



## Tiny batteries, big danger!

A button battery can become stuck in a child's throat and result in catastrophic injuries and even death. Make sure that grandparents and anyone else who cares for your child is aware of the risks of button batteries and know how to keep children safe from them.

## Change is coming for Australia's Hearing Services Program

The HSP represents 70% of the Australian hearing services market. "It is a huge and enormously important program with more than one million consumers holding an active voucher; and some of our most vulnerable citizens benefiting from the CSO program component."

## Hearing loss and Indigenous employment

"At school I would never talk to the teacher. I would never ask them for help because there was too much shame if they helped you in front of the other kid. But you can't do that at work."

## Tools to help, children, young people and adults manage their hearing loss

Hearing care professionals are experts in audiology but people with hearing loss are experts about their own hearing challenges. There are free resources to help people with hearing loss prepare for their appointments with an audiologist; and strategies to manage daily life more easily.

## They are at it again – tinkering with NRS

You will soon need to give your personal details and assurance that you are genuine to be able to use the National Relay Service, a program that allows people who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or have a speech impairment to make and receive phone calls.



Button batteries are lurking everywhere in your home — hearing aids, remote controls, kitchen scales, birthday cards, children's toys and countless other products.

If swallowed, a button battery can become stuck in a child's throat and result in catastrophic injuries and even death. Insertion of button batteries into body orifices such as ears and noses can also lead to significant injuries.

There are a number of ways you can protect your family:

- [Check before you buy](#)
- [Secure button batteries](#)
- [Store them out of reach of children](#)
- [Safely dispose of them immediately](#)
- [Know what to do in an emergency](#)
- [Make others aware of the risk](#)

### **Check before you buy**

- Look for products that do not use button batteries at all when buying a toy, household device or novelty item. Other types of batteries are less likely to be swallowed by young children and do not present the same degree of danger if they are. Alternatively, look for products where the battery does not need to be replaced, such as where the product is rechargeable.
- Check for a child-resistant battery compartment, if you do buy button-battery-operated products. This will make it much more difficult for a young child to access the battery.
- Buy new button batteries in child-resistant packaging — that is, the packaging needs to be opened with scissors.

### **Secure button batteries**

- Make sure the compartment that houses the button battery in a product is child-resistant, such as being secured with a screw, so that the product does not release the battery and it is difficult for a young child to access it. A number of products, particularly those purchased from overseas sellers or suppliers, may not be child-resistant, so be sure to check that the product you're after is as safe and secure as it can be — even if it means spending a few dollars more.
- Even if secure, button battery compartments are not necessarily child-proof. If the product is damaged, the button battery inside can come loose. If the product is damaged or the button battery compartment does not close securely, stop using it and keep it away from children.

## **Store them out of reach of children**

- Keep new and used button batteries out of sight and out of reach of children at all times.
- Keep spare button batteries locked away where it is difficult for children to reach them — lock boxes, secure cupboards or high spaces are perfect for this.

## **Safely dispose of them immediately**

Even when old or spent, button batteries can still pose a threat, so safely dispose of them.

- As soon as you have finished using a battery, put sticky tape around both sides of the battery. This makes them less attractive to children and avoids the low risk of them catching fire.
- Dispose of them immediately in an outside bin, out of reach of children, or recycle safely.

## **Know what to do in an emergency**

If you suspect your child has swallowed or inserted a button battery, call the Poisons Information Centre immediately on 13 11 26 for 24/7 fast, expert advice. If your child is having any difficulty breathing, contact 000.

## **Prompt action is critical. Do not wait for symptoms to develop.**

Not every health facility can manage injuries due to button batteries. Availability of care depends on where you live. Contacting the Poison Information Centre will help you to be directed to an appropriate medical facility that can manage the injury.

Do not let the child eat or drink, and do not induce vomiting.

