



**Extreme staff turnover
in remote health services.**

**Regulating the
Audiology Profession.**

Primary health care funding models do not adequately resource remote services.

The Menzies School of Health Research has uncovered a staff turnover rate of 151% each year, on average, in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service clinics in regional and remote Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Published in *Human Resources for Health*, the [study](#) also revealed that turnover of Aboriginal staff was half that of non-Aboriginal staff.

The participating Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service clinics provide care to about 63,500 Aboriginal people living in 30 communities.

Staff turnover increased with remoteness. It highlighted that the cost-of-service delivery is already high in very remote locations, and staff turnover adds to this expense. Turnover and poor retention of staff also results in heavy human resources impacts on remote services.

Due to this, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service have an increased reliance on short-term agency and locum staff, and turnover regularly redirects resources into costly and time-consuming recruitment and orientation of new staff. The study highlighted current primary health care funding models do not adequately resource remote services for these higher costs.

It also raised the urgent need for more equitable, needs-based funding.

Reducing staff turnover enhances interpersonal continuity of care, preserves valuable local knowledge, fosters trusting relationships between patients and their [health care providers](#) and improves cultural safety of care.

Greater employment of Aboriginal staff could help stabilise staffing in remote health clinics. However, this requires expanded training opportunities on Country to enable local Aboriginal people to enter the health workforce and pursue improved career pathways.

Menzies School of Health Research, Dr. Prabhakar Veginadu says, "This paper uncovered that [turnover](#) is very high in regional centres and extraordinarily high in remote Aboriginal health services.

"Increased employment of local Aboriginal people could help improve the stability of the remote health workforce while simultaneously improving cultural safety for patients, as Aboriginal people bring strong understanding of local culture and context. This requires increased supports and training pathways to build the capacity of Aboriginal people."

Professor Alan Cass says, "Growing our own local and skilled workforce is the best way to meet the health needs of communities across the NT.

[Menzies School of Health Research](#)



Join the Online Summit: Be a Champion for Children's Hearing Health.

Did you know that certain infections and medications can put young children's hearing at risk?

Whether you're a parent, healthcare professional, educator, or advocate, this is an issue we can all champion. Join us online on **15 November 2024, from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM (AEST)** for an essential conversation about how we can prevent hearing loss in children.

The **National Deafness Sector Summit** is about **"Protecting Young Ears: Navigating Disease & Medication Risks."**

As a virtual event, it is open to everyone, will highlight key issues affecting children's hearing health: Congenital Cytomegalovirus (CMV) and aminoglycoside antibiotics - two often-overlooked risks that can have lasting effects if not properly managed.

This summit marks the first in an ongoing series of events aimed at addressing important hearing health topics and issues that affect the deaf and hearing loss communities.

Why CMV and Antibiotics Matter for Hearing Health

CMV is a leading cause of congenital hearing loss, yet it's often overlooked during pregnancy. Likewise, while antibiotics save lives, the use of certain types - especially aminoglycosides - can damage hearing yet there are currently no broad risk mitigations for such a serious, life changing adverse effect.

What to Expect

At this summit, you'll hear from paediatricians, top researchers from organisations like Cerebral Palsy Alliance and Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and a parent sharing their personal journey with CMV. You'll have the opportunity to ask questions, share your experiences, and gain knowledge to help protect children's hearing.

Our speakers include:

- Dr. Duaa Gaafar, Paediatrician, Royal Children's Hospital & Honorary Research Fellow, Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- Kath Swinburn, Research Officer & Ethics Governance Manager; and Hayley Smithers-Sheedy, Senior Research Fellow, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, The University of Sydney
- Pam Rogers, Disability Advocate and devoted mother

Who Should Attend?

This event is perfect for: parents and caregivers; healthcare providers; educators; advocacy groups; researchers; and anyone interested in childhood health and preventative hearing health.

Don't Miss Out!

Join us for this this unique opportunity to learn from experts and make a difference in the lives of children. Captioning and Auslan interpreters will be provided to ensure accessibility.

