



Deaf suffragists fought for the right to vote

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Dementia and unaddressed hearing loss

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Deaf community can share with Disability Royal Commission

The Royal Commission wants to hear from culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability. It recognises that people who use Auslan or another sign language as their first language share a distinct, rich culture and language.



Passionate about reducing isolation for deaf Canberrans

Louise was managing a pharmacy, married and raising two kids when she first considered a cochlear implant.

COVID-19 led to challenges across education

Many of these challenges centred on the provision of accessible and inclusive online education for people with disability.

Accessible Telecoms

Use this free service to find independent and up-to-date information on telecommunication products and services that are suitable for seniors and people with disability.

Deaf suffragists fought tirelessly for women's right to vote

Despite harsh, discriminatory conditions, low pay and lack of recognition, countless deaf women have fought with brilliance and dedication for personal and professional recognition, including for the right to vote. They contributed to women's emancipation in the United States and Britain.

Annie Jump Cannon was a pioneering astronomer. Born in 1863, she experienced progressive hearing loss starting at a young age. One of the first women from Delaware to attend college, she was her class valedictorian when she graduated from Wellesley College, where she excelled in the sciences and mathematics.

In 1896, she was hired as a "woman computer" at the Harvard College Observatory, along with another prominent deaf astronomer, Henrietta Swan Leavitt.

The work involved looking at photos of stars and calculating their brightness, position and colour. The two were paid between 25 and 50 cents an hour – half the rate paid to men doing similar work. Nevertheless, Cannon is credited with cataloguing 350,000 stars.



Building on others' work, Cannon revolutionised and refined a system to rank stars from hottest to coolest that is still used today by the International Astronomical Union, though it is named for Harvard, not for her.

Cannon was a member of the National Woman's Party, formed in 1916 to advocate for passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, allowing women to vote. Cannon's suffragist efforts used her profession as a launchpad, as when she declared that "if women can organise the sky, we can organise the vote."

She used her prominence to pave the way for women in the sciences, becoming the first woman to receive an honorary degree from Oxford University in 1925, and facing down eugenicists who blocked her from joining the National Academy of Sciences because she was deaf.

In 1938, after 40 years of service, her role as "the dean of women astronomers" finally earned her a permanent faculty position at Harvard, where she worked until her death three years later. A lunar crater, Cannon, and an asteroid, Cannonia, are named for her.



British deaf suffragist Helen Kirkpatrick Watts, born in 1881, was a militant member of the radical Women's Social and Political Union who demonstrated at Parliament in 1909 for the women's vote.

After one protest that year, she was arrested and imprisoned – but began a 90-hour hunger strike that resulted in her release. As she left, she declared:

"The Suffragettes have come out of the drawing-room, the study, debating hall, and the committee rooms of Members of Parliament, to appeal to the real sovereign power of the country – the people."

One of Helen Watt's sister leaders in the Women's Freedom League was British deaf suffragist Kate Harvey. Harvey believed in not paying taxes until women were granted the vote, which resulted in authorities breaking into her home to arrest and imprison her in 1913.

A silent voice in print

Laura Redden Searing, born in 1840, was a gifted American poet, newspaper reporter and writer – often using the male pseudonym Howard Glyndon so her work would be taken more seriously. Deafened by illness as a child, she entered the Missouri School for the Deaf when she was 15 years old and learned sign language.

When communicating with non-signers, she wrote with a pencil and pad with which she conducted countless interviews over many years as a reporter and writer.

In 1860, Searing became the earliest deaf woman journalist, writing for the St. Louis Republican, whose editors sent her to Washington. There, she cultivated friendships with prominent leaders and interviewed General Ulysses S. Grant, soldiers on the battlefield, and President Abraham Lincoln. She also met future Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth, and taught him fingerspelling, a manual alphabet that is used in sign language.



When the Civil War ended in 1865, she travelled to Europe and picked up reading and writing in French, German, Spanish and Italian. She continued writing news stories for the St. Louis Republican and The New York Times. Returning to the United States in 1870, Searing wrote on a wide variety of topics for the New York Evening Mail and other newspapers and magazines.

