

16 March 2022



## About bloody time

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## Read Our Lips Australia

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It is a self-paced e-learning platform dedicated to supporting those with hearing loss and their families, by improving their quality of life through increased communication skills. Created by experienced lipreading instructors, users are guided 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.



## Early interventions helped little Morgan

Deafness is still often interpreted as an inflexible barrier to learning to speak, hear and listen. "I had never been around deaf people or hard of hearing children, so like most parents who suddenly find themselves in our situation, we wondered if she would be able to speak and assumed we would need to learn Auslan. We really didn't know what her future was going to look like."



## Instagram adds Auto-Generated Captions to videos

Auto-generated captions aren't exactly novel. It's just that most social networks have just been slow to introduce them. Instagram feed videos now feature auto-generated captions — an accessibility boost for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or prefer watching videos without sound.

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.

# AFL to include closed captions on club song in win for deaf and disability advocates

By [Paul Kennedy](#) for [ABC News](#)



The AFL has belatedly installed closed captions on team songs so deaf and hard of hearing barrackers can join in match day singalongs. All grounds will display words on the big screens.

The improvement has come after years of advocacy.

"Yeah, it should've [happened] maybe 10 years ago," St Kilda supporter Jaqui Mellington said. "But better late than never."



St Kilda supporter Jaqui Mellington said the move was better late than never. *(ABC News: Paul Kennedy)*

Ms Mellington will get her chance this week when the Saints play Collingwood in round one.

"Sometimes I feel like people sing the song and I don't feel a part of it," she said. "I feel like I'm missing out. With the captions I can follow along and sign and hear what people are singing and I can sign alongside them. It'll make me a part of the crowd and I won't feel like I'm missing out."

Collingwood barracker Calvin Black said it was "really hard" missing out on the team song when everyone else was celebrating. He's rapt to have a chance to sing Good Old Collingwood Forever with everyone else this year.

"Because I can be more involved with my family, and I can understand more [about] what's happening in the game," he said.



Calvin Black is looking forward to celebrating plenty of Collingwood victories in 2022. (ABC News: Paul Kennedy)

AFL Disability Inclusion Manager Tim Nield said this was a step towards providing better coverage of the game for supporters.

"Coming to a game of AFL and being able to engage in the team's club song, whether it's been at the start of the game or at the end of the game, it's sort of been an opportunity starved of the deaf and hard of hearing community," Mr Nield said. "We're all about how we can make our game more inclusive and accessible to everyone."

It is believed the AFL is considering using AUSLAN interpreters on scoreboards later this year.



Max Eyking said that there was still more work to be done to cater for deaf supporters. (ABC News: Paul Kennedy)

Brisbane diehard Max Eyking said he was pleased with close captions at stadiums, but wanted more.

"I think it's really important," he said. "Growing up without any hearing means captions help me understand what people are saying. I would like to see captions all the time and improved access. Technology can make this happen. I've been frustrated because I know AFL footy is really public face — a famous sport. I want to know what the players are talking about, the coaches are talking about."





Deafness Forum of Australia announces the launch of an innovative online course to teach you how to lipread at home or at work.

**Read Our Lips Australia** is a self-paced e-learning platform that is dedicated to supporting those with hearing loss and their families, by improving their quality of life through increased communication skills.

Created by experienced lipreading instructors, users are guided 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.

**Read Our Lips Australia** is the first of its kind in this country and the course is available to purchase online. It has been made possible by a grant from the National Disability Insurance Scheme-Department of Social Services (Information, Linkages & Capacity Building program).

Read Our Lips online is a great introduction to lipreading. You might find it easy in some parts and really challenging in others, but always enjoyable.

You can do it in your own time and at your own pace. [www.readourlips.com.au](http://www.readourlips.com.au)

# Focusing on the needs of people with hearing loss

By [Marcello Tonelli, MD, SM, MSc](#) and [Ruth Warick, PhD](#)

It is estimated that nearly 1.6 billion people worldwide are affected by hearing loss. Hearing loss is the third most common cause of disability, and unmanaged or undermanaged hearing loss is estimated to account for approximately \$1 trillion in lost productivity each year. Without intervention, the population affected by hearing loss is projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, of whom an estimated 700 million could benefit from treatment.

Interventions for hearing care are highly cost-effective. A study sponsored by the World Health Organization estimated that nearly \$15 in benefits would accrue from each \$1 invested, mainly driven by better health and improved productivity. However, many essential hearing care interventions (eg, audiometry, audiology, and hearing aid services) are partially or wholly excluded from publicly funded health insurance plans. Although partial coverage for amplification devices is available, eligibility often varies by region and may be means-tested.