Register [here](#).



DEAFNESS FORUM AUSTRALIA

oneinsix



Sydney Trains and members of the Deaf community are developing an advanced, artificial intelligence-powered signing avatar that can automatically translate audio announcements into Auslan.

For Deaf people, train travel can be a gamble. On an average day, nothing goes wrong: they catch their train to their destination and carry on with their business.

But when something out of the ordinary happens, the situation can quickly get scary, because most updates are only delivered by audio announcements.

A Deaf traveller may miss their train because it was moved to a different platform, or watch as their station whizzes by because the train isn't stopping there today. They may also remain on a train carriage in an emergency after everyone else has evacuated, and have to be rescued by station staff.

Every single one of these examples has been drawn from the real life experiences of Deaf people in Sydney. But my colleagues and I are working with Sydney Trains and members of the

Australian Deaf community to develop an advanced, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered signing avatar which can automatically translate audio announcements into Auslan.

Our work on the avatar also builds towards the next step: developing AI systems which can “understand” Auslan.

Journeys don't always go to plan

Earlier this year, my colleagues and I ran a pilot study with three Deaf train travellers in Sydney. As well as the stories they shared about what can go wrong during train travel, we learned they use tried and tested strategies for making their journeys go smoothly.

Their strategies might be familiar to regular commuters. For example, they would plan their journeys with an app, arrive early and look for signage to let them know if anything had changed.

But they also said they felt they needed to stand near information screens to watch for updates, and ask station staff or other passengers for information when the situation had changed.

They also reported being hypervigilant while on the train, watching to make sure they don't miss their stop.

But these strategies didn't always ensure Deaf travellers received important information, including about emergencies. For example, while usually helpful, station staff were sometimes too busy to assist.

The greatest frustration came in situations where other passengers weren't willing or able to provide information, leaving our Deaf travellers to just "follow the crowd". This often meant ending up in the wrong place.

Developing a signing avatar

Speech-to-text software might seem like an easy solution to some of these problems. But for many Deaf people, English is not their native language and Auslan can be processed far more easily and quickly.

Our Deaf travellers told us that, in a perfect world, they would want live interpreters. However, automatic, AI-powered translation using a signing avatar displayed on a platform or train screen which could identify key words in an audio announcement, generate a sentence with correct Auslan grammar, and stitch together the corresponding signs from our vocabulary library was appealing for a number of reasons.

First, it allows for real-time translation of announcements that use known vocabulary — which is relevant in the trains-and-stations context, where many announcements cover similar topics.

Second, an avatar and its signing can be customised to the needs of a given situation, such as using information about screen location to ensure the avatar signs in the right direction while pointing out exits or other platforms.

Third, multiple signers can contribute signs to an avatar's vocabulary, which can then be smoothly stitched together to make a sentence.

And importantly, an avatar means no real person has to be the "face" of an organisation's automatically generated announcements. This is particularly important because the Australian Deaf community is small and close knit, and if something goes wrong with the translation, nobody suffers any reputational damage.

From a technical point of view, an avatar also allows us to ensure a minimum quality threshold for signing. We're using motion capture to make sure each sign in our vocabulary library is accurate, and movements are clear.

It also helps us avoid the "uncanny valley" — an effect where something human-like but subtly wrong is unsettling. We don't want any of the many-fingered monstrosities you may have seen recently generated by AI.

AI for everyone

This work is one step in our broader aim of creating an AI system which can understand Auslan. This AI could be used to help Deaf and hearing station staff converse, or to create "chatbot booths" or app-based assistants that would allow Deaf people to get information on demand in Auslan about their train journeys or other daily tasks.

Sign languages and Deaf cultures around the world have nuances and complexities that hearing researchers and developers of AI may not be aware of. These nuances and complexities must be embedded in new technologies, and researchers and developers must take a language-first approach to AI data collection and design *with* — not just for — Deaf people.

