



Deafness in furry companions

Dogs and cats may be born or become deaf, but with good care, deaf animals can continue to lead quite happy lives.

Susan, David and the twins inspire

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TV captions performance

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\$1.2 million project supporting sensory health for aged care residents

"Poor sensory function worsens quality of life and exacerbates the impact of dementia by making communication more difficult," says Professor Piers Dawes. "It can also lead to reduced social engagement, increased dependency, disorientation and increased costs of care."

Photos from National Deafblind Conference 2022

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.

Hearing Centre on Wheels tackles hearing loss cases caused by bombing in Ukraine



A team of a hearing care professional and an ENT specialist has been working the streets of war-torn Kiev, discovering a high number of people who have lost their hearing as a result of bomb explosions and artillery fire.

And they have been working on wheels, touring districts in a specially equipped van in search of those who need hearing help.

Taras Kurilets is an audiologist from the Aurora Hearing Centre, Kiev.

During pauses in the Russian bombing of this north-central region of Ukraine, he and an otorhinolaryngologist drive through the bombed streets on Kiev suburbs, carrying out hearing consultations.

This is an area where many inhabitants have had their houses destroyed by Russian military action. For months they have lived without communication, electricity, gas, even water. Many of them have lost family, often in atrocious situations. Many are wounded.

Twice a week, the Aurora team drives around in their fitted-out van, carrying out examinations and auditory diagnoses, giving treatment recommendations, and supplying any necessary medication.

After a month of work, Taras Kurilets reported that "irreversible hearing loss was diagnosed for many citizens, either long-term loss or acquired because of very loud sounds: explosions and artillery fire.

"Hearing aids are needed for these cases. But these people are still full of energy and feel ashamed of the aids, perceiving them either as a sign of weakness or feeling the time is not right for their use."

In this land devastated by war, the psychological barrier still exists for hearing aids.

Behind this operation is the Aurora Hearing Centre, Kiev, part of one of Ukraine's principal hearing aid firms and [Vidchui Association](#).

By Corinne Couté for [Audio Infos France](#) Image © Aurora

Managing deafness in furry companions

By Dr Anne Quain for [The Canberra Times](#)

Dogs and cats generally hear very well, but that isn't always the case. They may be born or become deaf, or become hard of hearing.

Dogs and cats use their hearing to engage with their environment, to sense potential hazards, and to communicate with other animals and of course with people. With good care, deaf animals can continue to lead quite happy lives.

The most common types of deafness in dogs and cats are congenital - often due to inflammation, polyps or growths in the ear canal, or build-up of material such as wax in the external ear canal - associated either with a white coat and blue eyes in cats, or piebald and merle genes in dogs.

Some breeds have a higher rate of deafness than others. This includes the Dalmatian, Australian cattle dog, bull terrier, English setter, English cocker spaniel, Jack Russell terrier and Boston terrier.

Hearing loss isn't all bad news. Animals that are born deaf, and those that lose their hearing in the first few weeks of life, can adapt very well. They rely on their other senses to navigate the world, although it is recommended that when outdoors, deaf dogs are supervised at all times as they cannot hear auditory warnings signalling potential hazards like the sound of an approaching vehicle.



Picture: Shutterstock

Acquired deafness is typically gradual in onset, but it can be sudden - for example in the case of some brain diseases, or secondary to toxicity from ear medication.

Sudden-onset hearing loss is associated with more dramatic signs, as animals don't have time to adapt. These animals may show signs of distress, including loud vocalisation or sudden loss of response to verbal cues.

Age-related hearing loss tends to be gradual. Often owners notice that their pet "sleeps in" as they aren't roused by signs that might normally wake them, like the doorbell or the sound of the fridge opening.

I've had canine patients with terrible noise phobias that resolve in their senior years when they become hard of hearing. Dogs and even cats are capable of learning to read and respond to hand signals if these are clear and used consistently by the owners.

Author, Dr Anne Quain BVSc (Hons), MANZCVS (Animal Welfare), Dip ECAWBM (AWSEL) is a lecturer at the Sydney School of Veterinary Science and a practising veterinarian.

