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## Right way to be Deaf

"I've always felt like the object of a constant tug of war between the deaf and the hearing communities.

More than 90 percent of deaf and hard-of-hearing children are born to hearing parents like mine, who have little to no experience interacting with deaf people.

When it was discovered that I was profoundly deaf at six weeks old, my parents faced a common decision: Should they adapt themselves to their deaf child, learn sign language, and embrace deaf culture, or have their deaf child adapt to hearing culture, give her cochlear implants or hearing aids, and train her in the precarious art of lip-reading?"

## Rally sport the ultimate level playing field

Lynda Leigh has lived with degenerative hearing loss since she was a child, and said that the beauty of rally sport was that cars could be adapted to accommodate physical differences and disabilities.

"It doesn't matter what age you are, what sex, what sexual preference, how tall you are, your weight. We all compete on same roads with the top champions."

## TV star has middle ear bone surgery following motor bike accident

26 year old star of the TV show The Bachelor told Daily Mail Australia that her hearing was badly affected after an accident four years ago. The executive assistant (second from right in photo) said that in addition to her hearing loss, which requires an aid in her left ear, she also suffers from tinnitus.

One in Six Australians live with deafness and ear and balance disorders.

Our mission is to *Make hearing health & wellbeing a National Priority for Australia*

# CapTel

The CapTel saga was in the spotlight at a Senate Estimates hearing in the Federal Parliament.

The phone service will be axed at the end of January.

Senate Estimates hearings are occasions where senators ask public servants to explain how and why they are spending taxpayers' money. This particular Senate Estimates hearing on 21 October 2019 asked questions of the decision-makers in the Department of Communications.

A transcript of the questions & answers about CapTel is available to read and download at <https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/captel-in-spotlight-at-senate-estimates-hearing/>

## Background

An estimated 4 thousand people throughout Australia will lose their CapTel phone service in 3 months. Approximately half of these people are over 70 years of age.

The Commonwealth Government has awarded U.S. company Concentrix Services the contract to deliver the National Relay Service (NRS). The contract permits Concentrix to axe the CapTel handset service on 1 February 2020.

What is a CapTel captioned telephone? It works like any other telephone with one important addition: it displays every word the caller says throughout the conversation. CapTel phone users can listen to the caller and can also read the written captions in the CapTel's display window.

## *On Facebook*



**Meg Aspinall** CapTel empowers independence for those of us who are Deaf and Elderly . Please Save CapTel .

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



**Nola Schultz** I rely on Captel to make my medical appointments.

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



**Joey Wehbe** I rely on Captel to make and receive phone calls at work. It's so effective!

Has anyone tried Skype captioned calls? I have and it's really terrible. It wasn't as accurate and it only works on Skype to Skype calls. It's not even a practicable alternative to Captel.

Like · Reply · Message · 1w



**David Roberts** 50% of Captel users over age 70, and the bureaucrats think it's ok to ask them to learn a new technology and buy equipment they are not familiar with? Here's hoping all those 70+ year olds are tech savvy and looking forward to the disruption.

## Rally sport: 'Once we're in the car, we're all equals'

Lynda Leigh has competed both as a rally driver and co-driver, and said the sport was the "ultimate level playing field".

"It doesn't matter what age you are, what sex, what sexual preference, how tall you are, your weight. We all compete on same roads with the top champions," she said.



Photos ABC South East NSW: Vanessa Milton

Ms Leigh has lived with degenerative hearing loss since she was a child, and said that the beauty of rally sport was that cars could be adapted to accommodate physical differences and disabilities.

She said women made great rally drivers because they did not succumb to the 'red mist' and paced themselves — and their cars — over an event.

"I call myself Lynda Leadfoot, as a joke. As a driver, I was really slow, but I still got the thrills."

But that doesn't mean that accidents never happen.

### A dangerous sport

In her rookie year as a driver, Ms Leigh realised her two worst fears, going down an embankment and rolling her car, a beloved 1980 Datsun Stanza called Cumquat, after a compound lockup.

She got the car back on the road and continued to compete as a driver for two years before switching to the co-driver's seat.

"There have been terrifying moments, where I've looked up from my pace notes and there's a tree coming toward me.

"But I trust my driver and look down at my book and continue the calls.

"After five years, I don't have to look up from my book, I can feel where we are on a stage from my bum now."

<https://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-30/women-in-rally-sport-break-down-barriers/11649598?pfmredir=sm>

# Disability statistics: ABS report



The Australian Bureau of Statistics has published the findings of its 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.

