one of our group HLM meetings, so the Anglican Church is a good friend to BHACC. We thank them for their support.

Our speakers will be Andrew Stewart, Manager of PrintACall (they distribute our ALDs in NSW), Audiologist Lindsay Gillespie, who is one of our Patrons and has our work very much to heart, and Dr Celene McNeill, an Audiologist who specialises in the treatment of Tinnitus. Dr McNeill has spoken at our Expos in the past and is always popular. I am sure that those who suffer Tinnitus will be looking forward to her presentation.

We will have the event captioned and there will be the usual display tables for others in the Hearing Health world to display information for our guests. Also, of course, we will all get together to catch up and to buy raffle tickets over a delicious morning tea.

It does take a lot of hard work to bring all of this together and I thank the committee for their attention to detail in making sure those attending have an enjoyable and informative morning.

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



BHA VICTORIA

Tinnitus Support Group

If you, or a significant other, experience problems with tinnitus (ringing in the ears) you may be interested in a new tinnitus support group being run by Better Hearing Australia (Vic).

Starting on Thursday 11th August 2016, there will be one meeting per month. Commencing at 6.00pm (finishing no later than 7.30pm) at Better Hearing House, 5 High Street, Prahran.

This group is open to all who have tinnitus and those supporting people with tinnitus. The aim of the group meetings is to provide peer and professional support, foster independence and the ability to move on and provide accurate information about tinnitus.

It will be a casual, social meeting. You may wish to attend only once, or every month for a while. That decision is yours. Tea, coffee and nibbles will be provided and we ask for a gold coin donation as a way of covering some costs.

Please RSVP on (03) 9510 1577 or email victoria@betterhearing.org.au

Professional Development

Screening Audiometry Courses for occupational health professionals

From 21st–23rd September 2016 Better Hearing Australia (VIC) will be offering a basic screening audiometry course, suitable for nurses and other professionals working in Occupational Health.

The three day course will comply with the competency requirements of the Australian Standard AS/NZS1269 (Occupational Noise Management) and

expands on the curriculum originally set by Worksafe Victoria. The content includes both theory and practical work, enabling participants to accurately perform basic hearing tests and feel confident about dealing with the outcome of the test.

The course will be held at Better Hearing House, 5 High Street, Prahran, Victoria 3181. The cost is \$1,000 for the three day course which includes course notes, knowledge from an industry professional, lunch, and morning and afternoon tea.

For more information or to book a place on the course contact: (03) 9510 5177 or 1300 BHA VIC (1300 242 842) or email victoria@betterhearing.org.au

BHA SYDNEY

Last month, Roma Wood, one of our longest serving members, and friend of many right across Better Hearing Australia, turned ninety. Her birthday was the 29th June, and I am sure that all members of Better Hearing, especially those that know Roma, wish her a very happy birthday.

Roma has served Better Hearing, at all levels, for sixty-four years. She has been the President of Better Hearing Sydney, the Chairman of Deafness Council of New South Wales, the National President of Better Hearing, National Co-ordinator of Teachers and many more. Sixty-four years of service is a phenomenal achievement, and I think we should not simply wish Roma a very happy birthday, but also say a huge thank you for so many years of service to our organisation at all levels. Last year Sydney made her Vice Patron, and I have seldom, if ever, come across

anybody in any organisation that deserves this honour more.

Many happy returns Roma, congratulations on your achievement, and thank you for your many years of great service to all of us and to our organisation.

This year is a year of important birthdays and of important anniversaries. In 2016, Better Hearing Australia Sydney turns eighty. Our Sydney branch, your Sydney branch, started eighty years ago and has serviced people with hearing loss ever since. Think about the hearing aid of, say fifty or eighty years ago, and think about the hearing aids available to people today. At the Deafness Forum National Summit the Hon John Howard spoke briefly about the first hearing aids he used in his late teenage years and early twenties. His description included that they were large and fitted, just, in to his shirt pocket, (yes, we had shirt pockets in those days), had huge batteries, and compare these to the hearing aids of today. Much has changed in our field, but change is a constant. Now, we have mobile phones (what a very mixed blessing), and we can text people if or when we need to; and, all too often, when we don't.



“keeping in touch nationally,”

Texting is a handy technology but I sometimes wonder if it is over used. I was sitting in Xenos' Restaurant in Crow's Nest in Sydney earlier this year and sitting at the table next to me was a couple who “talked” to each other entirely by text the whole time they were there. I wondered what was wrong with talking to each other.