Only then will AI meet Deaf people's real needs: to ensure their safety and independence in every aspect of daily life.

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AirPods Missing Hearing Health Features in Australia



Apple's latest AirPods Pro 2, released last month, comes with innovative hearing health features that are not available in Australia due to pending regulatory approval.

The features, which include a hearing test and a clinical-grade hearing aid capability, are priced at \$399 and have been launched in many countries, including New Zealand.



Despite their availability in the United States and Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom are still awaiting regulatory clearance.

In the US, the AirPods Pro 2 also includes a hearing protection feature to minimise exposure to loud environmental noise.

Apple has yet to confirm if it has sought approval for these features in Australia. Former competitive shooter Kit Laughlin expressed his disappointment, saying that he purchased the AirPods Pro 2 in anticipation of using the hearing health functionalities to assist with his hearing difficulties. He said he found the AirPods socially acceptable and less stigmatising than traditional hearing aids.



Kit Laughlin says he purchased the AirPods Pro 2 to help with his hearing difficulties. Photo: Kit Laughlin.

Meanwhile, Apple continues to emphasise the importance of these hearing health features. Apple's vice president of health, Dr Sumbul Desai, and the WHO's technical lead for hearing, Dr Shelly Chadha, have stated that such technologies are crucial in democratising access to treatment for hearing impairments, affecting over a billion people globally. While traditional hearing aids in Australia can cost between \$1,300 and \$6,500, AirPods Pro 2 are priced at under \$400.

Previously, features such as the Apple Watch's sleep apnea notification and ECG functionality also experienced significant delays due to the rigorous local regulatory approval processes. This can be disappointing for early adopters (purchasers) but is not necessarily a bad thing.

Read the full article, [AirPods missing hearing health features in Australia](#).

Inspiring the Next Generation: Ear Science Institute in the East Pilbara.

In Western Australia's remote East Pilbara, the Ear Science Institute Australia's 'Healthy Hearing Outback' team significantly impacts young Aboriginal people's health and future careers.

Through a unique work experience initiative supported by Cochlear Ltd and the Rural Health West Outreach program, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, local youth are being introduced to the world of healthcare and audiology.



This initiative offers students from the Jigalong Remote Community School firsthand experience in clinical settings, opening up new employment and educational opportunities in the healthcare sector.



So far, the program has welcomed four students, with one young participant already expressing aspirations to pursue nursing. This experience gives them a real taste of clinical life and sparks interest in healthcare careers.

The outreach doesn't stop there. Plans are underway to bring students and teachers to Perth, broadening their exposure to the professional world of ear and hearing care far beyond their classroom walls.

The experience emphasises health education, teaching children and families about the importance of ear and hearing health. This effort is resonating within the community.

When asked what they should always check during a math lesson, students enthusiastically responded, "Check your ears!" While it wasn't the answer she expected, the message is clearly getting through.

Through this initiative, the Ear Science Institute Australia is enhancing health outcomes and planting seeds for a healthy, educated and inspired generation in East Pilbara.



Strengthening Trust and Safety with National Registration.

Australia's State and Territory Health Ministers are considering options for regulating the audiology profession.

Comprehensive knowledge and expertise in managing the complex nature of deafness and hearing loss is critical across all hearing health practitioners. The public is at risk if other vulnerabilities are not recognised and addressed as part of hearing health services.

Hearing loss and deafness are often identified at vulnerable points in life, such as when a child is newly born or during advanced age, when cognitive decline may be present. Hearing loss is often a symptom of a broader health condition and can coexist with other disabilities.

Protecting the public from unsafe practice is our priority

Deafness Forum Australia is committed to supporting the registration of audiologists and audiometrists in Australia under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, emphasising the benefits it would bring to public safety.

Earlier this year, Australia's Health Ministers commissioned a report to explore the level of regulatory intervention necessary for hearing healthcare offered by audiologists. Under investigation was whether audiology should

become a registered profession, meaning that every Australian audiology practitioner would be subject to monitoring and enforcement of uniform standards through thorough audits, investigations, and penalties.