Melbourne sisters provide inspiration for others living with hearing loss

By [Nikolina Koevska Kharoufeh](#) | for [Nine.com.au](#)

The Russo family are much like many Aussie families - they love to travel, are big Carlton fans and have a passion for basketball.

Susan and David's two daughters, Isabella and Sienna, were both born with genetic [hearing loss](#), a condition which has impacted their development, education and confidence.

"It can be frustrating for the girls. They have definitely felt more isolated. Though, they have taught me so much! Their courage and resilience are always inspiring," mum Susan tells 9Honey Parenting.



Susan and David Russo with their incredible daughters. (Supplied)

Genetic hearing loss, known as 'congenital hearing loss', is a condition which is present at birth, as opposed to hearing loss that may occur due to an accident or trauma.

Susan and David are both carriers of the hearing loss gene Connexin 26, which they only found out about through genetic testing as there was no history of hearing loss in their families.

The gene meant that their children had a one in four chance of being born with the condition - both daughters Isabella, 13 and Sienna, 10 being diagnosed at birth.

"The extent of loss differs for both of our girls and also varies from left to right ears and at different frequencies. They hear, but not at what is considered 'normal' levels of hearing," Susan explains.

It's been a long journey for Susan and David who do everything they can to support their girls in every way possible.

"When my first daughter was born there were lots of appointments; confirming the initial diagnosis, getting hearing aids and starting early intervention. This meant multiple sessions a week with an audiologist, testing, and disruption to normal routine," Susan recalls.

"Lots of time spent reading and singing to the girls right in front of their faces for most of their waking hours. Being diligent about making sure the girls always wore their hearing aids, getting used to them and the sound was a critical habit to form in the early months and years of their lives."



Sienna (left) and Isabella (right) at their first hearing aid fitting. (Supplied)

Outside of that, the girls have unfortunately also had to deal with a fair-share of [bullying](#).

"Some kids are just cruel, but we have found that education is usually the best way to combat this. The girls have given speeches to their classes or at whole school assemblies. After kids have a better understanding of the issue they tend to be more understanding," their mum explains.

The close-knit family of four continue to navigate the challenges. The girls are heavily involved in local basketball, which has provided a positive supporting community for them.

"I also have a really good relationship with the girls Hearing Australia audiologists who are always happy to listen and give advice," Susan mentioned.

"We teach them how to be independent with their devices and how to advocate for themselves."

"For parents who have just learnt that their child has a hearing loss, this realisation that their children can still live full and vibrant lives is a transformational moment. Once people realise that the girls can hear, have excellent spoken language and they go to mainstream schools they don't see them as different," Susan says.



Isabella and Sienna are incredibly close.

\$1.2 million project supporting sensory health for aged care residents

Improving quality of life for people living in residential aged care with dementia by increasing hearing and vision support is the focus of a \$1.2 million University of Queensland-led SENSEcog Care Australia study. The project was awarded funding through the [National Health and Medical Research Council](#) Medical Research Future Fund.

Commencing in July, University of QLD researchers will work alongside clinicians, aged care staff and residents with dementia to co-develop solutions to improve hearing and vision care.

[Professor Piers Dawes](#) from UQ's [School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences](#) said up to 70 per cent of people living in aged care settings have dementia or cognitive impairment.

"Poor sensory function worsens quality of life and exacerbates the impact of dementia by making communication more difficult," Professor Dawes said.

"It can also lead to reduced social engagement, increased dependency, disorientation and increased costs of care.

"Through this study we are aiming to develop effective and feasible solutions to ensure people living in aged care receive the help they need so they have the best quality of life."

Over 90 per cent of people in residential aged care communities have hearing and or vision problems that are frequently undetected or under corrected. Environmental factors such as poor lighting or noise also contribute to poor sensory functioning.



For residents living with dementia the impacts of poor sensory function are amplified. Poor sensory function can worsen quality of life and exacerbate the impact of dementia by making communication more difficult, increasing dependency, confusion and other symptoms of dementia.

This leads to prescription of excess medication and increases the cost of care. Hearing and vision care for people in residential aged care communities is a critical unmet need.