Remember, children are often unable to effectively communicate that they have swallowed or inserted a button battery. There may be none of the symptoms below. If you suspect a child has swallowed a button battery, ask for an X-ray from a hospital emergency department to make sure.

Symptoms to watch out for include:

- gagging or choking
- drooling
- chest pain (this may present as grunting)
- coughing or noisy breathing
- unexplained vomiting or food refusal
- bleeding from the gut — black or red vomit or bowel motions
- nose bleeds — sometimes this can be blood vomited through the nose
- unexplained fever
- abdominal pain
- general discomfort
- spitting blood or blood-stained saliva
- bloody discharge from ear or nose

## **Make others aware of the risk**

Make sure that grandparents, or anyone else who cares for your child, are aware of the risks of button batteries and know how to keep children safe from them.

<https://www.productsafety.gov.au/news/button-batteries-tiny-batteries-big-danger>

## Change coming for Australia's Hearing Services Program

The Government has begun a major review of the Hearing Services Program (HSP). The aim of the HSP is to reduce the incidence and consequences of avoidable hearing loss in the Australian community by providing access to high quality hearing services and devices. It has two parts–

1. The Voucher Scheme provides free hearing aids to people who have a Pensioner Concession Card, a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or a White Card (for hearing specific conditions), a dependent or a member of the Australian Defence Force and who have a hearing loss over a set threshold.
2. The Community Services Obligations Scheme (CSO) is for special needs groups, including children, Indigenous Australians and adults with complex hearing needs.

The Panel conducting the Review will report to Government in July 2021. It will focus on:

- whether it delivers services aligned with clinical need and contemporary service delivery
- how the Voucher and device maintenance payment system compares with advances in the manufacturing sector and product offering
- how technology is changing the provision of services through the HSP
- how HSP services are currently delivered and whether access can be enhanced for vulnerable Australians and in thin markets, such as regional, rural and remote areas.

Deafness Forum chair David Brady said, "It will be a roots and branches examination of the centre-piece of public hearing health and ear care in Australia.

"It is a huge and enormously important program with more than one million consumers holding an active voucher; and some of our most vulnerable citizens benefitting from the CSO program component."

The Program represents a majority share (about 70%) of the Australian hearing services market. Changes resulting from this Review may challenge the current business models and profitability of device manufacturers and of the nearly 300 clinics that are registered providers to the HSP.

The Government commissioned Deafness Forum to facilitate a national response on behalf of consumers. If you would like to learn more or to contribute from a consumer perspective, please contact Deafness Forum. You can also make a [direct submission to the Review](#).

"For our organisation and its members and friends, it's among the most important bodies of work that we will engage in during 2020 and 2021," David Brady said.

### Further reading

- [Hearing Services Program Review Consultation Paper](#) (30 Oct 2020)
- [Regulation Impact Statement Oct 2020 - a sustainable Hearing Services Program](#) (22 Oct 2020)
- [Review of Services and Technology Supply in the Hearing Services Program \(part 1 of 2\)](#)
- [Review of Services and Technology Supply in the Hearing Services Program \(part 2 of 2\)](#)  
Report in Sep 2017 by Price Waterhouse Coopers, commissioned by Department of Health.

## Hearing loss and Indigenous employment: two case studies

By [Damien Howard](#) and [Jody Barney](#) for [The Mandarin](#)



The impact of hearing loss on Indigenous employment is a long-neglected research issue, and thus little is known about it. **Damien Howard** and Murri woman **Jody Barney** provide two case studies highlighting the nature of Indigenous hearing loss and how to address it.

New data from the [ABS](#) shows overall 43% of Indigenous adults have hearing loss (nearly 60% in remote areas) and that those with hearing loss are disadvantaged in multiple areas.

Seventy-nine percent of Indigenous people affected by hearing loss were not aware they had a hearing loss. Six times the number of Indigenous children had hearing loss compared to non-Indigenous (29% of Indigenous children had hearing loss compared to 4.3% non-Indigenous).

