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# Hearing health and happiness.

Deaf queer spaces do  
exist.

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## Deaf queer spaces do exist: Asphyxia

**Melbourne-based author, artist and Deaf activist Asphyxia is making her debut as a songwriter at the Midsumma Festival 2023, with a brand new show *Stranger Than Usual*.**

“Using music and Auslan, I tell a personal story about the experience of being Deaf, queer, chronically ill and needing to use a wheelchair. These songs chronicle my journey to healing, filled with love, loss, discrimination and humour,” says Asphyxia.

“*Stranger Than Usual* is an opportunity for deaf people to have a taste of what music designed specifically for us could be like and experience it for themselves. And it’s an opportunity for hearing people to find out about how we experience music.”

The author of *Future Girl | The Words in My Hands*, and winner of the Readings YA Book Award 2021, began writing her own music around two years ago.

“Navigating the challenges of learning musical conventions in a teaching world that relies on listening, I collaborated with several musicians to find a way to make music accessible to myself... and others who are Deaf and hard of hearing,” says Asphyxia.

“Through experimentation and consultation with other Deaf and hard of hearing music-lovers, I have determined a method of arranging music so that it is pleasurable for hearing-aid wearers and can be optimally felt through sound vibrations.”

### **Deaf Queer Spaces Do Exist**

“When I took the pressure off myself and stopped trying to pass as hearing, the world

became a more pleasant place for me to be in.”

Deaf communities are more inclusive than queer spaces when it comes to making places accessible, according to Asphyxia.

“Being Deaf, and also using a wheelchair have resulted in a lot of marginalisation for me in mainstream spaces. In comparison, being a lesbian has paled into insignificance.”

“I feel most the most comfortable in Deaf queer spaces (they do exist!!) where we all sign so I can easily understand what’s going on, and there is a culture of ‘anything goes – we accept you as you are’ which I really love.”

### **More Feminist, More Lesbian**

“Unfortunately, my new level of deafness meant that the songs I have painstakingly learned to hear over the years were no longer accessible, much to my intense frustration.”

That’s when she hired Sarah to help her adapt songs. “I have had a wonderful time changing the words to all my favourite songs, making them more feminist, more lesbian, and more relevant to my own life.”

These days, a new project is taking up much of her time – Amplify, an accessible music project that will allow Deaf people to enjoy music.

“It is my goal that in the future we will be able to download accessible music from Spotify and other mainstream distribution platforms,” says Asphyxia.

By Shibu Thomas writing for the [Star Observer](#). Catch ‘Stranger Than Usual’ at the Abbotsford Convent from February 2-4, 2023.

More information [here](#).

# There is a direct link between hearing health and happiness.

Taking care of hearing health can have wide-ranging benefits, helping people to stay active and involved in the world around them.

"With hearing loss, you end up missing out on so much, even when you're just having a normal conversation with your wife or kids," Hearing Australia client Troy Ryan said.

"Do yourself and your family a favour by getting tested and getting hearing help early."

According to Healthshare, there are several types of hearing loss, which all impact our ability to interact with those around us.



People with hearing loss can also have mixed hearing loss, including conductive and sensorineural hearing loss.

In the over 55 age group, hearing loss has been shown to have dramatic impacts on personal relationships, resulting in a loss of communication and intimacy and disengagement in social situations.



Conductive hearing loss stems from a problem with the outer or middle ear. Sound cannot pass through to the inner ear due to an ear infection, a punctured eardrum, fluid in the ear or ear wax.

These conditions are generally able to be treated.

When the cochlea or auditory nerve are damaged or malfunction, this is known as sensorineural hearing loss. It can occur in one ear or both ears depending on the cause. The electrical information is not being accurately sent on to the brain.

"When I hear better, everything goes more smoothly in my life, including quality time with my partner, who prefers it when I can reply to her without asking to repeat all the time," Hearing Australia client Graham West said.

A loss of spontaneity was listed as one of the top complaints of both people with a hearing impairment and their close partners.

Instant observations, small talk in everyday interactions and even those three little words - "I love you" - became problematic.



# To light up the dance floor, turn up the bass

**As soon as the DJ turns up the bass, the crowd goes wild and dances with heightened enthusiasm.**

**But to what extent is this a conscious reaction?**

Researchers have taken a closer look at the relationship between bass frequencies and dancing.

The results showed that participants danced almost 12 percent more when researchers introduced a very low frequency bass that dancers could not hear.

