



**14 Years of Inspiring  
Advocacy and Leadership**



# New guidelines to improve long-term care of preterm babies.

**About 3,500 babies are born very preterm in Australia every year. 60% will experience difficulties.**

New clinical practice guidelines have been released with an aim to improve care of preterm babies — those born before 32 weeks' gestation — from the time they leave hospital up until six years of age.

Led by [Murdoch Children's Research Institute's](#) Centre of Research Excellence in Newborn Medicine, the guidelines have been developed alongside a team of neonatologists, paediatricians, clinicians, maternal and child health nurses, and those with lived experiences of preterm birth from across Australia.

Murdoch's Dr Jamie Owen said, "These Australian first guidelines detail how GP clinics, hospitals and other healthcare centres can work together to ensure all children have access to transformative, ongoing care and any health concerns are identified and treated early."

To avoid these gaps in care, every family with a child born very preterm should be guided by a co-ordinated, multidisciplinary team.

The guidelines recommended structured and specific post-discharge care for very preterm babies who were at an increased risk of growth, health and developmental problems, Murdoch Professor Jeanie Cheong said.

"Children born very preterm require intensive medical care to survive," Prof Cheong said.

The risk of hearing loss is highest in very premature infants, particularly those born before 32 weeks of gestation and with a birth weight of less than 1500 grams. These infants are more likely to experience sensorineural hearing loss and auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder due to their underdeveloped auditory systems.

Intensive medical interventions, such as mechanical ventilation and exposure to ototoxic medications can damage the auditory system. The prolonged stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit also increases the risk of hearing impairment.

"Some difficulties present early in life and others during the preschool years. Very preterm birth is distressing for caregivers and families and, along with the additional carer burden, can have consequences for family wellbeing, mental health and quality of life."

Prof Cheong said follow-up services for children born very preterm varied considerably across Australia.

"Follow-up care needs to be tailored to each child and initiated by each hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit team.

"Post-discharge care may involve many healthcare professionals and services, making co-ordination between these teams essential to maximise efficiency, reduce duplication and lessen the burden on families."



**[NAIDOC Week](#) (7 to 14 July) is a perfect time to celebrate the rich history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and First Nations peoples.**

This year's theme is "Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud & Proud."

The theme underscores the vibrant and enduring spirit of First Nations cultures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children suffer some of the highest rates of middle ear infections in the world.

The disease is going undetected among 26 per cent of First Nations children, while one-in-five live with undiagnosed hearing loss, according to clinical data from Hearing Australia.

"Ear infections are really common in children but for First Nations children they are typically more regular and actually start very early in life and last a lot longer as well," Hearing Australia's Kirralee Cross said.

"When you have middle ear disease it's really difficult to detect, so there can actually be no symptoms. You don't necessarily have to have an earache or fever.

"Lots of kids are suffering in silence."

Since 2019, Hearing Australia has assessed about 36,000 First Nations children, from newborns to age six, through its hearing assessment program called early ears.

After analysing about 19,000 of these assessments, Hearing Australia found children under two have more ear trouble than older ages.

It also found children who live in remote areas have more problems with ear health than those in the regions or cities.

Ms Cross, a Yorta Yorta woman said middle ear disease and hearing loss can have a huge impact on children's development and their learning.

She said it was also culturally important for children to be able to hear well, so they could learn songs and stories being passed down by elders.

"We see a lot of children come through who may be behind in school or may have speech delays or may not understand instructions, which makes it really difficult in a classroom," Ms Cross said.

"When kids have middle ear disease it affects their ability to listen, to learn but also to yarn and connect with others. It can be quite isolating."



Ms Cross said at follow-up appointments about 60 per cent of children have better hearing health than when they were first assessed. To tackle ear disease among First Nations children, more needed to be done to improve community awareness of ear health and health care providers must assess hearing early.

"Never disregard any concerns you may have," she said.

By Keira Jenkins writing or [YahooNews](#).



**We were inspired by Australian Human Rights Commission President, Emeritus Prof. Rosalind Croucher AM's speech, "Free + Equal: Safeguarding the Rights of All Australians," at the National Press Club in Canberra.**

Her words made us think: What kind of Australia do we want to be? What future do we want to leave for our children?

