



Hubbub makes it hard to hear

In many restaurants, people shout across the table. "At what other point do you experience that, other than a rock concert? If you experience that sitting in a restaurant for two hours, you'll receive the weekly dose of noise exposure you would be allowed at work."

HEARING awareness WEEK



Australian Communication Exchange and the National Relay Service

"It's pretty damn expensive to run this kind of operation. Seriously. You should see the bills this deafness charity has had to pay to its recent directors," writes columnist Myriam Robin for The Australian Financial Review.



Study confirms need for early hearing loss treatment in children

Results from a long-running Australian study show that early fitting of hearing devices is key to achieving better speech, language, and psychosocial outcomes for children with hearing loss. Children who receive early fitting of hearing devices and early educational intervention have significantly better language outcomes at 5 and 9 years of age, on average, than those whose hearing loss was discovered later.



Hear&Now 2020 Challenge

An easy and effective hearing check can help you learn how well you hear and how to get support if you need it .

TV captions: the good, the bad & the ugly

Researchers at Curtin University analysed 20 hours of programming across the five main channels on free-to-air television.



World Hearing Day

Tuesday 3 March 2020

HEARING awareness **WEEK** 1 - 7 March

Presented each year by



with financial support in 2020 from



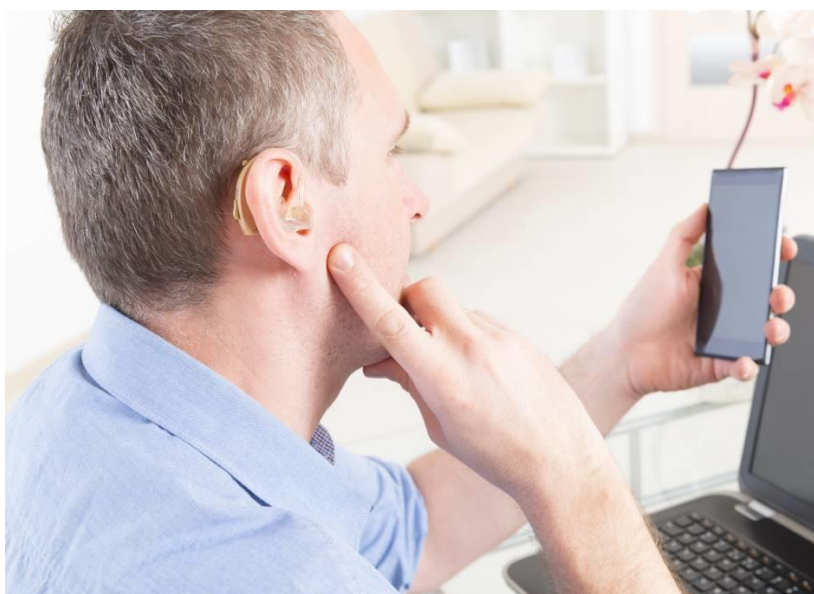
Don't let loss of hearing limit you

Every year on March 3, World Hearing Day is commemorated to raise awareness on how to prevent deafness and hearing loss as well as promoting ear and hearing care across the world.

It marks the beginning of Hearing Awareness Week in Australia and highlights for us all the importance of having our hearing checked regularly and reducing the noise around us for better hearing health.

As many as four million Australians are hearing impaired or deaf and Hearing Awareness Week focuses on the fragility of hearing health and ways to protect it.

The week aims to eliminate the stigma, isolation, lack of work opportunities and the associated health issues that come with hearing loss and how to improve the overall quality of life for people with deafness or hearing impairment.



Hearing aids are now so unobtrusive and accessible to most people who have diminished hearing. Photo: Shutterstock.

DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

oneinsix

It is often described as the 'invisible disability'. This is partly because hearing aids tend not to be obvious and because those affected are often isolated through lack of access to communications.

As technology advances, many people with hearing loss benefit from hearing aids and cochlear implants. These innovations have made a positive difference in the way they can communicate and enjoy their lives, but communication can be exhausting for a hearing-impaired person, even with a hearing aid or cochlear implant.

People often wait for years before they seek help for their hearing loss. They ignore the signs, which include turning the TV or stereo up so loud that others complain, frequently needing to ask others to repeat themselves and not being able to hear properly on the telephone.