We at Better Hearing must master technology and ensure that people with hearing loss are able to make the maximum use of it to their benefit. Maybe we should be looking at including the use of technology in our classes and courses, as well as ensuring that we make information available about what different forms of technology are out there. Personally, I much prefer to talk to people face to face whenever I can. All of these new technologies, like the many advances in medicine, make me want to come back in one thousand years time to look at the advances humanity has made by then.

Sydney has had two informal discussions recently. Our first discussion related to services and support being provided to the residents of retirement villages and over 55's places. It's my understanding that Adelaide is providing very similar services and I am very interested in finding out what Adelaide and other branches are doing here in these contexts. I must admit, I do not yet know the differences between retirement villages and the over 55's places but I will find out soon, I hope. Our second discussion related to teaching corporations and organisations how to recognise and then help their clients and customers who have hearing loss

hearing loss and could benefit from such assistance. I understand similar courses used to be taught by a number of branches, including Sydney, but I have been unable to obtain any record of or copy of any of these courses. If any branch, branch member or office bearer has such information, I would appreciate being sent it. My thinking here is that if our branches did start teaching such courses, we could charge a near commercial cost or price and make it an income stream.

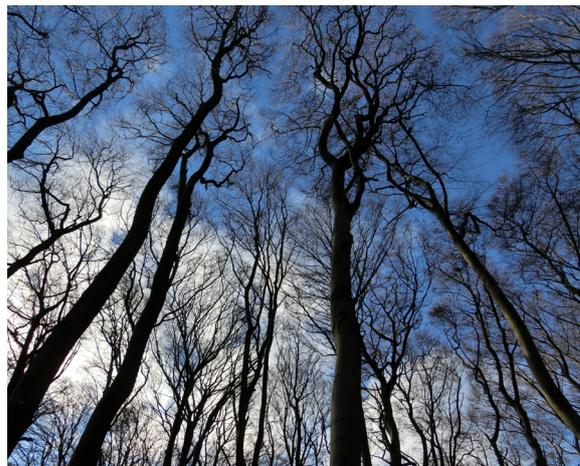
In Sydney, promoting our classes and courses is becoming increasingly difficult. For most of the last eighty years we have taught and promoted our classes by putting Community Announcements in the appropriate local newspapers. These are now finding it much harder to make ends meet and Community Announcements are no longer an integral part of their publications. We have tried Community Announcements and interviews on radio stations, both commercial and community, but these have not produced much of a result.

We in Sydney need to find new and successful means of promotion. If any other branch is having good to extraordinary success in the promotion of their classes, and/or their branch, I would greatly appreciate hearing about it. Maybe we need a nationally organised training course on the promotion of our organisation and our branches and groups.

This is enough from Sydney for today. We wish Roma a very happy birthday for the 29th June, and all other branches and groups the very best for the next financial year.

Andrew D'A. E. Bush

BHA ADELAIDE



We are surviving the very wintry weather in Adelaide but the past two days have been very sunny and crisp, so we feel the worst might be over and are looking forward to spring!

In May, our coffee morning group had a visit to the SA Art Gallery and viewed a special exhibition of Asian art. This was organised by our treasurer, Graham Day, and we were divided into two groups with guides who were able to speak very clearly and explain the features of the art works to us. We had about twelve attending and those who did enjoyed the experience.

In June, for our coffee morning we had our annual lunch in a private room at the Goodwood Park Hotel. This was organised by Pauline Crosby, one of our committee members, and was attended by 24 people. It was a very pleasant occasion and the private room meant that we weren't troubled by outside noise.

In July, we are having a speaker, Nina Swiderski, Principal Audiologist from South Australian Cochlear Implant Centre (SACIC), who will talk about cochlear implants and other implants to our audience.

On August 3rd we are switching our class and coffee morning arrangements and having Kylie Diceri who runs her own audiologist business in Adelaide come to tell us all that there is to know about hearing aids! Promises to be interesting.

Stan Gray is running the lip reading class once a month on Wednesdays and we have eight to twelve very faithful members who come along. We are also reviewing a very clearly presented Tinnitus Management DVD and hope to show that to our members in the near future. This is produced by the Tinnitus Association of Victoria, (www.tinnitus.org.au), and presented by Ross McKeown who has a very pleasant manner, clear diction and is easy to lip read. It would have helped to have captions, however, it is easy to follow and there are several written segments. It is worth viewing.