We imagine a society that values human dignity, gives everyone equal opportunities, and protects human rights for all, now and in the future.

At Deafness Forum Australia, we want an Australia where everyone's rights are protected, especially those who are often overlooked and most vulnerable. Recent inquiries have already shown serious human rights violations in areas like disability and aged care, and we can't let this happen again.

Right now, Australia doesn't have a national Human Rights Act, which leaves us all at risk of rights violations. Prof. Croucher called for urgent change to protect human rights better. We fully support her and are motivated to keep working for positive change.

Together, we can create a better future for all Australians.



***Paid advisory opportunity***

Deafness Forum Australia is currently seeking individuals to join a new citizen advisory group to support our advocacy across the NDIS reforms.

We are specifically interested in NDIS participants that are 18 years or older, who are deaf, have hearing loss, or have ear or balance disorders. We are also looking to recruit parents or guardians of children with hearing loss who are NDIS participants for this initiative.

This is a one-year role. Group members would need to be able to attend bi-monthly Zoom meetings and will receive financial compensation (\$50 an hour) for their time and expertise. Meetings will be held out-of-work hours.

Interested in being involved?

To learn more about this fantastic opportunity, please reach out to our National Director, Policy and Advocacy, Hayley Stone, at [hayley.stone@deafnessforum.org.au](mailto:hayley.stone@deafnessforum.org.au) before 20 July.



DEAFNESS FORUM AUSTRALIA

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# Advocates in the Nation's Parliament.

Ten-year-old Tim from Melbourne stepped up to the podium at Parliament House.

Tim, and five other kids from throughout Australia and New Zealand were in Canberra last week for the annual Power of Speech event, which aims to challenge perceptions among decision makers of what's possible for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Tim has two cochlear implants and received early intervention services for his hearing loss from not-for-profit organisation NextSense. He also attended NextSense kindergarten at Blackburn in Melbourne, which provides tailored support for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and helps prepare them for mainstream education.



Tim described his family's journey with hearing loss and the power of his hearing support team at NextSense to an audience that included Minister for Health and Aged Care.

"I made my first best friend there. He also wore cochlear implants and I spent most of my days with lots of kids who did, which made me feel good as I wasn't the only one", Tim said.



Deafness Forum Australia's Director of National Policy and Advocacy met with [Senator Anne Ruston](#)'s team to talk about the NDIS Bill, the Roadmap for Hearing Health, and the challenges experienced by consumers of hearing health services.

Erika Cevallos (pictured) is Senator Ruston's health advisor. Erika was keen to understand how registering audiologists and audiometrists would increase consumer confidence and ensure that all hearing health practitioners are suitably trained, qualified, and safe to practice.

They discussed the benefits of neonatal hearing screening, which allowed us to talk more broadly about the [Roadmap for Hearing Health](#) as a strategy to support short-, medium-, and long-term improvements in hearing health for all people in Australia.

Erika was also interested in Deafness Forum Australia's view on the current NDIS Bill and whether we would be calling for further amendments now that the review period has been extended to August.



**Earbus Foundation was at Warnkarunku Day, a significant event dedicated to improving health and financial literacy for young Aboriginal people.**

The inaugural 'Good Health & Good Wealth' event was held in the heart of Leonora in WA's Goldfields-Esperance region, offering vital health and financial education to the local children and young people.

The event was curated by the Leonora Community Resource Centre and St John's Ambulance.

Earbus Nurse George Carter Zillessen, a proud Gija and Gooniyandi man (pictured), gave information sessions around free hearing screening services as well as hearing health education and tours of the Goldfields Earbus, which is adorned with artwork by local students.

Earbus Foundation's presence at the expo underscored the commitment Earbus has to addressing ear health disparities and enhancing the well-being of young Aboriginal Australians.

They look forward to Warnkarunku Day becoming an annual occurrence and to engaging further with children and young people in Leonora through activities, informative sessions and access to hearing health resources aimed at fostering a healthier future for the community.

Visit the [Earbus Foundation website](#).



**Brian Rope, a key figure in Canberra's photography community, recently hosted his first solo exhibition.**

"Manipulated Realities" showcases Rope's photographic work and aims to intrigue viewers and raise questions. The exhibition features reimagined scenes and situations, encouraging visitors to engage with the images on display.

