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## Living with barely any hearing and everyone's wearing a mask

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## Reporting sexual assault: talking to a wall

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## 3M accountable for ear damage to veterans

Lawyers for U.S. defence personnel said the juries have so far awarded more than US\$200 million in damages to service members and veterans, determining that 3M knowingly sold defective earplugs that resulted in life-altering injuries.

## Clinic growth drives research funding

Lions Hearing Clinic in Western Australia has opened five new outlets in the past 12 months to meet growing demand for its range of audiology services. Its revenue grew 9 per cent in the 2020 financial year, 18 per cent in 2021 and is predicted to increase by 8 per cent in the next financial year.



## National Hearing Dog Day

40 years ago on 19 April, the first hearing assistance dog in Australia was delivered to someone suffering profound hearing loss. More at [www.lionshearingdogs.com.au/hearingdogday](http://www.lionshearingdogs.com.au/hearingdogday)

Currently **one in six** Australians suffer from some form of hearing loss. This may increase to one in four by 2050. Access Economics 2006

Deafness Forum Australia is a Voice for All. It is the peak body representing the views and interests of the 4 million Australians who live with hearing loss, have ear or balance disorders, people who also communicate using Australian Sign Language, and their families and supporters. Our mission is to make hearing health & wellbeing a national priority in Australia.

# Living with barely any hearing and everyone's wearing a mask



Fiona Murphy thinks the pandemic has stolen two years from her.

Fiona Murphy has found the pandemic exhausting.

The Australian-based author, poet and essayist was born profoundly deaf in one ear, and is losing her hearing in the other, and since Covid-19 hit, she can no longer rely on lip-reading to communicate with others.

"Without being able to see someone's entire face, it's like a novel, and cutting out part of it, you lose narrative and story when someone's talking to you," Murphy says. "It's hundreds of permutations going through your head. So you're thinking, did they say flaw or more or chore. You're not getting it from facial clues. It's like doing sudoku and a puzzle at the same time."

"Most deaf and hard of hearing people I know have struggled [during the pandemic]. It has been depressing and isolating."

Although some deaf people can use sign language as an alternative form of communication, this is also limited when everyone is in a mask.

"Facial expressions are an essential part of sign language grammar. Mostly, it feels like the last two years have been lost. It has significantly impacted on the ease and comfort of communication."

Murphy is keen to chat about her deafness to raise awareness about what she describes as "a complex social issue".

It is hard enough engaging in a conversation at any time. An experience most of us take for granted leaves her feeling mentally and physically shattered.

“Concentration fatigue, which is also known as listening fatigue, is one reason why deaf people seek out the security and certainty of silence,” she says.

Murphy wants hearing people to know that the world is designed for them. Buildings often have poor acoustics and, for those who can't hear, it takes an incredible amount of brain power to decipher speech.

“The issue is I can hear everything at once. You need two functioning ears to hone in on voice or a sound. Your brain will pick it up and amplify it. Because I've only got one functioning ear, my brain doesn't have enough information to hone in on a voice in a crowd.”

She says even something like a kettle or traffic “feels like a blizzard sometimes”.

“I had constant headaches in my 20s, and I was always exhausted. Even today, I sweat on public transport and at airports, when there is a constant volley of noise and announcements. I already enter those environments on alert and when you think that one in six people have some sort of hearing loss, it shouldn't be like that.”

She is lip-reading as we chat, but she is also looking me straight in the eye. To make things easier, I am sitting in a quiet room and I have enough lighting so there are no shadows on my face.

“This is perfect,” she says

The youngest of four siblings who all hear perfectly, Murphy was in her first year of school when a hearing test revealed she was profoundly deaf in her left ear.

With limited hearing in her right ear, she spent 25 years keeping her deafness a secret from acquaintances and workmates, and avoided all situations that might have worsened her hearing: noisy bars, live music events, social gatherings, and even watching TV.

Her biggest fear then was losing all her hearing, and she did her best to protect the little she had. When she tried hearing aids in her mid-20s, the noise was overwhelming. Hearing aids are often likened to glasses but Murphy felt as though she had been flooded with too much information. “I was just utterly confused and overwhelmed by what I was experiencing.”

When an audiogram at 30 confirmed she had hearing loss in her right ear, the news was so upsetting she cried. It turned out she had the rare genetic condition, otosclerosis, where the bones of her ear – the smallest bones in the human body – ossify or harden.

A year later, her perspective was completely overturned when she learnt to sign.

Mastering Auslan was freeing, and she connected with others in the deaf community.

