



Life is a perpetual game of charades for women living with hearing loss

Rebecca Falkingham is the new CEO of the NDIS and she has an appetite for change

Bec Bennett is working on an app that might make life better for Australians living with hearing loss

Government invests \$7.5 million in hearing health

"This funding will support evidence-based research that will improve access to health care to prevent hearing loss and improve the lives of those with hearing impairment," said Health and Aged Care minister Mark Butler.

"We want to ensure that all Australians have access to appropriate health care, to prevent hearing loss and help those with hearing impairment remain healthy and active."

Deafness Forum scores a win

Live captions have been introduced in the NSW Parliament. Now it's up to other states and territories' parliaments to follow the lead.

\$60 billion question

The NDIS is one of the fastest growing areas of government spending. It is a particular problem for the government, being the second-most expensive federally funded program, after the age pension.



\$7.5 million for hearing health

From [Department of Health and Aged Care](#).

The Australian Government has announced close to \$7.5 million funding to support research that will help prevent hearing loss and improve the health and wellbeing of those who live with hearing impairment, including projects focused on improving access to hearing health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



The Hon Mark Butler MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care

“This funding will support evidence-based research that will improve access to health care to prevent hearing loss and improve the lives of those with hearing impairment,” said Health and Aged Care minister Mark Butler. “We want to ensure that all Australians have access to appropriate health care, to prevent hearing loss and help those with hearing impairment remain healthy and active.”

The successful projects were:

Pathways For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Hearing Health: The PATHWAY Project

This project will generate evidence of culturally appropriate methods to build a strategy which optimises the hearing health patient pathway experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Institution: Flinders University, Chief Investigator: Dr Jacqueline Stephens, Budget: \$1,155,685

Improving access to the Hearing Services Program for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Generate evidence of culturally appropriate methods for a strategy which optimises the complex and hearing health patient pathway experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The University of Queensland, Professor Piers Dawes, \$902,757.

Prevalence of hearing loss in Aboriginal children caused by otitis media from birth to 5 years of age and evidence of the effectiveness of health promotion programs: evidence to inform national policy

Provide the first estimates of the number of Aboriginal children who have ear infections and hearing loss from 0 to 5 years of age and will demonstrate the feasibility of screening for ear infections and hearing loss from 2 months of age. It will also test, for the first time, the effectiveness of a health promotion intervention to resolve ear infections and prevent hearing loss without the need for surgery. If effective, this intervention can be implemented nationally.

Curtin University, Associate Professor Christopher Brennan-Jones, \$1,123,133.

Building on newborn hearing screening success: towards national standards and data management

Australia’s universal newborn hearing screening enables early hearing loss identification, access to hearing devices and early intervention. But we do not know how hearing programs improve

child outcomes, who do not access services, and whether postnatal screening occurs. We will establish the prerequisites of a national child hearing database to ensure screening/interventions improve child outcomes, ensure no child 'falls through the cracks', and facilitate research.

Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Associate Professor Valerie Sung, \$1,436,994.

Improving the psychosocial and emotional well-being of adults with hearing loss through co-designed evidence-based services: ACE2.0

Community members will partner with researchers to develop an innovative and contemporary education and support program to help adults with hearing loss and their family overcome the everyday communication, social, and emotional difficulties they experience. The solution will be rolled out and evaluated in hearing services across Australia and subsequently be made available to all Australians with hearing loss.

The University of Queensland, Associate Professor Nerina Scarinci, \$527,012.

Hearables and behavioural activation for mental distress and social isolation in hearing impaired older adults

This trial will test if hearables in addition to a pragmatic psychological intervention improves mood, quality of life, mental distress and social isolation in older adults with mild to moderate hearing loss.

University of Western Australia, Dr Andrew Ford, \$571,966.

Implementation and Evaluation of a Co-designed Program Targeting the Psychosocial and Emotional Impacts of Hearing Conditions in Adults

Develop an online Hearing Wellbeing Program (HWP) to improve the psychological, social and emotional wellbeing of people with hearing conditions.

University of Melbourne, Associate Professor Christina Bryant, \$496,103.

Empowering adults with hearing loss by increasing informed choice, accessibility, and uptake of hearing healthcare

Co-create a tailored online decision aid to explain the pros and cons of available hearing health options and increase uptake of hearing healthcare to improve the lives of many adults with hearing loss.

Curtin University, Associate Professor Melanie Ferguson, \$683,027.

Hearing loss, the silent enemy of good health: Effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and potential economic and social impact of interventions to promote treatment to facilitate improved hearing

Identify barriers to medical referral for hearing care and barriers to hearing aid uptake and use and will design and evaluate the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of interventions to address these, leading to improved health outcomes for Australians.