Supporting Audiologists and Audiometrists

Deafness Forum Australia values the expertise and dedication of audiology and audiometry professionals. We aim to further support these practitioners by advocating for a structured registration process that ensures ongoing quality and recognition for qualified practitioners.

Regulation presents an opportunity to strengthen trust between individual consumers and their chosen audiology professionals. Building this trust can enhance the support for individuals experiencing hearing loss and deafness, ensuring they receive the necessary care and assistance they need.

Non-Zero-Sum Gain

The challenge in making a case for registering audiologists and audiometrists in Australia under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme is that opponents see it as a competitive, win-lose scenario.

It's not.

We believe that all parties will benefit - the community, the profession, device retailers and governments. It's a win-win for Australia.

Ensuring Consumer Safety: Why Protected Titles Are Important

Currently, audiologists are self-regulated, meaning their title is not legally protected, which could leave consumers more vulnerable to unqualified practitioners.

Implementing registration would legally protect the use of practitioner titles such as "audiologist" or "audiometrist", ensuring that only those who meet mandatory qualifications and standards can use them.

In Australia, titles like "physiotherapist" and "doctor" are legally protected under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS), managed by AHPRA*, meaning only qualified professionals can use these titles. Without similar protections for titles like "audiologist" or "audiometrist", there is a risk that someone could use these titles without the necessary qualifications, which could harm consumer safety. * The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, aka AHPRA, protects the public by regulating Australia's registered health practitioners.

AHPRA's system includes a national register for protected titles, allowing consumers to verify credentials and report unregistered practitioners. This also allows for a national consistent complaint pathway. While Australian Consumer Law offers some protection against misleading claims, AHPRA's registration system provides stronger safeguards by ensuring professionals meet national standards and are monitored for ongoing competence.

State healthcare complaint mechanisms currently offer limited safeguards. A code of conduct exists for all unregistered healthcare practitioners, but being state specific, suspended individuals could move interstate and continue to practice.

Self-Regulation: limited scope

Because audiology is a self-regulated profession, qualified audiometrists and

audiologists may opt into being regulated through membership of a professional body. Professional bodies will accredit their members if they complete prescribed and ongoing education and work hours, but there is no legal requirement to be a member of a professional body, and accreditation is primarily recognised for public and private health funding purposes.

The professional bodies can only investigate complaints about their members. If misconduct is proven, the professional bodies can only counsel and train them, and if needed, terminate their membership. Professional bodies can't prevent non-members or those who commit misconduct from delivering hearing services; and they can't influence anyone who is not a member.

The right to complain can be a complex pathway

The process of making a complaint can be complex and time consuming and therefore, a disincentive to raising concerns. Determining which complaint mechanism to use requires understanding of various complaint authorities, and those who start a complaint process with one authority may be told to take their complaint elsewhere. Complaints against a business require a complaint to Fair Trading (different names apply in different states) or The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

The registration of audiologists and audiometrists in Australia under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme could simplify the complaint process for consumers. With a centralised registry, such as AHPRA's, consumers can more easily verify credentials and navigate the complaint system, allowing for a more straightforward and effective way to address grievances.

Mandatory registration for many healthcare professionals in Australia

Registered healthcare professionals in Australia are regulated under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). Only professionals listed on that register are allowed, by law, to use

the title of that profession. For example, anyone who uses the title optometrists in Australia must, by law, be on the national register.

Registration of health professions under the NRAS offers assurance to the public that the practitioner has met consistent national standards. Numerous health professions are already regulated this way, including occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, and podiatry as well as medical doctors and nurses.

National Registration and Accreditation requires professionals to hold recognised qualifications and renew their registration annually and requires them to participate in ongoing professional education.

The public can search for registered healthcare professionals through the Australian Healthcare Practitioner Regulation Agency website.