Many people, especially adults, cannot afford to buy and maintain their own hearing devices. One of the greatest challenges is a lack of recognition of the life-long financial burdens to access education and to participate fully in the workforce.

This week we can also take the time to be more aware of the growing epidemic of noise-induced hearing loss in the community.

While generations of Australians were subjected to the damaging effects of loud noise in industry and in war, no previous generation has been exposed to the constant aural barrage that is the background to our daily lives.

Noise from transport, noise in the workplace, noise in the places where we gather.

There are many situations when the music is so loud that a conversation is a shouting match. Young people spend hours each day listening to personal music devices at levels that are not healthy.

And it is thought that Baby Boomers will pay dearly for their recreational noise habits. For these mature Australians, the average community ratio of one in six people with a hearing loss, will jump to one in four then one in three and with it, a whole new set of life challenges to remain active participants in their communities.

More than a third of acquired hearing loss is due to excessive noise exposure and this is entirely preventable.

If you find yourself asking people to repeat themselves often or turn up the volume of the radio or television all the time, you may be starting to have reduced hearing.

You may also notice you are speaking louder than usual or have a ringing sensation in your ears.

While this may sound alarming, hearing technology has made great advancement over the years and a simple test could change the way you hear the world around you and ultimately improve relationships and your work effectiveness.

Visit hearingawarenessweek.org.au to find out more about hearing health.

A feature in the Young Witness newspaper (NSW),

<https://www.youngwitness.com.au/story/6650907/dont-let-loss-of-hearing-limit-you/>

Hearing health in Australia in crisis

There's no regulation of sound levels in restaurants, shopping malls and other places we gather – and that's contributing to a national crisis.

Hearing health in Australia is in crisis, with growing numbers of people showing signs of early hearing loss – and our public buildings are contributing to the problem, says **Professor David McAlpine**, who is the Director of Hearing Research at Macquarie University.



"We need the places where people gather, to be created to serve the needs that people have in a social setting, rather than to serve commercial needs," he says.

"There's a real dominance of the architectural style known as mid-century modern, with lots of flat concrete surfaces and bare walls, and these have terrible acoustics, reflecting and echoing sounds."

The acoustics of a space are largely invisible, McAlpine says – but they can often influence our comfort in a setting just as much as the visual elements.

"Many of our social settings don't take into account people's conversational needs and how effectively they are able to listen, so there's an unregulated exposure to loud sounds."

He adds that commercial needs often outweigh the comfort of the people who use these spaces; some restaurants like to push people through fast, for example.

Hubbub makes it hard to hear

Noisy train carriages, rowdy restaurants, raucous shopping malls, even loud open-plan offices – all of these add to the general hubbub that threatens our hearing. In a closed room, most of the sound energy comes from the walls; it's reflected, comes at you from all around, and is more intense than direct sound, says McAlpine.

"The amount of reflected sound energy is enormous in many restaurants, to the point where it's impossible to have a conversation with someone half a metre away from you," he says.

In many restaurants, people shout across the table, making the situation even worse.

“At what other point do you experience that, other than a rock concert? If you experience that sitting in a restaurant for two hours, you’ll receive the weekly dose of noise exposure you would be allowed at work.”

No 'noise at play' regulations

While noise exposure at work is regulated, there are no 'noise at play' regulations, McAlpine says.

“You’re able to deafen and damage the hearing of your clientele, but you can't damage the hearing of your staff,” says McAlpine – but noise exposure isn't closely regulated across all sectors.

Lack of regulations on noise exposure for clientele can be problematic for staff in industries such as hospitality, which is highly casualised and has low support for industrial noise.

“There are good controls in specific worksites like industrial settings, the building trade, even at a concert or a night club, but it's unlikely that wait staff in a restaurant are covered because they are not noisy places when there's no one in them,” he says.

He says that it's time we looked to introduce 'noise at play' regulations. We need to realise that we are doing irreversible damage to our hearing when we are in noisy environments, he adds.