The bare statistics in the media release are dramatic in themselves, but a deeper examination is even more disturbing. Let's consider what it means that so many people are unaware they have a hearing loss, as well as that they experience hearing loss so early in life.

The early onset of Indigenous hearing loss because of widespread ear disease means that the hearing loss is 'normalised' — people are unaware that they hear differently to others. This means people are much more likely to be judged by others for not responding in the way that is expected. Children may be seen as defiant, unmotivated or dumb when something is misheard and misunderstood. Because people themselves don't know they are not hearing as well as others, they are more likely to accept the negative judgements made about them and come to believe things

like they are dumb, or unmotivated. Or, they may resent and react against the unfair judgements and unfair treatment by others in ways that create social problems. Conversely, when a person knows they have a hearing loss they can ask for and receive consideration of why they did not understand, as well as not take to heart others ill-informed judgements. That so many Indigenous people don't know they have a hearing loss means that hearing loss is having a much greater psycho social impact on them.

In contrast to the early onset hearing loss experienced by most Indigenous people, most non-Indigenous people who are hard of hearing have a noise induced hearing loss that has a late onset — mainly when they are over 50. Their hearing loss did not impact on their social development, schooling and occupational training. So, as well as the higher proportion of Indigenous people with hearing loss, the earlier onset of their hearing loss means it has, or will have, a far more pervasive and profound impact on their lives. The important statistic is not only in the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who have a hearing loss. The early onset of hearing loss and that the fact that people don't know they have it both contribute to a far greater impact profile of hearing loss for them. The statistics on the different proportion of Indigenous people with hearing loss look bad, but it's actually far worse when you consider when the hearing loss occurs and that so many are not aware of it.

The outcome measures described in the ABS reflect this. Looking at employment outcomes. People aged 18–64 years with a moderate, severe or profound hearing impairment had different labour force outcomes than people with no measured hearing impairment. For example: 37% were employed, compared with 57% with no impairment 60% were out of the labour force, almost double the proportion of those with no impairment (31%).

The issue of hearing loss impacting on Indigenous employment is a long-neglected research issue, so little is known about it.

The following two case studies are from [Listening, Learning and Work](#). This book describes the to-date only research carried out on the impact of Indigenous hearing loss and how to address it. The two case studies describe successful employment outcomes and what contributed to them. One case study is from an urban setting the other is from a remote one.

### ***Case study one: success in a supportive workplace***

Naomi is an administrative trainee in a government department in a regional centre. Naomi has mild hearing loss that make it sometimes difficult for her to understand verbal instructions. However, she is very proactive in her efforts to make sure that she understands what is expected of her in her current work role.

Once a task has been learned, mostly through verbal instruction and being shown what to do, Naomi is able to get on with the work by herself without the need for further instruction. Naomi's supervisor sees her as a mature worker with a strong work ethic and effective communication skills, and is quick to praise Naomi.

"She has problems in the initial tasking but once she understands what she's meant to be doing she is fine. She always takes time to make sure she knows something, and if she isn't sure, she will ask again. Sometimes if she doesn't understand, you can explain in a different way and she will be fine.

With the GST I didn't do it well but someone else did get it right by explaining in a way that Naomi could understand."

Naomi confirmed she got on well with her boss. "My boss is really good, I can ask her for instructions again and she never makes me feel that I am dumb."

Naomi had been through a personal learning process that had helped her to realise that avoidance was not a useful communication strategy. She had worked and studied ever since leaving school. While she had failed to complete two courses and left some jobs, those experiences helped her to abandon the avoidance strategies she first began to use at school.

"At school I would never talk to the teacher. I would never ask them for help because there was too much shame if they helped you in front of the other kids... if I didn't understand I would leave it or ask a friend for help. But you can't do that at work. I found out in other jobs you have to ask but my supervisor now makes it easy to ask. She never blames me for not getting it."

