



Harvey Coates

The legendary Harvey Coates AO will deliver the 2021 Libby Harricks Memorial Oration in a webcast from Perth.

2.30pm AEDT Friday 5 March.

Hearing Loss as a social problem

A newly-published article describes how hearing-impaired people and their partners experience and manage their hearing loss. Hearing loss affects social interaction and social relationships, primarily through its impact on verbal communication and conversation.

Birth of a new language

"We've been able to see how children generate language..., and we have been able to record it happening in great scientific detail. And it's the only time that we've actually seen a language being created out of thin air."

Should jobseekers with disability declare it?

Disability recruitment consultant Kylie Jones said she felt that it was her skills and qualifications that played more of a role in the decision-making process to employ her. But it depended on the job that she was applying for, whether or not she ticked the disability box.

World Hearing Day

World Hearing Day marks the launch of the World Report on Hearing, presenting a global call for action to address hearing loss and ear diseases across the life course. The theme is Hearing Care for ALL! Screen, Rehabilitate, Communicate.



World Hearing Day
3 March 2021



World Hearing Day 3 March 2021



World Hearing Day marks the launch of the World Report on Hearing, presenting a global call for action to address hearing loss and ear diseases across the life course.



The theme is *Hearing Care for ALL! Screen, Rehabilitate, Communicate*. Visit the [campaign website](#)

Jobseekers with a disability are often asked to declare it, but more firms are moving away from just 'ticking the box'

By Nick McAllister for [ABC News](#)



For Leanne Del Toso, being hired for her skill set rather than her disability made her feel empowered. But in the past, she said ticking that box "made her feel insignificant as a human being" and her disability became "the highlight of who I am".

"I am not ashamed of being a disabled woman, in fact I am very proud," she said.

But she said she was careful how she answered questions when applying for jobs, as people could have preconceived ideas about what disability means, looks and feels like to others.

A corporate social responsibility administrator at a major health insurer, the Paralympian silver medal winner said she only ticked the disability box if it was part of the criteria for actually doing the job.

It is an experience faced by many potential employees with a disability, when given that paperwork to fill in.



Disability recruitment consultant Kylie Jones said she felt she was never hired for her hearing impairment, and felt that it was her skills and qualifications that played more of a role in the decision-making process to employ her.

But Ms Jones said it "depended on the job that she was applying for", whether or not she ticked the disability box.

In 2018, there were 4.4 million Australians with a disability, 17.7 per cent of the population.

Of these, 2.1 million people were of working age (15-64 years).

For these people, the unemployment rate was 10.3 per cent, more than twice the rate for people without a disability.

Ms Del Toso said, "I am conscious and extremely hesitant of ticking this box, as I personally feel that by admitting I have autism, my chances quickly diminish and I won't proceed to the interview process. And I'm not alone."

She said she should not have to second-guess herself and companies needed "a greater push for more opportunities for people with a disability to be seen in the workplace".

WA Equal Opportunity Commissioner Dr John Byrne (a member of Deafness Forum of Australia) said there were no legal obligations for companies to report on whether they were hiring people with a disability, nor was there any requirement for them to implement a disability quota.

"An employer may require a prospective employee to disclose a disability or pre-existing condition for insurance purposes, or to consider if reasonable adjustments need to be made for the job applicant to perform the duties of the position," he said.



"The employer needs to ensure that it does not, consciously or unconsciously, unfairly eliminate the applicant because of that disclosure."

"At the moment, if a job applicant alleges they have been unsuccessful because they disclosed their disability, it can be very difficult to prove", Dr Byrne said.

He said changes needed to be made as the onus of proof that discrimination has occurred is on the complainant under the Equal Opportunity Act 1984.

"We at the Equal Opportunity Commission would like to see the Act amended so the onus shifts to the respondent to show its conduct was not discriminatory," he said.

Dr Byrne said re-education was needed about what people with a disability could bring to an organisation, and he would always encourage employers to consider diversity, including people with a disability.

Nicaraguan Sign Language is a sign language that was developed, largely spontaneously, by deaf children in a number of schools in Nicaragua in the 1980s.

It is of particular interest to the linguists who study it because it offers a unique opportunity to study what they believe to be the birth of a new language.



Before the 1970s, there was no deaf community in Nicaragua. Deaf people were largely isolated from each other and mostly used simple home sign systems and gesture ('mímicas') to communicate with their families and friends, though there were several cases of idioglossia among deaf siblings. The conditions necessary for a language to arise occurred in 1977, when a center for special education established a program initially attended by 50 deaf children. The number of students at the school (in the Managua neighborhood of San Judas) grew to 100 by 1979.