An economic impact

Australia's hearing crisis is costly, because it is reducing productivity in our workforce overall, he adds. There's a general lack of understanding about what constitutes hearing loss: people don't know what hearing ability is 'normal,' they don't know what level of noise is dangerous and they are unaware of their own noise exposure over time, he says.

Hearing loss is categorised generally as mild, moderate and severe. In mild hearing loss, you have problems listening in noise. Moderate hearing loss occurs even when it's quieter (and you should be wearing a hearing aid).

We now see that people in midlife, of working age, are the big demographic that now have hearing problems. It's progressive, it's accumulative, and it's irreversible.

Severe hearing loss predisposes a person with five times the risk for dementia diagnosis, compared to someone who doesn't have hearing loss, he adds, and midlife hearing loss is the single biggest modifiable risk factor for a later-date dementia diagnosis.

Rather than acknowledge they may have hearing loss, many people in these situations project their hearing problem onto other people – they think others are mumbling, for example.

“Hearing loss is a disorder that affects communication, so it has a number of knock-on effects,” McAlpine says. “But once people become aware that it's impossible to have a conversation in a certain restaurant, then that may start to challenge the effectiveness of a restaurant.

“The people who make the decisions and pay the bills are increasingly those in mid-life, and they are going to be likely to move to another place that has curtains and carpets and surfaces that absorb sound and don't reflect it.”



Retrofitting for good hearing

Noise at work regulations are based on decibel levels over time. The World Health Organisation states that the [daily recommended safe volume level](#) for adults is below 85 dB for a maximum of eight hours.

“For example: every time your environment’s noise levels go up by three decibels, you are doubling the sound energy, and should reduce by half the amount of time you can safely listen,” McAlpine says.

He says that, despite a lack of noise at play regulations, many entertainment venues – particularly in the classical music field – are now retrofitting public spaces to improve the acoustics.

If you think you have hearing loss, get it checked out ... we do know it’s important to act as early as possible.

McAlpine says that the research on the impact of noise exposure on hearing loss is extensive and convincing, so the next stage of research will look at how to address and reduce the problem.

“Hearing function and hearing impairment is increasingly being taken out of the medical model, and is becoming a part of people’s social identity,” he says.

The important role that hearing plays in social inclusion, and its contribution to depression and dementia, is starting to get far greater recognition, he adds; and the public cost of these is spurring action.

“The message is: protect your hearing. If you think you have hearing loss, go and get it checked out.”

McAlpine says that one deterrent for many people is concern that hearing aids are seen as old-fashioned and ageing.

However, a rise in ‘hearables’ – devices that enhance hearing – may be a solution for many people in mid-life.

“There are solutions out there, that aren't just about a big hearing aid on the back of your ear. But we do know it’s important to act as early as possible.”

<https://lighthouse.mq.edu.au/article/march/our-public-spaces-are-too-hard-to-hear-in>

Hearing Australia Hear&Now 2020 Challenge

According to research commissioned by Hearing Australia, more than 59 per cent of respondents say their partner or parent doesn't believe they have a hearing problem or they think they're coping fine – despite knowing their hearing isn't what it used to be (39 per cent).

For the over 50s, almost 75 per cent of those who have a family member who hasn't had a hearing check, say it's likely due to them thinking they don't have a problem.

The research findings also indicate that the most common emotion felt by those who have a family member with hearing loss was frustration (68 per cent) – and the most affected are women and those aged over 50.

"The research highlights why it's really important for families to encourage and support their loved ones to take that first step. An easy and effective hearing check can help you learn how well you hear and how to get support if you need it," explains Emma Scanlan, Principal Audiologist at Hearing Australia.

"Putting off caring for your hearing health may feel easier in the short term, there's no need to wait. The right combination of hearing services, expertise, support and technology, can help you stay connected to the people you love and keep enjoying the things you love to do" Emma said.

Stephen Hodge, 67, says support from his partner Maree, his Army mates and Hearing Australia, helped him accept his hearing loss and take action.

"A significant aspect of poor hearing is continually having to ask people to repeat themselves - and background noise was also very frustrating," says Stephen. "I now find my volunteer work even more pleasurable and I find great joy in speaking with my three grandchildren. Now I have to remind Maree, my mates and my family that they don't need to shout at me anymore!"

So how can you help your family members take control of their hearing health?

