



Bushfires emergency broadcasts

Standing next to politicians and emergency leaders, Sean Sweeney said his role was not to translate the information but to interpret the meaning of whatever was being conveyed. "We don't interpret word for word. We're delivering the meaning and the intent and the tone of the speaker. That's our job." Auslan is the main language for over 5,000 Australians.

Communicating inclusively in emergencies

The Centre for Inclusive Design created a guide for people to communicate inclusively in times of emergency. It's particularly important to think about inclusive communication, that is information provided with consideration for people with different needs. Effective, accessible communication is critical and can help save lives.



He says something, I hear something different

Some days, hearing loss can drain a lot of our energy. We have to work hard at hearing and understanding. 'Hearing' people don't put any effort into hearing. It just happens... the hearing part is just so darn easy.



Scale of hearing damage for music industry workers revealed

Hearing loss and tinnitus are serious problems for music industry workers. The conditions can affect musical standards, limit employment and damage general wellbeing. Yet music industry workers' susceptibility to hearing problems is not well understood, as it can take years before the damage becomes severe enough to be detected by conventional tests and many people in the industry don't get their hearing tested.

One in Six Australians live with deafness and ear and balance disorders.

Our mission is to *Make ear and hearing health & wellbeing a National Priority in Australia*

Reviewing the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Australian Government promised last year to create a NDIS Participant Service Guarantee to improve participant experiences with the NDIS.

To do this, the Government commissioned a review of the NDIS legislation – a retired high ranking public servant, David Tune was appointed as the reviewer. This has become known as the 'Tune Review'.

The review looked at changes that could be made to the law to streamline NDIS processes, remove barriers to positive participant experiences and introduce the Participant Service Guarantee. The review did not consider changing the design or intent of the NDIS.



What the Tune Review heard

While there is support for the NDIS across all levels of government and the community, responses to the review often expressed frustration, dissatisfaction and sometimes anger about the way the NDIS has been implemented. It was clear that many of the benefits the NDIS seeks to achieve are yet to be consistently realised.

In particular, the review heard that some participants:

- feel the NDIS is too complex and difficult to navigate
- experience lengthy waits to supports
- do not understand how the NDIA makes decisions about eligibility for the NDIS and the supports provided in their plan, including when a support is reasonable and necessary
- have found the transition to the NDIS confusing and frustrating
- want to have more information and support to understand the NDIS, navigate the system and access their supports
- feel they are not recognised as the experts in their disability
- have difficulty finding information and products in accessible formats or in formats that otherwise suit their needs
- feel NDIA staff do not understand disability or appreciate the challenges they face as part of their everyday life.

What the Tune Review recommends

The Tune Review found the NDIS Act and its accompanying Rules are broadly fit for purpose but that some areas of the NDIS Act are unnecessarily rigid and do not allow flexibility. The review made recommendations to improve NDIS processes and remove barriers in the law that make it difficult for the NDIA to effectively support people with disability.

The Review made 29 recommendations but overall suggested:

1. Introducing a [Participant Service Guarantee](#) that sets out standards the NDIA must meet including:
 - clear expectations for how long processes will take to complete
 - more transparency in how the NDIA makes their decisions
 - better service delivery from NDIA staff and their Partners in the Community.
2. [Improving people's experience with the NDIS](#) by:
 - providing more flexibility in using NDIS funding
 - allowing plans to be amended
 - participants being provided drafts of their plan before it is approved
 - better supporting children and families
 - clarifying access for people with psychosocial disability
 - providing better connections to supports where markets are undersupplied
 - enhancing online systems so people can track where their requests are up to.
3. [The NDIA and governments working together](#) to:
 - clarify how the NDIS works with other service systems
 - help people navigate, engage with and understand the NDIS
 - create resources that help participants decide which supports they should use.

When will the recommendations be implemented if they are approved by the Government?

The Australian Government has committed to make the Participant Service Guarantee law by 1 July 2020, although some of the Tune Review's other recommendations may take longer to implement. We await the Government's response to the recommendations – it should not be assumed that all recommendations will have Government support to proceed to implementation.