Professor Dawes said in many cases aged care staff do not have training or confidence in how to support the hearing or vision needs of residents, and it can be difficult to access hearing and vision services for people in residential aged care.

"In this project we will work with aged care staff, clinicians, family, carers and residents to co-design a 'sensory support intervention'."

The intervention will involve training aged care staff to detect sensory problems and communicate better, ensuring older adults have access to good hearing and vision care (hearing aids, glasses), and improving the sensory environment (e.g. lighting, noise reduction). The intervention will then be rolled out in aged care settings and evaluated.

International Hearing Health advocate



David Brady, chair of Deafness Forum Australia has been appointed the Hearing Health Advocate in Australia by The Coalition for Global Hearing Health.

"This role is for me to advocate for policy design and implementation at country level and to present a unified front at global level to increase ear and hearing care," he said.

"It is an avenue for Australia to contribute to providing advice to World Hearing Forum (part of World Health Organization) to promote World Hearing Day and general awareness, as well as highlight our successes in the hearing health space.

"I look forward to showcasing why Australians are world class leaders in this space, especially in the field of children with a hearing loss, the advancement of hearing health on the national policy agenda, and the prevention of hearing loss at all ages."

CICADA QLD: Deafness Forum's newest member



Deafness Forum welcomes its new member, CICADA Queensland, an independent not-for-profit peer support group staffed by volunteers.

The organisation embraces people from all walks of life, throughout their hearing loss journey. This includes supporting those who are at the beginning, perhaps only starting to think about cochlear implants, through to those who are established cochlear implant users.

Whether you identify as Deaf or Hard of Hearing, use Auslan or spoken language as your primary method of communication, or simply need some support for yourself, family or friends, [CICADA Queensland](#) is here to help you navigate this journey.

Deafness Forum is a Registered Charity



Your contributions keep us working on your behalf.

All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

To donate, [go here](#)

Watchdog to conduct spot audits on TV broadcasters' closed captioning obligations

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) focusses each year on key areas for improved industry compliance.

Improving quality captioning



In 2022-23, ACMA will shift from investigating individual complaints to conducting spot audits to determine whether TV broadcasters are consistently and reliably meeting their captioning obligations.

Captioning of TV programs is essential for many audiences to access and enjoy television.

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network CEO Andrew Williams said his organisation and Deafness Forum Australia had been calling on the ACMA to actively monitor captions on Australian television for many years.

"We believe that the ACMA's reliance on consumer complaints does not provide adequate community safeguards for monitoring broadcasters' captioning obligations on television.

"We are pleased to see that the ACMA has listened to deaf and hearing-impaired organisations such as Deafness Forum, and will now be pro-actively monitoring live captioning on broadcast television as one of its 2022-23 compliance priorities," Mr Williams said.

"We hope that the spot checks to be undertaken by the ACMA proves to be an effective tool in improving compliance."

Read more about the [ACMA's other priorities](#) in 2022-23.



Captioning is the text version of speech and other sounds that can be provided on television, DVDs, videos on the internet, cinemas, theatres and public places like museums.

Captions are either selected as desired (closed captions), usually by turning the captions function on or off, or they are included so that they automatically appear on a screen (open captions). You may see the 'CC' symbol for closed captions or the 'OC' symbol for open captions on TV program guides, DVDs and accessible cinema session guides.

Project will send sign language teachers into remote villages of Solomon Islands

Australian Catholic University (ACU) and the Archdiocese of Honiara, Solomon Islands, have received a research grant of nearly \$500,000 to lead a ground-breaking project to send sign language teachers into remote communities of the Pacific nation.

The project is being funded through a research grant from a partnership between the governments of Solomon Islands, Australia, and New Zealand.



Led by ACU Associate Professor Dr Mellita Jones and representatives of Catholic Education Authority of the Archdiocese of Honiara, the project will train deaf and hearing people across Solomon Islands in AUSLAN, before sending them into remote communities where deaf children and young adults live.

Dr Jones said the ultimate goal was to lead deaf children out of the extreme isolation they felt, and become a pathway to education and employment.