Shona Fennell

BHA GEELONG

Throughout Term 2, Better Hearing Australia's Geelong Branch focused on providing members with a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of Communication Assistive Devices and the relevant organisations that provide these services.

As most members are of the age where they enjoy talking on the telephone rather than texting, we arranged a visit from Lance Hatley, from the National Relay Service, to explain the benefits of keeping in touch with life by using this service - funded by the Federal Government and used Australia wide.

Not only is it possible to keep in touch socially, it is also a way of banking, paying bills and making appointments etc.

This means greater independence and self-confidence rather than feeling like a burden on others, which is most important to Deaf and Hearing Loss sufferers.

Lance is the NRL Education Coordinator for Victoria and Tasmania and is profoundly deaf, so was accompanied by an interpreter. His talk was presented in Powerpoint form so the audience had firsthand experience of learning how a deaf person, with an Interpreter and using Sign Language, can still overcome communication challenges and manage Deafness in the Hearing World.

Lance travels throughout Australia creating awareness of how the National Relay Service can keep Deaf and HL people in touch at home, around Australia and overseas.

We invited Staff and representatives from local Audiologists, Training Institutions and Aged Care Groups to attend our NRS function and, as a result, our President Joan Belle and Pat Cairns were invited to attend a presentation of the Access CapTel phone by Bellarine Hearing. This was so inspiring that a similar talk was arranged for BHAG members.



The presentation and demonstration, given by Trevor Montgomery from the Sunshine Coast, was engrossing. Members were able to take turns operating the phone, which comes with a small screen on which the words spoken to the HL person appear. A specially trained operator at the Captioning Service uses voice recognition technology to transcribe whatever the other party says. Seven phones were ordered on the spot and have since been installed for a trial period!

At one of our Aural Rehabilitation sessions, our Cochlear Implant Members expressed the need for regular visits from Melbourne's Cochlear Clinic to be held in Geelong and, failing that, for a local Cochlear Support Group to be formed. Enquiries resulted in a visit from Sandra Keir to discuss Cochlear Implant Management and Trouble-shooting ideas.

Sandra is a member of Better Hearing Australia's National Branch Committee. She wears two Cochlear Implants and says this is a great success. She spoke about her experiences getting used to her implants and hearing sounds again which she had not heard since losing her hearing.

Sandra's talk was inspiring and she told of the importance of having a positive attitude, of being patient and not giving up, of being determined to get the most out of life with Hearing Loss and of persisting through difficult times. She shared her mission in life, which is to tell as many HL people as possible about the life-changing benefits Cochlear Implants have made to her and could make to theirs. Sandra has also offered to help BHAGB set up and manage its Support Group when she returns from Canada later in the year.

Pat Cairns

illingworth award

NOMINATIONS FOR 2016 ILLINGWORTH AWARD NOW OPEN

Please think about the excellent work done by your volunteers and choose someone from your branch to nominate for the Illingworth Award.

Branches may nominate a person who has been nominated previously, providing they have not previously been a winner of the Award.

Nominees may be anyone who serves as a volunteer for the branch (or the national organisation), for example Board members, teachers, branch trainers, speakers, office assistants, social coordinators and such. Submissions should include details of the nominee's roles, functions, activities, enthusiasm and commitment to BHA.

***Send submissions in writing to Carole at:
carolemccarthy90@gmail.com
by September 1, 2016***

My tinnitus trauma

Victoria's story

Better Hearing Australia is proud to be a campaign partner of Break the Sound Barrier



Three years ago I noticed a sonic, high pitched ringing in my ears and thought it would go away. But after two months, many GP visits, ENT specialist visits and numerous ultrasounds and MRI's, I was told I had garden variety tinnitus and to just cope as there was no hope to stop the ringing.

I plunged into the depths of despair and didn't know how I was going to continue to live with this screaming soundtrack in my head. After a lot of research I found great support from Better Hearing Australia (Vic) in Prahran and received counselling, discovered a noise machine that helped me sleep at night and slowly started to feel stronger and more calm in myself.