- download the full report from <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-for-people-with-disability-national-disability-insurance-scheme/review-of-the-ndis-act-report>
- download a plain English summary from <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-for-people-with-disability-national-disability-insurance-scheme/review-of-the-ndis-act-report-plain-english-summary>



Scale of hearing damage for music industry workers revealed

Hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing, buzzing or whistling noises in the absence of any external sounds) are serious problems for music industry workers. The conditions can affect musical standards, limit employment and damage general wellbeing. Yet music industry workers' susceptibility to hearing problems is not well understood, as it can take years before the damage becomes severe enough to be detected by conventional tests and many people in the industry don't get their hearing tested.

The Manchester Centre for Audiology and Deafness (UK) is trying to get a better understanding of the effects of noise exposure on musicians' hearing. The Manchester Centre recently analysed data on hearing difficulties and tinnitus in 23,000 people in the UK. The most striking finding was that music industry workers were almost twice as likely to report tinnitus compared with people working in the finance industry.

To assess generalised hearing difficulties, the Centre also analysed data from a test of speech recognition in a noisy environment. Difficulty understanding speech in noisy environments is one of the most commonly reported hearing complaints. But the results showed that music industry workers were no more likely to develop difficulties hearing in a noisy environment than people working in the finance industry.

That's not to say that music industry workers are immune to noise-induced hearing loss. The relatively good hearing in this group was probably because they had developed strong auditory and cognitive skills through years of musical listening and training. This could mean that the hearing-in-noise test (a standardised test that measures sentence recognition in background noise) was easier for them, which could counteract any hearing loss that they have as a result of noise exposure.

Or conversely, hearing loss brought about by noise exposure could decrease musicians' superior skills for being able to hear in noisy environments, so that their performance is similar to that of finance workers. The ongoing investigation using sophisticated methods for measuring musicians' hearing may provide some evidence to support this explanation.

The Manchester Centre also found that health and lifestyle had little effect on tinnitus and hearing difficulties. Noise exposure was by far the biggest risk factor for tinnitus for people working in the music industry, including musicians, music directors and production staff for all genres of music.

Hearing protection

The permissible limit for occupational noise in the UK is an average of 85 decibels based on an eight-hour working day. The length of safe noise exposure is reduced by half for every three decibels increase in noise intensity. This equals four hours of daily exposure for 88 decibels of noise, two hours for 91 decibels, and so on. Most amplified concerts exceed 100 decibels, meaning that music industry workers shouldn't be exposed to this level of noise for more than 15 minutes without proper hearing protection.

The findings from the study confirm the concerns that music industry workers have about the impact of their work on their hearing health. The list of high-profile musicians who reportedly suffer from tinnitus continues to grow, including Liam and Noel Gallagher, Chris Martin, Ozzy Osbourne and Bob Dylan.



Ozzy Osbourne suffers from tinnitus. Aranzazu Peyrotua/EPA

Classical music players are at risk, too. In early 2019 The Royal Opera House [lost its legal appeal](#) over the hearing damage caused to a viola player at a single rehearsal of Wagner's Die Walküre.

While changes to the law have increased hearing protection use and reduced levels of hearing problems in the construction industry, the music industry lags behind. [Only 6% of musicians consistently wear hearing protection](#). So another part of the research is to understand why so few musicians use protection and to devise ways to encourage them to change their behaviour.

From *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/tinnitus-scale-of-hearing-damage-for-music-industry-workers-revealed-127373>

Aged Care Royal Commission

“The greatest single disaster in Australia is to grow old. There is no place at the fireside for them. Old age is unhappy for all except the most fortunate, but when it is accompanied by loneliness and disappearance of all meaning from life it is doubly so.” *Donald Horne, The Lucky Country (1964).*



Read a Submission by Hearing Health Sector Alliance, of which Deafness Forum is a member, to the current Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

<https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/news-and-issues/royal-commission-into-aged-care/>



Let's start thinking about a big-picture accessible communications landscape.

