

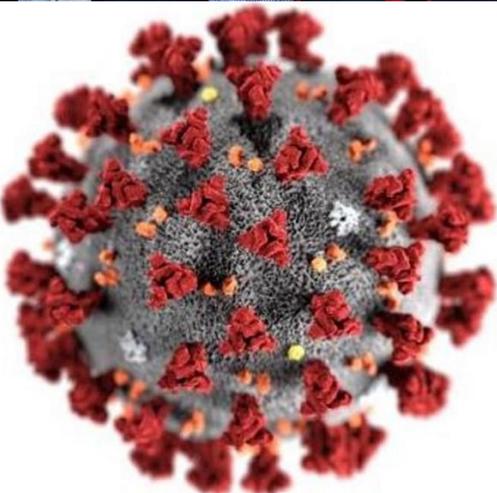


Earbus in WA is reaching far and wide

The Earbus Outreach Program covers an area equivalent to the size of Western Europe. Ear disease is a primary health condition that needs to be assertively managed by doctors and nurse practitioners, and in 2019 Earbus clinicians working in the Outreach Program provided 3,468 primary care consults.

COVID-19 and Hearing Loss

Research shows one in 10 COVID-19 patients report experiencing some form of hearing loss or tinnitus. Cases of COVID-induced hearing loss have been documented globally, everywhere from Iran and Egypt to Thailand and Turkey. Now, doctors and researchers are taking a closer look.



Hearing Loss statistics

Exclusion from communication can have a significant impact on everyday life, causing feelings of loneliness, isolation, and frustration, particularly among older people with hearing loss.

The annual cost of unaddressed hearing loss to Australia is around \$15 billion per year and it is growing. The World Health Organization estimates an annual global cost of US\$ 750 billion. And it is suggested that half of all cases of hearing loss can be prevented through public health measures.



Developing a new National Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 is Australia's overarching framework for disability reform and sets out a ten year national plan for improving the lives for Australians with disability, their families and carers.

Earbus in WA is reaching far and wide

Earbus Foundation of WA works with regional, remote (and now metropolitan) communities across Western Australia to treat and reduce the high rates of ear disease and hearing loss in Aboriginal babies and children.



Earbus features local Aboriginal schoolchildren's art designs.

Aboriginal children have the highest rates of ear disease in the world, despite mainstream Australia having some of the lowest rates of infection. Thus our problem is the worst and our gap is the widest.

The Earbus Outreach Program covers huge areas of Australia's largest state, ranging from Wyndham on the Cambridge Gulf in the Kimberley to Esperance on the Southern Ocean in the state's south-east. In 2019 the Earbus program was delivered on 70 sites but continuing growth will see that rise to 120 locations in 2020. It covers an area equivalent to the size of Western Europe. The numbers behind this complex and challenging service delivery model are remarkable.

In 2019 the Earbus Team performed 10,317 ear screens (Otoscopy and tympanometry) on 3966 Aboriginal children across the Pilbara, Goldfields, Kimberley, SW and South-East regions of the state. The purpose of screening is to triage children so services can be targeted at children with the highest needs.

Earbus Foundation now employs 6 full-time paediatric audiologists; diagnostic audiology in 2019 saw 4585 hearing tests performed. This averages out to around 120 hearing tests per week as Earbus trips are only conducted during school terms in order to reach the maximum number of children.

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Earbus ENT Anton checking ears in the Pilbara.

Because many of the Earbus trips are funded as Fly-In Fly Out (FIFO) visits Earbus works in close collaboration with Aboriginal Medical Services across these regions to ensure continuity of care between visits. It has long-standing and essential partnerships with Wirraka Maya, SWAMS, Bega Garnbirringu and more recent collaborations with YY and OVAHS in the Kimberley.

Earbus also collaborates with Starlight Foundation and Starlight Captains accompany the team on many regional visits.

In total, the Earbus Outreach Program in 2019 delivered over 22,750 occasions of care to Aboriginal children in regional and remote WA.

Earbus Foundation also delivers the Newborn Hearing Screening Program in WA's private hospital sector under contract on behalf of the WA Health Department.

In 2019, across all its programs, Earbus Foundation saw 12,166 children with an average cost of services per child of \$230 per year.

You can find more about its people and work at www.earbus.org.au



Earbus team on the road.

Aided Child Demographics 2019

This new report contains summary data on children and young adults fitted with hearing aids or cochlear implants in Australia.

In 2019, Hearing Australia supported the hearing rehabilitation needs of 25,976 citizens and permanent residents under 26 years of age.