- In 2018 there were 4.4 million Australians with disability, 17.7% of the population, down from 18.3% in 2015
- Prevalence of disability increased with age - one in nine (11.6%) people aged 0-64 years and one in two (49.6%) people aged 65 years and over had disability. Disability prevalence was similar for males (17.6%) and females (17.8%)
- 7% of all Australians had a profound or severe disability
- Almost one-quarter (23.2%) of all people with disability reported a mental or behavioural disorder as their main condition, up from 21.5% in 2015.

Read the summary of findings (Word doc) and for more detail, the Disability Tables at <https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/disability-statistics-abs-report/>

## Hearing loops in new passenger info displays

Aussie company Metromatics has installed nine of their new LCD Digital Bus Stop Totems with inbuilt Voice Announciators and Hearing Loops at Adelaide City Bus Stops.

These bus stop totems feature a bright LCD Display which is readable in sunlight. It displays to commuters the real-time arrival times of the buses plus other service information.

For those commuters who are visually or hearing impaired, the new Digital Bus Stop Totems provide a voice annunciator and a hearing induction loop.

Those who require hearing assistance and wear hearing aids can tune into the voice annunciator broadcast by activating the "T-Switch" on their hearing device.



# Is There a Right Way to Be Deaf?

"I've always felt like the object of a constant tug of war between the deaf and the hearing communities."

By Sarah Katz writing for The New York Times



"Your whole life, they've been trying to take you away from me," my father says to me, referring to the deaf community.

But the deaf community could just as easily say the same about my father.

More than 90 percent of deaf and hard-of-hearing children are born to hearing parents like mine, who have little to no experience interacting with deaf people.

When it was discovered that I was profoundly deaf at six weeks old, my parents faced a common decision: Should they adapt themselves to their deaf child, learn sign language, and embrace deaf culture, or have their deaf child adapt to hearing culture, give her cochlear implants or hearing aids, and train her in the precarious art of lip-reading?

My parents chose the former, believing that sign language would provide me with equal access to the opportunities afforded my hearing twin brother. So, when I was 6 months old, my parents welcomed educators from a local deaf school into their home to give signing lessons. Over several months, my mother learned to sign with me.

I soon began to sign back, newly capable of asking for "milk" (one hand in a squeezing gesture, as if milking a cow, but without the vertical motion) or "juice" (brushing the pinkie finger shaped into the letter "j" by the corner of the mouth, with an otherwise closed fist). Using sign language, I communicated a lot — even more than my brother. But then something strange happened. I began speaking. Aloud. In English.

"Dress pretty, you like?" my mother recalls me asking her when I was around 3 years old. I did, it turned out, have residual hearing, as later tests confirmed. But I spoke using classic American Sign Language word order, which involves a grammatical structure closer to French than English

— A.S.L. is derived from early-19th-century French Sign Language. And, although my mother knew that my syntax did not indicate limited cognitive ability, but rather an acute, developing awareness of the language, she began to wonder if sign language was the right choice after all. Was disregarding an aural-oral approach restricting my natural gift of gab?

After more research my parents found what they thought was a middle path. Rather than have me undergo cochlear implant surgery — the underappreciated difficulties of which are outlined by Sara Novic in her essay "[A Clearer Message on Cochlear Implants](#)" — my parents hoped to supplement my sign language education with cued speech, a visual communication system invented in 1966 at Gallaudet University that functions as a supplement to speech-reading (only 30 percent of speech is visible on the lips).

[Dr. R. Orin Cornett](#), then the university's vice president for long-range planning, had believed that the deaf student population struggled to read English due to inadequate access to phonemes — the distinct percussive and tonal sounds that hearing people use to speak words. Dr. Cornett developed eight handshapes and four placements around the mouth that renders phonemes visible as a person speaks. Although cued speech was still in its infancy, the data at the time showed that early exposure to it helped deaf children develop the phonological and phonemic awareness of spoken English necessary for learning to read at the same rate as, or better than, hearing children.

Cued speech can be learned in just 48 hours. My mother was convinced that this bicultural-bilingual approach involving a combination of cued speech and sign language lessons could give me the best of both worlds: full visual access to English and the hearing community, and concurrent access to sign language and the deaf community.

But we apparently couldn't have it both ways. When the educators from the local deaf school learned that my parents were considering cued speech, they became livid. "If you choose cued speech," my mother recalls one of them saying, "we're not coming back here."

In the deaf community, some feel that cued speech, like cochlear implants, threatens deaf culture because they believe it arises from a medical model of deafness, through which deafness is perceived as an undesirable trait that needs to be treated or cured. A "social model," on the other hand, suggests that the environment must adapt to the deaf person, whose "natural language" is sign language. The educators even asked my parents to consider sending me to their residential program, where, surrounded by fluent signers, I would absorb sign language at a faster pace and have full exposure to deaf culture. They believed that, as long as I had a strong command of sign language as a first language, I would have the foundation necessary to acquire English later on.