"If you notice they're starting to ask people to repeat themselves, have difficulty in following along with conversations in a group, particularly in noisy places, turn the TV up really loud or struggle to hear on the phone, it's time to jump on our website and take the Hear&Now Challenge together," recommends Emma. "It only takes a few minutes and it could change their life – and yours."

The world-renowned National Acoustic Laboratories, the research division of Hearing Australia, developed this innovative online hearing check. It identifies your hearing needs by integrating a subjective assessment of your hearing ability, attitude and beliefs with an objective speech-in-noise test. This assesses your ability to hear when there is background noise.

"The aim of our Hear&Now 2020 Challenge is to help families take action to improve their hearing health and to enhance the wellbeing of all Australians," says Kim Terrell, Managing Director of Hearing Australia.

"This is our purpose and has been for over 70 years."

The Hearing Australia Hear&Now 2020 Challenge kicked off in Hearing Awareness Week and runs until 30 April 2020. Visit www.hearing.com.au

Emergency broadcasts must be accessible: Deafness Council WA



The Deafness Council WA writes:

“For some time, the Deafness Council WA has been seeking the support of television broadcasters to open caption emergency services announcements.

“In our approach to the broadcasters we have indicated our total support for the current arrangement that includes Auslan interpreters in these announcements.

“However, there are a large number of Australians, particularly older people, who may use hearing aids or cochlear implants and many who have no aided support to assist with their hearing.

“Hence our approach to the broadcasters to open caption these public announcements on both TV and social media.

“The standard response we receive is that the announcements are closed captioned so people are able to access the information.

“This ignores the fact that:

- Not everyone has a TV that will broadcast closed captions
- Not everyone understands how to activate closed captions
- Many people only turn on the closed captions for certain programs
- If it’s an emergency, then why the reluctance to get the message out as widely as possible?

“In light of the recent bush fires we have now called on Minister for Communications Paul Fletcher to seek co-operation from the industry to introduce a standard that ensures all emergency services announcements are open captioned.”



<https://deafnesscouncilwa.org.au/>

Australian study confirms need for early hearing loss treatment in children



Research by the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), the research division of Hearing Australia, has established that the earlier a child with hearing loss can be fitted with a hearing aid or cochlear implant, the better the outcomes.

Results from NAL's Longitudinal Outcomes of Children with Hearing Impairment (LOCHI) study show that early fitting of hearing devices is key to achieving better speech, language, and psychosocial outcomes for children with hearing loss.

"The results show that children who receive early fitting of hearing devices and early educational intervention have significantly better language outcomes at 5 and 9 years of age, on average, than those whose hearing loss was discovered later," said Dr Teresa Ching, head of the Communication Sciences Department at NAL.

The third wave of the LOCHI study commenced in 2019 and will run until 2024. It will address the current evidence gaps on the long-term effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of early hearing intervention.

"It's critical for parents to be aware of these findings so that they and their healthcare professionals are prompted to take immediate action if they suspect a child may have a hearing problem," said Dr Brent Edwards, director of NAL.

"Children should receive regular hearing checks as they would receive their general health check-ups. It's important that parents understand that hearing health plays a vital role in a child's mental well-being and development," said Edwards.

LOCHI Wave III will investigate the effects of early hearing intervention on educational attainment, mental health, and quality of life of children with hearing loss at 18 years of age. In addition, it will quantify the economic impact of permanent childhood hearing loss.

The findings will provide important evidence to guide the hearing healthcare roadmap across an individual's lifespan. In addition, the evidence will guide healthcare workers, professionals, and policymakers to support and optimise outcomes for children with hearing loss.

"Hearing Australia cares for the hearing health of 33,000 children and young adults up to the age of 26," said Mr Kim Terrell, Hearing Australia managing director. "We're focused on delivering a number of initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence of preventable childhood hearing loss, which is estimated to be 49%."

About LOCHI

The Longitudinal Outcomes of Children with Hearing Impairment (LOCHI) study is a population-based, prospective study that directly compares the outcomes of children with hearing loss who received early or later intervention.