"They couldn't tell when those changes happened, but it was driving their movements," neuroscientist David Cameron of McMaster University, who led the study, told AFP.

The results confirm the special relationship between bass and dance, which has never been scientifically proven.

## **The pulse of the music**

Cameron notes that people attending electronic music concerts "love when they can feel the bass so strong" and tend to turn it up very loud. But they are not alone.

In many cultures "it tends to be the low-frequency instruments like the bass guitar or the bass drum, that give the pulse of the music" that gets humans moving.

David Cameron's theory is that even when undetected, the bass stimulates sensory systems in the body, such as the skin and the vestibular system (the inner ear).

These systems have a very close connection to the motor system responsible for movement but in a way that bypasses the frontal cortex. He compares it to the way the body keeps the lungs breathing and the heart beating.

Cameron said the research team believes the stimulation of these systems "give a little boost to your motor system. And that adds a little bit of energy and vigor to your real-world movements."

As for why humans dance at all, the mystery endures. Most theories revolve around the idea of social cohesion.

"When you synchronise with people, you tend to feel bonded with them a little bit afterward. By making music together, that allows us to feel better together as a group, and then we function better as a group, and we can have more peace."

**More information:** Daniel J. Cameron, Undetectable very-low frequency sound increases dancing at a live concert, *Current Biology* (2022). DOI: [10.1016/j.cub.2022.09.035](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2022.09.035). [www.cell.com/current-biology/f... 0960-9822\(22\)01535-4](https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822(22)01535-4)

From [Phys.Org News](https://www.phys.org/news)

**One in six Australians live with some form of hearing loss. This may increase to one in four by 2050.**

**Hearing health is essential for general health. Better hearing leads to greater wellbeing.**

Deafness Forum Australia is the peak body representing the views and interests of citizens 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.



## What can affect the ear, nose & throat?

The ear, nose, and throat are sensory organs that form part of the face and neck.

They share a few critical structures within the head, such as the sinuses and the Eustachian tubes.

People may encounter many ear, nose, and throat (ENT) problems, and doctors often group these conditions together. Although a general practitioner can treat many ENT issues, some people might need to see a specialist for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Doctors specialising in these areas study them as a group. An otolaryngologist, also known as an ENT, understands the structures of the ear, nose, and throat and treats their associated disorders.

The ears, nose, and throat have ties to sensory organs that humans use every day.

The ears allow a person to hear, and the inner ear helps stabilise the body and provide a sense of balance.

The nose allows a person to smell and also assists with taste. Breathing through the nose humidifies the air and helps to filter the air before it enters the lungs.

The throat provides a way for air to reach the lungs and voice box. It also connects the mouth

to the oesophagus, which food travels down to reach the digestive system.

These organs and their tissues form part of the complex structures of the face and neck, and they share a few important structures within the head. Examples include the sinuses, which can pass beneath the eyes and nose, and the Eustachian tubes, which link the middle ear to the throat.

Because the ENT system shares some organs, issues that involve one part of the ENT system may also affect an organ or structure somewhere else in the ENT system.

### Ear infections

Ear infections may occur if bacteria in the area multiply, causing inflammation and leading to symptoms.

Ear infections typically occur in the outer ear, called swimmer's ear or the middle ear but can also occur in the inner ear.

Symptoms can include ear pain, especially while lying down, difficulty sleeping, difficulty hearing or muffled hearing, feeling fullness in the ear, dizziness, spinning sensation, nausea and vomiting, issues with balance, drainage from the ear, warmth and redness of the ear skin, ringing in the ear.

## Hearing difficulties

Hearing difficulties, such as hearing loss or muffled hearing, may occur as secondary symptoms due to infections or other issues in the area. Injuries to the structures of the ear may also cause hearing difficulties. Some people may be born with hearing difficulties, while others may experience hearing problems as they age.

## Tinnitus

Tinnitus, or ringing in the ears, can be a secondary symptom of other issues such as infections. It may also occur from exposure to loud noises like machinery or loud music.

## Vertigo

Vertigo is a sensation of feeling the body is spinning or dizzy. Some people describe it as feeling like the environment around them is spinning or moving. Vertigo may occur in response to an irritation or inflammation in the delicate parts of the inner ear that control balance and hearing. Other conditions, such as Meniere's disease, may also lead to vertigo.

## Sleep apnea

Sleep apnea occurs when a person momentarily stops breathing during sleep. However, similar stoppages can occur many times in the night. Some forms can affect the nose or the throat.