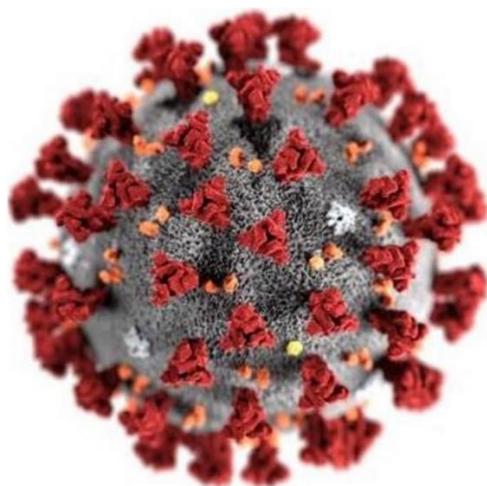
The full report shows the distribution of clients by state/territory of residence at 31 December 2019 and more.

Go to [https://www.hearing.com.au/About-Hearing-Australia/Corporate-Publications-\(1\)/Aided-Child-Demographics-2019?viewmode=0](https://www.hearing.com.au/About-Hearing-Australia/Corporate-Publications-(1)/Aided-Child-Demographics-2019?viewmode=0)

Doctors aren't sure why COVID-19 is causing Hearing Loss

Many COVID-19 patients report hearing loss and tinnitus as a late-onset symptom.

Hearing issues may be caused by COVID-19 itself, the medications used to treat it, or the stress surrounding the illness.



Linda Gaviria describes it as a siren - sudden and sharp, with no stutters or pauses as it sears through her eardrums. The sound erupts intermittently throughout the day, without a distinct source triggering its arrival. Linda, a 35-year-old paediatric ICU nurse in Florida, USA is experiencing what is medically known as tinnitus. But Gaviria recognises it as one of the many new symptoms she's endured since contracting SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in June.

She is not alone. Case studies show one in 10 COVID-19 patients report experiencing some form of hearing loss or tinnitus. Cases of COVID-induced hearing loss have been documented globally, everywhere from Iran and Egypt to Thailand and Turkey. Now, doctors and researchers are taking a closer look.

Hearing symptoms vary in COVID-19 patients

[Kevin Munro, PhD](#), a professor of audiology at the University of Manchester in the U.K., said that hearing loss and/or tinnitus tend to appear later in the course of a COVID-19 infection, or even after

recovery. These symptoms can manifest in multiple variations and volumes, and more research needs to be done to pinpoint their exact prognosis.

“What surprises me the most is the number of people who are reporting problems with their hearing - I’ve been getting hundreds of emails from people telling me they’re experiencing hearing loss or tinnitus,” Munro says.

“Still, I think we have to be careful and not say that COVID-19 is causing everyone to be deaf. We can say that more than one in 10 people are reporting that something has changed with their hearing, but we still don't know everything about it.”

Munro says it’s too early to tell the extent of the damage COVID-19 will cause on the ears. Some of the patients contacting him have reported an increase in their symptoms, while others have noted improvement over time.

What this means for you

If COVID-19 has affected your hearing or triggered tinnitus, you’re not alone. Researchers don’t yet know if this condition is temporary or permanent, but they advise you to seek guidance from a medical professional as soon as possible.

If the hearing loss is sudden, steroids may help reverse it in the first 24 hours.

SARS-CoV-2 isn’t the first virus to cause hearing loss

It isn’t rare for a virus to affect the auditory system.

Even though MERS and SARS - two other coronaviruses from the same family as SARS-CoV-2 - weren’t known to trigger hearing loss, other viruses can.

Examples of these include:

- [Measles](#): Can cause an ear infection that leads to permanent hearing damage
- [Mumps](#): Triggers severe swelling on one side of the face and usually inflicts hearing damage on the affected side
- [Human immunodeficiency virus](#): Causes the body to attack its cells, sometimes leaving patients with hearing loss and tinnitus as a result
- [Congenital cytomegalovirus infection](#): Can induce hearing loss in children

“We know that viruses can damage our hearing through different mechanisms that can cause permanent damage,” Munro says.

“None of the other coronaviruses caused hearing problems, but none of the other coronaviruses cause the long-term health problems that we are now fighting with this particular one.

“That's why people have been surprised when these young, healthy people who may have had mild symptoms are now reporting a hearing deterioration.”

By [Asmae Fahmy](#) writing for [Very Well News](#)

ATAG

ACCESSING THE ARTS GROUP

MAKING LIVE MUSIC
ACCESSIBLE

THU 24 SEP
11am - 12:30pm

ZOOM

Music is supposed to be the universal language. However, for people with disability, their opportunities to participate in Australia's music industry don't always hit the right note. Join us for this **FREE** online panel discussion with experts from the music industry and disability sector as they discuss how music companies, music venues and music festivals can amp up their approach to accessibility for and inclusion of arts practitioners and audiences with disability.