Together with BHA and Australian celebrity jewellery designer Jan Logan, we have launched a glam-

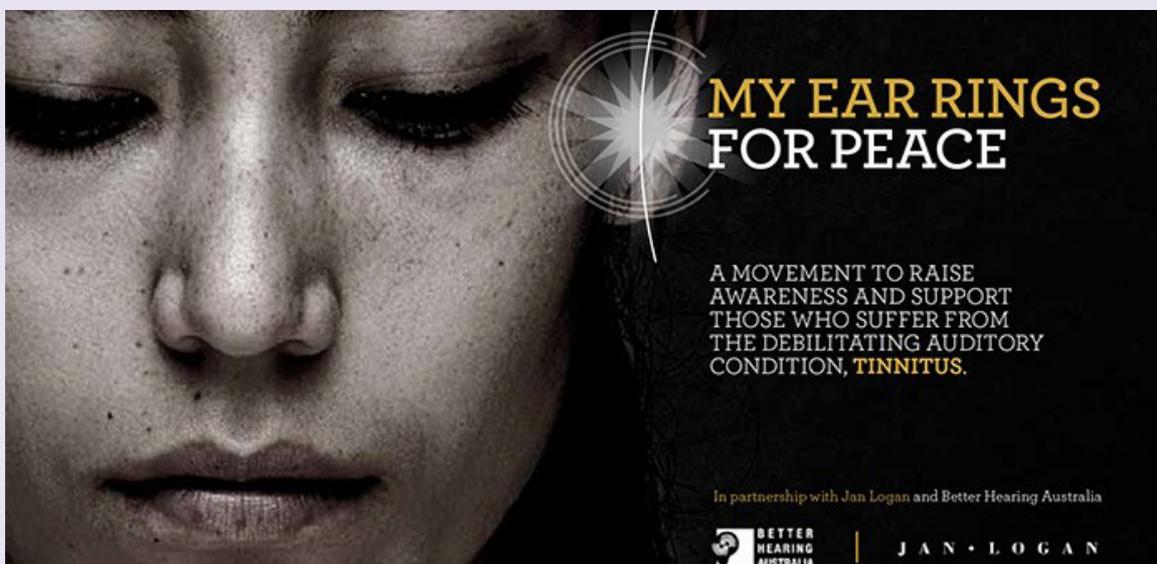


Visit breakthesoundbarrier.org.au/stories/tinnitus-trauma-victorias-story-2/ for this story and others

orous and meaningful campaign to support those who suffer tinnitus - *MY EAR RINGS FOR PEACE*.

Our aim is to establish a National Tinnitus Support Line to offer information and assistance to those who struggle with this auditory torment. Two million Aussies have tinnitus and don't even have the luxury to suffer in silence. It's time to talk tinnitus Australia and help people make peace with their tinnitus and support everyone with a hearing issue!

www.myearringsforpeace.org.au/



BY SUE DAW OAM BHA CANBERRA

I have a hearing loss, please face me and speak clearly

Linda Dwyer is a BHA Aural Rehabilitation Teacher and works in a job where she deals with the public. She has a hearing loss and struggles at times to hear some people. She tried one of our badges to help her customers understand her communication needs but she felt they needed more information.



***New badge for hearing impaired**
bhacanberra@gmail.com*

Linda came up with the idea of new wording for a badge, "I have a hearing loss, please face me and speak clearly". We had a number made and Linda tried the one with a magnetic fastener and was very happy with the results. Tom, another of our BHA members also bought one but as he has a pacemaker he chose the pin variety as the magnetic fastener may have affected his pacemaker.

In asking people to speak clearly we would like them to speak a little slower, keep the normal rhythm of speech, maybe speak a little louder, stay relaxed and be prepared

to repeat key words we missed in a sentence.

Many people do not understand how to speak clearly so it is important for the person with a hearing loss to be assertive to help people understand how to speak clearly.

Here are a few problems we come across:

Mumbling. It is hard to hear and to lipread when people mumble so encourage them to enunciate the words well.

Speaking too fast. Listening to a sentence for us is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle; we need time to think in order to put in the missing key words to make sense of the sentence. It is difficult when some people want to talk like a horse racing commentator. Encourage them to speak slower.

Over exaggerating the

words. This distorts the mouth, making lipreading more difficult. We are used to speed lipreading, picking out the important words. The familiar rhythm of speech helps us anticipate what is going to be said. Mouthing the words means we have to lipread every word which is tiring. Encourage them to speak at a normal rhythm.

Shouting. This distorts the lips making it hard to lipread and can also be embarrassing. The volume can make our hearing aids cut out making it even more difficult to understand what is being said and nobody likes to be shouted at. Encourage them to speak at a comfortable volume.

Accents. Someone with an accent can be hard to understand as

the rhythm of speech is different making it hard to anticipate what is going to be said. The vowels can sound different too, "She says Tom~~a~~eto and he says Tom~~a~~rto. We have to work harder to understand so speaking a little slower when you have an accent helps.