For Naomi this earlier experience of failure was motivating rather than demoralising. Her supervisor gave her confidence when she needed to seek clarification. The supervisor described the long talk she had with Naomi when she first started her present job. The supervisor knew that Naomi had experienced 'failure' in the past, and quickly identified the importance of communication (although neither knew Naomi had hearing loss) and the consequent need to develop different strategies.

"At the very beginning I got her to write down instructions given to her and that helps her. I really emphasised that she has got to keep asking if she does not understand. In the early days I used to check that she did understand, especially if she looked a bit perplexed. If she didn't, I would not growl at her for not understanding, but would say 'You have got to keep asking.'

"I have learnt that it does no good to growl at people, especially in front of others. You can't shame people. I talk quietly in private, then I try to encourage them to do better, rather than growling about what they have done and I keep in mind what they are dealing with in their families outside work. You can't just ignore all that.

"It is also good that there are other Indigenous people in the workplace that Naomi can talk to. She says this helps to make work a comfortable place for her.

"She is finishing here soon and needs to finish some assignments but I know she has not got a computer at home, so I have offered for her to come in and use one of the computers here."

This was a relatively small office with generally low levels of background noise. Naomi's supervisor had worked alongside Indigenous workers for 30 years and she went through a 'communications retraining' program with Naomi. She avoided public confrontational performance management techniques that Indigenous people often find discomfiting and 'shameful'. She also understood that Naomi did not have the kind of resources that are taken for granted in the wider community and was willing to provide extra workplace support to help her in her traineeship.

This was a highly supportive workplace for Naomi, thanks to the attitude of her supervisor, the low levels of background noise, and the presence of other Indigenous staff in the workplace.

Naomi herself also showed that she has learned communication skills that helped her to succeed, despite her hearing difficulties.

Naomi's supervisor did not assess Naomi's abilities on her initial capacity to understand instructions but on the way she capably performed tasks once she had mastered them. She also sees herself as partially responsible for communication outcomes "With GST, I didn't do it right". She shares responsibility for communication rather than just blame Naomi when there are problems. Her constructive attitude gave Naomi the confidence to ask for further explanations when necessary.

### ***Case study two: stranger danger and the benefits of team-work***

As part of an agreement with a mining company, a remote Indigenous community stipulated that a number of traineeships involving local community members would be completed. The fact that 60% of these trainees had hearing loss was not known by trainees or contractors at that time.

At first, the plan was to place trainees individually with contractors on the site, and assign them a mentor who would work with them. However, this did not work.

Many of the contractors found it hard to work with the trainees. These contracting staff changed constantly, and the trainees found they were continually working with new people who described trainees as 'unreliable' and 'difficult to communicate with'.

Things were not working but the mining company was bound by their training agreement. When it became clear that the initial training approach was not working, the mining company employed the trainees directly, as a work-team. This was a very unusual arrangement in an industry which generally relies solely on contractors for most on-site work. Normally, the company employed only a few office managers and support staff to organise the contractors' work.

The non-Indigenous man who had been employed to mentor the trainees became the team supervisor. This man had worked in the local community for twelve years and was known as someone who could work successfully with people from the community.

The Indigenous work-team soon became an island of social stability on a site where on-site mining company staff and site contractors were constantly changing. Neither the mining company staff nor the contractors had been able to really get to know the Indigenous trainees. The non-Indigenous supervisor of the team became the 'communications broker' between the constantly changing non-Indigenous workforce and the Indigenous trainees. The supervisor got to know all the trainees well, but found he was able to communicate more easily with some than with others.

When hearing tests were carried out the results showed that 60% of the trainees had some degree of hearing loss. The trainees that the supervisor got on with better were mostly those with the best hearing. The trainees with no hearing loss would often facilitate communication between the supervisor and those workers who could not hear as well. The supervisor noted that the trainees with hearing loss were generally the most reserved members of the team and had the most difficulty undertaking independent or individual work.

