

HEARING MATTERS



Journal of
**HEARING MATTERS
AUSTRALIA**
Support from real life experience



**SPEAK UP
FOR
YOURSELF**

SELF-ADVOCACY

SPEAKING UP FOR YOURSELF
AND OTHERS LIVING WITH
HEARING LOSS

ADVOCATING FOR
YOURSELF IN THE
WORKPLACE

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FOR ACCESSIBLE
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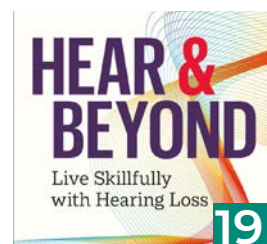
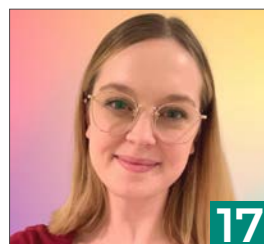
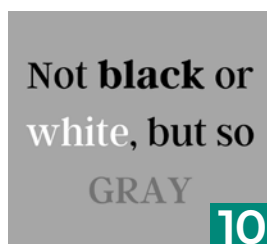
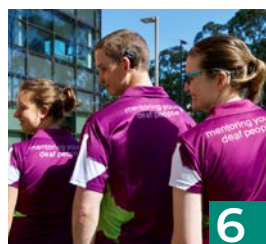
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HEARING MATTERS AUSTRALIA

Support from real life experience

HMA MISSION

To provide support based on lived experience to people living with hearing loss.

Find us on 

facebook.com/HearingMattersAustInc
facebook.com/groups/160071054087557

HAVE YOUR SAY!

HMA welcomes your suggestions and ideas to spread and share with the community. You can do this through your letters (emails), comments and written contributions, which you would like us to publish. Personal experiences, difficulties faced, matters which can enhance the quality of life for the hard of hearing.

Please send your emails with "Attention: Editor, Hearing Matters", in the subject line. Send it to: admin@hearingmattersaustralia.org

All material considered appropriate by the team will be published.



President's Message

Welcome to the October issue of **HEARING MATTERS**. This issue's theme is self-advocacy and building confidence. Being able to self-advocate is an important skill in managing hearing loss; without it we all fall back on the "deaf nod" where we just nod along without understanding what the other person has said. I think most of us with hearing loss have at least one story of when this has gone quite badly!

In this issue, we have some great articles about self-advocacy, including how *Hear For You* helps teens to develop the confidence and skills to self-advocate; one of our Volunteers, Kevin Rabe, personally started self-advocating for himself; and a book review of *Hear and Beyond* by Christine Hunter which has encouraged me to add this book to my 'to read' pile!

This issue is also the time we acknowledge our Corporate Members,. Please have a read of the blurbs of each of our nine Corporate Members who contribute to Hearing Matters Australia. Thank you to our Corporate Members, who continue to support us and our mission to support people living with hearing loss.

We still have our end-of-year celebration to look forward to on Friday, 2nd of December. Please mark it in your calendars and RSVP. Last year's celebration was a wonderful event and we expect this year to be no different! On pages 22 and 23, you will also see the dates for next year's events. We are going to be trying out some new things, such as some Zoom sessions and Open Days, so we have a lot to look forward to!

Finally, I, along the rest of the Committee, would like to give a big thank you to our Volunteer magazine designer, Melanie. Melanie began designing our magazine in 2021, and has done a wonderful job. Our new magazine layout looks much more professional and engaging. This is the last magazine that Melanie will do the layout for as she steps down from her role, and while we are sad to see her go, we are also so grateful for the amazing work she has done over the last two years.

I hope you enjoy this issue of **HEARING MATTERS**, and, as always, if you have any feedback on our magazine, please send an email to admin@hearingmattersaustralia.org

Bec Stewart

Rania's Story

By Rania Saab, 2022 Libby Harricks Award Winner

Thank you to Rebecca Stewart and Hearing Matters Australia for inviting me here today. I am honoured to be this year's recipient of the Libby Harricks Achievement Award. It is a privilege to be recognised in the footsteps of a dynamic woman who was a pioneer in paving the way for advocacy and support for people with a hearing loss.

I was diagnosed with a hearing loss at the age of three. I was fortunate enough to experience support throughout my schooling years. When I completed my HSC and got the marks I needed to be able to undertake a law degree, I really believed that I could do anything. And what I wanted more than anything was to be a lawyer representing disadvantaged people.

Going to university was an eye opener. I felt lost and really struggled to get the support that I needed to be able to hear and participate in the learning environment. The defining moment for me was when, part way into my degree, I went to see an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist about my deteriorating hearing. When I told the ENT that I was studying to become a lawyer, he said to me: *"Why? You're not going to be able to hear in a court room."*

This comment, coupled with university difficulties and personal struggles, made me seriously consider quitting. I thought about walking away from my degree because it was just so hard. However, at the end of the day, I decided that I just could not quit and disappoint my family. I realised that my life is my own to live how I please and that while I may always come up against barriers in the way of people's attitudes, discriminatory treatment of me and inequitable policies and procedures, this is not a reason to give up on my dreams.

While still at university, I was fortunate to come across a mentoring program being run by the Australian Network on Disability. I was still plagued by doubts about how I could actually be a practising lawyer, and participating in this mentoring program gave me the confidence to know that I could practice law one day. After



2022 Libby Harricks Award winner, Rania Saab (right), receiving her award from HMA President, Bec Stewart.

Image: Supplied.

I graduated from university, I did a four week placement with a top tier law firm (again, through the Australian Network on Disability) and this gave me practical, on the job training that also increased my self-confidence. I am so passionate about the work that the Australian Network on Disability does in helping organisations to become disability confident that I became an Ambassador and later accepted a position on the Board of Directors, where I remain today.