Working with the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network we can develop a roadmap for an ideal Australian Accessible Communications future. This roadmap will explore what is required for communications services in Australia to be fully inclusive and accessible for all consumers.

What do you think are the top 3 or so communications issues that are currently affecting you?

Secondly, what communications issues may affect you in the future. For example, issues might relate to having access to the right equipment or appropriate training, or the affordability of communications services such as the NBN or smartphones.

You can email your ideas to us at hello@deafnessforum.org.au

Comments about communications from Deafness Forum members

John writes: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on accessible communication. I am profoundly deaf and a major issue is that public meetings seldom provide a realtime transcript (Ed: aka captions) for deaf and hearing impaired attendees.

Organisers of public meetings usually know about the need for an accessible venue for people with a mobility disability and other access needs such as hearing loops and Auslan interpreters. However if I ask for a real-time transcript to be provided, I always have to explain what it is. Once they understand and enquire about provision of the service I usually get an apology that they are unable to source the service or that they are unwilling to meet the cost. There is a dire shortage of steno captioners who provide such services.

This makes it difficult for deaf and hearing impaired people to be part of the community, for example to attend rate payer meetings of their local council or a public lecture at a university.

A related issue is medical appointments. I have found a GP who readily communicates with me in writing, but when referred to a specialist I find the specialist is often either unwilling to see me alone, or suggest an Auslan interpreter (I am not an Auslan user) or sees me and fails to communicate with me. Specialists are not funded to provide a realtime transcript and invariably decline to do so.

I see the availability and provision of realtime transcripts as the most significant unmet need of deaf and hearing impaired people.

Janette writes: Thank you for the opportunity to air my views. I do not wear hearing aids – long story, won't go into this now – but, as I do have difficulty hearing on the landline, being able to use the Captel services has really been good for me.

Now, since the government has decided not to renew their contract with Access, Captel will now no longer be available. Some of my friends have been able to access other services with the advent of the NBN being connected to their homes. As yet our home doesn't have NBN access, so we are "up in the air" so to speak for some time now.

I choose to use my mobile mostly for communications; much easier to just SMS to say what you mean & to receive replies in this same manner. But I shouldn't be restricted to just this form of communications simply because of a hearing impaired problem.

So I would like to see movement towards easy & straightforward Ipads being introduced at reasonable prices if you are hearing impaired. On an Ipad (as on a Smartphone, but it has a smaller screen) you are able to have Face Time (or other applications with the same effect) where you are able to dial into another Ipad or Smartphone & speak to someone; also being able to see them as well, so as to be able to lipread. It's a much more friendly way of having a telephonic communication; much less of a "cut off from the world" situation which so many hearing impaired folk endure.

I would even go so far as to suggest that the Ipad program should be written to include the words spoken translated into written words which run across the top or the bottom of the screen. I am certain that technology would be able to include these provisions when around me all the time I see advancing technology going ahead in leaps & bounds in all kinds of areas.

Auslan interpreters save lives in bushfires, but only if they make the TV screen

By [Harriet Tatham](#) for ABC Radio



In the middle of Australia's bushfire crisis, some faces have become familiar.

RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons is one those. Another, standing to his right with a long salt-and-pepper beard, is Auslan interpreter Sean Sweeney.

Mr Sweeney belongs to a small group of interpreters who have been working for months to ensure the deaf community can access up-to-date emergency information.

"I'm the first one in 100 years of my family that's 'of hearing'," he said. "My great-grandparents are deaf, my grandparents are deaf, my mum and dad are deaf, and the list goes on. My aunts, uncles, cousins, second cousins — they're all deaf."

"When I was a kid I'd run away from any interpreting situation because I didn't really understand how it worked. To be able to sign socially is easy, but to be able to interpret is quite difficult."

Standing next to politicians and emergency leaders, Mr Sweeney said his role was not to translate the information but to interpret the meaning of whatever was being conveyed.