Rope's involvement in photography began at age nine. He is a Life Member of the Australian Photographic Society, and actively contributes to photography publications and blogs.

Brian, a highly respected former CEO of Deafness Forum Australia is pictured at the opening of his 'Manipulated Realities' exhibition with another former Deafness Forum CEO, Nicole Lawder.





# 14 Years of Inspiring Advocacy and Leadership.

## David Brady's Legacy of Change and Advocacy at Deafness Forum Australia.

David Brady, Chair of Deafness Forum Australia, has announced his retirement after 14 transformative years at the organisation. His departure marks the end of an era of significant achievements and lasting impact in the field of hearing health and deafness advocacy.

David Brady's tenure, which will officially conclude in November 2024, leaves behind a legacy of passionate advocacy and substantial policy and community engagement advancements.

Brady's journey with Deafness Forum Australia began in 2010 when he joined the board. Shortly after, in April 2011, he was elected as Chair, and his leadership period coincided with the inception of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), a transformative time for disability advocacy in Australia. He played a crucial role in these early stages, ensuring that deafness and hearing loss were recognised and adequately addressed within the new scheme.

"It was a time when disability groups were negotiating eligibility and benefits under the NDIS," Brady recalls, emphasising the organisation's role in these discussions.

Brady spearheaded numerous initiatives throughout his tenure, including hosting five deafness sector summits and four captioning

awards. One of his most notable contributions was at the 2014 Summit in Brisbane, where he acknowledged Auslan as the national language of the Australian deaf community, marking a historic moment in the sector.

Brady's leadership steered the Deafness Forum through difficult times by advocating for hearing health to be considered both a health and a disability issue. This perspective shift was crucial as it recognised that many experiencing hearing loss later in life view it as a health issue rather than a disability.

To address funding challenges, the organisation launched the 'Let's Make It Number 10' campaign, a national initiative prioritising hearing health, funded through volunteer efforts and strategic partnerships. This campaign included innovative outreach activities like organising 'silent sports' games at the Parliament of Australia to simulate the experience of hearing loss for politicians.

Brady's advocacy efforts also led to establishing the Parliamentary Inquiry into Hearing Health, culminating in the influential 'Waiting To Be Heard' report, which paved the way for Australia's Roadmap for Hearing Health.

"Our efforts have not only maintained Deafness Forum Australia as a key player in the sector but also led to our recognition as a health peak body in 2021 by the Minister for Health," Brady states proudly, reflecting on the significant role the organisation plays in mainstreaming hearing loss and ear health policies in Australia.

With David Brady as its chair, Deafness Forum focused on community engagement, including hosting NDIS consultations and youth forums, ensuring Australians with lived experiences have a voice in shaping policies impacting their lives. Most recently, Brady co-chaired the inaugural First Nations Roundtable led by Professor Kelvin Kong AM, which brought together Indigenous community leaders from various countries, adding a rich layer of cultural perspectives to discussions on hearing health issues.



Watch David Brady's message video message, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dbITwje3pY>.

As he prepares to retire, Brady reflects on his time as Chair with pride and gratitude.

“My 14 years as Chair of Deafness Forum Australia were served voluntarily. I have dedicated myself to elevating our member organisations, enabling their members to have a voice, and laying solid foundations in the Disability and Health sectors,” he shares.

His commitment was supported by the incredible efforts of Board Directors, staff, and members from more than 40 member organisations.

David Brady's retirement marks the end of an era, but he remains confident that the groundwork laid during his tenure will continue to foster advocacy and change.

“I am proud to be leaving the voices of the one in six Australians affected by hearing loss much stronger in policymaking now and for the future,” he concludes, looking forward to the organisation's continued success and impact.

## Help Shape the Future of Online Hearing Health Services.

We are excited to announce an innovative study in collaboration with Macquarie University, Cochlear, and Google.

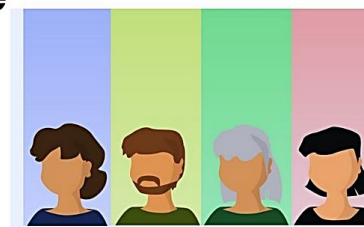
This new study aims to improve access to online hearing health information and resources for adults with hearing loss.

### Want to make a difference?

Participate on a community panel for a new research study.