For the past two decades, I have been an advocate. Not just for myself, but for my clients and for people with disability generally. For the past 15 years, I have been a lawyer. I have held onto my law degree with both hands because I think it is really important that people with disability are seen everywhere in the community. We need to be woven into the rich fabric of Australian society. We should not be segregated and dismissed or considered as less than and it is our duty to challenge those stereotypes when we come across them.

I would love to tell you that life has been smooth sailing since I graduated from university. It hasn't been – and that is okay. Another realisation that I have had over the past two decades is that – whether you have a disability or not – life is not easy for anyone. As people with disability, we are placed in the unique position of being forced to advocate for a better Australia. We owe it to ourselves and we owe to the people that come after us. We deserve a place at the table. We need to continuously demand for our rights to be upheld and for our voices to be heard.

I have spent my career as a lawyer with Legal Aid NSW, representing and advocating for the rights of disadvantaged people. More recently, I have been

working at Your Story Disability Legal Support, providing legal advice and assistance to people with disability, their families, carers and supporters about how to share their story safely with the Disability Royal Commission. I am happily married, with three beautiful children. Two of my children have a disability. I am not just a person with a disability, I am also a parent and carer of children with a disability. I have even more reason now to continue to advocate for a fairer Australia – we are all different and we all deserve to be accepted on our own merits.

Thank you again for this incredible award and for your time today.

THE LIBBY HARRICKS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 2023

HMA is calling for nominations for the 2023 Libby Harricks Achievement Award. This annual award was established by HMA (previously SHHH) in memory of the late President, Libby Harricks OAM to acknowledge Libby as a friend and a woman who through determination and spirit achieved more than she ever thought possible, both for herself and for many others.

This award is not limited to HMA members. If you know someone who is over 25 years old, deaf or hard of hearing, living in Australia, and who is a significant role model in the deaf and hard of hearing community, please send your nominations including the following information:

1. Name, address and email / mobile number of the person making the nomination;
2. Name, address and email of the person nominated;
3. A short description (approx. 500 words) of why you have nominated this person, what they have achieved, challenges they have faced, and opportunities that have been made use of.

For more information about the award and past recipients, please see our website:

Libby Harricks Award (hearingmattersaustralia.org)

Nominations must be received by the Executive Officer by **30 January 2023**. Nominations are welcomed by mail or email to:

Hearing Matters Australia Inc.
Ground Floor, Suite 600
Australian Hearing Hub
6 University Avenue,
Macquarie University NSW 2109

Email: admin@hearingmattersaustralia.org

The HMA committee will consider all nominations, with the winner being announced at the 2023 Annual General Meeting. The recipient's story will be published in a subsequent issue of **HEARING MATTERS**, the HMA website, and social media.



Self-Advocacy

By **Hear For You**

What is self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is about speaking up for oneself and one's interests.

It's relatively straightforward. When we first talk about this with our teens, their eyes glaze over or they become really hesitant about it. Why? Why should they bother? They're just teens.

What does it mean?

It means that ultimately they're the ones who are responsible for making known to others what supports they need in order to live their lives without hindrance.

Why do I need to do it?

Let's use the scenarios either of finishing high school or entering the workforce. They're going to be leaving a structured environment and having to interact with people who don't know them at all or very well, even accounting for the time it takes an average person to adjust to a new environment. The number of these interactions is going to exponentially increase.

Ok, so what? This happens to everybody.

This is where the hidden impacts of deafness surface and where the importance of self-advocacy reveals itself:

1. If the person they are talking to does not have any awareness of deafness/hearing loss and how it impacts communication, particularly those who are oral and have hearing devices, then the potential for miscommunication is much higher;
2. This leads to a greater potential for the deaf person to end up in a situation where they do not get the result they want, either because they were not confident enough to advocate strongly for what they needed or because they misunderstood what was going on and upon realizing it, were too embarrassed to correct the situation.

For us and our teens, the threshold for self-advocacy is much lower, i.e. when it needs to be employed and the importance of it is much higher. It is critical that our teens have this skill in order to be able to thrive in a hearing world.

How do we introduce the value of self-advocacy to our teens?

We find that they begin to understand value of self-advocacy when they begin to address the issue of their deaf identity. They need to first understand and more importantly, accept that:

1. They are deaf or hard of hearing, or hearing impaired, whatever they choose to identify with.
2. In doing so, they need to acknowledge their hearing limitations and the practical implications of those limitations, e.g. group talk is harder, can't hear or understand the person speaking five rows behind them.
3. They live in a hearing world and they are in the minority, an invisible and misunderstood minority so they are inevitably going to have to draw attention to what they want/need and educate people along the way.

As they deal with deaf identity issues, we also encourage them to dream big and not to let their deafness/hearing loss get in the way but to also know there are certain occupations that are currently unobtainable for safety reasons e.g. air traffic controller or astronaut. This may change in the future but we reluctantly have to say, and with gritted teeth, those options are not possible right now.

In our Life Goals & Skills Metro Program and Blasts, our mentors share practical tips from lived experiences of having to self-advocate for themselves in their daily lives and in the workplace. We talk about the how, why, and when



to self-advocate. It's not just about going in with all guns blazing at all times and at every possible opportunity – that will get people offside and make things much harder and it will deplete the emotional tank too quickly and too often. It's about choice and awareness as they start to gain in lived experience and to create these filters in their head so that they become much quicker in knowing and deciding when to speak up and how to speak up.

“What is the result if I don't speak up here? Who ends up losing out?”

“Is the pain of feeling stupid in front of people too great?”

“What is the most effective way of getting my message across?”