The following 3 specific actions could help address hearing loss and its consequences. First, most health systems do not have a coordinated strategy for ear and hearing care (in contrast to other common conditions like cancer and mental illness). Therefore, available services are often fragmented and siloed, which complicates collaboration and communication among physicians and other hearing care professionals. A national strategy with input from consumers, families, clinicians, payers, governments, and civil society groups could help to raise awareness, reduce stigma, enhance mechanisms for disease surveillance, and strengthen existing public health initiatives.

Secondly, health systems should be better adapted to meet the needs of people with hearing loss. This will require work in partnership with patients and families to identify and correct situations for which additional accommodations are needed. Examples include (1) improving the availability of sign language interpreters, captioning services, amplification devices, and other assistive technologies at health facilities; (2) providing quiet environments to minimise background noise during clinical encounters; and (3) providing access to suitable mechanisms for scheduling appointments. It will be equally important to educate clinicians about how to effectively communicate with patients with hearing loss and this in turn may require adjustments to undergraduate or postgraduate medical curricula.

Thirdly, research funding on the causes, consequences, and optimal treatment of hearing loss is not commensurate with the effect of poor hearing on quality of life and economic productivity.

## Conclusions

Hearing loss is an increasingly prevalent condition that is associated with adverse social and economic consequences, yet often is unrecognised or unaddressed. Similarly, the needs of people with hearing loss are not always reflected in public policy designed to achieve other objectives such as pandemic control. Broader recognition of hearing loss as an important public health challenge together with strategic investment in the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of hearing loss could help to reduce the costs and harms of this frequently neglected condition.

Read the research paper at [Jama Network](#).

# NATIONAL HEARING DOG DAY

Tuesday April 19th, 2022



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

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

To mark this special occasion, they are celebrating the transformative stories of partnerships between a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, and their Hearing Assistance Dog.

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

## Free tinnitus resources



[Tinnitus First Aid Kit](#), developed by the British Tinnitus Association, is a website full of useful advice and information for people newly diagnosed with tinnitus.

[Tinnitus Thermometer](#) is a PDF or online questionnaire that you can use to assess how your clients are experiencing tinnitus at a given moment and over time.

[Tinnitus Communication Guide](#) suggests some useful questions and communication tips to help professionals understand their clients, express empathy, and give hope.

Ida Institute's online Tinnitus Management course for audiologists and audiometrists includes guidance on using its [tinnitus tools](#).

## Early interventions helped little Morgan



Michael and Shannon Gibbs with daughters Morgan and Payton. Credit: Ian Munro/The West Australian

Being told their daughter, Morgan, is deaf was devastating for Shannon and Michael Gibbs.

They felt heartbroken at the prospect that conversations with friends and family, sounds in nature and the joy of music might not be a part of their little girl's world.

"The day after Morgan was born, she had her newborn hearing test in hospital and she failed it," Mrs Gibbs recalls. "We were ensured by staff that it was most likely just fluid, so we weren't too concerned but when they retested her on day three, she failed again."

The couple took Morgan for an Auditory Brainstem Response test, which is used to determine how hearing nerves and the brain respond to sounds. It resulted in the six-week-old being diagnosed with permanent hearing loss — news which came as a shock to the couple, who had no history of deafness on either side of the family.

"When we were given her diagnosis, it was extremely overwhelming and we just weren't expecting it," Mrs Gibbs says, explaining that her pregnancy had been complication-free and her scans had shown nothing was wrong.

"I had never been around deaf people or hard of hearing children, so like most parents who suddenly find themselves in our situation, we wondered if she would be able to speak and assumed we would need to learn Auslan. We really didn't know what her future was going to look like.

"Only now do we see how uneducated we were and with hindsight, we would have done things differently with Morgan. If only we knew back then what we know now."

Many misconceptions remain even today around what the future holds for children born deaf. For example, deafness is still often interpreted, incorrectly, as an inflexible barrier to learning to speak, hear and listen.



However, Telethon Speech & Hearing chief executive Mark Fitzpatrick says children born deaf in Australia can, in fact, learn to do all of these things just like a child with typical hearing.

“Most people see signing interpreters and think this is the only option for children with hearing loss but nothing is further from the truth,” Mr Fitzpatrick said. “Through advances in technology, many children can get access to sound and coupled with listening and spoken language therapy, we can help them learn to communicate and talk in ways a child with typical hearing could. They can then go to a mainstream school with their friends, participate in sport, enjoy music, go to the movies and do so much more.”

Nine out of 10 children who are deaf have hearing parents with no family history, and Mr Fitzpatrick says this probably contributes to parents feeling shock at the time of their child’s diagnosis and not knowing where to turn for help.

“They are thrown into a temporary world of chaos and emotions on top of the commotion having a newborn baby brings. We know that by unlocking the auditory part of the brain early in life we can achieve great outcomes for children with hearing loss and their speech and language development.”