I don't know if anyone else has this problem but I find people with teeth bleached to a dazzling white very distracting when I'm trying to lipread them. Bring back the natural smile.

There is a picture of our other badges on page 15 of edition 6 July 2015 of Spotlight. If you would like to buy one of the mentioned badges from BHA Canberra they cost \$10 plus postage. Contact bhacanberra@gmail.com

Sue Daw OAM, BHA Canberra



Rehabilitation for the hearing aid user

How can we do it better?

BY CAROL WILKINSON

Aural rehabilitation, hearing loss management, hearing training; call it whatever you like, the simple fact is, there's not enough of it happening in Australia.

It's a fact that a large percentage of hearing aids end up in cupboards and drawers rather than ears. It's a fact that devices alone are not enough for people with hearing problems. Yet it's also a fact that Rehab Plus, the government provided aural rehabilitation program, has had much lower than anticipated up-take rates.

At Better Hearing Australia we see people when they (or their families) are desperate for help. This is often years after they first got hearing aids which have been residing in a drawer.

This scenario needs to change.

The non-use of hearing aids is not an exclusively Australian problem. In 2006, the World Health Organisation stated that "despite the negative consequences associated with hearing loss, only one out of five people who could benefit from hearing aids, actually wears them."

Much of the literature on the reasons for non-use of hearing aids was published prior to the introduction of digital instruments. But, in 2013, McCormack and Fortnum found that despite the advent of superior technology,

usage rates are still as low as they ever were. They found that many people were disappointed and dissatisfied because they had been "over-promised" on how much hearing aids would help. Their scoping study of the literature revealed that people don't just need hearing aids. Hearing help is more than buying a gadget. They need the professional rehabilitative services that go with them. They went as far as to say "it would seem that, in terms of increasing hearing aid usage, support and counselling may be more important than expensive, modern technology."

There is nothing new here. In 2009 in the American Hearing Loss magazine, Audiologist Dr Mark Ross stated that, "...rather than focus on the best hearing aid, potential hearing aid purchasers could more fruitfully spend their time and energy looking for the right audiologist or hearing aid specialist. One who is competent, caring and conscientious."

I'm sure that all hearing aid professionals are already aware of the benefits of aural rehabilitation and most would say it is a standard part of the hearing aid fitting.

At BHA we are able to spend the time that is required to give people with hearing problems all the help and information they need. Information about their hearing loss, details of strategies that can help, an explanation of the benefits, and limitations, of hearing aids as well as details of other assistive devices.

Having the time to talk to clients and demonstrate the advantages of strategies such as active listening is a luxury that many organisations can't afford. But I would question why it should be a luxury and why it seems to be afforded to so few. The answer is money, and to some extent interest.

Good rehab takes time! And time, as they say, is money.

In 2014, Prof Anthony Hogan and Dr Rebecca Phillips from the Institute of Governance and Policy Analysis at the University of Canberra, along with Michele Barry and Sara Duncan from Better Hearing Australia, published "A Fairer Hearing". The document provides a summary of quality research which demonstrates that hearing loss has a substantial social, economic and health impact on people's lives. They state that while extensive resources and research support are being invested in the provision of aids and devices, devices alone cannot overcome prejudice and discrimination and cannot provide social support, education or employment. They are just aids to the process. They go on to say that substantial changes are required to the way Australia seeks to enable people with hearing loss to take their rightful place in society. In other words, there's a systemic issue that needs attending to.

Again, this is not just an Australian problem. Falkenberg, in the

Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research, bemoans the fact that in Norway there are still considerable barriers to aural rehabilitation and that there is a need for change from a medical and technical model to an holistic, cross professional and multi-disciplinary approach.

On the anecdotal side; at BHA we see so many people who come in for help telling us they have been fitted with hearing aids but have had no other assistance. Sometimes, there has been no follow up appointment and definitely no information about other hearing loss management strategies or assistive devices. Rarely have these people been informed about the limitations of hearing aids, and often they have no idea about different programmes or telecoils. What always puzzles me is that so many feel uncomfortable about going back to their supplier when they have problems.

I often feel that they see their hearing aid practitioner as a technician who simply provides a product rather than any other services. We have to change this belief.

Carol Wilkinson



However, we can only change it by example. That example is set by providing a high standard of rehabilitation services.