It's a skill of decision-making and balance. It's never going to be perfect. Sometimes you have to accept the perceived risk of making things worse and just say something.

Even for adults, it's not easy because the pain of social embarrassment and/or social ostracization is a universally human one, not a deaf one. This is why there is potentially an earlier need for our teenagers to learn how to self-advocate compared to their hearing peers because in this hearing world, the earlier they can move through the uncomfortableness of self-advocating, the better.

Hear For You is founded by deaf people and run by deaf people to mentor and inspire young people who are deaf through programs and services that are accessible to all. HFY Website: hearforyou.com.au

Speaking Out to Be Myself

By Kevin Rabe

Throughout my life, I've often felt that I was the only one who was different and that difference involved my hearing impairment. It appeared that I was the only person in the whole school, college, workplace who wore hearing aids. It's a daunting feeling but this began to change when I started working for the Immigration department where I worked for some 14 years until retiring in 2016. There were countless meetings and training lectures I had to attend. Sometimes I was at the counter facing people with chatter all around me. Then there was the telephone. Being hearing impaired, I wished these things were never invented. So my fears and insecurities started to build up so much that I had to find a way out.

After attending one meeting where changes in policies were discussed, I went to my section manager and talked to him about what I was missing out on and what to do about it. I remarked that I'd noticed that the National Office in Canberra had a disability section and so asked if there was one in Sydney or wherever the other offices were located. He said that he would ask around only to come back to say that there was none. Then he asked me, "Kevin, why don't you start one up?". I knew that there were a couple of other people who had hearing loss, one was Deaf, and the other wore hearing aids. A couple of others in my section had either sight impairment or mental issues. Anyway started off with three with different impairments and we managed to get together and worked out what we needed to make our working life more fulfilling. A team leader came along to one of our meetings and suggested that we call ourselves Staff with disAbility network. Human Resources heard of the group and they then took it under their control but gave me freedom to be the convenor for three years.

Now I found myself in the role of advocacy to help others. At one meeting it was suggested that one of us should go around the various



Kevin (centre) receiving the MAD award for his work with the Staff with DisAbility Network.

Image: Supplied.

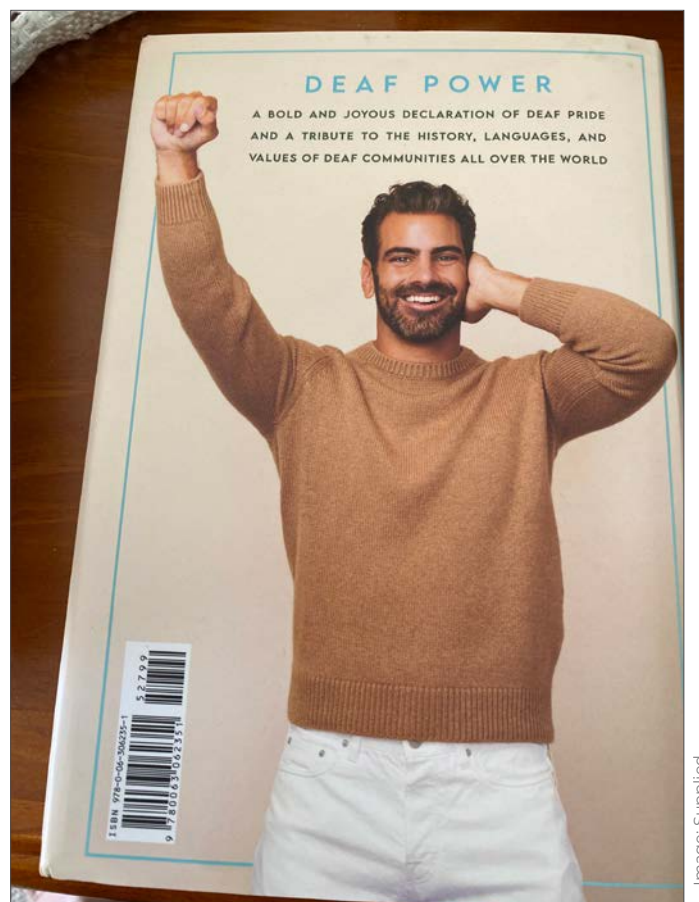
sections and speak to them about disabilities in the workplace. The group by then had now expanded to more members but I was the only one actively involved who had hearing loss. They made me the spokesperson and I had the responsibility of going around telling others about what it was like having hearing loss and how to overcome the negative stigmas attached and to develop positive attitudes.

The department had an award program called MAD, which means Making a Difference. On one occasion, Staff with DisAbility Network was nominated for this award. On this occasion, I had to represent the group and thus won the MAD award.

My last speech I had to make was during a Horizontal Executive Leadership Meeting and faced a roomful of managers from all sections. When I retired, I was given a Certificate of Appreciation from the State Director who made the statement that I "*made an important contribution to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and instrumental in the establishment of the Staff with disAbility Network and a successful conveyor and had raised disability awareness across NSW*".

During August 2022, I happened to step into The Book Shop located near St Vincent's Hospital, and was greeted the manager who handed me the book by Nyle Dimarco, *Deaf Utopia*. This man is Deaf and communicates using ASL (American Sign Language). I was captivated by this book. He tells how he became a strong advocate for the Deaf community and that they can achieve notable objectives in their lives and a celebration of deaf culture. Nyle was born deaf into a Deaf family and was encouraged by the advocacy of his mother in the importance of learning to wear hearing aids at school. During the time when Deaf schools were prohibited from using sign language, his mother made a determined effort to have sign language used in the classroom. With this positive attitude, Nyle became a successful actor, producer, and won *Dancing with the Stars* in America. Although it is about power and pride for the Deaf community, we who have hearing loss can be inspired by this same attitude and to achieve worthwhile goals with our broken hearing. Nyle found the way to be ok about being proud of being Deaf and he brilliantly portrayed this message in front of his book as "A Memoir - and a Love Letter to a Way of Life." The back of the book shows a picture of Nyle Dimarco cupping his left ear and raising his right arm in a fist indicating DEAF POWER.