## Summary

General practitioners can often treat ENT problems. However, for more complicated conditions or an accurate diagnosis, a doctor may refer someone to an otolaryngologist with specialised training, tools, and experience to handle ENT problems.

Article by [Nicole Leigh Aaronson](#) and [Jon Johnson](#) for [Medical News Today](#). Image by Artem Hvozdkov/Getty Images.

## Read Our Lips Australia



**You can access a free preview of our Read Our Lips Australia online lipreading course to see what it is all about.**

Visit our website and register your details to access Lesson 1 and decide if it is right for you.

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

Contact us at [support@readourlips.com.au](mailto:support@readourlips.com.au) or visit [www.readourlips.com.au](http://www.readourlips.com.au)

The fee is claimable through an individual's National Disability Insurance Scheme plan. How you claim the course fee will depend on your individual goals and how your plan is managed. For example, the fee may be claimed under Capacity Building for improved social and community participation; or alternatively under Core Supports for individual capacity building training.

Read Our Lips Australia was created with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Security and NDIS.

# World Hearing Day

The prevalence of hearing loss will rise considerably in coming decades due to changing population demographics, increasing exposure to risk factors such as recreational noise, and persistence of untreated ear conditions such as otitis media.

Many causes that lead to hearing loss are preventable. 60% of hearing loss in children can be prevented through public health strategies. Those who have hearing loss can greatly benefit from timely and appropriate interventions. Effective implementation of proven strategies to prevent hearing loss and rehabilitation of those with irreversible loss require public health measures to be put in place, including the integration of ear and hearing care services into national health systems.

## 3 March is World Hearing Day

World Hearing Day is the largest global awareness campaign on ear and hearing care that calls for action to address hearing loss.

World Hearing Day aims to:

- Promote public health actions for ear and hearing care
- Stimulate intersectoral partnership for ear and hearing care
- Raise awareness on hearing loss and care at a national and community levels across the world
- Encourage behaviour change towards healthy EHC practices.
- World Hearing Day is the ideal opportunity to spread the word and raise the profile of ear and hearing care in people's minds, in the world's media, and on the global health agenda.

Organising an event? Download the [Planning Guide for World Hearing Day 2023](#)

Spread the word. Download the [Communication Kit for World Hearing Day 2023](#)



## COVID-19 update

### [Updated eligibility for oral COVID-19 treatments](#)

The Department of Health continues to raise awareness around updated eligibility for oral COVID-19 treatments. People at higher risk of severe illness are eligible for antiviral treatments. More information is available on the [Department's website](#). There is also the [COVID-19 oral treatments fact sheet](#) which is available in over 60 languages.

Information about COVID-19 vaccines for people with disability and people who work in the disability sector has been collated on the [Department of Health's website](#). People who need help or support can call the Disability Gateway Helpline on 1800 643 787.

## Genetic testing and hearing interventions

Genetic diagnoses can provide parents additional information about anticipated hearing loss progression, comorbid conditions, and family planning.

Obtaining a genetic diagnosis may increase parental acceptance of hearing loss and subsequent pursuit of intervention. This study evaluates the association between genetic diagnoses and hearing loss intervention. [onlinelibrary.wiley.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)



**Travellers with hearing loss encounter many challenges navigating airport processes and may even have a diminished experience onboard the aircraft compared to hearing passengers. From the check-in process to receiving inflight announcements, traveling can be difficult for those with hearing loss.**

According to the Australian Government's Department of Health and Aged Care, about 3.6 million individuals in Australia have some level of hearing loss. That number is expected to increase to 7.8 million by 2060 as the population ages. The flag carrier for Australia, Qantas has implemented several steps to support passengers with hearing loss.

### **Prior to the flight**

Hearing-impaired passengers can book their trip over the telephone by utilising the National Relay Service or via the airline's website. If reservations were made online, Qantas requests that passengers contact them immediately to review any needed accommodations.

Travelers can inform the airline's staff if they are able to lip-read or would like attendants to use a pen and paper or to speak louder when interacting. Additionally, passengers should let the airline know if they plan to use an assistive listening device or a transmitting device that requires aircraft power.

Qantas provides a variety of assistance at its terminals as well. Curbside assistance can be arranged (subject to staffing availability) for all Qantas terminals within Australia. Their "Meet and Assist" service can be provided for passengers who need support within the airport.