About 450 children with hearing loss born in Australia between 2002 and 2007 have been enrolled in the study, 53% of whom first received intervention before 6 months of age. Despite variations in timing of intervention, all children received the same post-diagnostic free, expert audiological services from Hearing Australia. This refers to all children eligible for audiological services with Hearing Australia and means that the results of children can be fairly compared, whenever and wherever their hearing loss was discovered.

The LOCHI study is the most comprehensive in the range of predictors and outcomes measured prospectively, the duration of the longitudinal study and the number and separation of measurement points, the range of hearing loss included, the group size and the sampling from across an entire population. The combination of these attributes provides data with unprecedented potential to examine effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of early intervention.

The study evaluated outcomes at 6 and 12 months after intervention and again at the ages of 3, 5, and 9 years. The findings at 3 and 5 years have been published, and the NAL Team is currently analysing data at 9 years.

https://www.hearingreview.com/hearing-loss/patient-care/pediatric-care/hearing-devices-2?fbclid=IwAR1an3W8LLb4IzYXICEzv7sibfuDi7m_34NNN5ptzuV6vzwc1mZxXIL9cY



Open Captions Australia has a new website as a one-stop-shop promoting Open Captioned movies in cinemas across Australia, as well as general community events and more: www.opencaptions.com.au and www.facebook.com/OCAustralia

The ruin of CapTel

This article attempts to combine several recent articles by columnist [Myriam Robin](#) for The Australian Financial Review: *Australia's CapTel cost blowouts hardly unique; ACE keeps consultancy fees close; Fletcher wants charities regulator to investigate ACE.*

The charity that was until recently contracted to run Australia's National Relay Service (NRS) – which provides real-time captioning of landline telephone calls so deaf people can make them – has received \$116 million in government funding in the past five financial years. Or over \$140 million, if you add in the first seven months of FY20.

But when the government put the service to tender last year, Australian Communications Exchange said it needed to increase what it bills the government per captioned minute from \$4.44 to a whooping \$7.49. This comes after several years of overruns which resulted in the government paying 44.7 per cent more in FY19 for the Relay's operation than it had for the same service in FY15. It's the \$116 million question: why has the cost of providing captioned telephone services to Australia's profoundly deaf community risen 45 per cent in the past five years?

The issue has caused Communications Minister Paul Fletcher some static of late, after he moved the service to another provider who doesn't offer the CapTel service that 1,000 or so profoundly deaf Australians had come to rely on.

We (The Financial Review) pondered the hefty consulting fees paid by the charity that was in 2017 contracted to provide the service to a recent ex-director who still sat on the board of a related entity. In a mere three-month period to December 2017, various companies owned by Brisbane financial adviser Scott Summers billed Australian Communication Exchange (ACE) a grand total of \$358,552.16 for various services including "consultancy fees", "financial modelling factoring lower call minute rates", "transcription services" and "recruitment".

Summers had, from June 2015 to May 2016, been a director of ACE and at the time the payments were being made was still a director of Accesscomm. Accesscomm is one of a series of legally separate but [unambiguously related](#) companies to ACE, whose basic corporate set-up was to deal directly with the government but outsource its various functions to its other entities, several being charities, who then billed ACE for services rendered. These other entities often had [directors and staff in common](#) with ACE.

But Summers' privately owned and operated businesses aren't part of this corporate web. And even stranger, three months before they sent those big bills ACE's way, Summers' Pathway Enterprises Group was paying the private company of ACE's long-time CEO Sandi Gilliland \$29,000 for "professional fees." Asked about this specific payment, Gilliland said it was for consultancy services he provided in his area of professional expertise that had nothing to do with ACE or its associated entities.

It, along with all of ACE's payments to Summers' businesses, were disclosed to ACE's board, Gilliland added, which additionally obtained legal advice confirming their appropriateness. Speaking of ACE's outsourcing to Summers, his services were chosen, Gilliland said, because of his "depth of understanding of the business", which resulted in his identifying significant cost savings.

We're sure the services variously provided by SS Platinum, SSS Advisory Group and SSS Transcription Services were exquisite. But you do have to wonder why Summers couldn't provide his sage advice while he sat on ACE's board a few months earlier. Or, indeed, in the normal course of his duties as a director of an associated entity, as he remained in late 2017.