Since retirement, I was confronted with the negative prospect of self isolation; loneliness without being with other people. I found that by getting out in a number of ways to get involved with the community through volunteer work. Besides being involved with Hearing Matters Australia (HMA) and dealing with the HMA HAB (Hearing Aid Bank), I'm also actively volunteering with the Catholic Help Care organisation meeting with other lonely



The back cover of Nyle Dimarco's book, *Deaf Utopia*, depicting DEAF POWER.

people in their homes or at the aged care facility providing companionship and having someone to talk with. This in itself is rewarding as one time I was offered to visit someone with hearing loss, although this fell through due to COVID lock down.

Another advocacy role I undertake is to attend my church on Saturdays, and besides being the librarian there, I also stand at the door greeting people as they come in which then enables me to join in conversations and to encourage the use of the Hearing loop.

Hearing Loss is Gray

By Dr Michelle Hu

NOTE FROM BEC STEWART: I have been following Dr Michelle Hu on Instagram for some time and she has some great content about living with a hearing loss as someone who understands both living with a hearing loss, and the audiology behind it all. This post in particular stuck out to me. One barrier I've found when trying to explain my hearing to friends and family is that it isn't always clear cut. Sometimes friends are baffled because they don't understand why I'm struggling so much when they've seen me succeed in 'worse' listening environments - but the truth is it just isn't black and white! Michelle Hu explains this really well in her post below.

Michelle Hu is a paediatric audiologist and bilateral cochlear implant recipient. If you are interested in viewing her content, please check it out by searching [@mama.hu.hears](#) on Instagram, or her website, [mamahuhears.com](#). Additionally, Dr. Hu also created, and runs, a course for parents of Deaf or hard of hearing children.

A while ago, [@mybattlecall](#) asked the question, "What is one thing you wish people understood about hearing loss?"

If there's ONE thing from my heart to yours - know that it is NOT straight forward.

It's so.....GRAY.

And individual.

I might hear my mom but not my dad. I might hear you when we're in a restaurant but not in the car. I can hear you say the word "five" but not "six." I might "hear" you because I can see your lips but I can't when you turn around. I might understand a Midwest accent but not a Texan one. I might understand Spanish but not Italian. I can hear one person with a mask on but not another. Every single situation has so many variables and differences.

I can hear you better in the morning but forget it in the evening. I get tired listening to gossip but I'm energized listening to the passion in people's voices. I can't pick up on sarcasm but I can hear your car's turn signal. I can't recognize songs but I love music. I can't hear the GPS voice but I can hear paper crinkling in the back.

My hearing loss may never make any sense to you - but it affects every single aspect, in & out, detail and breath of my LIFE.

It's just GRAY!

Not black or
white, but so
GRAY



@mama.hu.hears



Image by: Unsplash (CC0)
Image source: <https://www.stockvault.net/photo/185452/fast-enough#>

Review of Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport

Republished from the One in Six newsletter issued on 17 August 2022 with permission from Deafness Forum Australia and HMA Life Member & Volunteer Ms Christine Hunter.

The Disability Transport Standards are currently being reviewed by the Australian Government's Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications & the Arts.

Deafness Forum Australia prepared a submission to the Review through the lens of our involvement in the Transport for NSW Accessible Transport Advisory Committee, of which we are a long-standing member, represented by Ms Christine Hunter.

NSW Opal travel cards data shows there were 20 million Opal card trips in the month of June 2022, implying that 3.3 million passengers per month could have had hearing loss.

Deafness Forum's research found that Transport for NSW (transport.nsw.gov.au) had made commendable efforts to increase the accessibility of its services for people with hearing loss, by installing hearing loops. Unfortunately, however its efforts were not reaching as many people with hearing loss as needed, especially in circumstances of disruptions to commuter rail services.

On this basis, Transport's strategy for supporting passengers with hearing loss needs to include multiple forms of one-to-many real-time communication, such as text-based visual signage.

Deafness Forum Australia found that a combination of aural and text based real-time information

would better meet the needs of passengers who are living with hearing loss.

Read the [Deafness Forum Australia Submission to Stage 2 Reform of Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002](#) that was prepared for Transport for NSW by our Consumer Advocate and Transport Adviser, Ms Christine Hunter. Christine is immediate past president of Hearing Matters Australia.

A Personal Experience

Most people with hearing loss would be able to relate stories of difficulty during disruption of transport services. One member of Deafness Forum reported the following incident:

She has severe hearing loss and relies heavily on high quality hearing devices. Recently she was on a train journey that was experiencing an extended delay. There were audio announcements on the train but this time it was unintelligible, largely because the sound system on that carriage was faulty. The real time station signage on the train could offer no information on the delay and was not visible from the vestibule of the carriage.

On arrival at the next train station there was unclear advice about the need for passengers to disembark and the amplified message on the station was little better. The station master was also speaking quickly, complicated by a lot of background noise. This led to much confusion for many.

She had little idea of the alternative arrangements and resorted to asking a complete stranger where they had to go and whether or not other arrangements were being advised.

Fortunately, this incident did not threaten her safety, but it was certainly frustrating and inconvenient. It also reminded her forcefully of her disability and that under these circumstances she was not able to act independently as she normally does when travelling.

The incident is not the only time that the transport system's communication strategies during disruptions have not met her needs.

In this situation, the isolation and helplessness felt by this person would have been typical of people who have hearing loss and, considering the analysis above, there could easily be many people,

both those using hearing devices and those who were not, experiencing similar difficulties on a daily basis during public transport journeys.