“It can’t just be the deaf children who learn sign language, but the communities, so the ultimate outcome is to give those deaf children an opportunity to be active members, which is what people need for good mental health, prosperity and productivity,” she said.

Deafness is one of the most common disabilities reported in Solomon Islands, leading to high levels of poverty-related diseases such as malaria, meningitis, rubella and otitis media. There is currently no research to determine the exact numbers of deaf people in the country.

There is only one educational facility supporting deaf youth in Solomon Islands, the San Isidro Care Centre, operated by the Catholic Education Authority in Honiara.

Sister Rollo of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary said young people who came to live at the San Isidro Care Centre experienced a profound change in their lives when they were able to communicate for the first time.

"When they come to San Isidro, it's their first time to even get to know their name, to write their name, to spell their names," Sr Rollo said.

"It's very touching for us as teachers."

Sister Rollo said deaf youth were often "the least and the last" in their communities.

"They are the least to be given the opportunity, in most cases they're either given to other relatives, or are expected to stay at home, look after the house, or work in the garden, and they are the least and the last to receive any good information because of the difficulty and the barrier in the language."

Catholic Education Authority secretary Modesta Hasiau said deaf children in Solomon Islands should have equal rights to education and employment opportunities, but it was not the reality.

"It's just a barrier with the communication that they can't fully participate in the larger community and society, like with employment and all sorts, but at the end of the day they are Solomon Islanders, they are human beings as well," she said.

Ms Hasiau said inclusive education would likely be the next big challenge for governments, as community members in Solomon Islands push to have all teachers trained in sign language.

"Studying at San Isidro will be a milestone, and probably an eye opener for the government, so they can see this is very important and adds to what the nation has already written down in our inclusive education policies," she said.

"We have to touch the families, encourage them to come to the training, to learn how to communicate, especially with those who are deaf, so they can be able to start within their own families and communicate within their own families, and then go out in the wider community. That's what I see is important from the initial part of this project," he said.

Dr Jones, who has spent more than a decade leading the unique partnership between ACU and Solomon Islands, is planning to go to the Pacific Island nation once the country's international borders reopen. She also hopes to take pre-service teachers from ACU to help with the project. She said her work for Solomon Islands had become "very personal".

"For me it's not just work anymore, but it's who I am," Dr Jones said. "I can use something of the privilege and opportunity that I've had in education to bring something of value to their community, and I've learned and gained far more than I think I've given."

From [The National Tribune](#)

New Shepherd Centres for kids with hearing loss

As part of the new Government's promised spending in healthcare, three new Shepherd Centres will be created.

Shepherd Centres provide support services to children with hearing loss, including the development of speech and communication skills, life skills and emotional resilience. These are all areas where hearing-impaired children and young people need intensive clinical support, including early intervention.

The Shepherd Centre is part of the First Voice network, which includes SA Can do Group, QLD Hear and Say Centre, WA Telethon Speech and Hearing, and Victoria's Next Sense.



The new Shepherd Centres will be established in Tasmania (Hobart and Launceston) and New South Wales (Macarthur).

There are currently no organisations providing comprehensive on the ground clinical services for children with hearing loss in Tasmania. Currently, kids in need of support in Tasmania can only access the support they need through a fly-in-fly-out program. The new services in Hobart and Launceston will provide services across Tasmania and are expected to help over 2,000 children and their families over the next two decades.

The Macarthur Region in south-west Sydney is the fastest growing area in NSW. And services in nearby areas are over-capacity.

The Government will also support the development of the Shepherd Centres' HearHub, an online health platform that provides clinical testing, educational and diagnosis tools for children with hearing loss. A fully resourced HearHub will be able to support over 9,000 Australian children with hearing loss and related communication difficulties such as autism spectrum disorder.

Hearing Loss Social Groups

Run by Deafness Resource Centre

Meet other people with a hearing loss:

- **Sharing experiences, challenges and successes we may have faced**
- **Learn the about Assistive Technology available to make your life easier**

When: Saturday 30th July

10.00 am-12.00 pm

Morning Tea, Tea, Coffee and Biscuits

Where: ACT Deafness Resource Centre

**Level 1B Grant Cameron Community Centre
Holder**

For Registration and Enquiries:

Email: hearinghelp@actdrc.org.au

Call: 02 62874393



How captions for Stranger Things have raised the bar for accessibility

While some of the descriptive captions used in the hit Netflix series have made fans all over the world squirm, it's helped many viewers enjoy the show "on a deeper level".