But as the Australian Communications Exchange's long-time CEO Sandy Gilliland pointed out while defending the payments, CapTel was costing more simply because "more users were making calls". We don't doubt it. Though it seems unlikely that in the years since 2015, Australia has nearly doubled its population of profoundly deaf people.

Who is Sandi Gilliland? Don't look for information on the ACE website – it's disappeared. A search of Google Images failed to unearth a photo. We found this article (extract), *ACE'S Sandy Gilliland is helping the deaf to communicate* by the Courier Mail on Apr 13 2010:

At one point in his career, Gilliland abandoned the not-for-profit sector and joined the business mainstream but found it difficult to cope.

"I had a stint in a commercial construction business and I found it to be the most amoral playground in the world and, after a while, I just couldn't hack it, so I went back to what I believe.

"I like being able to say to the board at the end of the year: 'I've spent most of your money but spent it on those whom we serve.'"

Perhaps more light on the matter is shed by the fact that CapTel's Australian cost blowouts are far from unique. By 2018, CapTel services in the United States, which are provided by the same proprietary Ultratec technology, were costing the Federal Communications Commission \$US1 billion a year. The figure had been rapidly rising for some time, the FCC first having looked at the issue in 2013.

There was one key reason the FCC suspected this was occurring: individuals who didn't need to use the CapTel service were being encouraged to do so by companies that had no incentive to limit call minutes to those who absolutely needed them and were aggressively marketing and distributing the handsets. The service, the FCC noted, risked becoming unsustainable unless urgent action was taken. So by 2018 it instituted a further reforms "to minimise waste, fraud and abuse". These included a broad, general prohibition against providing the service to ineligible users, with the cost of any such calls being recoverable, providers having a responsibility to alert the FCC to any such usage of the relay.

Funnily enough, the month before the FCC's report on the matter was released, a group of Australian Communication Exchange (ACE) insiders sent a confidential letter to leaders in the deaf community raising concerns about the operation of CapTel in Australia. They pondered whether users should be required to register, so as to weed out "non-genuine calls": that is, calls being made using the service at a cost of \$4.44 a minute by those who weren't severely deaf. The

letter's authors also stated they had "little doubt" the government may be "compelled to consider cutbacks ... based upon the soaring annual cost of providing the service". Prescient, that.

Luckily for the 1,000 or so mostly very elderly Australians who actively use the CapTel handsets, Ultratec, the US company whose handsets ACE was (indirectly) subsidising and distributing, has decided to take over providing the CapTel service in Australia. Though it's not clear who is paying for it or how long this will continue. And who's listening to the calls? One of the reasons the CapTel service is expensive is because it requires phone operators to transcribe calls in real time as they come in. Presumably a call centre in the US is now eavesdropping on private conversations, something that used to be done by ACE employees covered by Australian privacy laws.

Government wants charities regulator to investigate ACE

Last week, the Communications Minister Paul Fletcher formally wrote to his party room colleague Zed Seselja, the Assistant Finance Minister whose portfolio includes charities, asking him to request the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission investigate ACE.

As we revealed, the charity was in 2017 contracting an associate of its CEO Sandy Gilliland to conduct [expensive consultancy work](#), shortly after the same associate had contracted Gilliland for \$29,000 of professional services work. Gilliland said last week that lawyers and his board signed off on ACE's arrangements, while the second payment had nothing to do with his work for ACE.

Writing to Seselja on Monday, Fletcher said he would like the Commission to consider whether ACE or its associated entities had "used its funds or assets for non-charitable purposes, such as for the private benefit of its members, directors or staff", as well as whether its responsible officers had "complied with the duty to disclose perceived or actual conflicts of interest and not to misuse their position".

In his letter, Fletcher claims the ACNC has "previously investigated ACE and had a number of concerns" regarding its compliance with charities legislation. The ACNC operates under secrecy provisions that prevent it from disclosing or confirming investigations that do not result in enforcement actions: none have ever been taken against ACE.