University of Melbourne, Associate Professor Julia Sarant, \$541,448.

A win for Deafness Forum: captions in NSW Parliament

Deafness Forum chair David Brady caught up with the NSW Parliament Speaker in the Lower House and the President of the Upper House to congratulate them on taking the boldly sensible step to install live captions in the NSW parliament.

It is a first for a state parliament in Australia. David said the captions were working well.

Deafness Forum will be encouraging other parliaments to follow the NSW lead.



At left: David Brady with the President of the NSW Legislative Council, Matthew Mason Cox. At right: Thumbs up from the Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly, Jonathon O'Dea and the Member for North Shore, Felicity Wilson.

Public hearing on experiences of people with disability from CaLD communities

Until 28 October, the Disability Royal Commission will hold a public hearing in Melbourne to examine the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability.

This will include the unique experiences of Deaf people who identify as CaLD, as members of the Deaf community.

This hearing will be an opportunity for the Royal Commission to receive evidence about the importance of Auslan and Deaf identity.

The Deaf community is invited to attend the hearing, or follow it online.

A video in Auslan gives details of the hearing, and some of the issues it will cover that are relevant to the Deaf community. The video is also captioned. The video is on You Tube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZxh77f_EFo&t=4s



Over a billion young people are at risk of hearing damage due to listening to loud volumes for prolonged periods. To get an insight into the listening habits and preferences of video-gamers and esports' athletes, the World Health Organization (WHO) is conducting an online survey.

If you are a gamer or watch and participate in esports, please respond to this anonymous [10 minute survey](#) so that your opinion counts in WHO's work. Closing date: 5 November



By [Josh Zimmerman](#) for [The West Australian](#)

Premier Mark McGowan embraced a much wider colour palette on Thursday as part of Loud Shirt Day in benefit of Telethon Speech and Hearing.

In what has become a long-running tradition, Labor MPs shed their power suits and jackets to don their most garish shirts while raising funds for a good cause.

Mr McGowan presented Telethon Speech and Hearing with \$500 in donations direct from the Labor caucus — but not before those gathered in the room heard speeches from two of the not-for-profit's direct beneficiaries, brother and sister Kyden and Jemma Robertson.

The siblings, aged 9 and 7 were born with profound hearing loss. With the support of Telethon Speech and Hearing - including cochlear implants, years of speech pathology and school-based support - both children are now able to hear and communicate effectively.

Who is the new NDIS CEO?



[Hireup News](#)

Rebecca Falkingham is the latest CEO of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, so it's time to get familiar with this senior public servant.

Before joining the NDIS this month, Rebecca Falkingham was in charge of the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety. She was awarded a Public Service Medal for "outstanding public service through innovative policy design and service delivery of public service reform in Victoria".

Once a Labor ministerial adviser, Falkingham also worked in the NSW government of former Liberal premier Mike Baird. Falkingham is one of Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews' most devoted public servants.

In June, Falkingham's name hit the headlines in a controversial story. [The Age reported](#) that the Victorian Ombudsman was "investigating an executive purge and mass hiring of replacement staff at the Department of Justice". This investigation brought to light what the paper called "brutal clean-out of the department's executive ranks overseen by secretary Rebecca Falkingham" - an overhaul now known as the "Red Wedding", giving a nod to one of the gorier scenes in the Game of Thrones.

While Falkingham does not, as far as we know, have lived experience of disability, she does have professional insight into the barriers faced by the disability community. She unveiled the Department of Justice and Community Safety's 'Disability action plan Framework 2019-2022'.

Overall, her background or leadership in government and social policy seems a solid foundation on which to build.

How Falkingham will go in her role as CEO remains to be seen, but as her new colleague and chair of the NDIS Kurt Fearnely said, the disability community is ever "hopeful" for positive progress.

The \$60 billion question: how to fund the NDIS



By [Rachel Clun](#) for [The Age](#)

The NDIS is one of the fastest growing areas of government spending. It is a particular problem for the government, being the second-most expensive federally funded program, after the age pension.

The NDIS was meant to cost about 1 per cent of GDP, but now looks like costing 3 per cent.

Australian Government Actuary Guy Thorburn, reviewing the NDIA's annual financial sustainability report for 2020-2021, said forecast costs were "significantly higher" than originally expected, and the scheme's sustainability "remains exposed to a number of risks".

Actuaries have found three areas in which the National Disability Insurance Scheme had "some degree of control" over future costs. They were the number of people entering or leaving the scheme, the growth in support plans, and what prices the agency paid for services.