Help shape an Australia-first online support service for adults with hearing loss.

Contact Us Today



We are inviting people to join the Consumer and Community Involvement Panel where they can play a pivotal role in shaping the development of this platform and ensuring it meets the needs of adults with hearing loss. Your valuable input is essential in making sure these online supports meet your needs and the needs of others like you.

Who We Need: Adults 18+ with hearing loss

Time Commitment: 10 – 20 hours per year over 3 years.

Participation involves a 2-hour initial meeting, 30-minute follow up interview and additional meetings (estimated 3 hours, 4 times per year)

**You'll get paid for your time and commitment.**

Interested? Reach out today to [jane.lee@deafnessforum.org.au](mailto:jane.lee@deafnessforum.org.au)

If you are eager to make a difference but unsure you can commit to this opportunity, let us know, and we'll keep you in mind for future opportunities.

Your participation is crucial in creating meaningful online support services. Together, let's make a difference!



# Meet Australia's Ideas for Ears Winner.

Bradley, age 12, from Singleton NSW was one of 14 worldwide winners in MED-EL's 2024 Ideas for Ears competition.

The prize for his creativity was a trip to MED-EL headquarters in Austria to meet with fellow young inventors.

Bradley's favourite highlight was meeting the engineer who created his individual hearing implant.

Bradley has a unilateral hearing loss, and received a MED-EL SYNCHRONY Cochlear Implant when he was 8 years old, implanted by ENT Professor Kelvin Kong (AM).



MED-EL is a global company, the world's leading hearing implant company, on a mission to help people with hearing loss experience the joy of sound.

The Ideas for Ears competition aims to raise awareness of hearing loss while encouraging children aged from six to 12, to craft inventions that enhance the lives of individuals with hearing challenges.



**An exciting opportunity is now available for a PhD student passionate about making a difference in the lives of adults with hearing loss.**

Macquarie University is developing Australia's first online support service tailored specifically for adults with hearing loss.

Imagine a platform where users can access personalised care plans and resources to promote healthy hearing behaviours. The service aims to enhance health literacy and empower users to take charge of their hearing health, improving their overall quality of life.

Over five phases, the project will explore the needs of adults with hearing loss, brainstorm solutions, develop an online service prototype, and refine it through real-world testing.

If you're a domestic student interested in pursuing a PhD in Medicine and Health, this could be your chance to contribute to a significant advancement in public health research that is focussed on people with hearing loss. The chosen candidate will receive a generous stipend to support their studies and participation in this impactful work.

Applications close on October 31, 2024.

Don't miss your chance to be a part of this groundbreaking endeavour that promises to advance your academic career and make a tangible difference in people's lives.

Here is where [you can apply](#).

# Landmark Event for Teachers of the Deaf and Multidisciplinary Professionals.

**The Australian and New Zealand Conference for Educators of the Deaf will be held in Sydney from 28 to 29 September 2024.**

ANZCED, as the conference is known, is typically held every two to three years. However, due to recent global events, this is the first face-to-face national conference for professionals in the education of deaf or hard-of-hearing children and young people since the 2018 ANZCED.

The conference, hosted by the National Association of Teachers of the Deaf, offers a valuable opportunity for both teachers of the deaf and a range of other professionals in the field, including psychologists, speech pathologists and parents, to engage with recent brilliant research, participate in enriching conversations and be part of a real-world exchange of ideas.

Professor Louise Paatsch will open the conference with a keynote presentation titled *Children's Play: Fostering Learning in the Classroom*. This session is sure to provoke extensive discussion.

Later, participants can select from a diverse range of concurrent sessions. The first day will culminate in a presentation highlighting significant projects, including the Australian Expanded Core Curriculum – Deaf and the Australian Teachers of the Deaf Mentoring Project.

The National Association of Teachers of the Deaf National Awards will be presented at an evening cocktail party. Jessica Kirkness will share insights from her book *On Growing Up with Deaf Grandparents* at the event.

Day two of the conference begins with a panel discussion moderated by Dr Breda Carty. The panellists will delve into the Royal Commission on Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability, particularly focusing on the implications for education as well as the implications of the proposed changes to the NDIS.