"We don't interpret word for word. We're delivering the meaning and the intent and the tone of the speaker. That's our job."

By doing this, interpreters are exposed to raw emotion.

"I have moments when I'm interpreting Shane Fitzsimmons," Mr Sweeney said. "He choked up a little bit when he announced one of the firefighters had passed away and I had to really compose myself and not choke up as well because I take on the emotion of the speaker. Because I have to. It can be hard but it's really important work. Interpreting saves lives."

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-10/auslan-interpreter-sean-sweeney-australian-bushfires/11848818>

Communicating inclusively in emergencies

The Centre for Inclusive Design in Sydney created a guide for people to communicate inclusively in times of emergency.

It's particularly important to think about inclusive communication, that is information provided with consideration for people with different needs.

Effective, accessible communication is critical and can help save lives.



Communication when hearing is an issue

Auslan interpretation

For 10,000 Australians, Auslan is their main language (2016 Census).

During television broadcasts, an Auslan interpreter should always be visible on screen. Avoid close up camera shots which crop out the interpreter or pop up graphics which block their visibility. If the interpreter is not clearly shown on screen, no information is being conveyed.

You can book Auslan interpreters by state and through various agencies (just do a web search for Auslan and your state).

If you are on the ground in one of the affected areas, learning some key Auslan phrases may be useful. In this video, Auslan interpreter [Hadley Johnson demonstrates some basic signs useful for emergencies](#).

Video captioning

1 in 6 Australians experience hearing loss and over 1 million Australians require captioning to understand videos.

Video captioning not only benefits those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, but reaffirms the information being communicated in a written form, aiding in comprehension and memory retention.

Captioning allows videos to be watched without sound, which is particularly important for noisy environments.

Listed below are some captioning tools which you can use. Automatic captioning tools are quick and easy to use. However, they are not always accurate and manual corrections may be required.

Do it yourself captioning

For social media/emergency videos, captioning may be required at short notice. These are captioning tools which you can use yourself, on smartphones or computers.

- Youtube generates captions for an uploaded video. [Here is a guide to using them](#)
- [Apple Clips](#) – live video captioning while you record (Free on App store)
- [Subtitle](#) – generates captions for an uploaded video (This is a paid product)
- [Closed Caption Creator](#) - generates captions for an uploaded video (This is paid product)
- [Amara](#) – manual captioning (This is a free product)

Captioning service providers

These are professional captioning services which have worked with major media outlets.

- <https://www.121captions.com/>
- <https://www.accessmedia.com.au/>
- <https://www.ai-media.tv/>
- <http://livecaptioning.com.au/>
- <http://www.captioning.com.au/>
- <http://thesubstation.com.au/>
- <https://www.zoodigital.com/>

Auslan interpreter vs captioning

Auslan and English contain different structures and syntax for sentences and so, reading captions may be difficult for Auslan viewers to understand. It is recommended that both captioning, and Auslan interpretation is provided.

Communicating when language is an issue

Plain English

Use of simple, plain language is not only a requirement for people who experience an intellectual or cognitive disability to best understand information but vital in emergency scenarios. Keep your messaging clear and concise for effective communication. Jargon and abbreviations should also be avoided.

Key communications should also be repeated to ensure that your message is conveyed.

Free online translation tools

Here are some online resources that can be used to translate phrases for written forms of communication.

- [Google Translate](#)
- [Linguee](#)
- [Yandex Translate](#)

Professional Translation services

Longer messages translated by tools may contain grammatical and syntax errors when translated: we recommend using a professional translation service for longer written and videos:

- [Australian Translation Services](#)
- [Translating and Interpreting Service](#)
- [LanguageLoop](#)
- [Aussie Translations](#)

Contact the Centre for Inclusive Design if you have any suggestions

info@cfid.org.au Tel: 02 9212 6242.