“[Auslan] just utterly changed my entire perspective of myself, and it opened up another world. Constantly mulling over and decoding language isn't present when I'm signing.

“My brain opened up. I wasn't having to focus at such an intense level.”

Murphy says embracing her deafness means the prospect of being completely deaf no longer bothers her.

Fiona Murphy is the author of the memoir, *The Shape of Sound*. From [Stuff](#)

# Anthony Albanese's first campaign promise is to help children with hearing loss

By [Lauren Ferri](#) for [news.com.au](#)



Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese has made his first promise to Australian voters as he campaigns to become the country's 31st prime minister.

Australian children struggling with hearing loss will have greater access to expert care under a Labor government, with a plan to extend the support service nationwide, the Mr Albanese promised.

Mr Albanese vowed to provide \$1.5 million to fund the development of the digital Hearhub platform which is run by Shepherd Centres.

Shepherd Centres provides support services which help hearing-impaired children develop speech and communication proficiency, life skills and emotional resilience.

Hearhub will provide hearing tests, educational resources and practical support for families online, which will benefit children with hearing loss and related communication difficulties such as autism spectrum disorder, a media release from the Labor campaign said.

In addition to the online offerings, Hearhub would also expand the Shepherd Centres into rural and regional areas under the plan - the new Shepherd Centres would be in Launceston and Hobart, a first for Tasmania. They will have \$2.5 million in funding, while an additional \$2.5 million will go to a new Shepherd Centre in Oran Park in Sydney's Macarthur region.

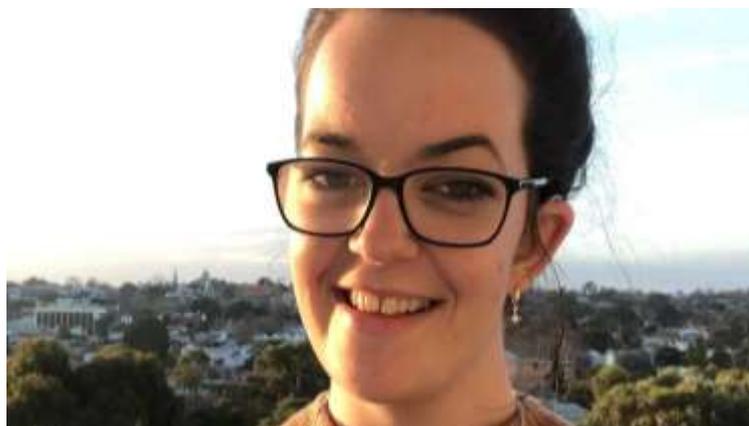
Mr Albanese said children with hearing loss deserve the "best possible start in life", which begins with care and support.

"A Labor government will ensure our kids are looked after, whether through digital or on-the-ground support services. No child will be left behind," he said.

Labor's health and ageing spokesman Mark Butler said the Morrison government has ignored the issues for "too long".

# Reporting sexual assault is like ‘talking to a wall’

[The Guardian](#)



The Disability Royal Commission heard of the difficulties deaf women face when reporting sexual abuse and assault. Photograph: Andrew Brownbill/AAP

When Catherine Dunn told a university wellbeing officer she had been sexually assaulted, a lack of appropriate services left her feeling like she was “talking to a wall”.

Dunn, who is deaf, was assaulted as a teenager at a party and at a university, where she was a resident.

She told the royal commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability, of the barriers faced by deaf women when reporting sexual abuse.

“I felt like I was just talking to a wall when I went to access services,” she said of her university experience.

“I also didn’t have an interpreter there, so I was forced to speak.

“The wellbeing officer that I spoke with had no understanding of my cultural history of being a deaf woman and it really wasn’t worth pursuing.”

Dunn told the commission she didn’t report her assault as a teenager to police.

She was living away from her family’s country Victoria home and was attending a school in Melbourne.

“When the assault occurred I thought: ‘Where can I go? Who can I tell?’ My parents live very far away from me. I use Auslan to communicate,’” she said.

“At the time I also didn’t have the words or the language to describe what occurred and who I was as a person. For me, wellbeing just wasn’t supported or acknowledged.

“And the support at school was not enough.”

The royal commission has previously been told almost half of all women with disability will experience physical violence during their lives. About 48% will experience physical violence, compared with 27% for women without disability.

# Hearing Australia: new chair appointed



Elizabeth Crouch AM is the new Chair of Hearing Australia.

Ms Crouch served on the Hearing Australia Board since September 2020, and has been acting Chair since December 2021. Elizabeth is the Emeritus Deputy Chancellor of Macquarie University. She spent 16 years with the Government including with Federal Health and more than a decade in the private sector.