After the lunch break, there are two exciting presentations: one is by the Consortium for Outcomes in Deaf Education, a group created to gather data on the number of deaf children and young people receiving educational services in Australia and the nature of that service provision. The work of CODE is facilitated by the collaboration of various groups interested in deaf education, including Deafness Forum Australia, Aussie Deaf Kids, Deaf Australia, and the National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf. The second keynote and closing presentation by Prof Greg Leigh has become a highlight of ANZCED conferences, promising valuable insights for all attendees.

The full conference program will be available shortly at <https://anzced.naatd.com.au>

A pre-conference workshop is offered on Friday 27 September. The workshop will focus on assessing deaf children and students, including what assessments teachers of the deaf should use, how they administer them, and how they can best use the information to plan and program the child's developmental goals and next steps. Participants will work with colleagues to finetune assessment processes, including appropriate tests for the deaf or hard-of-hearing children cohort and who to include in the assessment team.

Further details and registration for the conference and workshop are available at <https://anzced.naatd.com.au>

Please attend the ANZCED Conference 2024 in September to renew, refresh and reconnect.

# Energy Companies Using Estimates Harms the Vulnerable.



From the ABC's [How energy companies are using estimates](#).

**When Kate White received a large gas bill while her home was empty for renovations, she discovered that her utility provider, AGL, had estimated the charges. After submitting her actual meter reading, her bill was reduced from \$658.68 to \$132.68.**

This incident highlights a common practice in the energy sector where both gas and electricity bills are sometimes estimated rather than based on actual meter readings.

In Australia, it's not uncommon for energy and water meters to be estimated when physical access is restricted, or meter readers are unavailable. However, many consumers, like Kate, are unaware that their bills might not reflect their true usage, leading to potential overcharges. Energy companies often rely on past consumption data or averages which can lead to significant discrepancies in billing.

The issue of estimated bills is regulated by national bodies to ensure that actual readings are attempted at least once a year. Consumers also have the right to challenge estimated bills and request adjustments based on actual meter readings. Despite these regulations, many customers remain in the dark about these practices and their rights.

Energy consumer advocate Craig Memery suggests that energy companies should do more to inform customers about estimated bills and how to verify or challenge them. He believes more proactive communication could help address this issue.

Smart meters, which automatically transmit detailed energy usage data to utility providers, has been proposed as a solution to reduce the reliance on estimates. These devices offer detailed energy usage information, which could enhance transparency and trust between consumers and energy providers.

The use of estimated billing and the transition to smart meters are part of broader efforts to modernise energy infrastructure and improve consumer protection in the energy market. However, as the sector evolves, ensuring that consumers are well-informed and can easily access accurate billing is a critical challenge.

As always, it is the vulnerable who are most disadvantaged. This situation reflects a broader issue in consumer rights where individuals must navigate complex systems and regulations to ensure they are not unfairly charged. It underscores the importance of citizen education and the need for regulatory bodies to enforce clear, fair practices in utility billing. It is especially important at a time of rising cost of living costs.

With the price of power so high, many households are already struggling to pay bills. For people that are doing it tough, that means they might not be putting food on the table for the kids or other things that are really necessary.

# The clock is ticking for Shorten's plan to get the NDIS Bill across the line.



## The Government's fast-track agenda to 'get the NDIS back on track' has been stalled with the Coalition pulling a surprise move to delay the progress of the Bill until August at the earliest.

Advocates must use this opportunity strategically. It's imperative to lock in a legislative requirement for co-design to ensure that the voices of the disability community are front and centre across all stages of the reform process.



By Hayley Stone, Director of National Policy and Advocacy for Deafness Forum Australia.

It's time for the next update on the Government's progress in 'Getting the NDIS Back on Track', and there's a lot to unpack since our last article.

A Bill is a formal proposal for a new law or a change to existing law that is put forward by the Government for consideration by Parliament.

This 'get the NDIS back on track' Bill has had several amendments since our last update. The scope of NDIS-funded supports has been expanded, there's more clarification on the powers of the CEO, and increased transparency around needs assessments.

While it looked like Labor was on track to get the Bill passed with the support of the Community Affairs Legislative Committee, the Coalition, in a surprise move has blocked the progress of the Bill to allow for further consultations.

