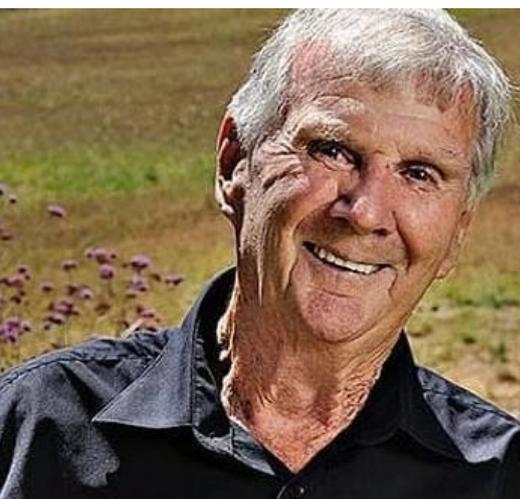




## CapTel alternatives cumbersome and slow

More than 4,000 people with hearing difficulties around Australia will be without the CapTel phone service from February 2020 when an American company takes over the National Relay Service.



## Hyperacusis is a condition affecting how people perceive sounds

Musicians and military personnel are likely to suffer with hyperacusis, but it can also be caused by trauma such as whiplash. "Noises are agonising, it feels like someone has taken a knitting needle and stabbed me in the eardrum."



## It was his time in the army that caused his permanent hearing loss

The host of *Gardening Australia* traces his permanent hearing loss back to his time in the Korean War. "I was a machine gunner and we had on the front of every machine gun a device that sent sound forward. But most of us took it off and threw it away because the device was so heavy."

## 'Tickle' therapy could help slow aging

'Tickling' the ear with a small electrical current may slow down an important effect associated with ageing. This could help protect people from chronic diseases which we become more prone to as we get older, such as high blood pressure, heart disease and atrial fibrillation.

# Brisbane woman lodges Human Rights complaint against Federal Government 'discrimination'

By Danielle Buckley, Redlands Community News, The Courier Mail

A HEARING-impaired woman has lodged a Human Rights complaint against the Federal Government over its decision to scrap a phone transcription service.

Shirley Edwards, who has two cochlear implants, has taken the Federal Government to task over its decision to stop funding CapTel — a phone service that converts conversations into text.



More than 4,000 people with hearing difficulties around Australia will be without the service from February 2020 when new provider Concentrix takes over the National Relay Service.

Mrs Edwards was the second person in Australia to start using the handset six years ago and uses it daily to chat with friends, make appointments, do volunteer work and speak with her sister in New Zealand. She said it had plugged her back into the world. The CapTel phone operates like a regular phone but can translate conversation into text within seconds.

"I loved it — it gave me back my independence and took me out of isolation," Mrs Edwards said. "It made me part of the world again. So when we learnt it was going to be axed it was a heck of a shock."

A spokeswoman from the Department of Communications and Arts said CapTel would be replaced by a new online captioning service, that will be rolled out in November. "People who are unable to use computers, mobile phones or tablets will be able to use a teletypewriter," the spokeswoman said.

But the Australian Human Rights Commission has accepted Mrs Edwards complaint under the Disability Discrimination Act. Mrs Edwards said under Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities the Government's decision was "discrimination pure and simple".

"It clearly states that the government should take appropriate measures to ensure people with disabilities have equal access to information and communications," she said.

Mrs Edwards said the other relay call options like the teletypewriter (TTY) were "cumbersome and slow. With CapTel it takes 35 to 40 seconds to make an emergency call. It takes over two minutes with TTY," she said.

<http://online.isentialink.com/couriermail.com.au/2019/08/15/ce75f897-cbc9-4018-8099-c57c1ec4abc1.html>



**Before Peter Cundall became the famous host of ABC TV's *Gardening Australia*, he served as an infantry soldier in the Korean War. It was his time in the army that caused his permanent hearing loss.**

"I was a machine gunner and we had on the front of every machine gun a device that sent sound forward. But most of us took it off and threw it away because the device was so heavy. Without even realising it, that's when the damage to my hearing started," says Peter.

After leaving the Australian Army, Peter moved to Tasmania to start his own gardening and landscaping business before launching his gardening talkback program in 1967.

Peter's realisation that he had issues was gradual. "The first problem I found was tinnitus, which sounded like rushing water. Later on, I found that if there was a group of people in a room talking, I'll quite often be sitting there missing some of the points that they were making. So I would be forced to say, 'Excuse me, would you mind saying that again?'," he says.