She was a feminist who wrote about women's issues such as unequal pay and women's sexuality. She also explained her support for an 1872 campaign for women's right to vote with an analogy to the freeing of the slaves after the Civil War:

"I believe I am called upon to sign this petition in conformation with that clause of our constitution which recognises the equal rights of all human beings of lawful age and sound mind without regard to sex, colour, or social condition. Having decided that black people do not belong to white ones, why not go a step farther and decide that women do not belong to men unless the proprietorship be recognised as mutual?"



Author: [Joan Marie Naturale](#), Reference Librarian, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology Libraries, Rochester Institute of Technology.

Published in [The Conversation](#)



The COVID-19 pandemic led to multiple challenges across all levels of education. Many of these challenges centred on the provision of accessible and inclusive online education for people with disability.

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training surveyed disability practitioners from the tertiary sector to understand the impact of COVID-19 on their delivery practices, the students they support and on teaching and learning. There were 18 recommendations. These form the basis of the resulting guidelines that were written by a team of disability, accessibility and education design specialists working at the coalface during COVID-19.



Content includes:

- ONLINE LEARNING IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES
- USING CAPTIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS FOR ONLINE DELIVERY
- VIDEOCONFERENCING APPLICATIONS THAT SUPPORT CAPTIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS
- LECTURE CAPTURE TECHNOLOGY THAT SUPPORTS CAPTIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS
- SPEECH-TO-TEXT AND MOBILE TRANSLATION APPLICATIONS
- ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT
- SIGN LANGUAGE AND INTERPRETERS

Read [Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Online](#)

Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment and is hosted by the University of Tasmania.

Social isolation a real risk for those with hearing loss



ALONE: Hearing loss can make people feel anxious, isolated and uncomfortable in social situations. Photo: Shutterstock

Army veteran Bruce Jackson had led a very active social life, but his hearing loss significantly impacted his enjoyment over time.

Instead of having a relaxing evening eating out with friends, he found himself straining to follow conversations. Places were too noisy; the experience was not enjoyable, so he gradually stopped going out. He would, consciously or not, avoid places he knew would have a lot of background noise.

"It just didn't seem as much fun anymore. Of course, that's a hindsight view; it wasn't something I was really aware of at the time. I wouldn't go out to dinner very often, and we had previously gone out quite a bit," he said.

The issue was even felt at home sometimes.

"My wife would say 'You're just not listening to me', and I'd say, 'You've got to speak up, you're mumbling'. Of course, she wasn't mumbling, and it wasn't that I wasn't paying attention. I just couldn't hear her properly," he said.

"I started to notice, in crowds, if I wasn't standing close to somebody, that I would have to work hard to maintain the conversation."

As part of a Department of Veterans Affairs assessment at the age of 60, Bruce was tested by Hearing Australia, and the result shocked him.

"I didn't think it was anything dramatic," he said.

"But the real awareness of it came when I got my hearing aids. I thought, if this is how I should be hearing, it must have been bad for a long time."

Bruce estimates he was suffering from hearing loss for up to 10 years before becoming a client of Hearing Australia.

The first time his hearing aids were turned on, Bruce was amazed.

"The videos of young babies having a cochlear implant fitted, that reaction that they get when the sound first comes through, I know for a fact that was my reaction. I froze a little bit," he said.

"It was stunningly brilliant ... they kept asking me how they were and how the sound was, and the only response I could make was that I could now hear in colour. The difference is like going from an old black and white television to watching 75 inches of high definition."

People are encouraged to seek help as soon as they suspect they may have hearing loss. You can access a test at onlineassessment.hearing.com.au Sound Scouts, an interactive game developed by the National Acoustic Laboratories, is also available to test children's hearing at soundscouts.com/au

There is plenty of support available online for people looking for more information on hearing, including how to access hearing tests in your local area, and where to find playgroups and support organisations. Take to your favourite search engine to find out more.