NDIS Minister Bill Shorten has been quoted as furious, and we're back to the drawing board, with Labor on one side, the Coalition and the Greens on the other.

It is yet another example of how the Scheme is being politically weaponised. Even the One Nation party has weighed in, with Pauline Hanson stepping up as a surprise ally of Labor's fast-track plan.

So, what do we do now?

The reality is that a call for a delay until August is not going to allow for any meaningful work to be done on the subordinate legislation, which is where the real impacts will be felt by participants, and where most of the sector's concern is focused.

It is worth pointing out that it's not unusual for legislation to be enacted before the subordinate legislation is finalised: it's not ideal, but it's important to not get caught up in the idea that this is conclusive evidence of sinister intent.

We don't want to see the development of subordinate legislation fast-tracked at breakneck speed. We want to work in codesign with the Government to develop the provisions with care.

The Coalition's actions to delay progressing the Bill may have afforded advocates some leverage with the Government. We should approach this opportunity strategically and consider what really matters now and what can wait. The disability community needs a clear, collective ask, and it's got to be realistic and achievable during Minister Shorten's term in office.



**The logical thing is to make a concerted push once again for the Bill to contain a legislative requirement for the Government to work in genuine co-design with people with disability.**

As it currently stands, the Bill only requires decision-makers to be **satisfied** that **appropriate consultation** has been undertaken before legislation is passed. This is legalese for “you really should think about consulting, but we're not going to make you if you've got a reason not to.” Keeping this requirement loose allows a Government to pick and choose when consultation suits its agenda and when it doesn't.

It also sets a low bar for community engagement. Consultation typically involves seeking stakeholder views, but decisions are ultimately made by others in authority. Co-design empowers those most affected by the decisions – it requires the Government to work with the disability community in equal partnership to shape the changes that will ultimately impact their lives.

The first thing we should do is land on a clear definition of what co-design is, and we know that the Government definition of co-design falls considerably short of our expectations.

We'd also need to negotiate with the Government around the key aspects of the Scheme where co-design was necessary and desirable – no government would agree to a blanket agreement to codesign everything, nor would we want this. It would undermine the legislative process, which already has its own checks and balances.

The urgency is clear. With rumours of an early December election swirling in Canberra, Bill Shorten must secure parliamentary approval for the NDIS Bill before an anticipated Cabinet reshuffle, perhaps in October, paving the way for the next phase in his career.

This would explain the Minister's haste to have the NDIS Bill passed as soon as possible, a strategic move that provides a logical milestone for a new Minister to step in and take the reins before the country goes to the national polls.

We must lock in a legislatively mandated commitment to a co-design process with the disability community to ensure that the voices of the people the Scheme was designed for are front and centre, across the reform process, irrespective of the priorities and motivations of whatever Minister, or Government of the day happens to have stewardship of the Scheme.

A legislative commitment to co-design on those parts of the new Scheme that have a direct impact on the lives of people with disability would be a crucial win that would lock in genuine choice and control for people with disability.

It is a bold ask, but it's a timely one.



# Advancing a Hearing Health Agenda at the UN.

The United Nations General Assembly on Preventing and Controlling Noncommunicable Diseases will consider the importance of including hearing loss in the global health agenda.

This presents a unique opportunity to highlight hearing health and wellbeing in this important international space.

Ear Science Institute Australia and the Deafness Forum Australia presented Australia's case for making hearing health and wellbeing a part of the international strategy. Dr Dona Jayakody, Head of the Brain and Hearing Department and Senior Research Fellow, prepared the case.

“The inclusion of untreated hearing loss would strengthen international cooperation and advocacy for hearing loss, provide adequate, sustainable resources, and build capacity to increase awareness on hearing loss, as well as early detection and treatment at global, regional, national, and state levels.

“There is a lack of evidence on effective interventions, including randomised control clinical trials to prevent and treat, monitor and evaluate interventions, promote healthy behaviours and implement research findings in real-world situations.

“There is also a lack of evidence on risk factors for Noncommunicable Diseases generally and mental wellbeing, poor healthy behaviours, and barriers to accessing healthcare in rural areas and across different linguistically and culturally diverse communities,” Dr Jayakody said.