In 1980, a vocational school for deaf adolescents opened. By 1983, there were over 400 deaf students enrolled in the two schools. Initially, the language program emphasised spoken Spanish and lipreading, and the use of signs by teachers was limited to fingerspelling (using simple signs to sign the alphabet). The program achieved little success, with most students failing to grasp the concept of Spanish words.

The children remained linguistically disconnected from their teachers, but the schoolyard, the street, and the school bus provided fertile ground for them to communicate with one another. By combining gestures and elements of their home-sign systems, a pidgin-like form and a creole-like language rapidly emerged — they were creating their own language. The "first-stage" pidgin has been called *Lenguaje de Signos Nicaragüense* (LSN) and is still used by many who attended the school at the time.

Staff at the school, unaware of the development of this new language, saw the children's gesturing as mime and a failure to acquire Spanish. Unable to understand what the children were saying, they asked for outside help from MIT. As researchers began to analyse the language, they noticed that the young children had taken the pidgin-like form of the older children to a higher level of complexity, with verb agreement and other conventions of grammar. The more complex sign language is now known as *Idioma de Señas de Nicaragua* (ISN).

Linguistics

ISN offers a rare opportunity to study the emergence of a new language. Before ISN, studies of the early development of languages had focused on creoles, which develop from the mixture of two (or more) distinct communities of fluent speakers. In contrast, ISN was developed by a group of young people with only non-conventional home sign systems and gesture.

Some linguists see what happened in Managua as proof that language acquisition is hard-wired inside the human brain.

"The Nicaraguan case is absolutely unique in history," Steven Pinker, author of *The Language Instinct*, maintains "We've been able to see how it is that children - not adults - generate language, and we have been able to record it happening in great scientific detail. And it's the only time that we've actually seen a language being created out of thin air."

Since 1990, other researchers have begun to study and report on the development of this unique language and its community. Researchers all have their own interpretation of the events leading to the language and its development since then, but all agree that the phenomenon being studied is one of the richest sources of data on language emergence discovered to date.

Read more at [Wikipedia](#).



The legendary Harvey Coates AO will deliver the 2021 Libby Harricks Memorial Oration in a webcast from Perth in Western Australia.

Since 1999, The Libby Harricks Memorial Oration has attracted speakers from among the world's leading academics, researchers, policy-makers, advocates and commentators. It raises awareness of issues of hearing health, deafness and ear and balance disorders.

This year's orator Professor Harvey Coates has a lifelong interest in otitis media in Aboriginal children since completing his training at the Mayo Clinic. This has included clinical outreach in remote parts of Australia and the South Pacific, as well as working with the WHO, and Committees nationally and internationally. He has well over 100 publications and remains within the top ten cited Australian otolaryngologists. He has received many National and Society honours including Officer of the Order of Australia.

2.30pm AEDT Friday 5 March. Read more [here](#)



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EDUCATION & LEARNING for ALL

The Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples' Education Fund (ADIPEF) will assist indigenous and non-indigenous people with disability to participate in both formal and informal education programs through small grants. Realising that the work to empower people with disability is ongoing we have long considered the best way to support this is through further education and learning.

The Value of Learning & Education

We believe the importance of education should not be measured in graduate degrees and diplomas or in salaries people achieve or careers people have undertaken and achieved. The importance of education should be measured by peoples' continual learning of cultures, relationships, history, tolerance and honing the skills to apply this learning.

Unfortunately for many people with disabilities their early years are more about cure and rehabilitation than stable, well grounded education. The skills to make and retain careers, relationships and friends are developed while they attend school however continuing disruption of this education impacts greatly on this learning. For many people with disabilities from both indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds, education can go a long way to not only developing their skills but also their self esteem and the pride of their family, friends and community.

For many, a small financial grant will enable them to undertake a course. This education fund is about helping people complete or undertake courses and programs through providing small grants. Our fund is looking to distribute small quarterly grants of up to \$2,500 to assist people with disabilities to continue their learning.

Eligibility

People with disabilities of any age may apply for any assistance to help with both formal and informal education. For an application, write, email or go to our website.

Deadlines for Applications

March 31st and September 30th each year.

How you can help

To help us with this work you can donate to the Education Fund. We appreciate your donation whether once only or ongoing. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Complete form over page. Your gift will go a long way to helping both indigenous and non-indigenous people with disabilities to achieve their dreams.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples' Education Fund
A sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation www.communityfoundation.org.au
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Hearing Loss as a social problem: a study of hearing-impaired spouses and their hearing partners

By Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen and Hans Henrik Philipsen

A newly-published article describes how hearing-impaired people and their partners experience and manage hearing loss in the context of their conjugal relationships.