Eventually the team approach became a very successful operating model. The supervisor of the team became the only non-Indigenous member of staff who had worked at the site for more than a year. Within the team, trainees with good hearing were able to act as 'communication brokers' between the supervisor and those with poorer hearing.

The team operated on two stages of communication brokerage. The non-Indigenous supervisor was a first stage 'communication broker', (the company told him what they wanted to team to undertake, then he talked to the team and those without hearing loss understood him). Then Indigenous members of the team with no or little hearing loss carried out a second stage of communication brokerage – communicating with team members with hearing loss.

In many cross-cultural settings these processes often occur when there are people available and willing to do this. Indigenous staff consult and seek clarification and guidance from the non-Indigenous staff with whom they are comfortable or Indigenous peers. These people are usually chosen because of their non-judgmental attitudes, and because they are willing to provide informal communication support.

These case studies highlight successful support that is inclusive, non-stigmatising and strength focused. Indigenous people affected by hearing loss, whether they know it or not, desperately wish to be seen as the same as others. Programs that require publicly naming difference are often avoided because of this. They show unobtrusive support provided by informed, non-judgemental people help greatly. Training employers, supervisors and work peers in how to do this can fast track development of these skills. Support from Aboriginal peers who have culturally derived nonverbal communication skills is usually most comfortable for those with hearing loss. The 'social amplification' involved needs to be enabled and not obstructed by workplace processes. Employment policy and practices that promote this kind of support will improve employment outcomes for the 43% of Indigenous people with hearing loss. You can read more about this in [Listening, Learning and Work](#).

About the authors



[Damien Howard](#)

Damien has worked as a psychologist for over 30 years. He has particular interests in working with Aboriginal people, people living and working in remote cross-cultural contexts and psycho social issues of listening problems (mild hearing loss and auditory processing problems).



[Jody Barney](#)

Jody is a Murri woman from Urangan with kinship to Fraser Island Birri-Gubba and the Gurangi people of Barcaldine. Jody is the first Deaf Aboriginal person to have a business degree in Australia.

## They are at it again, tinkering with your National Relay Service



You will soon be made to register to use the National Relay Service (NRS).

The NRS is a government program that provides a phone service for people who are hearing-impaired or have complex communication needs. The NRS relay officer provides a link for the parties to the call and relays what is said or typed.

### **Compulsory user registration**

The Department of Communications, which has responsibility for the NRS says that users must register if they wish to continue to access the NRS.

The Department says that compulsory registration will make sure that the service is available and resourced for those with a genuine need.

To register to use the NRS, you will need to provide personal information, an ID check and confirmation that you need to use the service. The Department says that this information will:

- allow it to contact users of the NRS as part of future consultations
- help to prevent non-genuine use of the service, including scams and fraud
- ensure that the service continues to meet the needs of users. The number of current users is unknown – information obtained through registration would help ensure that the service meets the needs of users now and in the future.

A Department spokesperson said that the registration process will ask that a person “attests once that they need to use the service” because they are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment. There will not be a need for third party confirmation.

### **Comment**

It is in everyone’s interests that the NRS gives maximum value to the people who need it and that it has the support of the general community. But forced registration is a blunt instrument for learning the identity of users and tackling scams. Forced registration is not a comfortable fit with a principle of equality; and the purpose of the NRS as a crucial, accessible communication service.

The dark undercurrent to this new rule is that people will be obliged to self-identify as a person with disability if they wish to use the NRS.

## Tools that help adults manage their hearing loss

While hearing care professionals are experts in audiology, people with hearing loss are experts about their own hearing challenges. That's why it's necessary for hearing care professionals to involve people with hearing loss in their own care to achieve the best outcomes.

Ida Institute – a not for profit international organisation – has tools to help people with hearing loss prepare for their appointments with an audiologist; and strategies to manage daily life more easily.