Minister for Government Services Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds said, "This appointment reaffirms the government's commitment to ensuring Hearing Australia has the necessary leadership to continue delivering high quality services for Australians with hearing loss".

Deafness Forum Australia's chair David Brady welcomed the news on behalf of consumers.

"I would like to thank Minister Reynolds for making such an excellent appointment.

"Elizabeth Crouch is eminently qualified and will be an enormous asset to Hearing Australia in its important work. We look forward to working with her, and with managing director Kim Terrell and his team in the future."

## Full Volume

A new Bluetooth-related software bug plaguing Tesla owners is causing their car stereos to unexpectedly blast at full volume, in a risk to safe driving and possibly even their physical wellbeing.

"Please issue an emergency fix on this bug that turns the volume up all the way on Bluetooth," Twitter account WholeMarsBlog pleaded with Tesla CEO Elon Musk. "You are damaging users' hearing. The volume should never go from silent to 100 percent."



"There's a bug in either the latest Tesla update or iOS version that occasionally resumes music at the absolute maximum stereo volume that not only destroys my ears but maybe my speakers too."

Musk acknowledged the issue. "First I've learned of this," he replied. "Will be patched shortly." It's yet another instance of customer support being fulfilled by the CEO himself via vague tweets — which, while it's a chaotic strategy, does demonstrate Musk's hands-on interest in the product.

# Lifetime achievement award for Bob Cowan

World-renowned hearing expert Professor Bob Cowan has been awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award for Contribution to Industry-Research Collaboration by Cooperative Research Australia (CRA) at its Excellence in Innovation Awards at Parliament House in Canberra.

Professor Cowan, a University of Melbourne Professorial Research Fellow and Managing Director of HEARnet Clinical Studies, led the Australian Government-funded HEARing Cooperative Research Centres from 1992 to 2019, bringing together industry, public sector, and university collaborators.

He has been recognised for his ground-breaking work over three decades in raising awareness of the economic costs and benefits of addressing prevention and improved remediation of hearing loss in children, adults and the aged. Under Professor Cowan's leadership, CRC technology outcomes have supported Cochlear Ltd's world-leading position, and been applied commercially in fitting half the world's hearing aids, improved hearing in noise for iPhones, protection of hearing of call-centre operators, and automated diagnostic testing for infants.



Together with the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), he initiated a world-unique longitudinal cohort study of infants with hearing loss (LOCHI) confirming benefits of newborn screening and early device fitting. Under NAL, LOCHI continues as a legacy study of HEARing CRC.

Professor Cowan has created a lasting legacy in workforce capacity, investing HEARing CRC commercial revenues to embed 72 PhDs with industry and clinical partners, including Cochlear and hospital services across Australia.

He established a Specialist Certificate in Biomedical Research Management at the University of Melbourne to equip academics and professionals with research management skills and ensured these skills were taught to HEARing CRC graduate students. As a leader with Audiology Australia, he brought two World Congresses of Audiology to Australia, and initiated HEARnet Learning as an on-line professional education program translating research outcomes into clinical practice.

Professor Cowan has published more than 140 papers in the fields of audiology, cochlear implants and biomedical management, and holds several Australian and international patents.

On receiving the award, Professor Cowan said, "It's a huge honour to accept this award, both for myself and for the many wonderful colleagues from industry, university, hospital, healthcare and early intervention services, all of whom put their hearts and minds into improving hearing loss prevention and healthcare services."

We are privileged to be able to say that Professor Cowan is a long-standing member of Deafness Forum Australia.



There are 3.6 million Australians living with hearing loss and, with an ageing population, this figure is predicted to increase to almost 9 million by 2050. **Read Our Lips Australia** is an online learning program designed to improve lipreading ability so users can have more confidence to communicate in different settings, removing their isolation and vulnerability to mental health concerns.

**Read Our Lips Australia** has been created by experienced lipreading instructors and guides users through online modules at their own pace to identify key mouth movements. Identifying and understanding lip movements is a skill that can be improved with regular practice, time and patience.

For more information visit [www.readourlips.com.au](http://www.readourlips.com.au)

## Become a member of Deafness Forum

An individual member of Deafness Forum of Australia can be person who has a hearing impairment, is Deaf, a member of their family, or someone who provides services such as teachers, researchers, audiologists, etc.

New memberships for people under 26 years or a parent or guardian are free for the first calendar year. To join, download and complete a membership [application form](#).