Complaints against registered professionals are investigated by the relevant appointed board. Mandatory registration for health practitioners ensures standards through meaningful penalties for unprofessional conduct. Penalties can include suspension or deregistration, meaning that the person cannot practice that profession any longer anywhere in Australia.

Deafness Forum Australia's Position

Protecting the public from unprofessional practice is a priority for Deafness Forum Australia.

Deafness Forum Australia supports the registration of audiologists and audiometrists under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, emphasising the benefits it would bring to public safety.

We believe that registration would enable the public to trust that they will receive services from suitably qualified professionals, registered with a national body and to have a transparent and simplified complaints pathway when they do not.

Mandatory Professional Registration benefits all Australians.

We want consumers to trust audiology and audiometry services in the same way they trust others who provide their healthcare, such as general practitioners, nurses, or optometrists.

Mandatory professional registration would mean that the public could trust the titles audiologist and audiometrist, so that anyone calling themselves an audiologist must have university qualifications in audiology. Audiologists achieve a Masters' level qualification to provide their primary care role.

Audiometrists complete a range of certifications, including to diploma level, and conduct hearing tests across a range of settings.

Currently, there is the potential for public and health professional confusion about the expected role of the two professions.

Without registration and title protection, there is no mechanism to address this. (Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – Scope of Practice Review Final Report, Oct 2024)

Mandatory registration will offer more accessible information about each registered audiologist or audiometrist via an online search of a single government-maintained website.

A simplified complaints pathway that applies to all registered professionals will be open to consumers.

Anecdotal evidence suggests practitioners would value registration and hope to affirm their professional status through the same mechanism that recognises their colleagues in other healthcare professions.

Being registered will provide audiologists and audiometrists with formal acknowledgment of their qualifications and competence. We believe that audiologists and audiometrists will gain professional credibility and recognition from other healthcare professionals as fellow registered practitioners.

Latest Development

State and Territory Health Ministers have commissioned further consultation and modelling to inform final consideration and decision about the future regulation of audiology.

We do not know if registration of all audiologists and audiometrists was recommended to the Health Ministers. It is possible that the Health Ministers have entertained the idea of regulation for only some audiologists, such as those offering diagnostic or implant services for infants.

As the peak citizen representative body, we do *not* support only partial registration of some audiologists. We believe that every Australian, regardless of their age or associated condition or disability, deserves a new and robust system to ensure professional hearing services. Further, a partial registration model will make regulation and complaints processes even more complicated than they are now.

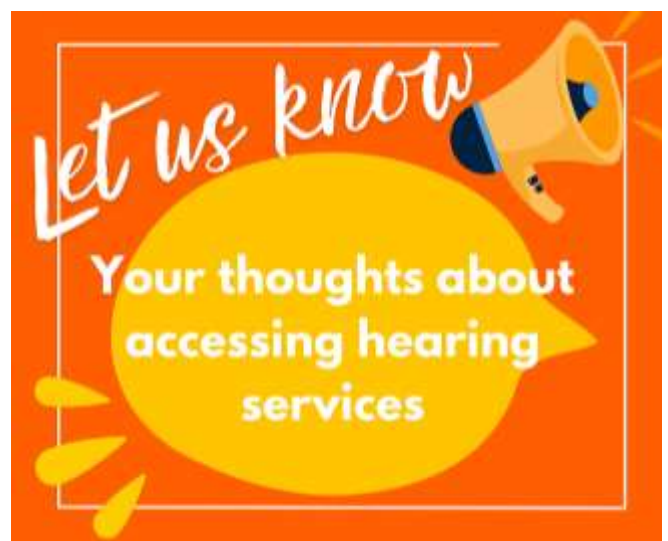
The Health Ministers' inquiry is set to resume this month, with limited opportunities to contribute to decisions. Invited stakeholders will be consulted about costs, implementation, risks, and impacts on First Nations communities. We were advised that the consultation process would include interviews with select stakeholders. All other stakeholders would be invited to provide input via a public process hosted on the Queensland Health website. The findings are to be presented at the next Health Ministers Ministerial Council meeting in early 2025.