- We need the community to be better informed about hearing loss, hearing aids and the broader rehab services that should go with hearing aids.
- Potential hearing aid users should have counselling and information prior to the fitting of devices.
- At fitting there needs to be comprehensive information about the use of hearing aids, including program options, bluetooth, telecoils and any other 'bells and whistles'.
- Other hearing loss management strategies should be used and people need to be informed of what they are and how to put them to good use

For example:

Positioning. Where to place yourself for the best listening and viewing for different situations

Using visual cues. Body language and lipreading

Active listening. Making yourself an active part of the conversation

Educating significant others and the community. How others can help. What helps? What doesn't?

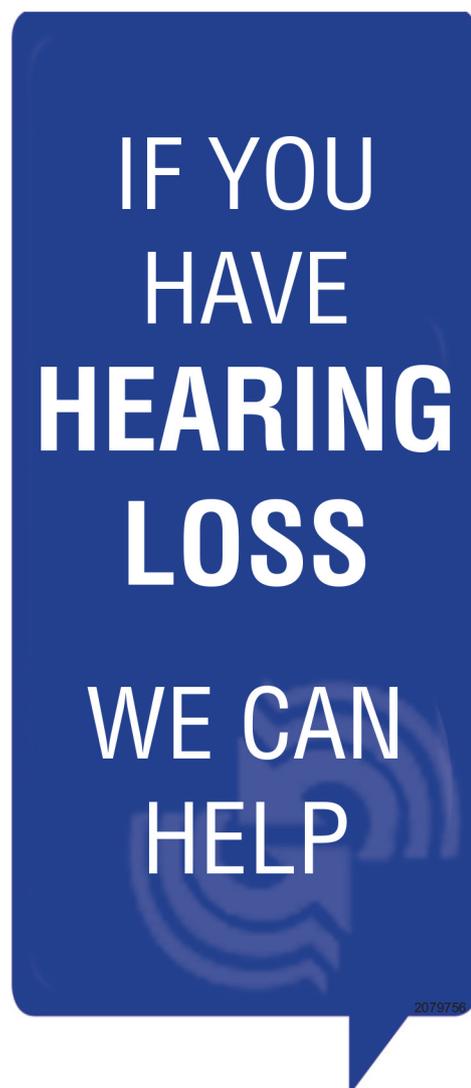
Assistive devices. What other assistive devices may be helpful, where to get them and how to use them

Let's start lobbying for more funds to be directed towards aural rehabilitation so that the massive amount spent on hearing aids isn't wasted. We need a change in attitude and beliefs about aural rehab.

Better Hearing Australia is well positioned to advocate for this.

Carol Wilkinson, Hearing Advisor, BHA Victoria

Sub note - BHA has engaged in dialog with the OHS who are now reviewing the high rates of abandonment of hearing aids.



Real world outcomes for basic and premium hearing aids

Is there a difference?

BY SUSAN CLUTTERBUCK

Choosing hearing aids that best meet the communication needs of an individual can be a challenging task for the consumer and for their hearing care professional. The choice of style, features, colours and level of technology is varied, and working together to get the best match to suit the individual can take considerable time.

One question that is often asked is “will I get better results if I choose Premium technology, compared to choosing Basic technology?” One would assume that Premium technology features would deliver better outcomes if the premium price is to be justified. But is this the case?

The Hearing Aid Research Laboratory (HARL) at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, has conducted an investigation into this very question. The research team measured performance across a number of areas where Premium technology would be expected to give better results (speech in varying levels of background noise, sound acceptability, sound localization and listening effort). The measurements were done under controlled conditions in the laboratory and were supplemented

by self-report surveys after the participants had worn the aids for a month. The participants (45 people) were not aware of the level of technology they were using. The 2014¹ and 2015² published results reported, “it should not be assumed that more costly hearing aids always produce better outcomes. With contemporary hearing aids from two major manufactures, the subjects obtained as much improvement in speech understanding and quality of life from lower-cost basic-level instruments as from higher-cost premium level instruments.”

The HARL group pointed to the need for study of a much wider group and stated that self-report measures were “the gold standard” for documenting outcomes. They acknowledged that results of laboratory measurements do not always translate to real-world performance.

The EARtrak survey process for measuring client satisfaction with hearing aids has a large database of real-world outcomes. This database was analysed to examine whether there were any differences in outcomes between basic and Premium technology. The database

was filtered to closely match the characteristics of the group studied by the HARL researchers (degree of hearing loss, age, fitting status).