Annual membership fees for organisations start at \$100. Download a membership [application form](#)

More info at <https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/about-us/become-a-member/>

## 3M owes US Army veteran \$50m for hearing loss



A U.S. federal court ruled in favour of the US Army veteran in a trial over 3M's combat earplugs. PHOTO: REUTERS

FLORIDA - A US\$50 million jury verdict against 3M - the largest compensatory damages award to date in legal trials over the company's combat earplugs - came down in favour of a US Army veteran in a federal court in Florida.

Luke Vilsmeier's was the 12th test trial in the massive, consolidated litigation over subsidiary Aearo Technologies' Combat Arms version 2 earplugs in the US District Court for the Northern District of Florida. Jury verdicts now stand at seven for service members and five for 3M, which has an appeal pending on key issues.

Lawyers for the service members said the juries so far "have awarded more than US\$200 million in damages to US service members and veterans, determining that 3M knowingly sold defective earplugs that resulted in life-altering injuries".

"It is clear 3M's defences - whether in the courts, to investors, or the public - are unconvincing and without merit," the lead plaintiffs' counsel said in an emailed statement.

The judge overseeing the litigation "has ordered parties to prepare nearly 1,000 cases for trial this year, and considering how juries have responded in these cases, we look forward to trying them across the country to fully hold 3M accountable for the damage they have caused to those who served our nation", the lawyers said.

3M said in a statement, "We are disappointed with today's verdict and will appeal. The same issues raised in our earlier appeals relating to legal defences and evidentiary rulings apply in this trial."

"We remain confident in our case and will continue to defend ourselves vigorously in the remaining trials," it said.

# NATIONAL HEARING DOG DAY

Tuesday April 19th, 2022



National Hearing Dog Day will be held for the first time on Tuesday 19 April 2022.

On this day 40 years ago, the first Hearing Assistance Dog in Australia was delivered to someone suffering profound hearing loss.

More at [www.lionshearingdogs.com.au/hearingdogday](http://www.lionshearingdogs.com.au/hearingdogday)



Chloe and Rae in a selfie to show their support for National Hearing Dog Day.

Rae (Raelene Walker) is a member of the Board of Deafness Forum Australia. She is an academic specialist and pastoral care support Teacher of the Deaf at Perth's Shenton College Deaf Education Centre.

# Calling all music lovers, musicians and singers!

MED-EL announces a global music event.

“Virtual Voices & Band” is a global event where hearing implant users from all over the world will perform a song together online. It doesn't matter what instrument they play or how well they sing (including those who just love to singing along to the radio) — anyone can be part of Virtual Voices & Band.

Recipients of any hearing implant type or brand are welcome to join this exciting online event.

When is it? It will take place online in October 2022.

[Register here](#) to get more information and updates via email.

## Research into the role of technology in the COVID-19 vaccination response

[Centre for Inclusive Design](#) is doing research commissioned by the [Australia Digital Health Agency](#) into the role of digital technology in accessing the COVID-19 vaccine and information about the vaccine.

The aim of this research is to understand what worked and what didn't to improve the delivery of health services in the future.

### **Who are we looking for:**

NDIS participants, multicultural communities (including refugees, students, newly arrived people), people who have experienced homelessness, older people in the community, those experiencing domestic/family violence, immunocompromised people, young people in and out of residential care.

**Where:** We will be running In-person and online workshops for people who live in Melbourne, Gold Coast, Broken Hill, Illawarra, Sydney, Bendigo.

**When:** From 21 April to 19 May 2022.

**What you will be doing:** We want to hear about your experiences with accessing information about the COVID-19 vaccine and booking the vaccine. You will work with other people from the community in the workshops facilitated by research team staff.

**Duration:** 3 hours per In-person workshop (breaks included) **Or** 2 hours for Online meeting.

This is a paid opportunity (\$50 Visa gift card per hour).

The researchers are keen to work with you because of your lived experience in the last two years and want those experiences to shape a future with more equitable access to health outcomes.

If you are interested in participating, please [click here to register your interest](#).

Email [gabriela.martin@cfid.org.au](mailto:gabriela.martin@cfid.org.au) if you have any questions or comments.

# Clinic growth drives research funding



By Madeleine Stephens, **COMMUNITY & ARTS**



Lize Coetzee is the chief operating officer at Ear Science Institute Australia. *Photo: David Henry*

Lions Hearing Clinic in Western Australia has opened five new outlets in the past 12 months to meet growing demand for its range of audiology services.

Lions Hearing Clinic is the patient-facing allied health arm of not-for-profit medical research organisation Ear Science Institute Australia, founded in 2001 by surgeon and scientist Marcus Atlas.