Deafness Forum Australia is committed to bringing the consumer voice to the decision-making. **Your** lived experience as consumers, how you have engaged with audiologists, audiometrists or others in the hearing services in hospitals, school, private, commercial or government settings, is important and deserves attention.

Your voice can make a difference – share your views with Deafness Forum Australia

Deafness Forum invites you to tell your story – in confidence – about your experiences receiving care from hearing care providers. We will convey your collective experience to decision makers.

Service providers, your experience and views matter too. Deafness Forum invites you to share your perspective so that we can understand the issues from all perspectives.



There are two surveys.

To share your lived experience as a user of hearing services, please complete our online survey before 30 November 2024.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R8ZX6CV>

The survey is designed to find out more about your lived experience and opinion of regulation for audiologists and audiometrists.

The second survey is for people in the profession

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RLVWL76>

We invite you to contribute your experiences, knowledge, and opinions through our anonymous survey to help us better understand the potential benefits and challenges of mandatory professional registration.

Direct ENT Referrals from Audiologists.

A review commissioned by the Australian Government has proposed that audiologists and speech pathologists be allowed to refer patients directly to Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) specialists, bypassing GP referrals.

This recommendation is part of the newly released 'Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce - Scope of Practice Review'.

The review examined the barriers and incentives health professionals face working to their full scope of practice in primary care and identified what helps or hinders them from collaborating effectively in team-based care.

The review received numerous examples showing that GPs often need advice from other health professionals, like audiologists, to fill out the required referral forms for specialist doctors. This is especially true in specialised areas, where GPs lack expertise. Many GPs believe that their role in managing these referrals is crucial to prevent too many unnecessary specialist visits. Patient feedback suggests that these administrative steps are often seen as pointless and frustrating, significantly hindering access to care.

Download [Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce - Scope of Practice Review](#).

Enhancing Clarity and Accountability

The review points to the need for clarity about the roles of audiologists and audiometrists. It noted that implementing title protection and registration is essential. It would clarify their distinct roles and responsibilities, making it easier for the public and other health professionals to understand the specific functions each plays.

It is recommended that title protection and a registration system be established to clearly define and differentiate these roles.

Access to ENTs and Other Health Professionals

Patients – and most concerningly, children – can wait up to a year to see an ENT.

Workforce shortages in the health sector are a widespread and enduring issue, affecting both the accessibility and quality of healthcare. Shortages stem from a growing demand for healthcare services driven by an aging population, more complex health needs, a constrained supply due to an aging workforce, and obstacles in education and training.

In addition to the current review into regulating audiologists, other current health reform initiatives by the Australian Government aim to enhance the stability and sustainability of the health workforce.

- A review of complexity within the National Regulation and Accreditation Scheme
- A review of accreditation systems within the National Regulation and Accreditation Scheme (the Woods Review).
- Streamlining the entry process for overseas-trained health practitioners into practice (the Kruk Review).
- Workforce distribution levers and enhancing consumer access to general practitioners (the Working Better for Medicare Review).
- Implementing various national and state/territory medical, nursing, and allied health workforce plans.

Although these investigations are distinct and focus on different areas, the findings and recommendations from each must be considered collectively to drive system-level changes and develop an adaptable, flexible, and responsive primary care system.

Culturally Safe Hearing Services.



Hearing Australia provides culturally safe services for First Nations children to ensure they can listen, learn and stay connected to community and culture throughout their lives.

Hearing Australia professionals will check their hearing for free if your child is under six years old.

You can book an appointment at your local Aboriginal Medical Service or book online at www.hearing.com.au/bookings

The hearing assessment program is an initiative of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are not yet attending full-time school are eligible to be seen in the years before primary school.

All services provided under this program are free of charge. A hearing check includes several age-appropriate tests of hearing and middle ear function.



Do you shop at Woolies and have a disability? Want to work at Woolworths or have previous work experience in retail as a person with disability?