People are using only 80 per cent of their support packages in the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and combined with a higher-than-expected number of people entering the scheme, the program's costs will continue to rise without intervention.

Just 37 per cent of people on the disability support pension were on the scheme – an indicator that there are many years of growth left.

Figures from the March budget forecast the program would cost \$35.8 billion this financial year, rising to \$46 billion in 2025-2026.

The scheme is predicted to cost more than \$60 billion a year by the end of the decade.

But the government won't make sweeping cuts to the scheme, as Chalmers noted when talking about the pressures on areas including the NDIS.

"When your priority is providing a decent level of service and a decent level of care, then you need to look elsewhere in the budget to make room for that. So I wouldn't expect from us some big cuts to spending in those areas," he said last week.

NDIS Minister Bill Shorten said people on the scheme should not worry there would be "Liberal-style cuts" to its budget.

"We will be working to reform the scheme to improve its effectiveness to achieve outcomes while curbing growth in costs," he said.

Opposition NDIS spokesman Michael Sukkar said the Coalition would be watching Shorten closely to see if the October budget did anything to tackle waste and inefficiencies in the system.

"NDIS participants deserve certainty and to know where the Albanese government intends to take the NDIS, and if any proposed cuts to the scheme will affect them and their plans," he said.

21 October 2022

The Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the Hon Bill Shorten MP announced on 18 October 2022 a Review of the NDIS.

The Minister has appointed us, Professor Bruce Bonyhady AM and Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM, as Co-Chairs of the Independent Review Panel. We write to introduce ourselves and the Review Panel and to invite you to engage with the Review.

Bruce has spent more than 30 years working to improve the lives of people with disability and brings an extensive understanding of the design of the scheme. Lisa is a former senior public servant who has wide-ranging experience including in complex social policy reform.

The Panel also includes:

Ms Judy Brewer AO, a high profile speaker, writer and advocate on issues relating to education, autism, and family carers.

Mr Kevin Cocks AM, a recognised leader in the human rights and disability field.

Professor Kirsten Deane OAM, Deputy Director Melbourne Disability Institute.

Mr Dougie Herd, who has worked for more than 30 years in disability advocacy, disability advice and service delivery in Scotland and Australia.

Dr Stephen King who is a Productivity Commission Commissioner with expertise in human service delivery models.

The Review will look at the design, operations and sustainability of the NDIS, as well as ways to build a more responsive, supportive and sustainable market and workforce. You can read the full NDIS Independent Review Terms of Reference on the website:

www.ndisreview.gov.au.

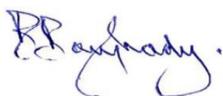
As the Co-Chairs, we are committed to ensuring the Review restores trust, confidence and pride in the NDIS among participants and their families and carers as well as the broader community.

We want to build on what you and others have already said to previous reviews.

Over the coming weeks, we will have more to say about our approach to the Review and how the Review proposes to engage with the disability community and other parties wishing to contribute. If you are interested in meeting with us, please register your interest on our website: <https://www.ndisreview.gov.au/contact-us>.

We look forward to working with you over the course of the Review.

Yours sincerely



Professor Bruce Bonyhady AM



Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM

Hearing the future conference and dinner

Hearing Australia and the National Acoustic Laboratories are celebrating 75 years of innovating and transforming hearing care. To celebrate this milestone, they are hosting a special conference and gala dinner in Sydney on Monday, 28 November 2022.



The 'Hearing the future' conference is a wonderful opportunity for professionals in hearing health to discuss the key trends and issues in hearing care in Australia and how we can continue to work together to improve the lives of people with hearing loss.

The conference will feature presentations from experts on the latest in hearing health care, research and technology. It will also include a panel discussion with international and national experts on the global challenges and opportunities in hearing health care.

Registration for the conference is free. The gala dinner held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, is optional and tickets are \$50 + GST.

To register and for more information about the conference program, please visit the [Hearing Australia website](#). You can also register now via [Eventbrite](#). Please register by 14 November.



At the **Cochlear Professional Evening in Perth.**

Meliza Dalisay Cruz (Cochlear Ltd), Dr. Andre Wedekind (Audiologist), Dr Stephen Rodrigues (ENT), Rae Walker (Deafness Forum Australia), Frank Risi (Cochlear Director, Surgical & Implants Product Management).