As the United Nations General Assembly prepares to address Noncommunicable Diseases, the inclusion of hearing loss in the

global health agenda could mark a significant step towards broader, more inclusive health policies. This effort, led by Ear Science Institute Australia and Deafness Forum Australia seeks to enhance international cooperation, improve resources, and expand research dedicated to hearing health.



## New research has uncovered significant findings on the long-term effects of one of the most common forms of chemotherapy on cancer survivors.

Published in [JAMA Oncology](#), the study tracked a cohort of testicular cancer survivors who received cisplatin-based chemotherapy. An interdisciplinary team at University of South Florida and Indiana University followed the patients for an average of 14 years, revealing that 78% experience significant difficulties in everyday listening situations, negatively impacting their quality of life.

“It's important that we understand the real-world effects of patients' sensory problems and if we can understand that, then we can develop better therapeutic strategies and preventive measures to improve the long-term quality of life for cancer survivors,” said Robert Frisina, distinguished university professor and chair of the USF Department of Medical Engineering.



### Quick fact

People with disability experience **online hate speech at higher levels** than others in Australia.<sup>1</sup>



## There are laws to keep Australians safe from severe online abuse.

People with disability experience online hate speech at higher levels than the national average.

The Online Safety Act makes it easier to fight the most severe types of online abuse and hold abusers to account and help get dangerous content removed.

If someone has shared explicit photos of you, or if you or someone you know experiences severe online abuse, including harassment or threats, visit [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au) to make a report, or for support.

If you've seen illegal and violent online content, you can make a report directly to [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au).

You can make a report on behalf of someone else if you have their permission.

### Auslan Video

This [Auslan video](#) will enable Australia's Deaf community to access the information they need to feel fully informed about the Online Safety Laws.

This includes how to report severe online abuse and harmful material.

## My name is Tracey McGeehan. I am profoundly deaf and wear bilateral hearing aids.

I am forty seven years old. I lipread as my communication and I speak reasonable well despite the hearing loss.

Telephone calls have been my main issue in life. Using the National Relay Service has been helping me to make calls until I started researching deeply into the accessibility features of mobile phones.

I discovered by chance the accuracy of captions during phone calls in pixel 7 mobile phones. I now have this type of phone, and my disability self is flourished.

I am able to make phone calls with ease and participate fully in the conversation.

I wish to raise awareness of this amazing technology as not everyone may know about it.

# Clear Breaches of Gifts and Hospitality Policies.



## Staff at the National Disability Insurance Agency failed to disclose years of secret gifts received from global IT giant Salesforce.

The Government's Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit recently tabled its final report for its Inquiry into Procurement at Services Australia and the National Disability Insurance Agency.

The findings follow the release of the inquiry's interim report last year, which focussed on the activities of the Synergy 360 consulting firm as an advisor to the technology company Infosys in obtaining Government IT contracts. That report raised serious questions about potential financial impropriety and improper relationships with parties receiving contracts from the Commonwealth and referred those matters to the National Anti-Corruption Commission.

In this final report for the inquiry, the Committee investigated the procurement of National Disability Agency's new customer relationship platform, known as the PACE system, from the US based global IT company Salesforce. Committee Chair, Mr Julian Hill MP said that "it was perplexing that the value for money assessments in this procurement gave no

explicit weighting to price as a key factor in scoring and ranking proposals."

Mr Hill said "the sizes of the contract variations were significant, now \$135 million up from \$27 million at inception ... a substantial proportion was due to significant changes in scope. Other vendors were denied the opportunity to tender for the product ultimately being delivered."

Mr Hill noted that "although NDIA gave evidence that no declarations of any hospitality relating to this contract were made by its staff, Salesforce subsequently provided written evidence of more than 100 instances of hospitality and/or gifts, including meals, drinks and golf outings, passing to NDIA officials over an almost five-year period. This was before and after the award of the contract, and throughout the period of contract variations."

"The premise stated by NDIA for its hospitality policy is that none of its officials should accept gifts that could be seen to compromise their integrity.

"This was clearly not followed."

After the interim report was tabled, the Committee learned also that Synergy 360 made an unsolicited approach to Salesforce in advance of the PACE tender process and that meetings took place between former NDIS Minister Stuart Robert, Synergy 360 and Salesforce before and after the awarding of the contract.