Deafness Forum is a member of Ida Institute and supports its vision for person-centred care delivered by empathetic professionals; and of informed consumers who understand, value and expect person-centred care from their service providers.

The tools assist people with hearing loss in voicing challenges and priorities more clearly and upfront in the appointment with their hearing care professional.

The appointment can then more immediately focus on what is most important to the people with hearing loss.

By being prompted to think about and articulate their individual needs, the people with hearing loss become more aware of difficult environments, coping needs, and the effect of their hearing loss on loved ones.

All the tools can be accessed for free at the Ida Institute's [website](#)

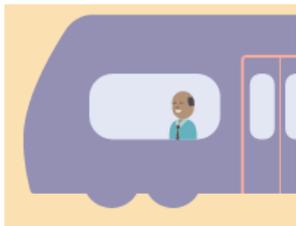


### **Prepare for Your First Appointment**

Prepare for your first appointment with a hearing care professional by organising your thoughts, feelings, and priorities.

### **Prepare for Your Follow-up**

Think about what questions you would like to ask and who else you would like to involve in your treatment.



### **Everyday Life with Hearing Loss**

Explore these tips and tricks to make hearing and communication easier in different real world situations.



### **Manage Your Tinnitus**

Use our tinnitus resources to learn the basics about tinnitus and to describe exactly how it affects you.



### **Managing Hearing Loss at Work**

Use these resources to make your workplace more hearing loss friendly.



# Always Was, Always Will Be.

Always Was, Always Will Be. is the theme for NAIDOC Week from 8 to 15 November 2020.

It recognises that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years.

They are spiritually and culturally connected to country.

This country was criss-crossed by generations of brilliant Nations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were Australia's first explorers, first navigators, first engineers, first farmers, first botanists, first scientists, first diplomats, first astronomers and first artists.

Australia has the world's oldest oral stories. The First Peoples engraved the world's first maps, made the earliest paintings of ceremony and invented unique technologies. They built and engineered structures - structures on Earth - predating well-known sites such as the Egyptian Pyramids and Stonehenge.



NAIDOC 2020 invites all Australians to embrace the true history of this country – a history which dates back thousands of generations.

It's about seeing, hearing and learning the First Nations' 65,000+ year history of this country - which is Australian history. We want all Australians to celebrate that we have the oldest continuing cultures on the planet and to recognise that our sovereignty was never ceded.

Learn more about [NAIDOC Week](#)

Wherever you live, you can take part in NAIDOC Week celebrations. To find out about activities in your area, contact your nearest [Regional Office](#)

## 'Not a sprint, it's a marathon': Disability royal commission to request extension to September 2023

By Maani Truu for [SBS News](#)

The Disability Royal Commission has asked for an almost one-and-a-half-year extension to complete its final report.

Chair Robert Sackville said "The commission is not a sprint, it's a marathon," explaining that it was tasked with investigating violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of people with disability in a wide range of settings.

"The terms of reference are extraordinarily broad, much broader than any royal commission appointed in this country since well before the turn of the 21st century."

Attorney-General Christian Porter announced [plans to amend the royal commission legislation](#) to ensure the confidentiality of witnesses during and beyond the inquiry.



Kerri Mellifont QC, Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission addresses a hearing. Source: AAP



In the photo, Deafblind West Australians held their annual planning day to share ideas for events, projects and advocacy in 2021.

## Know someone who would like to get One in Six?

Drop us a line: [hello@deafnessforum.org.au](mailto:hello@deafnessforum.org.au)

We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay respect to them and their cultures, and to elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the challenge of overcoming high levels of ear health issues among First Nation people and its role in Closing the Gap. We acknowledge the risk to indigenous sign languages of disappearing and the importance of Auslan.

People with disability have and continue to be subjected to isolation, exploitation, violence and abuse in institutions. We thank the Australian Parliament for its bipartisan support of a Royal Commission into the evil committed on people with disability.

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