Findings and Recommendations

A reliance on T-coil technology is not sufficient to meet the needs of the majority of passengers with hearing loss.

Ideally, there needs to be **clear real-time text-based messaging** that can back up any announcements made. For example, in trains where there is rolling overhead real-time signage indicating the train route and upcoming stations, consideration should be given for updates from Rail Operations Centre to be displayed, if only to advise passengers to alight and wait for further official advice in times of delay.

Real time electronic signage should also be clearly displayed at railway stations and other transport terminals. All written and graphical transport related stand-alone signage (including maps and directions) on stations should be clearly visible and able to be understood by all commuters.

There are real-time communication apps available on smart phone devices (e.g. Tripview) which provide excellent timetable and travel information. This is a great way to access real-time information regarding timetabling and if there are delays or disruptions to services. However, given that a large percentage of the people with hearing loss who are aged over 65 years, many may not have smartphones or be able to manage this facility, particularly if they have dexterity issues or have no access to smart technology.

Current disability training for staff and operators is very general, not disability specific.

For hearing loss, the training needs to be more specific. Customer service staff and operators need to understand that it is **less** about speaking louder and **more** about ensuring that there is clarity in communication.

Unfortunately, the more recent wearing of face masks has made lip reading impossible and therefore much harder to understand face to face conversation as the sounds are also more muffled.

Link to read the Deafness Forum Australia Submission to Stage 2 Reform of Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002: deafnessforum.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Deafness-Forum-Australia-Submission-to-Stage-2-Reform-of-Disability-Standards-for-Accessible-Public-Transport-2002.pdf



NAL HEARsearch

Join HEARsearch and be part of NAL's mission to improve the lives of people with hearing difficulties.

The National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) is expanding the reach of its world-leading research studies by enabling people all over the world to participate and make a difference. We invite you to join the HEARsearch community.

We don't have enough research participants to conduct high impact research. Most of our current hearing research studies require participants to attend at least one session in-person, restricting participation to those who live near our facilities and are able to attend during business hours. Now with HEARsearch, the exciting new NAL initiative, participants can contribute to quality hearing research studies from any location using their computer or smartphone. With a higher number and greater diversity of participants, NAL researchers will be able to discover more valuable insights quickly and effectively, and translate these into improved, tried and tested, innovative hearing services and technology.

Our research volunteers gain a great sense of fulfilment and enjoy the opportunity to give back to the community. Studies may include online surveys, online interviews, trialling new listening tests, or trialling new hearing apps or technology. As always, participation in a given study is optional, and qualified research staff are available to help when needed.

Check out the HEARsearch webpage (hearsearch.com.au) to sign up and join the growing community. Together we can advance hearing research, and improve the lives of people with hearing loss.



Make a difference

Your contribution will change the lives of people with hearing difficulties.



Contribute from anywhere

Take part in research wherever you are via your computer or our smartphone app.



Be in the know

Find out about new developments in hearing research, services and technology.

Technology Corner

Access to Hearing Devices in Hospitals

By **Bec Stewart**

Hospitals and surgeries can be scary for everyone, but having access to technology that we rely on to communicate is essential and our right! Unfortunately, not all hospitals or doctors are as accommodating as we might hope and expect.

In 2018, I had a routine surgery coming up. In preparation for that, I called the hospital to ensure that I would be able to wear my hearing aid and cochlear implant both leading up to and coming out of the anaesthetic. I made the call through the National Relay Service, and the nurse I spoke with was very reluctant to check that a plan had been implemented. She told me that I would have to wait until the surgery to ask the anaesthetist and hung up, giving me no chance to respond or ask further questions.

Following this experience, I submitted two complaints, one to the hospital and one to the Human Rights Commission. The hospital responded promptly, calling me the next day – despite my complaint mentioning I couldn't hear on the phone! They later emailed me and assured me that the staff member I spoke to on the phone was counselled. I requested that hospital staff receive disability awareness training and for policies to be put in place for the use of hearing devices before and after anaesthetic but was never given a confirmation.

Five months later, I received a two-page letter from the Human Rights Commission outlining the hospital's records of the events and actions taken due to my experiences. Their recount differs from mine, and claims I was not hung up on but was transferred to another department (I have screenshots of being told that they are hanging up). However, due to



Image: Supplied.

Bec accessing a speech-to-text phone app in hospital.

my complaint, the hospital will be making some fundamental changes that will hopefully prevent others from having the same experience I had.

These changes include:

- an in-service to all hospital staff about what the National Relay Service is and why it is used,
- a tool to identify and manage any communication issues or barriers (including English as a second language) for those being admitted for surgeries; and
- the staff member attended a course on customer service for people with disabilities.

My hearing aid and cochlear implant are my ears, and to remove them is to remove my ability to communicate with medical staff; now, with some medical staff being unable to lower their masks, other technologies like speech-to-text phone apps are a necessity. It is our right to have access to any technology we use to manage our hearing loss - refusing us that access is unacceptable.



Hearing Connections specialises in technology and support for people with Hearing Loss.

Andrew Stewart is the Managing Director and has two cochlear implants, having grown up with a progressive loss. All his siblings also wear hearing aid and/or cochlear implants, as do his children and other family members.

Bec Stewart is his daughter and wears one hearing aid and one cochlear implant. She has been wearing hearing aids since age 5 and received her cochlear implant in 2017.

Corporate Members 2022

Hearing Matters Australia Inc thanks and acknowledges our Corporate Members, who are pleased to assist members and their friends with hearing help.



EARS 'R' US

Ears 'R' Us provides individually tailored treatment options for all types and degrees of hearing loss. Ears 'R' Us is accredited by the Office of Hearing Services to provide free services to eligible pensioners and veterans.