After a thorough hearing assessment with an Hearing Australia audiologist, Peter opted for a very sophisticated pair of hearing aids which he describes as so tiny that you can barely see them.

Peter speaks of the importance of others to take a leaf out of his book and take action on hearing loss.

It's tempting to postpone doing something about hearing loss. Men in particular tend to resist because they think hearing aids are some clunky mechanism. But of course, modern hearing aids are absolutely remarkable and can be virtually invisible, he says.

Now that he has hearing aids, he hasn't looked back.

"When I went out to my garden with my hearing aids, I found the noise incredibly distracting at first. I never knew that birds could be so loud. After I got used to them, it was like I was in a new world. I was back to being 22 years old, and I could hear everything again," he says.

From Hearing Australia, [https://www.hearing.com.au/Hearing-loss/Inspiring-stories/Gardening-Australia-star-shares-his-hearing-loss-s?fbclid=IwAR18NzR16g9rP5Bt1ax-XpkVZ9KyIF0hXDkQyEcuuQez\\_spfKu7ecSaGKgE](https://www.hearing.com.au/Hearing-loss/Inspiring-stories/Gardening-Australia-star-shares-his-hearing-loss-s?fbclid=IwAR18NzR16g9rP5Bt1ax-XpkVZ9KyIF0hXDkQyEcuuQez_spfKu7ecSaGKgE)

## Man does dishes for wife because sound of it is too painful for her

By Claire Gilbody-Dickerson for Metro News

A mum wears industrial earmuffs for nearly 24 hours a day because her sensitive hearing means noises 'cut through her like a scalpel'. Linda Stratmann, 71, from Walthamstow, north east London, had her hearing irreparably damaged after sitting next to speakers at a concert more than 20 years ago. Now the retired credit controller has to wear the large earmuffs over noise muffling earbuds whenever she leaves the house and carries around a decibel counter.

Linda has been diagnosed with hyperacusis, a condition affecting how people perceive sounds. She is furious at people who think her problem is psychological.

'Noises are agonising, it feels like someone has taken a knitting needle and stabbed me in the eardrum. 'High pitched noises and the sound of laughter are especially painful. 'I was once in a restaurant wearing my earplugs, it was someone's birthday and they ramped up the music right next to the door so I couldn't leave. 'Gary had to wrap his arms around my ears so I could get out of the door, I'll never go there again.'



'Now, after dinner, Gary will say "clear the noise scene" and he washes the dishes, so that works out for me.' Linda is forced to avoid parties and spent over £200 for her Bose sleep buds to block out noises. She said: 'Whenever I go outside I use the sleep buds which play white noise that muffles sound, with ear muffs on top.

Musicians and military personnel are likely to suffer with hyperacusis, but it can also be caused by trauma such as whiplash. There is no cure and Linda underwent treatment for a year which she said didn't help.

[https://metro.co.uk/2019/08/10/man-does-dishes-for-wife-because-sound-of-it-is-too-painful-for-her-10549473/?fbclid=IwAR06Xjq1HWb4Ys3gKO4qFqRAsIL312805Q9TNZO9KU\\_ninIF0UY9cz5vegQ](https://metro.co.uk/2019/08/10/man-does-dishes-for-wife-because-sound-of-it-is-too-painful-for-her-10549473/?fbclid=IwAR06Xjq1HWb4Ys3gKO4qFqRAsIL312805Q9TNZO9KU_ninIF0UY9cz5vegQ)

# ACCESSIBLE TELECOMS



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- Accessory
- App

You can also find information on where to get training in your state, as well as resources about the National Relay Service.

In recent months, our database has expanded to ensure a comprehensive list of devices, as well as expanding our accessories to ensure the information is relevant to your needs.

Have a look at what is available at <http://accessibletelecoms.ideas.org.au/telecom/category>

If you need assistance, the website includes live chat.

Alternatively, you can access the service by email, fax or phone on 1800 029 904.

Check **Accessible Telecoms** to find out which phones and tablets support high quality video for live Auslan conversations, find out which hearing aids can connect directly to a smartphone or see what phone alert systems are available in Australia.

**Accessible Telecoms** has been developed by the Australian Communication Consumer Network (ACCAN) and is made possible thanks to a readiness grant from the National Disability Insurance Agency. ACCAN has enlisted IDEAS (Information on Disability Education and Awareness Service) to deliver this information via their website and call centre.

## 'Tickle' therapy could help slow aging

'Tickling' the ear with a small electrical current appears to rebalance the autonomic nervous system for over-55s, potentially slowing down one of the effects of ageing.