A comparison of Basic and Premium performance yielded:

- significantly better outcomes for Premium technology for conversation in small groups (speech in soft levels of background noise) (Fig 1)
- no difference for large groups, in the car, or for restaurant/café situations (speech in moderate to loud levels of background noise)
- no difference in sound clarity or comfort with loud sounds (sound acceptability)
- significantly better outcomes for Premium technology for the sound of one's own voice (sound acceptability)
- no significant difference in ability to localise sounds

Listening effort is not directly reported on the EARtrak survey, so a comparison

Fig 2: Daily usage for Basic (blue) and Premium (red) hearing aids

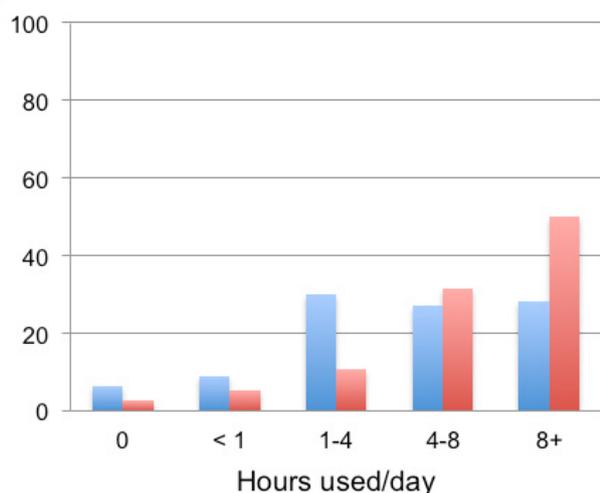
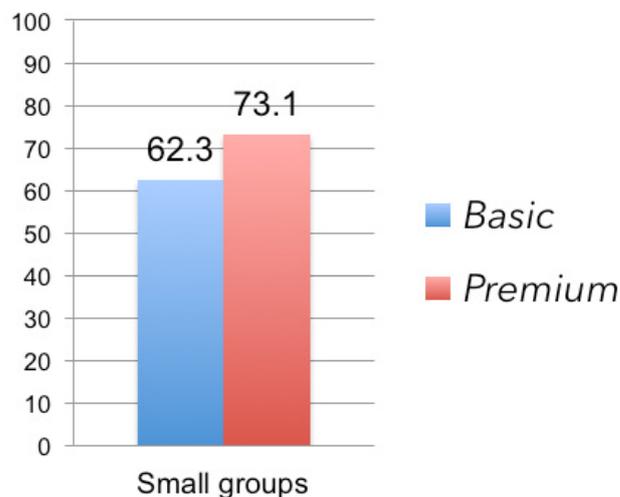


Fig 1: % satisfaction with Premium and Basic technology hearing aids in small groups



with the results of the HARL group could not be made. The EARtrak “real world” outcomes for people reporting on their experiences with Basic and Premium technology agrees with some aspects of the HARL research but has some evidence for better outcomes with the Premium devices.

Upon further analysis of the EARtrak database, two interesting results have been found:

1. People fitted with Premium technology reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with one-to-one conversations (92.1%), compared with basic technology (82%).
2. Significantly more people with Premium technology devices wore their hearing aids for more than eight hours per day (50%), compared with 28% of those wearing Basic technology devices (Figure 2).

Why are these results interesting?

Firstly, most marketing of Premium level technology is targeted towards improving ability to communicate in more challenging environments, not to following speech in the (relatively)

easy one-to-one situation. Perhaps the improved satisfaction with the ability to converse one-to-one is a reflection of reduced 'listening effort' with Premium devices?

Secondly, if listening effort is reduced, the sound of one's own voice is better and if one can converse more easily in small groups, then this could possibly contribute to the hearing aids being worn for longer each day. There is considerable benefit from the ability to consistently use hearing aids as a part of daily life. Consistent sound stimulation reduces the difficulties in everyday communication and facilitates re-training of auditory skills. Hearing aids that are rarely used, or used on a limited basis, have less chance of meeting the goals of hearing rehabilitation.

Is who fits the device more important than which device is fitted?

The significance of the hearing professional in mediating a good result with hearing aid outcomes should not be overlooked. The EARtrak database shows wide variation in outcomes for different clinics - some clinics are delivering an average of more than 80% satisfaction of the situations important for their clients, and others have an average of less than 40% satisfaction. This

variation can also be seen for Premium technology fittings. This is not an issue relating to the characteristics of the consumer or the technology.