Based on in-depth interviews and being together with hearing-impaired persons and their partners, it argues that the social implications of hearing loss are associated with the temporal aspects of conversational exchange.

A more nuanced understanding of the strategies hearing-impaired people and their partners employ to manage interactional complications can help to improve care and support for people affected by hearing loss.

Hearing loss is one of the most common chronic disabilities. A valid estimate is that 10 percent of the populations in the USA and Europe (and Australasia) have some degree of hearing impairment. (Authors' note: we use the terms "hearing loss," "hearing-impaired," and "hard of hearing" interchangeably. Scholars and audiologists seldom account for the terms used. Some participants used the term "deaf" about their hearing loss or less frequently talked of having a "disability.")

A number of scholars have described how hearing loss affects social interaction and social relationships, primarily through its impact on verbal communication and conversation. Scholars have pointed out certain shortcomings in the treatment of hearing-impaired persons linked to wider social factors of the hearing-impaired person's family situation, what we refer to as the socio-sonic context. Audiologists and other health care professionals need to understand the social implications of hearing loss in assessing their patients' or clients' needs for health care, hearing care, and rehabilitation.

Conjugal Frictions

Sometimes, you know, [my wife] used to shout to make me hear, but I always thought she was shouting because I was annoying. — *Luke*

I do get frustrated because I know I can't talk to her in another room. [...] And even if she is facing me, she can't hear me because she can't see me to lip read at a distance. — *Mary's husband*

It was most often the close partner who insisted on the consultation with an ENT. The hearing partners recalled increasing communication difficulties, the high volume of the television, and their partner's withdrawal from conversations (keeping quiet or sitting alone) as the first indications that there was a hearing problem.

My experience mirrors Gina [the wife] in that I gradually became aware that there was something that she did not understand, and I had to be careful about how I said things and make certain that I was looking at her. Otherwise she was not going to get it... It is a process that continues. It is getting worse. We are learning and adjusting as we go along. — *Gina's husband*

Embarrassment and frustration were the terms used most frequently when participants described how the hearing loss affected their relationship. As we will demonstrate below, these feelings are linked first to the experience of not being heard or listened to, and secondly, to the timing and tempo of everyday conversation and interaction.

Listening and Hearing

One thing with people who are partially deaf: you don't actually hear things. You have to listen... You have to concentrate on hearing all the time, you have to listen. And normal people don't listen, they just hear, it is automatic. And that what I was beginning to say to Luke: 'You have to listen, because you are getting a bit deaf, and this was when he was in denial. — *Luke's wife*

Initially, the hearing partner felt frustrated because the hearing-impaired partner did not seem to listen. Listening, which is supposed to be intentional and selective, is often contrasted with hearing, which is supposed to be an indiscriminate and automatic receiving of sound. As one participant (Frederic) told his wife, who was deeply frustrated because he was not listening to her: "*I am listening, but I can't hear,*" meaning that he was not *intentionally* ignoring her or her wish to share something with him. Others reported that they could "hear, but not understand," meaning that, even if they listened intently and heard something, they could not make sense of what they received. Another source of frustration could be the hearing-impaired spouse lacking the will to act on their problem. This ultimately caused one hearing spouse to make an audiology appointment without her husband's knowledge.

Further frustration arose if the hearing-impaired partner forgot to put on the hearing aids, or simply switched them off. All participants took out their hearing aids occasionally and went "off-line," either because they wanted to give the ear canal a rest from the device physically, or because they wanted to enjoy the relative silence of the hearing loss for a while.

However, switching off the hearing aids or forgetting to put them on may also signal an unwillingness to listen and engage socially. One 70-year-old participant had had a cochlear implant one year before we met him. His new hearing was "a miracle," he said, because he was able to hear sounds that he had not heard for "almost a lifetime" (eg, birds, squirrels, water running, and the coffee machine). The implant had also enabled him to socialise with his family and friends again. Nonetheless, according to his wife, he often forgot to put his hearing aids on in the morning. His wife worried when he did not answer her, now that he could hear, and she felt frustrated and upset about his forgetfulness:

This is our biggest fight. How can you forget something that helps you hear? I can't see without my contacts, so I put them on the first thing in the morning. So why doesn't he put on his hearing aids? — *Frederic's wife*

Another couple agreed that they did not consider the husband's hearing loss a problem. They "dealt with it" and emphasised that it was "not a big issue" in everyday life — with one exception, however: the wife felt terribly frustrated that her husband often turned his hearing aids off when

he came home from work, making it impossible for them to have a routine conversation. The husband explained why he switched off his hearing aids:

It is getting progressively noisy, so it is wonderful to switch them off ...It is something of a paradox, isn't it? You suffer from hearing loss, and then you become acutely aware of noise.