Scientists found that a short daily therapy delivered for two weeks led to both physiological and wellbeing improvements, including a better quality of life, mood and sleep.

The therapy, called transcutaneous vagus nerve stimulation, delivers a small, painless electrical current to the ear, which sends signals to the body's nervous system through the vagus nerve.

The new research, conducted at the University of Leeds, suggests the therapy may slow down an important effect associated with ageing. This could help protect people from chronic diseases which we become more prone to as we get older, such as high blood pressure, heart disease and atrial fibrillation. The researchers, who published their findings today in the journal *Ageing*, suggest that the 'tickle' therapy has the potential to help people age more healthily, by recalibrating the body's internal control system.



Lead author Dr Beatrice Bretherton, from the School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Leeds, said: "The ear is like a gateway through which we can tinker with the body's metabolic balance, without the need for medication or invasive procedures. We believe these results are just the tip of the iceberg.

"We are excited to investigate further into the effects and potential long-term benefits of daily ear stimulation, as we have seen a great response to the treatment so far."

### ***What is the autonomic nervous system?***

The autonomic nervous system controls many of the body's functions which don't require conscious thought, such as digestion, breathing, heart rate and blood pressure.

It contains two branches, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic, which work against each other to maintain a healthy balance of activity.

The sympathetic branch helps the body prepare for high intensity 'fight or flight' activity, whilst the parasympathetic is crucial to low intensity 'rest and digest' activity.

As we age, and when we are fighting diseases, the body's balance changes such that the sympathetic branch begins to dominate. This imbalance makes us more susceptible to new diseases and leads to the breakdown of healthy bodily function as we get older.

Clinicians have long been interested in the potential for using electrical currents to influence the nervous system. The vagus nerve, the major nerve of the parasympathetic system, has often been used for electrical stimulation and past research has looked at the possibility of using vagus nerve stimulation to tackle depression, epilepsy, obesity, stroke, tinnitus and heart conditions.

However, this kind of stimulation needs surgery to implant electrodes in the neck region, with associated expense and a small risks of side effects.

Fortunately, there is one small branch of the vagus nerve that can be stimulated without surgery, located in the skin of specific parts of the outer ear.

In Leeds, previous research has shown that applying a small electrical stimulus to the vagus nerve at the ear, which some people perceive as a tickling sensation, improves the balance of the autonomic nervous system in healthy 30-year-olds.

Other researchers worldwide are now investigating if this transcutaneous vagus nerve stimulation (tVNS) could provide a therapy for conditions ranging from heart problems to mental health.

Diane Crossley, aged 70, from Leeds, took part in the study and received the tVNS therapy for two weeks.

"I was happy to be a participant in this really interesting study, it helped me with my awareness of my own health."

"It was a fascinating project and I was proud to be part of it."

In their new study, scientists at the University of Leeds wanted to see whether tVNS could benefit over 55-year-olds, who are more likely to have out-of-balance autonomic systems that could contribute to health issues associated with ageing.

The therapy led to an increase in parasympathetic activity and a decrease in sympathetic activity, rebalancing the autonomic function towards that associated with healthy function. In addition, some people reported improvements in measures of mental health and sleeping patterns.

Being able to correct this balance of activity could help us age more healthily, as well as having the potential to help people with a variety of disorders such as heart disease and some mental health issues.

Additionally, improving the balance of the autonomic nervous system lowers an individual's risk of death, as well as the need for medication or hospital visits.

Researchers found that individuals who displayed the greatest imbalance at the start of the study experienced the most pronounced improvements after receiving the therapy.

They suggest that in future it may be possible to identify who is most likely to benefit from the therapy, so it can be offered through a targeted approach.

tVNS therapy has previously been shown to have positive psychological effects for patients with depression, and this study shows it could also have significant physiological benefits.

Science Daily, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/07/190730083706.htm>

## How to remove earwax at home

By Aaron Kandola for Medical News Today

Earwax, also called cerumen, serves an essential function in the body. It helps to remove dead skin cells, dirt, hair, and other debris from the ear canal. It is possible for the body to overproduce earwax, allowing it to build up and block the ear canal. A blockage can also occur if a person cleans their ears using a cotton swab, as this can push the earwax further into the ear canal.



A common method for earwax removal is to use a syringe with warm water. It is vital to avoid forcefully flushing the water into the ear canal, as this can cause dizziness. The water must not be too hot or too cold. After a minute, the person should tilt their head the other way so that the fluid and earwax can drip out.