To learn more about communication when vision is an issue and about Multilingual translations, read the full article at <http://centreforinclusivedesign.org/community/blog/2020/january/09/communicating-inclusively-in-emergencies/>

NRS update

The office of the Minister for Communications Paul Fletcher spoke recently with Deafness Forum about the National Relay Service.

Key points:

- The Minister’s office acknowledged that there had been unacceptably long call waiting times in November and December. The Department of Communications and Concentrix, the company managing the NRS have prioritised increasing staffing levels to reduce delays.
 - All calls to emergency services except for those using video relay are prioritised ahead of other calls in the NRS answer system.
- Some users were being blocked from accessing Internet Relay. The reason is that some users’ browsers have cached the address for the former call page. These users need to clear their browser history so they connect with the new page at nrschat.nrscall.gov.au If you need help, contact the NRS Helpdesk. For most users the old web address will automatically redirect them to the new page.
- The CapTel phones cannot be used with the NRS from February.

The NRS Helpdesk is open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

Phone 1800 555 660	SMS 0416 001 350	helpdesk@relayservice.com.au
TTY 1800 555 630	Fax 1800 555 690	www.communications.gov.au/node/19659

He says something, I hear something different

By Gael Hannan for Hearing Health & Technology Matters

Some days, hearing loss can drain a lot of our energy. We have to *work hard* at hearing and understanding. 'Hearing' people don't put any effort into hearing. It just happens. A sound happens – and they hear it, registering it as a cough, a bell, a voice, whatever. What they do with that knowledge is something else, but the hearing part is just so darn easy.

The person with hearing loss may *hear* the same sound but can't register as something identifiable or tell what direction it's coming from. The person might also *misinterpret* the sound – or not hear the sound at all. Many scenarios, none of them particularly easy.



Theoretically, when hearing loss is present, a conversation should work fairly well if certain 'musts' are in place. We *must* be facing each other. We *must* have as little background noise as possible. We *must* have reasonable light for speechreading. We can control these variables in our own home. But when we leave that safety net, we're *out there* in the world of communication challenges.

Out there, when the Hearing Husband says something, I may 'hear' something different. Even being bimodal, using a hearing aid on one side and a cochlear implant on the other, I still need to speechread much of the time so that I can *see* what I may be missing with my ears. But here's the problem: I don't spend every second of my life gazing at my husband's face in order to catch the words as they flow from his mouth.

Driving in the car – and we do a lot of traveling in Thor, our small motorhome – is always a fun game of "What-WHAT?" It goes something like this:

(Doug is driving and I'm looking out the window at some amazing scenery. He speaks and by the time I turn to look at him, I catch only a bit of anything that makes sense.)

Doug: Muh blub mentle this afternoon?

Me: What? What do you want to do this afternoon?

Doug: I don't want to do anything. I was wondering about the time.

Me: It's noon.

Doug: No, I said, what time do you want to stop this afternoon?

This conversational snippet might sound like a bad joke, but if you add up all the time we spend trying to get on the same page in conversations, it adds up to a whole lot of wasted, not-funny, breath. Every day. But the Hearing Husband more frequently does “it” the better way:

Doug: Honey. *Honey!* (He might have to say it twice, if the scenery is particularly enchanting.)

Me: (He has my attention.) Yes?

Doug: What time do you want to stop for the day?

Me: I dunno...4'ish?

Doug: Sounds good.

See how easily that goes? It might take the same amount of time as the previous example, but there's way less stress involved. Instead of both of us getting irritated, the only bit of strain is *his*, in trying to get my attention. This confirms one of the golden rules of hearing loss communication – get the person's attention before starting to speak. In our house, spoken exchanges are still fair game for becoming lost in translation. We both speak English, but when his words hit the wall of my deafness, they become something different.

Doug: (calling to me) Gael, why didn't you clean the cat's litter this morning?

Me: Me?! What did your last slave die of?

Doug: What are you talking about?

Me: You gotta be kidding me. (I go to the laundry room where the cats do their business. He's not there.) Where *are* you?

Doug: In the kitchen!

Me: (arriving there, still feeling indignant) Did you just ask me why I hadn't done the cat litter this morning?