Morgan Gibbs was not fitted with hearing aids until she was two years old. Her younger sister, Payton, on the other hand, was diagnosed with hearing loss at birth and promptly given hearing aids and support from six weeks old. The difference between the two sisters is obvious, according to Mrs Gibbs. Morgan, now three, still struggles with her speech because she accessed the interventions and hearing aids much later than Payton, now two, who is a chatterbox with speech and language skills that exceed those of other typical hearing children her age.

Mrs Gibbs said reaching out to Telethon Speech & Hearing, which supports children with hearing and speech delays, resulted in Morgan turning a corner. She now attends a mainstream school where she listens on the mat alongside the other kindergarten children.

“She was not saying anything at day care and was not responding because she could not hear in noisy environments,” Mrs Gibbs says. We were seriously discussing holding her back from kindy because she was so behind for her age.

“But Telethon Speech & Hearing really helped educate us on things like making sure you get their attention when speaking and to rephrase sounds and they provided both girls with services including regular speech therapy. The difference was, we were in touch with Telethon Speech & Hearing from the moment we got Payton’s diagnosis, so her abilities are above a lot of hearing children.

“She has only just turned two and can already say five-word sentences and count to 10.

“We’ve had to do a lot of catch-up work with Morgan because she missed those sounds early on but I can’t believe how far she has come and feel so proud of her.

“I just want other parents to know to seek out those early interventions and to know your child is definitely capable of accessing sound and language and doing amazing things.”



By [Katie Hampson](#) for [The West Australian](#)





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DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

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# Deafblind

## International DbI

Deafblind Information Australia announces two webinar opportunities from Deafblind International.

'Delivering Best Practice in Social Care for People with Acquired Deafblindness'

Thursday 31 March 2022

2:30am - 3:30am AEDT

Online via [Zoom](https://zoom.us/j/91838450165) <https://zoom.us/j/91838450165>

'From Emerging Gestures to Tactile Sign Language'

Wednesday 20 April 2022

6:30pm - 8:30pm AEST

Register [here](#)

## 11th National Deafblind Conference

The program has now been released and registrations are open. The hybrid event will be taking place in Fremantle, Western Australia on Thursday 30 June and Friday 1 July 2022, as well as online.

The theme for the conference is "Deafblind Keeping Connected through COVID and beyond" and aims to support the connection and reconnection of people with deafblindness and those who support them across Australia.

The National Deafblind Conference is the only forum in Australia with capacity to educate, connect, and support across sectors: deafblind individuals, families, service providers, educators, allied health and community organisations.

There will also be two pre-conferences on Wednesday 29 June specific to Usher syndrome and Charge syndrome.

The latest research developments and service improvements in the specialised world of deafblindness will be showcased. This is particularly pertinent with the rapid changes that have been required to adapt to living with Covid in 2020/21 and beyond. This conference is an opportunity to learn from one another, for professional collaborations, education to the broader community on the support needs of people who are deafblind, friendships and networks to develop and a national agenda of important issues to be established particularly in the current COVID environment.

This conference provides a valuable and unique professional development opportunity for various disciplines and we invite you to learn more at [www.ausdbconf2022.com.au](http://www.ausdbconf2022.com.au)

## Instagram adds Auto-Generated Captions



By Stephanie Mlot for [PCmagazine](#)

Instagram feed videos now feature auto-generated captions — an accessibility boost for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or prefer watching videos without sound.

"It's a long time coming," company CEO Adam Mosseri tweeted on Tuesday. "But we're excited to share a new tool that empowers those in the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities."

Instagram uses speech recognition technology to automatically create captions, which appear as text at the bottom of the screen. Users can visit Settings > Account > Captions to remove the transcript. It's unclear exactly how to opt into automatic subtitles for your own video posts, though.

"We've noticed that our community has implemented time-consuming and labour-intensive 'workarounds' (burning-in captions on videos, outsourcing captioning work) in an effort to make their content more accessible for deaf and hard of hearing viewers," an Instagram spokesperson [told CNET](#).

"Auto-generated captions on IG video will help people save time by spending less time captioning and more time creating amazing content."

The new feature is currently available for English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Arabic, Italian, German, Turkish, Hindi, Indonesian, and Japanese, with more languages coming soon. As with any AI solution, the more people who use this captions feature, the better the results will be.

Instagram in May [rolled out Stories captions](#) in the form of an add-on sticker that automatically converts speech to text. While users may edit the style, position, and colour of words, there is currently no way to highlight text for better contrast, and the function offers only a few font types.

Auto-generated captions aren't exactly novel; most social networks have just been slow to introduce them. TikTok only just beat Instagram to the punch by launching a new subtitle feature last April. Zoom opened live closed captioning to all free users in October, while Twitter in December began offering automatic captions to mobile and web users.



What really is Welcome to Country? and Acknowledgement of Country?

Here is a video by Jade Kennedy that can make it real and relevant to you (and don't forget to use the captions option).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdYmSByzrL8>

## 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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