'Life with a hearing loss is like playing a perpetual charades game': 4 women on living with hearing loss

[Korin Miller](#) for [Yahoo News](#)

It's easy to assume that hearing loss would never happen to you, but about one in six adults have some trouble hearing. There's a wide range when it comes to hearing loss, with a spectrum spanning from mild hearing loss, where someone has difficulty hearing softer sounds, to profound hearing loss, where a person will not hear any speech and can only hear very loud sounds. Basically, hearing loss is a condition that can look different for everyone.

Hearing loss can impact all aspects of a person's life, from work to social situations and relationships. And, while many people don't know what it's like to live with hearing loss, it's likely that someone you interact with regularly has the condition. Here's what it's like to live with hearing loss, according to people who have it.

Noisy environments are difficult to navigate

"Hearing loss makes socialising more challenging because communication takes more work, especially in noisy environments," Shari Eberts, co-author of [Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss](#), tells Yahoo Life. Eberts says that she first starting noticing hearing loss when she was in her mid-20s. Now 53, she says her hearing loss "has gotten progressively worse" and she wears two hearing aids as a result.



Shari Eberts, pictured with her husband and two children, says that hearing loss makes socialising more challenging. (Photo: Penguinmoon Studios)

Eberts says she now uses a "combination of mental, technological and behavioral strategies to optimize each communication situation so I can participate and enjoy." That includes things such as lip reading, moving to a quieter part of the room and speaking to one person at a time. This, she says, "can be helpful in creating a better micro-environment within a challenging one."

Dating can be complicated

Karina Cotran, 28, author of [Hearing Differently: Growing Up With a Cochlear Implant](#), tells Yahoo Life that most people she has dated have been "very open-minded and curious" about her hearing loss, which she's experienced since she was 3 years old. But, she says, "others were quick to make assumptions that my having hearing loss was something difficult for them to deal with, or something that they didn't expect of me at the moment when I told them I had it — and it didn't end up going any further than that."



Karina Cotran says that dating with hearing loss has taught her to be "very honest" about what she can and can't hear. (Photo: [im.perfections](#))

She's now in a relationship, but Cotran says she learned that she had to "be very honest" about what she can and can't hear. "This was to help make sure that I wasn't putting myself in a position where I was making hearing difficult for myself, but also placing that unnecessary pressure on my partner to 'hear for me' when it can be prevented," she says. Cotran says she's also had to "learn how to be okay" with depending on her partner in order to hear in certain environments, especially during the height of the pandemic when people wore masks and she wasn't able to lip read.

"I learned how to be direct about my needs, and to create that safe space where my partner could ask me questions about my hearing loss without feeling weird or defensive about it," she adds.

Cotran also shares that in past relationships she felt the need to "overcompensate" for her hearing loss. "I was willing to let things slide with my other partner — things that I value in a partnership — because it felt like my hearing loss was also a thing that my partner has to let slide as well," she says. But, Cotran adds, "this is not how I feel now."

But hearing loss can make relationships stronger

Katherine Elizabeth Boettcher, 34, developed sudden hearing loss in her right ear when she was 30. She tells Yahoo Life that it's been a "learning game" for herself and her husband. They've learned, for example, that "when the water is running in our bathroom and he tries to talk to me, I can't hear him at all from our bed," she says.

"I always laugh when he whispers in my right ear, forgetting I can't hear a thing," Boettcher says. "It's our normal and, if anything, I feel we are closer because he knows something about me that not everyone does and he supports my needs in my journey."

"I usually tell people right away, especially if I am having trouble hearing them," Eberts says. "Because hearing loss is invisible, people may not know that you are having trouble hearing unless you tell them."

But Eberts says she also asks people to help her understand them better. "Things like facing the person with hearing loss, speaking clearly and at a moderate pace, as well as keeping your face uncovered can make communication much easier," she says.

Masters recommends being open about your hearing loss. "There's a lot of stigma around hearing loss and some patients almost feel embarrassed about it," she says. "But the biggest thing you can do is own your hearing loss and advocate for yourself. It's a health issue and nothing to be embarrassed about."



Katherine Elizabeth Boettcher, pictured with husband Matthew Pfau, says her hearing loss has been a "learning game" for both of them. (Photo courtesy of Katherine Elizabeth Boettcher)

But not everyone reveals their hearing loss all the time

Cotran says she doesn't always tell people about her hearing loss. "This varies depending on who I'm talking to and the situation that I'm in," she says. "If there's no need for me to bring it up, I don't bother because the other person knowing I have hearing loss will not add any value to the interaction." That includes things such as grabbing coffee, running errands or talking to people she doesn't know well at a party.