<https://atagonline24sep.eventbrite.com.au>



Create NSW
Arts, Screen & Culture



Guest Speakers

- Eliza Hull - Musical artist
- Alister Hill - Sydney Opera House Prod.
- Emily Collins - MusicNSW MD
- Jane Slingo - AEMC Dir/EP
- Morwenna Collett - Consultant/Educator

Auslan interpreted
Open captioning



Register by 23/9/20



NOW
ONLINE

DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

oneinsix

Deafness and hearing loss: causes, impacts, prevention, identification and management, global strategy

Key facts

- Hearing loss is the most common disability of adulthood.
- More than 450 million people worldwide have disabling hearing loss, and 34 million of these are children.
 - Disabling hearing loss refers to hearing loss greater than 40dB in the better hearing ear in adults and a hearing loss greater than 30dB in the better hearing ear in children.
- It is estimated that by 2050 these figures will double.
- Hearing loss may result from genetic causes, complications at birth, certain infectious diseases, chronic ear infections, the use of particular drugs, exposure to excessive noise, and ageing.
- 60% of childhood hearing loss is due to preventable causes.
- 1 billion young people (aged between 12–35 years) are at risk of hearing loss due to exposure to noise in recreational settings.
- Unaddressed hearing loss poses an annual cost of \$15 billion just in Australia.
- People with hearing loss benefit from early identification; use of hearing aids, cochlear implants and other assistive devices; captioning and sign language; and other forms of educational and social support.
- Current estimates suggest an 83% gap in hearing aid need and use - only 17% of those who could benefit from use of a hearing aid actually use one.

Impact of hearing loss

One of the main impacts of hearing loss is on the individual's ability to communicate with others.

Spoken language development is often delayed in children with unaddressed hearing loss.

Unaddressed hearing loss and ear diseases such as otitis media can have a significantly adverse effect on the academic performance of children. They often have increased rates of grade failure and greater need for education assistance. Access to suitable accommodations is important for optimal learning experiences but are not always available.

Teaching in sign language will benefit some children with hearing loss - the most recent Australian Census reports 10,000 people use Auslan as their first language. Provision of captioning and sign language interpretation on television will facilitate access to information.

Social and emotional impact

Exclusion from communication can have a significant impact on everyday life, causing feelings of loneliness, isolation, and frustration, particularly among older people with hearing loss.

Economic impact

In Australia, the annual cost to the nation is around \$15 billion per year and it is growing. The World Health Organization estimates that unaddressed hearing loss poses an annual global cost of US\$ 750 billion. This includes health sector costs (excluding the cost of hearing devices), costs of educational support, loss of productivity, and societal costs.

Prevention

Overall, it is suggested that half of all cases of hearing loss can be prevented through public health measures. Some simple strategies for prevention of hearing loss include:



- immunising children against childhood diseases, including measles, meningitis, rubella and mumps
- immunising adolescent girls and women of reproductive age against rubella before pregnancy.
- preventing cytomegalovirus infections in expectant mothers through good hygiene; and screening for and treating syphilis and other infections in pregnant women.
- strengthening maternal and child health programs, including promotion of safe childbirth.
- following healthy ear care practices.
- reducing exposure (both occupational and recreational) to loud sounds by raising awareness about the risks and developing and enforcing relevant legislation.
- encouraging individuals to use personal protective devices such as earplugs and noise-cancelling earphones and headphones.
- screening of children for otitis media, followed by appropriate interventions.
- avoiding the use of particular drugs which may be harmful to hearing.
- referring infants at high risk, such as those with a family history of deafness or those born with low birth weight, birth asphyxia, jaundice or meningitis, for early assessment of hearing, to ensure prompt diagnosis and appropriate management, as required.
- implementing the [WHO-ITU global standard for personal audio systems and devices](#). This can be done by governments and manufacturers of smartphones and MP3 players. If adhered to, the standard could help prevent hearing loss due to listening practices that are harmful to hearing.
- educating young people on hearing loss, its causes, prevention and identification.

There is more to read on the [Deafness Forum website](#)

Deafness Forum represents Australia in the World Hearing Forum, part of the World Health Organization.

Artist helps hearing impaired access the arts through Auslan



Sue Jo Wright is using sign language to help members of the deaf community like herself gain access to the arts.

Having worked as an Australian Sign Language consultant on the ninth season of *The Voice Australia*, she is now putting her visual arts credentials to good use as an artist educator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia.

She also leads Auslan tours at Art the Gallery NSW.

Ms Wright is an artist who works primarily with photography, video and textiles.

"Growing up as a deaf person I missed out on opportunities due to lack of access, and this included understanding and appreciating art," she said. Now, following my art studies, I feel I can empower other deaf people to develop a deep passion and curiosity for art, to broaden their minds and unlock their potential for creativity."

"I lead Auslan tours at Sydney's major museums with much more confidence in the interpretation of artworks, thanks to the skills and knowledge I've acquired through my learning at TAFE NSW."