On the very same day the letter was sent, Gilliland, ACE's company secretary and liquidators met to wind up the company, in the presence of a single other member, ex-CFO and former director Paul Kennedy (who objected to the validity of the meeting and noted the absence of ACE's current directors). According to the minutes, quorum was achieved through Gilliland's holding of 33 proxies. Motions were passed to wind up the company, and instructing the liquidators to seek ASIC's consent to destroy its books, within legislative requirements. In the case of voluntary windups, the only such pre-requisite is ASIC's approval of proceedings.

Minister calls for ASIC to stop former CapTel provider destroying books

[Katie Burgess](#) wrote for the Canberra Times on Friday:

(Communications Minister) Mr Fletcher told Parliament Australian Communication Exchange tried to almost double the cost per minute rate charged to taxpayers, from their then current rate of \$4.44 to \$7.49 during the tender process.

Mr Fletcher said the company tried to "leverage" the fact it had an exclusive licence to the CapTel technology in Australia to justify the increase.

Mr Fletcher also accused a company associated with ACE of actively marketing handsets to residents of requirement homes, leading to a "sharp increase" in the number of call minutes from CapTel devices, which drove a cost blowout for the relay service.

The switch to Concentrix was fiercely opposed by users of the service, who preferred the CapTel handset to teletypewriters.

However the US owner of the technology, Ultratec refused to allow Concentrix to use the technology.

Ultratec has since offered to keep supporting CapTel handsets indefinitely using a US call centre, although the Australian government has warned this could cut out at any time and raised questions about the data and privacy controls in place.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6648004/minister-calls-for-asic-to-stop-former-captel-provider-destroying-books/?cs=14230>

National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service program: grant opportunity



The Australian Government is inviting applications to apply to deliver services for the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service (NABS) program from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2022.

The NABS program provides a national service that books and pays for an accredited Australian Sign Language (Auslan) interpreter to attend medical consultations that attract a Medicare rebate, or specified health consultations, provided in a private medical practice by a general practitioner, specialist or health professional.

NABS' objective is to ensure no deaf person is disadvantaged by not having an available interpreter when attending a private medical or specified health appointment provided in a private medical practice by a general practitioner, specialist or health professional.

From 1 July 2020, funding will be available for an organisation to deliver support for approximately 600 existing NABS clients who are ineligible for the NDIS and clients who are 65 and over.

<https://www.grants.gov.au/?event=public.GO.show&GOUUID=2F939827-A5EA-DE3A-BBBBC20B064188A3>

Quota International turns up the volume on support during Hearing Awareness Week



Quota International is giving a shout out for hearing awareness this month.

The Campbelltown NSW branch will be doing its part to reach out to people in the community as part of Hearing Awareness Week. Leading the awareness campaign for the group is Southern Highlands hearing awareness advocate Pat Fulton.

Ms Fulton was integral in promoting support available for people with a hearing impairment. She will be sharing information about support available at various locations between the Southern Highlands and Macarthur regions during Hearing Awareness Week. This will include handing out a Hearing Helper - a handy reference booklet developed by Quota members. The aim of the booklet is to provide guidance and support for the one in six people across Australia who have hearing loss, a condition known as the "invisible handicap".

Complementary copies for wider distribution can be obtained from Quota Club members.

People in the community will have the chance to learn more about the booklet and other support during a series of stalls during Hearing Awareness Week. These will include:

- Campbelltown Mall on March 5 from 10am-2pm
- Mittagong RSL Club on March 6 from 10am to 2pm
- Bunnings Mittagong on March 7 from 9am to 3pm

The stalls will provide an opportunity to book a free hearing screening, free hearing aid checks, information on the Federal Government Hearing Services program, hearing aids and cochlear implants, and audio loops.

There will also be an opportunity to learn more about local hearing service providers, rehabilitation and how to 'train your brain' to use hearing devices all day.

Contact Pat Fulton at pathearingcoach1@gmail.com

Hearing Heroes and GN Hearing help show the world that a life with hearing loss is not limited

- GN Hearing joins the World Health Organization (WHO) in urging people not to let their hearing loss limit their lives via a unique and heart-warming initiative.
- #MyHearingHero celebrates people that are redefining what is possible with hearing loss, aiming to inspire and empower people around the world.
- Share your achievements, big or small, and break down the barriers of hearing loss.