A good audiologist will listen to the communication needs of their client and help them choose the device features and technology to best meet those needs. Basic technology can meet most needs if properly fitted and fine-tuned for the individual. Premium technology will not give superior results unless the same attention is given to the needs of the individual.

References:

1. Cox R, Johnson J, & Xu J Impact of advanced hearing aid technology on speech understanding for older listeners with mild-to-moderate, adult-onset, sensorineural hearing loss. *Gerontology*, 2014, 60(6), 557-568.
2. Cox RM, Johnson JA, & Xu J Impact of hearing aid technology on outcomes in daily life 1: The patients' perspective. *Ear & Hearing* 2016

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Hearing Awareness Week events

BHA CANBERRA

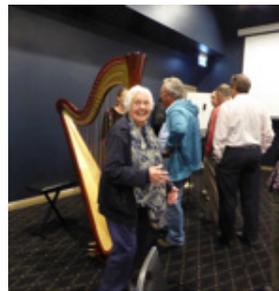
It is going to be an interesting Hearing Awareness Week here in Canberra as there will be two events you can attend:

Hearing Expo

On Wednesday 24 August the annual Hearing Expo, run by the ACT Deafness Resource Centre, will be held at the Hellenic Club in Woden from 10am till 3.30pm. There will be a large and varied number of information stalls featuring assistive listening devices, hearing aid and Cochlear providers and self help groups including BHA. This gives you the opportunity to talk to these knowledgeable people about the services they provide. The day starts with some interesting presentations with audience seated in a looped area and real time captioning provided.

Special Rediscovering Music Day

The following day, Thursday 25 August, Kristen Sutcliffe, who is an Australian Hearing Audiologist and a Canberra Symphony Orchestra Bassoon player, will be facilitating a special Rediscovering Music Day at the Hellenic Club in Woden. This event is free and you can come and go as you please. It will start at 10.15 with an introduction by Kristen and the morning session will feature a String Quartet which is a very popular combination. After morning tea there will be a special presentation by Valerie Looi who is a research audiologist at SCIC. She will talk about music appreciation with hearing loss and changes



*Rediscovering
Music Day*



in technology. After lunch at 1.30 we will learn all about the amazing and varied Percussion Instruments. At 2.30 you will be able to have a 'hands on' percussion experience. You will love it!

We have been lucky to have now participated in a variety of Rediscovering Music Sessions over the last three years. I think the Percussion Session has been my favourite so far because it was so unexpectedly amazing. I must admit I seem to say that after every session. Last week we experienced a Harp and Tuba performance. They blended together beautifully. We all came away with a smile on our faces and song in our hearts. You will be able to ask the musicians questions and see how each instrument is played. Hearing them play the scales and familiar tunes and sitting quite close to the musician helps your brain remember how these instruments sounded before our hearing deteriorated.

I hope you will be able to attend one or both of these days. I know you will find interesting, informative and enjoyable.

Sue Daw OAM, BHA Canberra



Mark some HAW events in your calendar!

BHA CENTRAL COAST

Better Hearing Australia Central Coast (BHACC) is holding an Expo during Hearing Awareness Week on Wednesday 24th August, 9:30am to 12:00 noon at the Anglican Church, 3 Mann Street, Gosford.

The Expo will feature information about tinnitus, hearing aids and other assistive listening devices.

Guest speakers will include:

- Dr Celene McNeill, Audiologist - experienced clinician, researcher, international speaker and advisor
- Lindsay Gillespie, Audiometrist, Telex Hearing Care
- Andrew Stewart, Printacall Communications Technology

The Chertsey Primary School Signing Choir will perform and relevant hearing loss management services will also be in attendance to provide information.

The Expo is a free event and morning tea will be served. For more information, please call BHACC on 4321 0275.

BHA VICTORIA

We have received so many requests for Hearing Awareness Week activities that we have extended events across two weeks.

Sunday 21st August

Along with a range of other organisations we will be launching HAW at Federation Square.

Over the next few weeks our activities will include:

- Hearing Screening at our local state MPs office - Sam Hibbins
- A community health event in the Eastern Suburbs
- Professional development at Bundoora Extend care
- An event at the Positive Living Centre and
- Wesley St Marks.
- We will also promote walk in hearing screening during that time.

We're looking forward to sharing photos from HAW in the next Spotlight.

Michele Barry, BHA Victoria

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**BETTER
HEARING
AUSTRALIA**

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BHA news