Losing Spontaneity

In general, the hearing-impaired participants felt embarrassed when asking other people to repeat themselves. This is in part because they associated the request to repeat with being slow-witted and because it tends to disturb the flow and progression of normal conversation and social interaction, thus making the situation more complicated and uncomfortable. Feelings of embarrassment became more acute in social situations outside the home. Nevertheless, frequent requests for repetition also caused friction within the context of close relationships and everyday one-to-one interaction. This general finding is well illustrated by the following quotes from two hearing partners:

I noticed that you [addressing his wife] do think sometimes that I sound aggressive towards you, but it is not intentional. It is because you did not hear me the first time. Perhaps it is a bit of frustration. I do speak louder, and you then get a bit upset because of my speaking louder, and I sound aggressive. But I am not actually trying to sound aggressive; I am trying to make myself heard. [addressing the interviewer:] We do find the situation sometimes... after she has said 'pardon' three times, I get frustrated. I know that it is a problem, and it has been a problem for years... If I can't be heard, there is no point for me in saying it. — *Mary's husband*

It is a sad fact that often I will need to repeat things two or three times to Gina before she gets it. What happens is that you try, as you are repeating it, to improve the clarity of what you are saying, and by the time you get to the third time, that is when she is taking it on board. It has become so precise, pedantic and exact in what you are trying to say that it sounds— and let us be honest— probably does contain some elements of irritation. [Gina, nodding affirmatively, adds "Yes."] So by the time she is getting it, I am irritated, which I was not when I started, and I am not as soon as I have said it. But the only bits she gets is a sense of irritation, which is partly justified and partly because I am being very precise and pedantic about the way I am saying it... That is something we have to learn and that we both have to learn. — *Gina's husband*

The hearing partners often admitted that they became irritated when having to repeat themselves. In the process of repeating, the tone of voice shifts, making the speaker appear more and more agitated or even aggressive. Moreover, in the same process, the content and linguistic richness of the initial message are reduced to what is absolute necessary. Asking someone to repeat something, however, and insisting on being heard could also take on an aggressive tone. For example, one

hearing person found that his partner often acted aggressively towards other people when he asked them to repeat something several times.

It is the lack of spontaneity and the continual thought that it is necessary to filter and censor everything that you are saying and the way you are saying it to avoid some of the problems that Gina otherwise has. Is it worth saying and potentially saying three times or else is it much better not even to start? —*Gina's husband*

What you lose is a lot of spontaneity. It is totally pointless me making an off-the-wall remark, a new subject, a comment, a joke, because firstly the situation physically has to be right, in that we have to be looking at each other, which is obviously not the case a lot of the time...The adjustments come in asking yourself the question. If I say this, is it going to be heard? If it is not going to be heard, is it worth going through a process of engaging attention to make the remark. So a lot of the time you— no— and you just don't. —*Gina's husband*

In general, making oneself heard is hard work for the hearing partner. It is therefore tempting to *not* make the effort and to give up sharing small talk, whims, ideas and jokes with the hearing-impaired partner.

This suggests that successful conjugal adjustments to hearing loss depend on how both partners manage to integrate and adjust to the hearing loss in their social interactions and the everyday lives of their relationship.

As a young woman pointed out when considering how her hearing loss affected her relationship with her fiancé:

It is part of our relationship. We make sure that we hear what the other person is saying...we acknowledge we hear each other, and that I heard him even if I am not responding... we make sure that we see each other as much as possible when we are talking. — *Anna*

There are indications that counselling in the private home may support this learning process and reduce the conjugal friction caused by the hearing loss.

Only one couple had had counselling in the home. This "on site" counselling was highly appreciated because they learned how, in small ways, they could facilitate their conversational exchange and their interaction in the particular soundscape of the home, thereby trying to reduce frictions and frustrations.

About the authors: **Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, PhD**, holds a doctorate degree in anthropology from the University of Copenhagen. She is professor of qualitative and ethnographic health research at the National Institute of Public Health, University of Southern Denmark. **Hans Henrik Philipsen, PhD**, is chief anthropologist at the Ida Institute, in Nærum, Denmark.

This article in One in Six is a brief, edited extract from the original. Enjoy the [full article here](#).