Chief operating officer Lize Coetzee said research had indicated many people needed hearing care but were yet to access it.

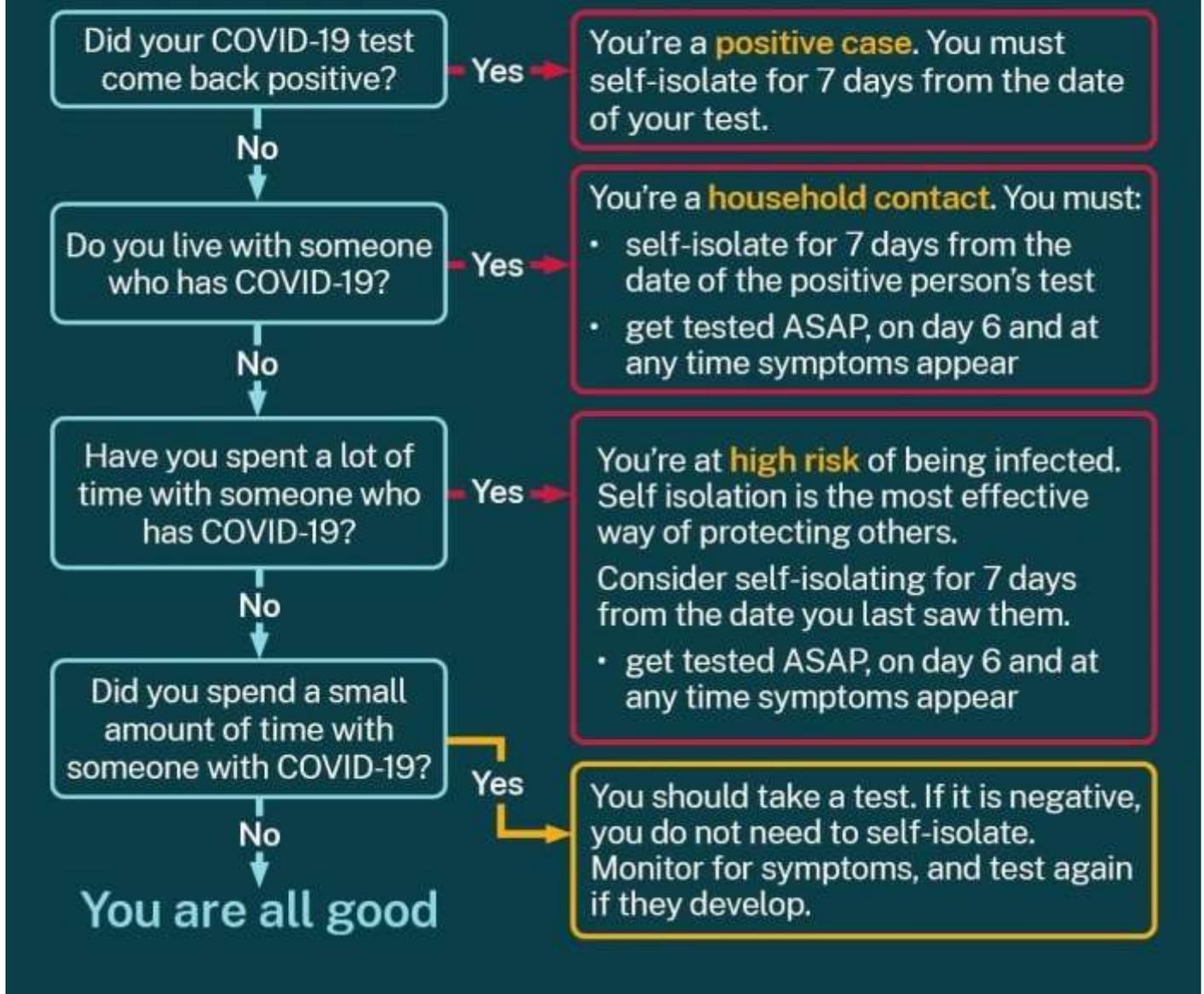
“We know the prevalence of hearing loss is one in six, and one in four if you look at people over the age of 65, but the amount of people who actually take action on their hearing loss is still very low. The research shows us that it takes about nine years for people who think they have hearing loss to actually action it.”

Lions Hearing Clinic’s revenue grew 9 per cent in the 2020 financial year, 18 per cent in 2021 and is predicted to increase by 8 per cent in the 2022 financial year.

Its Gift of Hearing fundraiser reached \$1 million in 2021.

# Exposed to COVID-19?

## Here's what you need to do



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

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

Contact us to receive this publication in an alternative file type.

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