The evocative captions used for season four of the Netflix series Stranger Things have spawned many internet memes. Credit: Netflix

Hearing people have taken to social media in recent days to share how they've both enjoyed and been disturbed by highly-descriptive captions like "tentacles undulating moistly", "fissure writhing wetly, and "eldritch gurgling" used in the show.

Ensuring the fourth season's storyline was accessible to all viewers was an essential part of Jeff T's role as author of English subtitles for Stranger Things.

"We wanted to try to accurately reflect that in our subtitles for the Deaf and hard of hearing because this is their primary avenue for access to those sensory inputs."

New research

[Labour Force Participation and Hearing Loss Among Adults in the United States](#)

Moderate-to-severe hearing loss, but not mild hearing loss, was associated with higher odds of not participating in the labour force. However, there were no differences by hearing loss status in being employed or having a full- versus part-time job.

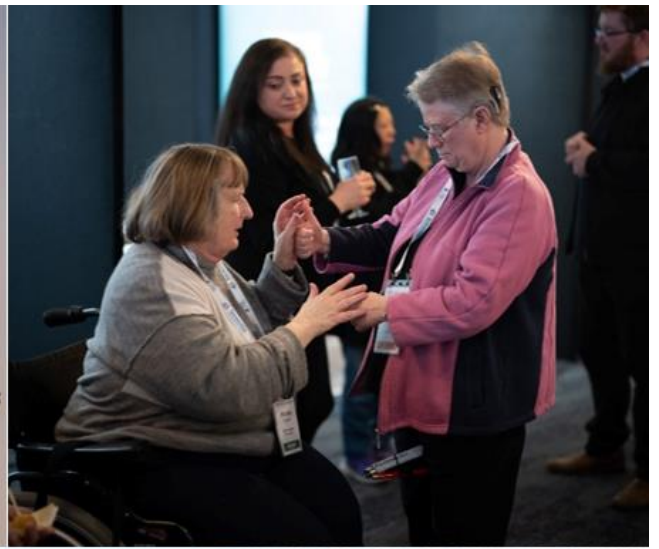
[Hearing Impairment With Cognitive Decline Increases All-Cause Mortality Risk in Chinese Adults Aged 65 Years or Older: A Population-Based Longitudinal Study](#)

Researchers concluded that cognitive decline was common in individuals with hearing impairment, and cognitive impairment further increased mortality risk.

[Effectiveness of Targeted Electrical Stimulation via Cochlear Implant on Tinnitus-Perceived Loudness](#)

The results provide new insights into the physiological mechanisms of tinnitus and future targets for innovative therapeutic strategies.

Photos from National Deafblind Conference Fremantle Western Australia



Excessive noise exposure in coal mining

Workers in the coal mining industry in Australia are at high risk of developing noise induced hearing loss due to their potential exposure to high and consistent noise levels.

The coal mining industry in Australia typically employs 20,000–30,000 workers annually.

Noise induced hearing loss is the most compensated, occupational disease for coal mining in Australia, and yet it is entirely preventable.



The results of a second of two studies of Australian coal mining indicate that the mining population hearing loss threshold for males in the industry is significantly worse compared to an age and gender matched normal population.

The results of the studies provide Australian mining and other noisy industries with evidence to support a review of hearing conservation strategies to improve mitigation of hearing loss across the working lifespan. From a workplace perspective, employers need to consider appropriate workplace interventions to promote hearing loss prevention strategies across the workforce. This information can be used to inform future noise and hearing policies and procedures within this, as well as other noisy industries, to prevent and reduce further exposure of workers to excessive noise.

From: Pre-employment hearing threshold levels of 59,601 Australian male coal miners compared to an otologically normal international male population (ISO7029:2019), [here](#).

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

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

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