Doug: (responding to my tone) No, I didn't. Because I already did it. I *said*, the weather is looking better this morning.

I feel sheepish, because I have the bad habit of responding to what I *assumed* he said, when there's actually a strong chance given my hearing loss and the fact that we weren't in the same room, that I may have misheard him. This is another golden rule of communication: don't try to speak through walls or around corners.

For the most part, the Hearing Husband and I communicate well. It didn't happen overnight. It has taken time, commitment, and patience (he has more patience than me) to get to this point. It's the same with my friends and other family members; overall, it works. With other people I meet, I've learned to express my needs.

While I expect people to accommodate my needs (when it's possible, which is most of the time), I'm also grateful when they do. After all, communication is a two-way street. When he says something, I hope I hear it as intended. If not, we just have another go at it.

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/betterhearingconsumer/2020/he-says-something-i-hear-something-different/>

Hearing help for bushfire affected communities

Hearing Australia (formerly Australian Hearing) has established an emergency hearing help service to support members of the community in bushfire affected areas.

Hearing Australia will help all people with hearing loss to have access to support during the bushfire crisis (not just existing clients).

The service is available to anyone needing hearing help and includes:

- An emergency Helpline 1800 826 500 available 8.30am to 5.00pm 7 days a week
- Emergency appointments to see a qualified audiologist at their nearest centre
- Priority support services including hearing checks, replacement hearing aids and batteries
- Hearing Australia bus will visit communities in bushfire impacted areas when it's safe

Hearing Australia will work with government services like Centrelink and local organisations so that people living in bushfire affected areas know how to get help from Hearing Australia.

Public consultation: National Preventive Health Strategy

The Australian Government is calling for consumer input to the National Preventive Health Strategy. This Strategy aims to help Australians improve their health at all stages of life through early intervention, better information, and targeting risks that can be changed and the broader causes of poor health.

While the Strategy is not specific to hearing or balance disorders, this is an important opportunity for those impacted by hearing and balance conditions to inform how the government understands the broad health priorities are important to you, how important various strategies are in maintaining your health, what stops you from taking care of yourself, what barriers to health living you have in your community, how you access information or advice on healthy living, and your understanding of what you believe impacts your health.

The Living Well for Longer – National Preventive Health Strategy Survey is now live on the Health Department's website under Public Consultation:

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/national-preventive-health-strategy>

The survey will officially close on Friday 31 January 2020.

The questions in the survey could seem removed from your direct experiences with a hearing or balance condition. There is, however, more research which links hearing and/or balance problems with other health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and dementia. In turn, these types of conditions have links to things such as access to health advice and services, eating patterns and activity levels. Therefore, understanding the broader attitudes and barriers to healthy living of those with hearing and balance conditions informs the government about the prevention of related hearing or balance conditions.

If you have the time we encourage you to participate in this survey.

Libby Harricks Memorial Oration 2020



Deafness Forum of Australia and Audiology Australia present the annual Libby Harricks Memorial Oration. The Oration will be a keynote address during the Audiology Australia 2020 Conference.

The 2020 Oration will be presented by Clinical Professor Harvey Coates AO DM MS FRCS(C). His topic is to be 'Indigenous Ear and Hearing Health: Tackling the silent epidemic'.

Date: Sunday 3 May 2020

Time: 4.30 – 5.45pm

Place: Crown Ballroom, Crown Towers Perth WA.

Entry to the 2020 Libby Harricks Memorial Oration is **free** if you register [here](#)

Know someone who might like to get their own 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 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.

Items in Deafness Forum communications may incorporate or summarise views, standards or recommendations of third parties, which is assembled in good faith but does not necessarily reflect the considered views of Deafness Forum or indicate commitment to a particular course of action. We make no representation or warranty about the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of any third party information. We want to be newsworthy and interesting and our aim is to be balanced and to represent views from throughout our community sector but this might not be reflected in particular editions or in a short time period. Content may be edited for style and length.