There are also numerous apps and technologies on offer to make life easier. These include communication technologies, including talk to text, which effectively caption a live conversation, doorbells that flash light, and smoke alarms with vibration pads to go under a mattress or pillow.

From the [Illawarra Mercury](#)

Care for the client beyond their condition



Person-centred care takes centre-stage in a new set of guidelines for meeting the unique needs of people with severe or profound hearing loss.

Created by a group of international experts - including Professor Louise Hickson at the University of Queensland - the guidelines urge practitioners to "care for the client beyond their condition" and deliver person-centred care at every stage.

Visit the [Ida Institute](#) to learn more.



Deafness Forum is a member of Ida Institute and distributes its information and resources freely in Australasia to consumers and hearing care professionals.



Louise Irvine was managing a pharmacy in Canberra, married and raising two kids when she first considered a cochlear implant.

Throughout her childhood, a series of ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialists were unable to diagnose why Louise was hard of hearing, and why it was deteriorating with age.

“With my hearing getting worse as I got older, it was always like ‘I don’t know what my future is going to be,’” she said.

“It was mentioned to me that I would never be able to get a proper job.”

Louise’s mum realised something “wasn’t quite right” with her youngest child’s hearing when she was three, and a bout of measles seemed to make it worse.

“I just naturally learned to lipread, so in most situations I coped really well, unless someone was behind me,” Louise said. “That was when it was really obvious I couldn’t hear.”

Louise progressed through the mainstream education system without learning support or hearing aids, which she preferred not to wear until after adolescence.

It wasn’t until she enrolled in a degree to become a teacher for deaf and hard of hearing students that she met other people with hearing loss.

“That was a real shock to the system.”

Unlike Louise, her peers at university who were totally deaf used sign language and those who were hard of hearing had been since birth, meaning they found it difficult to speak.

She also observed they had strong ties within their community.

“They were sort of in their own little world and they were really happy. In some ways, they were more accepting of their hearing loss than I was.”

Louise left teaching, studied IT and found work she enjoyed that suited her skills and temperament.

When she and her husband, a pharmacist, moved to Canberra and bought a business, she became store manager. But Louise noticed she was struggling working in a retail environment and knew her hearing aids, which were “way past their lifespan”, needed replacing.

But her audiologist advised that new hearing aids wouldn’t help.

“She said I could spend \$12,000 and get new hearing aids and they were not going to offer me any more benefit than the ones I had.

“It had been suggested to me by one of my earlier ENTs that I would probably end up with a cochlear, so I thought it was time to investigate.”

Louise’s audiologist spoke to the Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre, and she suggested Louise attend a meeting of a volunteer group supporting people with cochlear implants to hear about their experiences firsthand.

“There were two people that I remember, one woman was elderly and she was struggling. She’d had a cochlear implant for about six months, which in hindsight is not very long, because it does take a while to get used to. She kept asking her husband every time someone said something, ‘What did they say?’, and he’d have to repeat it to her.”

The other woman Louise remembers was younger and she had no trouble communicating.

“She was amazing, you would never have known, and that’s what people were saying about me.”

Comparing the experiences of the two women helped Louise make her decision.

“For the first time in my life I thought, ‘Oh, well there is a future for me’. I can get along with people and communicate and be independent.”

She had the operation in February 2010 and a month later it was switched on. At first, all Louise could hear was loud noise; nerves were being stimulated but her brain needed to learn how to translate that into messages.

“I was determined that it was going to work. I had mine on right from the beginning, as soon as I woke up in the morning until I went to bed.”

Eleven years later, Louise has graduated from an accounting degree at the Australian National University, which she studied while working full-time and supporting her children through their final years of high school.

“You know, when I was young, I felt there was something wrong with me. Yes, hearing loss is a disability, but I don’t see it that way anymore.”

As a member of the board of Deaf ACT, Louise is passionate about reducing isolation for deaf Canberrans, and improving access to appropriate mental health care.