Ph: (02) 9688 7341

Email: admin@earsrus.com.au

Web: earsrus.com.au



HEALTHY HEARING & BALANCE CARE

We are a private independent audiology practice bringing together the expertise of audiology, otology and neuro-physiotherapy to provide customised strategies for the prevention, assessment and rehabilitation of all hearing and balance disorders of children, adults and the elderly.

Ph: (02) 9387 3599

Email: admin@healthyhearing.com.au

Web: healthyhearing.com.au



HEARING CONNECTIONS

Hearing Connections provides people with hearing loss with the technology and support they need to be independent. This includes hearing the TV, personal microphones, smoke detectors and alarms and alerts with flash, vibrate and loud volume. We provide hearing coaching, and Hearing Connections also specialize in Hearing Loop Systems and are a registered NDIS provider.

Ph: 0411 757 622

Email: andrew@hearconnect.com.au

Web: hearconnect.com.au



TRUSTED BRANDS • DISCOUNT HEARING AIDS

HEARING SAVERS

Hearing Savers offers world leading hearing aid technology at the best prices in Australia. Our aim is for hearing technology to be readily accessible and affordable to all across our network of 100 clinics. We are completely independent, which means we will always offer you the right choice and best value in Australia... not to mention our Price Beat Guarantee.

Ph: 1800 004 327

Email: save@hearingsavers.com.au

Web: hearingsavers.com.au



INDEPENDENT AUDIOLOGISTS AUSTRALIA INC (IAA)

IAA is a not-for-profit incorporated association to promote and support clinical practices owned by audiologists. All full members of IAA are university-qualified audiologists who have a financial interest in an audiology related business that is at least 50% owned by audiologists.

Ph: 0424 720 915

Email: exec@independentaudiologists.net.au

Web: independentaudiologists.net.au



MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

MACQUARIE SPEECH AND HEARING CLINIC

Located in the Australian Hearing Hub, the MQ Health Speech and Hearing Clinic (SHC) is a provider of evidence-based services in audiology and speech pathology. SHC is a registered provider of the NDIS, which funds reasonable and necessary supports to help individuals with disabilities reach their goals and participate in everyday activities. SHC is also jointly working with HMA for the Hearing Aid Bank Program.

Ph: (02) 9850 2900

Email: shc@mq.edu.au

Web: mqhealth.org.au

Corporate Members 2022 *(continued...)*



St George
Hearing & Balance
Clinic

ST GEORGE HEARING AND BALANCE CLINIC

St George Hearing and Balance Clinic is an independent clinic specializing in ENT and Audiological services for Paediatric and Adults in Kogarah. From hearing assessments to fitting of hearing aids - patients can feel comfortable that their health providers have years of experience and care about the well-being of their patients.

Ph: (02) 9553 4999
Web: ent.com.au



SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

The Sydney Opera House is committed to providing services to improve listening clarity for people who experience hearing loss for tours, experiences and performances. This includes Hearing Loops and FM Augmentation systems in venues and for tours as well as regular scheduled captioned performances.

Ph: (02) 9250 7777 (Box Office)
Email: accessibility@sydneyoperahouse.com
Web: sydneyoperahouse.com/visit-us/accessibility/vision-hearing.html#hearing



wordofmouth
technology

Est. 1993

WORD OF MOUTH

Word of Mouth Technology has been providing equipment and support to the Deaf and hard of hearing community since 1993. As a registered NDIS provider, we pride ourselves on sourcing great products to help people hear, listen, and connect. We are experts in assistive technology for home, education, and the workplace.

Ph: 1800 966 266
Email: info@wom.com.au
Web: www.wom.com.au

Nominations for the HMA Committee

Each year HMA elects a new Committee, made up of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and three Ordinary Committee Members. The Committee works closely with the Executive Officer to ensure HMA provides support for those living with hearing loss.

All full members of HMA are eligible to nominate for positions on the committee. HMA rules specify that the majority of members of the Committee must be people living with hearing loss. The rules also specify that the positions of President and Vice President must be filled by people who live with hearing loss. This means that only people who live with hearing loss are eligible for nomination to those leadership positions. It also means that if more than three hearing people nominate for the Committee, then

an election is held at the AGM and members choose the three hearing HMA members they wish to have on the Committee.

Nominations for the Committee are due the week before an AGM.

A simple nomination form can be completed online from within the Members Resources section of the HMA website. To complete a nomination, the nominee, a proposer, and seconder must all be members of HMA.

If you are interested in nominating to join the HMA Committee but want to have a chat about what is involved, please send an email to admin@hearingmattersaustralia.org and one of our Committee Members will get in contact with you.

Volunteers' Corner

My Journey to Becoming an Audiologist

By Lilly Leaver

On average, it takes a person 10 years to seek help for their hearing, from when they first notice problems.

When I came across this statistic three years ago during my undergraduate degree, I was shocked. That is, 10 years worth of asking for people to repeat themselves, 10 years of struggling to hear the television, and, most importantly, 10 long years of worsening communication with loved ones. At the time, I was working in the community as a disability support practitioner, caring for people who live with chronic disabilities. As the majority of my clients also had difficulties with their hearing, I was motivated to look further into the accessibility of hearing care. The more I searched, the more statistics I came across. "Only 23% of older Australians who are hard of hearing own hearing aids". When 1 in 6 Australians have hearing loss, why is it that it takes so long to access proper help? I then asked myself: "How can I help improve these statistics and make a difference in the lives of people with hearing loss?" This is when my journey into audiology began!