If you've answered yes to one or both questions, register your interest (it will take two minutes) to join an online focus group to share your experiences and ideas!

[AFDO](http://afdo.org.au), is running these focus groups.

When: Dates in mid November to mid December 2024, during and after business hours (AEDT)

Where: Online, via Zoom

\$: Participants will be paid \$60 per hour for their time.

Spots are limited, so sign up today!

Register at <https://buff.ly/4ebOgUI>

Bridging Fiji's Auditory Care Gap.

“I hope the Ministry of Health and Medical Services can send an Ear Nose Throat specialist once a month to Labasa so that patients can get the help they need.”



While the ears are important organs, the majority of residents in parts of Fiji do not know how to take care of them, says audiometrist Nasif Mohammed of Australia.

During his two days of screening in Labasa Town recently, he had attended to 40 patients: the youngest was a four year old while the eldest was 80. Labasa is a town in the north-eastern part of Fiji with a population of 28,500.

He said most of the patients suffered mismanagement of the ear such as perforated ear drum, ear infection, ear canal blocked with ear wax, scar tissue, some having ear discharge and unable to clean it the right way.

“I have been told that there is no audiometrist in the north and patients who need medical advice travel to Suva. I hope the Ministry of Health and Medical Services can send an Ear Nose Throat specialist once a month to Labasa so that patients can get the help they need.”

He saw a female patient with hearing impairment, sitting down feeling depressed in the clinic.

While describing the treatment he provided, tears rolled down from his eyes, the patient leapt with joy after hearing voices with the support of a hearing aid.



Nasif Mohammed of Australia (far right), and his colleagues in Labasa Town.

He also saw students with hearing problems from Labasa School for Special Education.

“Some need urgent medical attention and hearing aid,” he said.

“I hope we could do more for the children such as getting together to raise funds and send them overseas for treatment.”

“The ear is an important organ ... I feel more awareness is needed.”

From [Ear Specialist Gives Free Service](#).

Hearing health in Fiji faces significant challenges, particularly due to the high incidence of hearing impairment, which affects about 80,000 Fijians during their lifetime. Better awareness, early identification, and intervention could potentially prevent most of these cases.

The Fijian Ministry of Health emphasises the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to tackling ear and hearing care issues. This approach incorporates not just health services but also education, communication, and community support networks to provide a comprehensive support system for people with hearing loss.

Yarnings: Which Way?



The life experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing are often more complex than for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are hearing, or non-Aboriginal Australians who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

In turn, this can make engaging with and benefiting from policies and programs such as Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) more complex, particularly for individuals living in remote settings.

This new research paper has a focus on yarning participants' experiences navigating the NDIS to gain supports that meet their interwoven socio-cultural, health and disability-related needs and aspirations.

To understand more about these complexities, yarnings were held with 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NDIS participants who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing living in rural and remote communities in the Northern Territory. Researchers also analysed data to learn how NDIS plan budgets were being utilised by this group in comparison to the wider NDIS population.

Researchers highlight that with sufficient cultural and communication supports, some yarning participants were able to effectively utilise their NDIS plan to attain supports to achieve positive socio-cultural, health and disability-related outcomes. However, the NDIS must enhance collaboration with participants, local communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, disability service providers, and interfacing systems such as the health system, to develop more locally led solutions that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Deaf or Hard of Hearing participants to achieve better outcomes.

From [Which Way? Experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Attaining Supports to Meet Their Interwoven Socio-Cultural, Health and Disability-Related Needs and Aspirations Within the Context of Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme.](#)

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Positive Role Models.



A deaf photographer has launched an exhibition to showcase positive role models for people who live with hearing difficulties.

"Deaf Mosaic", an exhibition by Stephen Iliffe, is showing in hospital corridors and waiting rooms in Nottingham, U.K.

42 portraits highlight "the achievements of deaf people from a wide range of backgrounds" and include fashion models, athletes, TV chefs and scientists.