You can purchase ear drops over the counter or online to treat an earwax blockage. These are usually water- or oil-based solutions that soften the earwax.

If you have any doubts you should consult your GP. Obviously, doctors will strongly counsel against poking anything smaller than your elbow in your ears.

Should you use ear candles? Ear candles are not a reliable or safe treatment for earwax. Using ear candles is also known as ear coning or thermal-auricular therapy. It involves covering a hollow fabric cone in wax or paraffin, inserting it into the ear of a person lying on their side, and then lighting it. A paper plate protects the skin by catching any dripping wax.

The theory is that ear candling creates suction to pull the earwax out of the ear. However, there is no evidence that ear candles work. They can also cause injuries such as bleeding, ruptured eardrums, burnt skin and household fires.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322247.php>

Advertisement

## Loud Shirt Day – release your inner flair for The Shepherd Centre

The Shepherd Centre, a non-profit charitable organisation, has provided early intervention programs and services for children living with deafness or hearing impairment.

It is seeking the support of workplaces across the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector to raise money to support children at The Shepherd Centre, as well as spread awareness of hearing loss in the wider community on Loud Shirt Day (18 October).

Starting with just five families, today The Shepherd Centre helps over 500 children and families each year through five centres in NSW and ACT, as well as families in Tasmania, rural and remote areas of Australia and overseas via residential workshops and tele-intervention (assistance via videoconferencing).



<https://youtu.be/1Ln92-COI4o>

On Loud Shirt Day, participants are encouraged to wear a 'loud' vibrant party shirt to their workplace or education setting, and collect fundraising money. Workplaces may also choose to host a Loud Shirt Day morning tea with rainbow coloured cupcakes, sweet treats and tropical flavoured teas.

A 70s tie dye cocktail party could be a fun fundraiser after hours, or a Loud Shirt Day BBQ and picnic event for families.

Those choosing to participate are asked to register at [Host a Loud Shirt Day](#). A host pack will then be sent with a range of resources to promote the event. A [Pinterest page](#) has been prepared to showcase a range of fun event ideas.

For more information please contact Individual Giving Officer Elly on 02 9370 4456 or via email at [events@shepherdcentre.org.au](mailto:events@shepherdcentre.org.au)



## Playing sound through the skin improves hearing in noisy places

September 17, 2018 7:33pm AEST

Hundreds of thousands of people with severe hearing loss depend on surgically implanted electronic devices to recover some of their hearing.

These devices, known as auditory or cochlear implants, aren't perfect. In particular, implant users find it difficult to understand speech when there is background noise. A new approach to solve this problem involves playing sound through the skin.

People with auditory implants hear the world in a very different way to people with healthy hearing (the video below simulates what it's like to hear through an auditory implant). In an implant user, the sound that is usually transmitted to the brain by tens of thousands of extraordinarily sensitive cells in the ear is instead transmitted by just 22 tiny electrodes. This means that the information transmitted to the brain is severely limited.

This is a big problem in complex sound environments, with a conversation in the corner, music blaring, the bang of a door and the clatter of cutlery. The implant user is unable to join a conversation in a busy office or hear a teacher in a chaotic classroom. We need a new way to get crucial sound information to the brain and bypass the information bottleneck at the implant.



<https://youtu.be/n9fvIG7LfSc>

## ***Fusing the senses***

The brain is continuously combining information from all our senses to build a picture of the world. When a sense is impaired, as in a deaf or blind person, the brain can compensate by using information from another sense.

In the late 1960s, Paul Bach-y-Rita showed that blind people are able to “see” what is happening in a film when visual information is presented through vibration on the lower back. Since then, researchers have shown that people are able to “see” using sound, and that people who have lost their sense of balance are able to balance again when the missing information is presented through touch.

As auditory implant users only get limited sound information through their implant, researchers wondered whether providing extra sound information through touch could improve their hearing.

To do this, researchers developed a simple, adaptable system that takes speech in a noisy environment and extracts the broad sound-level fluctuations, known as the “speech envelope”. This speech envelope information is not conveyed effectively by the implant and is known to be important for understanding speech in noise. The speech envelope information is then converted into small vibrations on the skin. The brain can then combine these signals with the implant signal to improve understanding of speech.

The goal is to develop a compact, inexpensive, wrist-worn device that can be used in the real world within two years. This device will help implant users hear in noisy places and expand their access to education, work and leisure.

## **Know someone who might like to get their own One in Six?**

Drop us a line: [hello@deafnessforum.org.au](mailto: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 are 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 and being committed on people with disability.

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