My mother was stumped. On the one hand, she didn't know if cued speech would work, but desperately wanted to succeed at finding a way to communicate with me quickly and effectively. On the other hand, she didn't want me to be alienated from the deaf community. My father, however, was resolute: He would not send his child away. Together, they decided the promise of cued speech was worth the risk for at least a year at the nearby public school.

If it didn't work out, they would have the deaf school's residential program as a fallback option.

Today, I'm a 30-year-old who wears hearing aids, never attended a residential deaf school, and who can sign proficiently, but not fluently. I attended public schools, surpassed most of my hearing peers in reading ability, graduated with a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in creative writing, married a hearing man, and work as a full-time freelance writer. Yet despite my father's insistent confidence — "I have zero regrets," he often tells me — I'll never know definitively whether my parents made the right decision.

Throughout my life, I've felt like the object of a constant tug of war between the deaf and hearing communities. Although I'm rewardingly self-employed, married and highly literate, I still struggle in hearing-centric environments. I have to remind my husband more frequently than I would like to turn his head so that his lips aren't obscured while we're out with his family at dinner, or to cue what he's saying. Well-meaning hearing people frequently insult me with "compliments" about how well I've assimilated, like, "I can barely tell you're deaf!" (We call comments like these "audist"— akin to "racist" or "sexist" — because they assume deaf people like me must speak aloud and sound like a hearing person to be deemed fortunate or successful.)

On the other hand, when I spend time with deaf friends, I'm often chided by them for not being more fluent in sign language, or otherwise embracing a more culturally deaf way of life. According to them, I've succumbed to audism by using my voice to speak more often than my hands, and cued speech to absorb information. All this, despite performing in deaf theatre throughout childhood, and, during my college years, taking sign language at Gallaudet; interning as a sports reporter covering United States soccer and swimming at the 2009 Deaflympics in Taipei, Taiwan; interning at the National Association of the Deaf; and, after graduate school, cofounding an online, intersectional journal of deaf and disability literature and art called The Deaf Poets Society. Right now, I can't be deaf without drawing criticism from somebody.

I still hold out hope that the deaf and hearing communities will come to a compromise. One Maryland-based, deaf native cuer, Amy Crumrine, believes she has the answer: through her national nonprofit organization, [CueSign](#), she is promoting an approach that involves both cued speech and sign language. Founded in 1998, the organization provides resources to several stakeholders — educational programs, organizations and families of deaf children — in the service of "manual bilingualism."

Amy met with me recently in a coffee shop in Bethesda, Md., to discuss her project. During the interview, we transitioned seamlessly between sign language and cued speech, and, as we commiserated over the tensions between the hearing, deaf and cued speech communities, she repeatedly asserted that the one thing that matters most in raising deaf children is language access. "I strongly believe in a family foundation," she said. "It's important for the child to be able to communicate with parents. Find a way. Whether it's cueing or signing."

This conclusion suddenly struck her during the early 1990s while she was a junior studying social work at the Rochester Institute of Technology, which is known for its National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

"For the first three years, I didn't tell anyone I cued," she said. "I was ashamed. I remember one night, my sorority floor, we're all sitting around, and we were just having a conversation and

signing. And one person decided to say, 'Tell us something you wish we knew.' So, I said, 'I grew up with cued speech.' People looked at me — and then maybe two or three girls raised their hands and said, 'Me too.' And that night I cried. Because I had just come out. For the first time in my life, I felt safe."

"Looking back," she added, "it helped me discover that I have so much to offer. And I was not going to let the politics of cueing and sign language stop me."

[Sarah Katz](#) (@sarahbea89) is a writer and editor who lives and works in Northern Virginia.

**New Book:** "[About Us: Essays From The New York Times Disability Series](#)," edited by Peter Catapano and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, published by Liveright.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/07/opinion/health/is-there-a-right-way-to-be-deaf.html?fbclid=IwAR0VLaNBMgb4ft-YSvSJyrC8wJQeKmnS-JL8Y7MRUG4s1v45yLhRAJS7s4>

# Daily Mail

Home | U.K. | U.S. | News | World News | Sport **TV&Showbiz**



Monique Morley, a 26 year old star of the TV show The Bachelor told Daily Mail Australia that her hearing was badly affected after an accident four years ago. The executive assistant (second from right in photo) said that in addition to her hearing loss, which requires an aid in her left ear, she also suffers from tinnitus.