The exhibition was installed earlier this month in the Nottingham's two main hospitals and Ropewalk House, which celebrates the 30th anniversary of audiology services there.

Mr Iliffe, who grew up in Leicester, said he did not have any deaf adult role models to aspire to.

"When I was growing up, it often felt as if I was the only deaf person in the world.

"I want today's generation of deaf children and adults to have earlier access to positive role models and to feel that they too have the right to their own dreams and to be supported to achieve them."

Author, actor and comedian Samantha Baines, who is one of the 42 people featured, said she was in "total shock" when she was told she had hearing loss.

She said if she had seen the exhibition when she was told the news, it would have helped her at the time.

"Walking out of that first hearing test, it would have been a massive boost to see something like 'Deaf Mosaic' in the waiting rooms.

"I'd have seen all these vibrant, multi-faceted deaf people breaking down barriers and achieving amazing things. It would have meant so much to see those role models."

From [Exhibition to show 'deaf people can do anything'](#).



Why is it important for people with hearing loss to see role models in media and the arts?

When people with hearing loss see characters or public figures who are deaf or hard of hearing represented in media and the arts, it helps normalise deafness and hearing loss. This increased visibility shows that hearing loss is a natural part of human diversity rather than something to be hidden or ashamed of. It allows people with hearing loss to feel seen and acknowledged in mainstream culture.

Role models play a vital role in fostering positive identity, breaking down barriers, inspiring achievement, and promoting greater understanding for people with hearing loss. Their visibility has a profound impact on self-esteem by showing that deafness does not define or limit a person's worth or potential.



Hearing Australia is working with many First Nations peoples and services including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, schools, early education providers, communities and families, to provide hearing services that meet the needs of local communities.

Good hearing is essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children so they can listen, learn and yarn. It is important that First Nations children have hearing checks early and often because otitis media (middle ear infection) is more prevalent in early childhood.

In 2023-24, Hearing Australia's team provided more than 1,000 outreach visits to First Nations communities across the country to deliver hearing care to children and adults. 10,742 First Nations children had hearing assessments by the Hearing Assessment Program - Early Ears.

Hearing Australia Cultural Leader, Tracy Cunico (pictured), says supporting communities in building capability to locally manage ear and hearing health is a crucial part of Hearing Australia's programs.

Tracy explains, "We upskill local health professionals and early childhood educators

through training and professional development, enabling them to play a vital role in the early identification of potential hearing issues in children.

"In 2023-24 we assisted the NSW based EarTrain program to deliver 25 training workshops to over 400 health workers across the country.

"In Tasmania, workshops were run with every Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations as well as other First Nations health services. We also provided direct support to health workers to undertake hearing assessments for 500 young children. And through our First Nations Support Line, we're able to provide on-the-spot support for staff with a simple phone call."

Hearing Australia provides clinical supervision and support, training and professional development opportunities, access to online resources and one-on-one support.

"We encourage health and education providers, community groups and others who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities to reach out to us for information and support for ear and hearing health."

For more information, visit the [Hearing Australia website](#), email firstnations@hearing.com.au or call the First Nations Support Line 1300 253 655.

Image: Aboriginal Early Childhood Worker, Tammy, was inspired to create an entire learning program around the importance of sound using Hearing Australia's [Spirit of Sound Storybook](#).



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Cover photo and photo on this page by Tom Williamson.

The Annual General Meeting of the Members of Deafness Forum Australia will be held online on Wednesday 27 November 2024.

Members will be asked to vote to:

- Accept the minutes of the last AGM
- Accept the Annual Report, which includes the auditor's report and annual financial statements
- Appoint an auditor
- Appoint directors - read their profiles

For the all the reports, director profiles and meeting access details, go to

<https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/our-annual-general-meeting-of-the-members/>

Join the meeting on 27 Nov:

- 12.00 pm Western Australia
- 1.30 pm Northern Territory
- 2.30 pm South Australia
- 3.00 pm Eastern States