"Starting is always scary but the more familiar I became with the learning of artistic practice, the more confident I became in communicating and interpreting important contemporary and historical art to the deaf and hard of hearing community.

"This barrier of communication is constant for me. My study has helped me to bridge various gaps like this, especially when working on group projects, setting up exhibitions and communicating our needs and interests."

Story by [Merryn Porter](#)

Developing a new National Disability Strategy

The [National Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#) is Australia's overarching framework for disability reform and sets out a ten year national plan for improving the lives for Australians with disability, their families and carers.

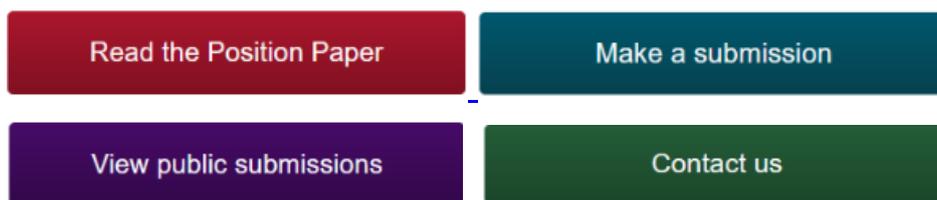
The Government said the current Strategy is about creating a more inclusive society that enables Australians with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens.

Consultations

The Department of Social Services is asking for your feedback on proposals for the next Strategy, as set out in the [National Disability Strategy position paper](#). The closing date for receiving your suggestions and submissions is 30 September.

The proposals include:

- the vision, outcome areas and guiding principles for the new Strategy
- a stronger focus on improving community attitudes
- clearly describing roles and responsibilities of governments and the community
- regular public reporting
- developing targeted action plans to drive better implementation
- how people with disability can be engaged in the delivery and monitoring of the Strategy.



Peer networks: where people support each other

The Peerconnect website provides practical information about peer networks in Australia. Its focus is on the disability community.

A peer support network is where people get together as equals to provide support to each other because of similar experiences or circumstances in their life. There is evidence that peer support can help people feel more confident, knowledgeable, capable, and less isolated.

[Find a Peer Network](#) takes you to a list of peer networks around Australia.

[Setting up and running peer networks](#) contains many useful fact sheets and video clips that can help you set up and run a peer support network.

[Peer Network Stories](#) is a collection of stories from peer networks and their members.

There are many benefits of peer support. You can read about them in [Why Peer Support Is Awesome](#)

Peerconnect was created from funding by the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Message from World Health Organization

The countdown to World Hearing Day 2021 has begun.

3rd March 2021 will mark the launch of the World Report on Hearing and is an opportunity to raise awareness on this topic among policymakers and general public alike.

The theme of the World Hearing Day is

'Hearing care for ALL!

The World Hearing Day 2021 and the World Report on Hearing present a global call for action to address hearing loss and ear diseases across the life course.

Key messages of World Hearing Day:

Policy makers

- The number of people living with unaddressed hearing loss and ear diseases is unacceptable.
- Timely action is needed to prevent and address hearing loss across the life course.
- Investing in cost effective interventions will benefit people with hearing loss and bring financial gains to the society.
- Governments must act to integrate person-centered ear and hearing care within national health plans for universal health coverage.

General public

- Good hearing and communication are important at all stages of life
- Hearing loss (and related ear diseases) can be avoided through preventative actions such as: protection against loud sounds; good ear care practices and immunization.
- Hearing loss (and related ear diseases) can be addressed when it is identified in a timely manner and appropriate care sought
- People at risk of hearing loss should check their hearing regularly
- People having hearing loss (or related ear diseases) should seek care from a health care provider



Riley doesn't want to miss a word



Credit: Justin McManus

To feel alone in your own world is a normal way of life for many deaf children.

Riley Gurry, 15, explains that missing the nuance of conversation can be the most challenging aspect of deafness. "I'll be in the yard with my friends at school and we're having a conversation and I don't catch something so I say 'what?', " Riley says. "Then my friend will say 'it doesn't matter'. Well, actually it does matter because everyone else heard it. It's unfair to say it doesn't matter because usually you say something that is part of a conversation and everyone should be part of that conversation."

Riley, of Mitcham in Melbourne, is lucky to have always been able to make friends easily and he takes great pleasure in communicating. He doesn't want to miss a word.

Riley was born deaf but not diagnosed until he was two years old. He is the only deaf person in his family and among his friends at school.

"It's really great to see kids from all over Australia who are just like you," he says. "It's also great because you get to learn about your own story and identity and embrace the challenges of being deaf or hard of hearing by making it a superpower, not a disability or handicap."

By Catherine Lambert writing for [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

Know someone who would like to get One in Six?

Drop us a line: 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 of disappearing 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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