The carrier has also started providing hearing loops, which are loops of wire that transmit sound directly into the telecoil receiver of a hearing aid via a magnetic field to eliminate background noise at some airport terminals and lounges. Just look for signage at Qantas facilities to see if hearing loops are available.

### **Boarding and inflight**

Passengers who need further support are able to board first and receive an individual safety briefing. When the captain makes announcements during the flight, the cabin crew endeavours to update customers with hearing loss using their preferred mode of communication. This is why the airline encourages travelers to notify them of their communication preferences prior to departure.

According to the airline's website, travellers in the exit rows need to be able to take in instructions from the crew in the event of an emergency and be able to quickly assist in a crisis, so some level of hearing is necessary for certain situations.

By [Anita Gallagher](#) for [Simple Flying](#).





## Katrin Manella

“Without a doubt, the pandemic has entirely changed all of our lives. In many cases, for the worse –but in some cases unexpected benefits and opportunities have arisen. I, at least, have a positive story to tell. Maybe you’re interested?”

Due to a congenital, profound hearing loss in both ears, I was forced to compensate for my missing sensory organ by lip reading from a very early age. In many ways, my eyes were my ears –enabling me to actively participate in a daily life very similar to that of people with normal hearing. And in noisy situations, my perception was sometimes even better. I was lucky to have parents who strongly supported me living a ‘normal life’ as a child and teenager. This meant that I was able to confidently attend a public school and, later, university –my entrance ticket into the working world of an audiologist.

In fact, in my profession, my handicap gave me the great advantage of being able to put myself in the customers’ shoes. For more than 10 years now, I am proud to be working for a hearing aid manufacturer in Switzerland. And with the home office reality during the pandemic, I suddenly realised a fundamental change in my working life.

In our company, everyone now uses video calls for meetings. Everybody directly faces the

camera with headphones, which means that I can see my conversation partners directly from the front and close to me, simplifying lip reading and clear speech. In contrast to physical meetings, the loudness and distance in online meetings is always the same, and the background noise is gone.

The most profound learning for me has been that I am now able to understand everything in large team calls due to the closed caption option. This means that I can make use of my ‘other ears’ and easily read what is being said.

In this new setting, it has been very surprising to learn how loose and relaxed conversations can be. Apparently, I have been used to a very high level of stress, due to the great efforts of listening and lip reading. Moreover, I have realised how much information I must have been missing in the past. As a result, I am now full of energy in the evenings, which is highly beneficial for my private life –a tremendous improvement that I would not want to be without! I wonder if others out there share my experience.”

From [World Hearing Forum](#).



**Ear Science Institute Australia** created videos that feature people telling their account of how hearing loss can affect social and emotional wellbeing.

You can view the videos via these links:

- [Hearing loss affects us all in different ways](#)
- [Ways of coping with hearing loss](#)

# New Research



## Hearing loss and injury-causing falls: can hearing aids make a difference?

There are many potential risk factors for falls, ranging from diminished eyesight and muscle weakness, to diabetes and heart disease. One risk factor that hasn't received widespread attention is hearing loss, a health condition affecting approximately one in three people between the ages of 65 and 74 and nearly half of those older than 75.

Research conducted by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine links hearing loss with an elevated risk of injury-causing falls. In their [study](#) of 2,017 individuals ages 40 to 69, Johns Hopkins researchers found that a 25-decibel hearing loss (classified as mild) was associated with a three-fold higher risk of falling, compared to someone with normal hearing. Every additional 10 decibels of hearing loss increased the chances of falling by 1.4 fold.

Experts point to a number of possible explanations for the link between hearing loss and falls. One is that hearing-impaired individuals possess reduced environmental awareness (what's going on around them) or less spatial awareness (relationship to other people or objects around them). Cognitive overload may be another factor — the brain is

devoting excessive mental resources to hearing, at the expense of maintaining balance.

Article from [Amplifon Hearing Health Care](#).

## Association of lifestyle behaviours with hearing loss

A [large study](#) in the UK showed an increasing number of healthy behaviours was associated with decreased risk of hearing loss. The healthy behaviours examined were: never smoking, high level of physical activity, high diet quality, moderate alcohol intake, and optimal sleep.

Another [study](#) finds hearing aid use for people living in the community with dementia and hearing loss is influenced by:

- degree of hearing aid handling proficiency
- positive experiential consequences
- degree of hearing aid comfort or fit
- person-environment interactions, and
- social reinforcement.