GN Hearing celebrates the Hearing Heroes who show that life with hearing loss is not limited, by supporting the WHO World Hearing Day theme of *'Hearing for life: don't let hearing loss limit you'*.

Hearing loss is a global challenge - 466 million people worldwide live with hearing loss and this number continues to grow. In Europe around 22% of people are living with hearing loss.

GN Hearing's #MyHearingHero include Andrew Hugill, Founder and Musician of *Aural Diversity*; Tom Staniford, champion para-cyclist; and Mo O'Brien, the *Oarsome Foursome* team member who is rowing across the Atlantic Ocean. These Hearing Heroes are all breaking down barriers, uniting people with hearing loss and living their lives without limits.

At all life stages, hearing is a vital element for communication, socialising, learning and working. GN Hearing is focused on providing innovations and initiatives to support people living with hearing loss to live their life to the fullest.

Hearing loss is often neglected for years and can affect every aspect of personal, social and professional life. If left untreated, hearing loss can increase the risk of cognitive decline and dementia, but early interventions can ensure the impact of hearing loss remains minimal, and people can live a full unlimited life.

"Only one in three people with hearing loss are receiving the right support, but we know that timely interventions and innovation options available today can greatly improve quality of life. If properly treated, hearing loss should not place limits on a person's life," said Andreas Anderhov, General Manager, GN Hearing ANZ.

The good, the bad and the ugly: live captions on TV

Most live captioning errors on the five main channels on free-to-air television (ABC, Nine, SBS, Seven and Ten) relate to:

- related to missing words
- spelling errors
- unclear distinction between speakers
- caption lag and synchronisation
- the length of time that captions appeared onscreen
- captions obscuring onscreen graphics.

No surprises there.

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network commissioned research into the quality of live captions on Free-to-Air TV. This was after receiving feedback from Deafness Forum and consumers about the quality of live captions on TV.

Researchers from the Centre for Culture and Technology at Curtin University analysed 20 hours of programming across the five main channels on free-to-air.

The quality of the live captions was assessed against the Australian Communications and Media Authority's Television Caption Quality Standard.

Overall, in their report the researchers found that live captions were not verbatim, and that significantly more errors were uncovered when researchers re-watched the programs with the sound turned on. This is particularly troubling as people who have hearing loss may or communicate in Auslan may be completely reliant on the captions and unable to identify these errors, some of which can significantly change the meaning of program content.

These findings are even more concerning given the recent summer bushfires and natural disasters, during which the community was heavily reliant on live and emerging information. In these instances, the accuracy of information provided through live captioning can be critical for ensuring personal and community safety.

The researchers made several recommendations. These included that the Television Captioning Quality Standard should be reviewed and that the Australian Communications and Media Authority should undertake monitoring of live captions.

Another recommendation was that a second phase of this project be undertaken to give consumers who use captions the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of live captioning on free-to-air television.

Deafness Forum will work with Australian Communications Consumer Action Network and the broader disability sector to progress these recommendations.

The report is available at <https://accan.org.au/our-work/research/1691-live-caption-research>

I'm deaf and have found that transportation services have a long way to go to be more accessible

[Sarah Katz](#) is a freelance writer who covers the intersection between disability and mental health, relationships, entertainment, and public services.

As a deaf traveller, she finds herself “routinely excluded” from services that nondisabled travellers have access to.

Katz has developed a few strategies to navigate travel, like purchasing tickets ahead of time online, reading any information available, and asking others for support.

But ultimately, Katz writes, disabled people should have equal access to transportation services – especially because they pay the same as hearing travellers.

Read the full story at <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/how-i-navigate-inaccessible-transportation-services-as-deaf-person-disabled-2020-3>



One of the most active and influential community advocates in Australia is Ann Porter.

Ann created and leads Aussie Deaf Kids. She is a respected adviser to many organisations in our sector, including Deafness Forum.

Today is Ann’s birthday. It’s always overshadowed by World Hearing Day, but not this year!

Know someone who might like their own One in Six?

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

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians across the lands, waters and seas and thank Elders past, present and future for their continued custodianship. We acknowledge the challenge of overcoming high levels of ear health issues and its role in Closing the Gap. We acknowledge the risk to indigenous sign languages disappearing.

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.