From [Canberra Weekly](#). Image by Kerrie Brewer

NDIS vaccine failure unmask the government's disability agenda

Opinion piece by Paul Bongiorno for [The New Daily](#)

Something is horribly amiss when thousands of Australians with serious disability have not received their first COVID shots eight weeks into the vaccine rollout.

The \$25 billion scheme has been undergoing a radical rethink ever since it emerged that the so-called independent Tune review two years ago was shown to have been heavily doctored by the then-minister Stuart Robert's department to pave the way for a cut in services and the [imposition of unsympathetic compulsory assessments](#).

There is mounting evidence, much of it from leaks coming from within the federal public service and some from freedom-of-information releases, that the Morrison government views the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the same way as it views anyone on welfare.

Welfare is a dirty word and most receiving it should be starved off it as soon as possible – surely this is the only credible explanation for returning unemployment benefits to below the poverty line.

Though in the past the Prime Minister has been quick to make the distinction between welfare recipients and support due to those who through no fault of their own suffer a disability, his government's approach is eroding the credibility of his words.

One of the early architects of the NDIS under the previous Labor government, Bill Shorten, says planned changes under Mr Robert that include Robodebt-style harassment of people in the scheme fundamentally alters its original purpose and design. Rather than seeing those with disability as hapless victims of fate, they are now to be viewed through the "welfare cheat" prism.

The secretly planned changes, revealed at the weekend in *The Saturday Paper*, manifest a fundamental distrust of those with disability, who the Parliament of Australia has accorded the right to receive the support they need to live their lives with as much dignity as possible.

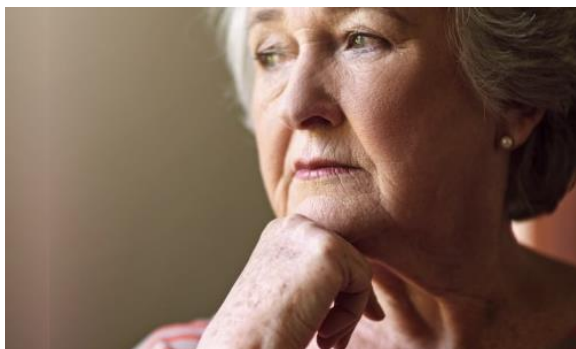
Many in the sector are now hoping that the new minister Linda Reynolds will abandon Mr Robert's narrow and punitive preferences.

Senator Reynolds, however, is accepting none of the blame for the fact that people with disability have been forgotten in the first phase of the vaccine rollout despite the acceptance they are among the most vulnerable in the pandemic. Senator Reynolds' office says the rollout is the responsibility of Health Minister Greg Hunt and she will be discussing the delivery failure with him.

Mr Shorten says the "rollout has been one big car crash and somehow people with disability miss out again".

The Prime Minister took the highly unusual step of using Facebook to announce he was abandoning targets for when Australia would be fully vaccinated, after making the highly dubious claim that we are world leading. Australia is No.100 on the list of 170 countries for the coverage of its rollout.

Those with disability deserve an explanation for why they have been ignored in the first phase of the rollout and assurances they have not lost the respect Scott Morrison used to claim he was giving them.



Unaddressed hearing loss is responsible for more dementia among older adults than any risk factors including alcohol over consumption, traumatic brain injury, obesity and hypertension combined according to research.

Ear Science Institute Australia is currently undertaking the HearCog clinical trial, which will investigate the impact on cognitive function of hearing-impaired older adults by using hearing aids and cochlear implants.

HearCog Trial Project Team Leader Dona Jayakody said they found when they treated hearing loss with cochlear implants there was an improvement in cognitive functions. Now they are taking the next step.

“So we are trying to find out whether we can delay or arrest dementia by treating hearing loss with hearing aids,” said Ms Jayakody.

Participants are required for the study. If you are 70+ years old and think you have hearing loss, register your interest – 0418 282 192.

From [6PR Newstalk Perth](#)



Devices Search



Click on Devices to search for phones, tablets, accessories or apps suitable for people with specific needs or disabilities.