Advertisement

To all cochlear implant recipients and friends

You are invited to

International Cochlear Implant Day gathering

An informal Meet and Greet on the forecourt steps of the Sydney Opera House

Thursday 25th February at sunrise 6.30 am-10am

PLEASE BE COVID-SAFE AND OBSERVE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Come along and meet recipients from all over Sydney, wear a name tag and bring your own breakfast



LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU



DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

oneinsix

Ava empowers

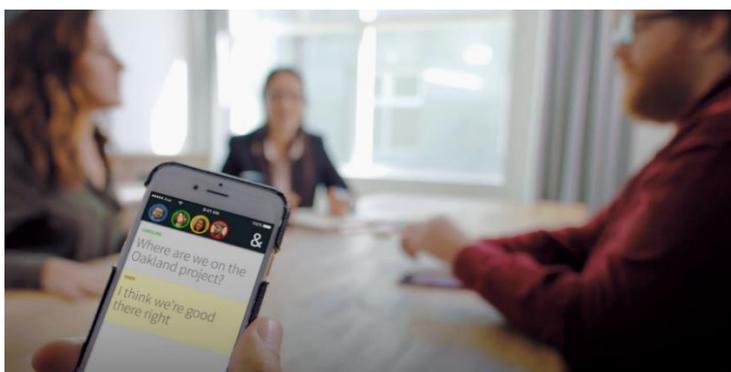
[Ava](#), a Euro-American start-up building software to help deaf and hard-of-hearing people participate in everyday conversations, has launched two new products at a time when the pandemic has raised the barriers for that community.



Photo: Ava's founders Skinner Cheng, Pieter Doevendans and Thibault Duchemin

Citing that group conversations have always been a struggle for the deaf and hard of hearing (it's nearly impossible to lip read multiple mouths at once), the startup says COVID has exacerbated the situation. Masks — and conference calls with the video turned off — leave people entirely out of the conversation, and leaves them dependent on others to be included.

Ava set out to solve the challenges of both accessibility and autonomy. CEO Thibault Duchemin grew up in France as the only hearing person in his deaf family, while CTO Skinner Cheng is deaf. The young founding trio also includes Pieter Doevendans, an entrepreneur from the Netherlands. Starting in 2014, the team built an app that acts as a personal mobile captioner.

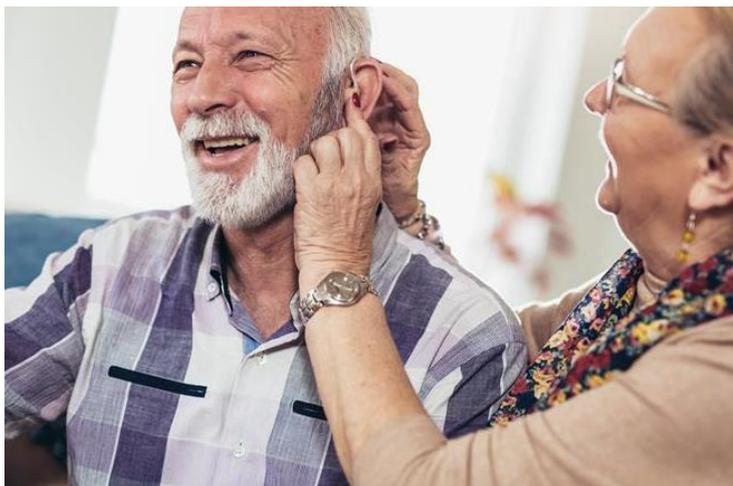


Today's new products address professional needs. The first new product, Ava Closed Captions, provides closed captions for all online meetings and videos on Mac, Windows, and Web. The second, Ava Scribe, gives users instant access to 99 percent accurate captions using a mix of real-time AI-based captions and live transcription.

"450 million deaf and hard of hearing people simply cannot wait anymore for society to catch up with their accessibility needs," says Duchemin.

By [Annie Musgrove](#) writing for [Tech.eu](#)

Hearing Services Program



Changes to the Program

In the October 2020 budget, changes were announced to the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the program). The following program changes will take effect on 1 July 2021.

- Client Vouchers extended to five years.
- Program clients who are not fitted with a device will be eligible for annual reviews.
- Maintenance is not claimable for 12 months after refitting as the manufacturer warranty will provide the first 12 months.
- Relocated maintenance will be equal to one quarter of standard maintenance plus the client co-payment amount.

Further detail on these changes is available on the [Program Changes website](#), including the [Hearing Services Program Changes factsheet](#) and [Changes to the Hearing Services Program FAQ](#). If you have further questions please complete the [survey](#)

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.

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.