'I had a motorbike accident when I was travelling to Indonesia, when I was 22. I was riding a road bike and hit a big pothole and flipped my bike,' Monique recalled.

She underwent middle ear bone surgery following the accident, and now relies on a hearing aid in her left ear.

'I was hospitalised for two to three weeks as I had fractured my skull and had to have an ossicular chain reconstruction. As a result of the accident, I have suffered from bad tinnitus [a ringing or buzzing sound in the ear] and now wear a hearing aid in my left ear.'

Monique teamed up with Loud Shirt Day and [The Shepherd Centre](#) to remove the stigma around wearing hearing aids.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-7586567/The-Bachelors-Monique-Morley-requires-hearing-aid-motorcycle-accident.html>

**ideas4ears**  
CHILDREN'S INVENTION CONTEST

6

WWW.ideas4ears.org

The [Ideas for Ears](#) competition is back for its third year.

We wanted to give you the heads up so you can share this with the children and families you are working with.

Last year Australia had it's very first winner, clever young Leon from Perth. Check out Leon's adventure [here](#) and watch his video below.

### Win a trip to Austria!

Open to children aged between 6 and 12, the judging panel (of MED-EL inventors) will be looking for originality, creativity, practicality, imagination and innovation in selecting the winning children's inventions.

The winner will receive a trip to Innsbruck, Austria, along with their guardian, for an innovation tour of MED-EL's research and development factory, and have the opportunity to meet with MED-EL's many inventors.



### Ready, Steady, Invent!

Share with your families, they can click the green button to enter, or learn more. Entries close at midnight on Friday 17 January 2020. [Terms and Conditions can also be found here.](#)

### What type of invention could be made?

Every idea is welcome. It could be a new invention, or an improvement to something that already exists. The important thing is how it could help people with hearing loss at any age and make their lives easier.

<https://www.ideas4ears.org/>

# Disability Royal Commission update

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability is accepting submissions. A submission is the main way people and organisations can provide information to the Royal Commission about their experiences of violence, neglect, abuse or exploitation of people with disability. Anybody can make a submission. Submissions can be made using the form available on the Royal Commission [Submissions page](#). An Easy Read version of the form is also available.

The Australian Government is funding a legal advisory service and advocacy support for people who want assistance to make a submission. If you need assistance in making a submission you can contact them using the information below.

You can contact the Disability Royal Commission:

- by email at [DRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au](mailto:DRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au)
- by telephone on 1800 517 199 (9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday AEDT excluding public holidays)
- by post at GPO Box 1422, Brisbane Qld 4001

ABC Television has created a webpage where it will file all its news stories on this Royal Commission – <https://www.abc.net.au/news/story-streams/disability-royal-commission/>

## Support services

Department of Social Services is funding a new counselling service for people engaging with or affected by the Disability Royal Commission.

The National Counselling and Referral Service run by Blue Knot Foundation provides short-term and trauma-informed counselling services. Counselling provides an opportunity for people to discuss how they are feeling, and receive support in order to make decisions about telling their story in a safe and confidential environment. Blue Knot Foundation are specialists in phone counselling and complex trauma, and currently provide counselling and referral services for people engaging with the National Redress Scheme. Their experienced practitioners will also connect people to other supports they might need such as advocacy, legal and financial services, long-term counselling services and crisis support.

You can call the National Counselling and Referral Service on **1800 421 468**, 9am to 6pm weekdays or 9am to 5pm weekends AEDT. For support in other languages, please ask for an interpreter when contacting the Service.

People who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or have a speech impairment can contact the service through the National Relay Service (NRS) on 133 677.

## Other support services

The Commonwealth has extended its well-established National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) to support people with disability to engage with the Disability Royal Commission.

Advocacy support is for people with disability (or family members or carers acting on their behalf)

who need assistance because they have difficulty in communicating or understanding how to engage with the Commission. An advocate will be able to help people with disability to understand how to tell their story to the Disability Royal Commission, how to work out problems or avoid discriminatory issues, find communication supports such as interpreters, and access other supports such as legal or financial services.

A free legal advisory service funded through the Attorney-General's Department will help people with disability to understand their legal rights and options for engaging with the Disability Royal Commission. National Legal Aid and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services will be providing the national legal advisory service. You can contact the national legal advisory service on 1800 771 800, 9.15am–5.15pm AEDT, Monday to Friday to register for the service.

For more information about support services, visit the [Department of Social Services website](#)



Michelle Courts, a director of Deafness Forum and Life Member Andrew Stewart were at the Australian Society for Intellectual Disability conference in Adelaide this month.

## Know someone who might like to get their own 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 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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