Telecom Training Search

Click on Telecom Training Search to search for training about how to use telecommunication devices.

Use this free service to find independent and up-to-date information on telecommunication products and services that are suitable for seniors and people with disability.
<https://www.accessibletelecoms.org.au/>

Deafness Forum's advocacy work

If you or your organisation are interested in one of Deafness Forum's current projects, let us know if you would like to contribute.

- An initiative by the Department of Health to lift the quality of hearing health and care in aged care facilities.
- Providing feedback on the [Disability Gateway website](#) with particular focus on emergency contacts, safety and help, communication aids and services, and information for families of children newly diagnosed with disability.
- Promoting and providing feedback on a public consultation, Assistance Animals: A Nationally Consistent Approach.
- Participating in a Teleaudiology Guidelines working group hosted by Audiology Australia.
- Participating in a government consultation to create Grief And Bereavement Support social media and brochures in plain language, captioned videos and accompanied by Auslan interpretations.
- Offering views to the Government about National Disability Insurance Agency, including proposed Independent Assessments for people in or applying to join the Scheme.



Deafness Forum is a Registered Charity

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

To donate, go to

<https://www.givenow.com.au/organisation/public/534>

Device aims to improve balance for hearing impaired

Researchers are investigating whether a device giving feedback on body position can improve balance and stability in older adults with hearing loss.

Three in five adults aged over 60 have a hearing impairment and every 10 decibel increase in hearing loss puts an individual at greater risk of falling.

For elderly people, falls can result in serious injuries such as hip fractures and head traumas that can have a debilitating effect on quality of life.

A University of Queensland study is trialing the effectiveness of a device, which is worn on a belt around the waist and records body sway during a series of balance exercises. It provides vibration feedback to the wearer for retraining of balance depending on the degree of body sway.

The researchers are seeking volunteers. Assessments will be undertaken at UQ's St Lucia Campus.

For details about participating in the study, contact Katrina Kemp on k.kemp@uq.edu.au

ROYAL COMMISSION

The Disability Royal Commission wants to hear about challenges, barriers and ways to better prevent and reduce violence against, and abuse, neglect and exploitation of, culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability.

The Royal Commission says it recognises that people who use Auslan or another sign language as their first language share a distinct, rich culture and language.

The Royal Commission is seeking feedback about:

- How culture and language may affect your life course.
- How you overcome language barriers when trying to access support, and ask for assistance.
- Cultural attitudes and the language of disability.
- How communities can have positive or protective attitudes towards disability, and reasons that people may not identify as having a disability even though they have an impairment.
- How the different ways disability is understood in culturally and linguistically diverse communities may support and include people with disability, or how they might exclude or disadvantage them.

You can read the full issues paper and how to respond on the [Royal Commission website](#).



and the people who support them to share their experiences

Auslan video: share your experiences with the Disability Royal Commission, <https://youtu.be/zU4wAmZYM0U>

'Your Story Disability Legal Support' has short Auslan videos about how you can get free, independent legal support to safely share your story with the Disability Royal Commission. For free legal advice on the options to keep your story safe, visit www.yourstorydisabilitylegal.org.au

Advertisement

Sydney University survey: adaptations and strategies for communication

We would like to invite adults with a hearing loss to complete a 20-minute survey. We are interested in your views about how easy it is to communicate with staff at your audiology clinic. Are adaptations and strategies for communication used? Are these adaptations or strategies helpful? This information will guide us on the type of support that could improve these services.

Follow this link for more information [[Online survey: communication accessibility](#)]. After you have read the information on the first page, you can choose to click on the tab to complete the survey, or, if you prefer, choose not to complete it.

If you prefer, you can also complete a printable survey, which you can download here [[Printable survey: communication accessibility](#)].

Please let the researchers know if you would like more information about this survey in a video with Auslan interpretation. Contact isabelle.boisvert@sydney.edu.au

Ethics approval information: The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee Project No.: 2021/041



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. There are a number of ways that 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](#)

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

Drop us a line: hello@deafnessforum.org.au

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