Earlier this year, I commenced my Master of Clinical Audiology at Macquarie University. At the same time, I started volunteering at Hearing Matters Australia (HMA). My role at HMA is the Australian Hearing Hub (AHH) Co-ordinator. The AHH is a collaborative nucleus that houses some of Australia's leading organisations in hearing health and research. It is my responsibility to provide the link between these institutions and the wider community. It is important that I explore how all the resources in the AHH can benefit you, your families, and the HoH and deaf community, so that you can connect and feel confident to advocate for yourself, and have your voice heard. This March, I attended the AHH showcase for World Hearing Day 2022 on behalf of HMA alongside Executive Officer, Ida Shi. This year's theme was "To Hear for Life: Listen with Care". We heard presentations from Hearing Australia, The Shepherd Centre, Next Sense, Cochlear, Macquarie University, and many more. All speakers highlighted

how important it is to come together as a community and work on improving Australia's hearing health. This means that we need to ensure that we can make hearing meaningful for everyone, especially for children and those in the later stages of their life. After the event, I created an information booklet titled, "Who

is in the Australian Hearing Hub?" to help HMA members and the public to know what resources are available in the AHH. It is available on the HMA website page at hearingmattersaustralia.org/static/uploads/files/who-is-in-the-hearing-hub-v3-updated-by-15-august-2022-wfqfkrvfjhsb.pdf. As the audiology landscape is moving towards these goals, self-advocacy will play an important role. This means asking for what is needed from



HMA Volunteer, Lilly Leaver.

Image: Supplied.



Lilly Leaver at the Australian Hearing Hub showcase in March.

Image: Supplied.

an Audiologist, and taking an active role in decisions that will make a difference in your life.

So far, my journey into audiology has been rigorous and has challenged me academically. My course has required much determination and resilience. Throughout the course, I have had many rewarding experiences which have shaped my perspective.

In April, our professor allowed us to have an excursion to the basement level of the Australian Hearing Hub, to explore the anechoic chamber. We had been learning about Acoustics, the physics behind sound and how it moves in space. Macquarie University's anechoic chamber is a special room that hangs independently from the rest of the Hearing Hub and is heavily insulated to create an environment where noise from outside cannot make its way inside. It has been said that spending more than 45 minutes in this room can turn you mad! Truthfully, I'm not sure as to the validity of that claim! However, it was a fascinating experience to be in a room so silent! I can recall my professor explaining the physics of the chamber to our class whilst we were inside. I could hear what he was saying when he was facing me, but as soon as he turned away, his speech became fuzzy and it was difficult to make out what he was saying, as there was no echo or reverberation in the room to give me any hints.

I also recently had my first clinical placement block in May, and during this time I was fortunate to venture to many different places. I went to four primary schools in Western Sydney and tested the hearing of kindergarteners through a screening program. The kids all loved playing the games we brought, and getting them involved in their own hearing tests was a new and interesting experience for them. I was also assigned to a week-long placement in both Lake Haven on the Central Coast, and Maitland in the Lower Hunter Region of NSW.

In the future, I want to be an audiologist who listens to, and supports clients to feel empowered to take control of their own hearing. To do that, I aspire to dedicate my life to improving the social wellbeing of those living with hearing loss, and to be a clinician



Image: Supplied.

Lilly in Macquarie University's anechoic chamber, located in the basement level of the Australian Hearing Hub.

who assists my prospective clients to achieve their communication goals. HMA is helping me understand how I can improve care for people with hearing loss, as well as supporting self-advocacy in decisions surrounding hearing rehabilitation. I am very passionate about making hearing care more accessible. In my pursuit of these goals, I am learning Australian Sign Language alongside my degree as a part of TAFE NSW's Certificate II program. Auslan is a beautiful and rich language that I am privileged to have the opportunity to learn. I am hoping that in the community, and as a clinician, this will allow me to communicate with anyone, whether they feel more comfortable signing or using spoken language.

I am grateful to be a volunteer at Hearing Matters Australia alongside my master's program. The AHH coordinator role is an important link that helps people with hearing loss access the useful information that the Hearing Hub has to offer. I want to use my audiology and Auslan studies to support and organise HMA events, as well as continue to support the deaf and hard of hearing community by creating meaningful resources that promote accessibility and self-advocacy.

Book Review

'Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss' by Shari Eberts and Gael Hannan

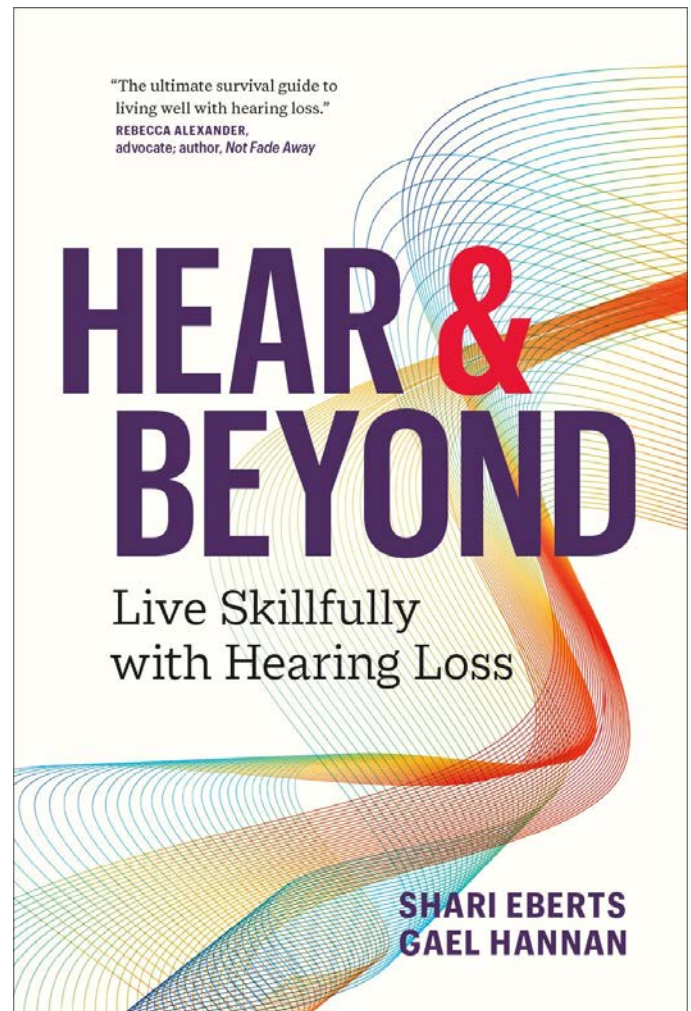
Review by **Christine Hunter, HMA Life Member**