## Newborns, infants and children

- [Children With Unilateral Hearing Loss After Newborn Hearing Screening in Taiwan](#)
- [Development and Evaluation of Paediatric Versions of the Vanderbilt Fatigue Scale for Children with Hearing Loss](#)
- [Efficacy of cochlear implants in children with borderline hearing who have already achieved significant language development with hearing aids](#)
- [Middle ear effusion and newborn hearing screening](#)
- [Paediatricians' knowledge & attitude toward hearing loss and newborn hearing screening programs](#)
- [Universal newborn hearing screening with automated auditory brainstem response in Hungary: 5-year experience in diagnostics and influence on the early intervention](#)



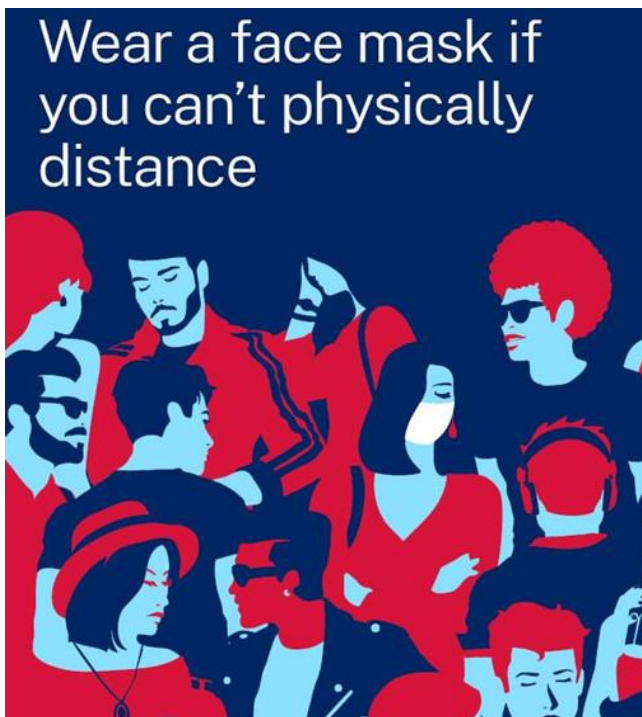
# Hearing the future

Hearing Australia and the National Acoustic Laboratories have worked with the Government, universities, commercial and not-for-profit organisations for 75 years to provide world leading research and services to help children and adults with hearing loss.

Over this period, the organisations helped over one and a half million Australians and produced research that shaped global hearing health care.

To celebrate this milestone, they hosted the **Hearing the Future** conference in November that featured presentations from experts on the latest in hearing health care, research and technology.

You can watch highlights of the event [here](#)



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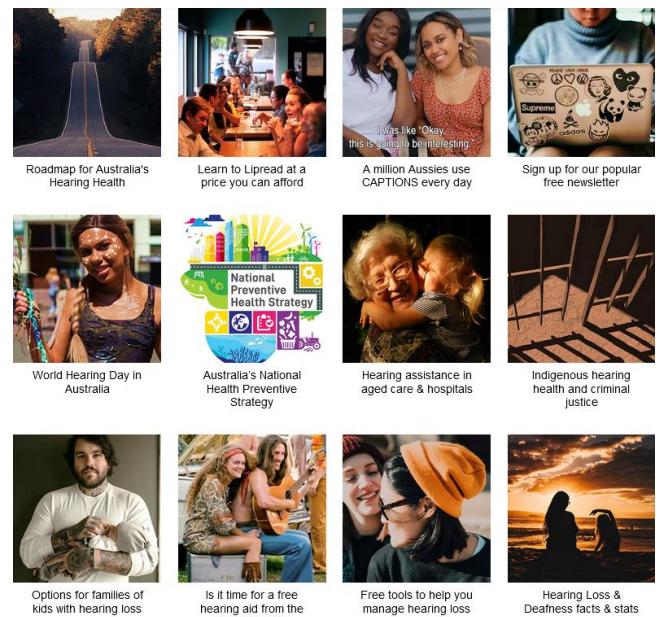
## Now is the time to join Deafness Forum Australia to support our advocacy in 2023.

You can download a membership application form [here](#).

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

Drop us a line at [hello@deafnessforum.org.au](mailto:hello@deafnessforum.org.au)

## Our website is a rich source of information, [www.deafnessforum.org.au](http://www.deafnessforum.org.au)



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