Cotran works in communications in what's mainly an office job. "My hearing loss rarely affects my work at all, especially now in remote environments, where meetings are typically video calls with closed captioning," she says. "I just tell my lead and my colleagues up front about my hearing loss when I can, just so that they are aware, just in case I need to ask them to repeat themselves." She also says she may flag her hearing loss if she needs to jump on a call with a colleague since she can have "difficulty" hearing on the phone at times.

Hearing aids don't make things magically better

While hearing aids are helpful for people with hearing loss, Eberts points out that they don't necessarily restore hearing. "People often think that hearing aids work like glasses, where you put them on and your hearing snaps back to normal like glasses do for many vision issues. Unfortunately, this is not the case," Eberts says. "Hearing aids make things louder, and they do make it easier to understand speech in quiet environments, but they do not return your hearing to 'normal.'"

Not everyone with hearing loss knows sign language

"Out of the 48 million Americans with hearing loss, it is estimated that less than 5% use sign language to communicate," Eberts says. "Even so, many times when people with hearing loss ask for an accommodation at a theater, or a lecture, or in healthcare, a sign language interpreter is the first thing that is offered."

Eberts says this is "terrific" and "helpful" for people who use sign language "but for the vast majority of us that don't, it is not useful." Instead, she says, captioning is a better accommodation.



Catherine Hoath and her two daughters all have hearing loss and says that reading non-verbal cues can feel like playing a "perpetual charades game." (Photo: Courtesy of Catherine Hoath)

Hearing loss can lead to misunderstandings

Catherine Hoath, 54, tells Yahoo Life that she's had hearing loss since she was six and she has two daughters who also have hearing losses. "We are all very perceptive when it comes to reading non-verbal cues because life with a hearing loss is like playing a perpetual charades game," she says. "We're constantly trying to figure out what is going on based on the sounds we do hear, the context we are in, the people we are taking with, their facial expressions and their body language."

Hoath says she's "hopeful" that she's correctly guessing what people are saying, but notes that she has "no way of knowing for sure."

"I suspect that people may believe we are arrogant if we seem to ignore them sometimes when we really don't hear them," Hoath says. "Since so much of our lives revolve around guessing, we sometimes guess incorrectly and that leads to misunderstandings with people."

How can we improve health messaging to reach all Australians?



A Consultation Paper has been released on the Department of Health and Aged Care's [Consultation Hub](#) to inform the development of the new National Health Literacy Strategy.

Submissions close 11:59pm 9 November 2022.



Australians living with hearing loss helped with new support app

Many of the 3.6 million Australians who live with hearing loss will soon have the support of an audiologist via a free app developed in Western Australia.

The project, led by Dr Bec Bennett from Curtin University and Ear Science Institute Australia, secured Federal Government funding with a 2022 Investigator Grant through the National Health and Medical Research Council.



Dr Bennett said worsening hearing loss impacted people's behaviour by preventing them from participating in social activities or withdrawing from social interactions altogether.

"My earlier research identified that people with hearing loss also experienced listening fatigue, social disconnection and many other social anxiety symptoms," Dr Bennett said.

"It is common for people with hearing loss to feel excluded at social gatherings; even with hearing aids, people can often feel frustrated, embarrassed and exhausted by having to strain to keep up with the conversation, and inevitably, people start to withdraw."

"The critical role that psychology-driven interventions could play in addressing the psychosocial impacts of hearing loss for both hearing aid owners and non-owners is largely overlooked, and currently, there is no intervention," Dr Bennett said.

"Audiologists want to be able to support their clients' psychosocial needs, but a lack of time, skills and resources mean they cannot do so. They have highlighted the need to implement digital interventions to help them deliver effective psychosocial education, training and support to a wider variety of people in a timely manner."

Dr Bennett will work with adults with hearing loss and audiology clinics and clinicians to develop the app, which will then be tested in a WA-based hearing service to ensure it can be rolled out and integrated within existing hearing services.

Notice of the Annual General Meeting of Deafness Forum Australia

Dear members,

This is to advise you of the upcoming Annual General Meeting of the members of Deafness Forum Australia.

It will be held online on Wednesday 30 November 2022 at 3pm AEDT, 2.30pm ACDT, 12pm AWST.

At the meeting, members will have the opportunity to:

- find out and ask questions about Deafness Forum’s operations and finances
- speak about any items on the agenda.

Members will be asked to vote to:

- accept the minutes of the last annual general meeting
- accept the annual report
- accept the auditor’s report
- accept the annual financial statements
- appoint and pay an auditor
- elect directors.

The agenda for this meeting and the minutes of the last annual general meeting are posted on our [website](#). We are currently finalising our Annual Report document.

Steve Williamson
Company Secretary
info@deafnessforum.org.au

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

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

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