Mr Hill said "three meetings with former Minister Robert occurred with no written records available of what was discussed or evidence that other potential vendors who were not Synergy 360 clients were afforded similar access. Ultimately Salesforce secured a major government contract and later benefited from a series of lucrative variations."

The Committee wants the National Audit Office to conduct audits of potential gifts and hospitality issues in the public sector to identify practices of concern. It has also asked Salesforce to report all hospitality provided to all Australian Commonwealth officials for the last 3 years.

The report can be [downloaded here](#).





## Schoolchildren should be equipped with the tools they need to succeed, and early intervention can make all the difference.

Often overlooked in preparing children for school are the three important pillars of hearing, vision and communication. These form the basis of a child's educational journey, playing pivotal roles in their ability to absorb, engage and thrive in today's busy classrooms.

We now routinely detect children with hearing losses at birth. However, newborn screening will not always identify mild, single-sided or progressive permanent losses that develop over childhood, nor will it identify children who develop [glue ear](#), a common childhood condition that can go unnoticed.

A lot of school-age children will experience mild to moderate hearing difficulties, which may not be recognised until the classroom teacher starts to notice delays in learning and behaviours like inattention and difficulty following instructions.

A recent [University of Melbourne study](#) involving 1,200 primary school children found almost five per cent of the children tested had a previously undetected hearing disorder.

Even a mild hearing loss in the classroom [can disrupt learning](#) by impeding a child's capacity to interpret spoken language clearly, follow instructions, engage in discussions or grasp crucial nuances during lessons.

There is also the effect of increased *listening effort* as a child with mild loss attempts to compensate for the partial signal received, making them even more worn out and irritable.

It is not only what we can hear, but how we can manage competing sounds. There is growing evidence that the poorer a child's ability to listen in a noisy environment, the greater the risk of developing literacy delays.

An audiology assessment or participation in a school-based hearing screening program should be on the checklist to ensure that no child faces unnecessary hurdles, due to undetected hearing issues that can be addressed.

By Associate Professor Dani Tomlin, Dr Peter Carew, Dr Ruth Braden, Dr Christine Nearchou and Dr Miya St John, [University of Melbourne](#).

## What's Next in Classroom Architecture?

Increased noise levels make classroom speech understanding more challenging. This, in turn, diverts cognitive resources (which are finite) away from academic learning.

Those students who are least able to achieve and maintain attention are likely to be the most challenged by the many distractions, both auditory and visual, created by having a second class group in the same physical space. And this means the risk that these children will become disengaged from classroom activity is higher in the open-plan environment.

There are signs that the days of super-sized open spaces may be numbered. The Victorian Department of Education is considering it and the NSW Department of Education has already decided to end construction of new open-plan classrooms.

So, we may be on the cusp of a new era in school classroom design. Hopefully it will be one that will optimise learning flexibility while minimising acoustic (and visual) distraction to ensure that vulnerable students remain engaged and don't end up lost in space.

First published in [Health & Wellbeing](#).

# 2024 FARMER HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

ADVANCING HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SAFETY  
IN AGRICULTURE: WORKING TOGETHER FOR  
TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION



Wednesday 14 August 2024

Symposium and Workshops - 9am to 4.30pm

Hotel Kurrajong Canberra



## Registrations are open for the National Centre for Farmer's Health Symposium!

This is a fantastic opportunity to connect, learn, and grow with industry experts, collaborating to advance health and wellbeing in agriculture.

Noise-induced hearing loss is highly prevalent in farming communities. At Deafness Forum Australia, one of our commitments is to improve hearing health outcomes for these communities and the agriculture sector at large.

The continual use of loud machinery and equipment on farms, such as tractors, augers, firearms, chainsaws, radios and tools in the workshop increases the risk of permanent hearing loss for farmers.

The typical noise level of a chainsaw cutting is 120 decibels - without hearing protection, it is safe to be exposed to it for a maximum of 8 seconds before the risk of damage to the ears.

So, we are excited to attend the Symposium and look forward to learning and building partnerships to enhance health out

We encourage you to register too and join us ð this important event!

More info and register at  
<https://farmerhealth.org.au/event/farmer-health-symposium-2024>



## Know someone who deserves their own copy of **One in Six?**

Let us know at [hello@deafnessforum.org.au](mailto:hello@deafnessforum.org.au)

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