Until now, I have never come across a clear roadmap for people with hearing loss who, like me, want to hear and communicate better. Because everyone's hearing journey (and hearing loss) is unique, I have accepted the fact that there can't be a one size fits all approach to communicating well with hearing loss; that is, until I read *Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss* written by Shari Eberts and Gael Hannan.

Backed up by the lived experience of the authors and many others living with hearing loss, and validated by hearing science, technological advances and modern hearing care principles, the book offers a new way forward to greater connection and engagement – regardless of whether you're new to hearing loss or have been living with it for a long time. It's almost like an operating manual!

I enjoyed reading *Hear & Beyond* from the very first page: so much so that I found it hard to put down. Its two amazing authors each have hearing loss and their book is clearly focussed on the consumer. It is an easy-to-read, comprehensive, practical, and innovative guide which answers so many questions about hearing loss and the 'baggage' that can sometimes come with it. It is also packed with personal insight, empathy, experience, humour, and real-world advice on navigating life as a person with hearing loss. I've worn hearing aids for well over forty years, and I even learnt a few new tricks! It was also an eye opener to recognise some of the hearing denial behaviours I'd unconsciously practised over the years.

With honesty and humour, Shari and Gael share their own hearing loss journeys and outline many valuable insights, strategies, and workarounds ('hacks') to help you engage with the world and be heard. They share tips for navigating all areas impacted by hearing



loss, including emotions, relationships and support networks, work, and technology, with specific chapters also covering tinnitus, parenting, friends, entertainment, outdoor activities, travelling and even bluffing! The book also gives a good run-down on the range of technology currently available, from hearing aids to speech-to-text apps.

One of the many aspects of *Hear & Beyond* that I really liked was the inclusion of strategies for adopting a new empowering mindset towards hearing loss and communication behaviours, that can make even the most challenging listening situations manageable. There are numerous descriptions and examples scattered

throughout the book, of what the authors call “Mindshifts”, which are the ways you can think differently about hearing loss so that it's easier to manage. An example of this could be from the attitude of a person thinking - *‘I want to hear better, the way I used to’, to them changing their mindset to - ‘I want to communicate better, and it takes more than hearing aids to do this. I must use other skills and additional technology’.*

Chapter 14 of the book is devoted to Advocacy: a concept particularly pertinent to the theme of this issue of Hearing Matters. The clear message from *Hear & Beyond* is *“When you advocate for yourself, you are also advocating for other people with hearing loss.”* In other words, when you can let those around you know what you need to have the most effective communication with them, you are also increasing their awareness of the needs of others with hearing loss. Self-advocacy is an area that not many people who experience hearing loss consider – often because they feel powerless and are just trying to cope with their own hearing condition.

Because hearing loss is invisible, Shari and Gael point out that a fundamental lesson of hearing loss is that *‘you need to be assertive and specific about the help you need and be just as clear about what you don’t need’.* This concept of advocacy really resonated with me as I found myself reflecting on my own hearing journey and pathway into advocacy.

For 30 years or so, my hearing loss was something that was just ‘there’ and I just had to cope as best I could unaided, as it was the belief of my family at the time that nothing could be done. I managed some circumstances better than others, but I lost my scholarship to train as a teacher because of it. My hearing loss certainly made life harder and caused numerous embarrassments and at times confusion, when I missed or misunderstood questions, comments, and information. It was something that I was uncomfortable disclosing to others, other than those close to me, as it made me feel less intelligent, less capable and at times less worthy.

Even after I got hearing aids, completing my teaching degree, starting teaching, and

becoming a faculty head, I still felt less capable and that I had to work harder than my peers. The view seemed to be that all I needed was good hearing aids and all would be well, but, of course, this was not the case and I often struggled to cope and to appear as “normal” as possible. If at that time I’d had people like Shari and Gael telling me what is in their book, it is likely that I may have had more confidence to express my needs and assert my capabilities. Fortunately, I found Hearing Matters Australia, then known as SHHH, and started to learn a lot more about my hearing loss, and the other aspects of managing it beyond just the devices. It was also good to relax, converse, and laugh with others who understood!

The increase in my knowledge and understanding about my hearing loss, as well as that of others, gave me the empowerment and the confidence I needed to speak about it with others, share my story and to do my best to advocate and represent our interests to anyone who would listen. I was surprised that when I did this, others would often open up and share their own stories about hearing loss, its management, or an issue they had with their devices; and it would so often lead to some great conversations. It doesn’t always have to be about the serious stuff, and we can all have a laugh at ourselves from time to time as we reflect on some of the misheard jokes and not-so-good hearing loss situations we find ourselves in. When you advocate, it helps everyone, including yourself.

I echo the words of Shari and Gael on the mindshift that everyone with hearing loss needs to make: *‘It is my right to ask for and receive equal access. When I advocate for myself, I am also creating change that benefits others’.*

Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss is a book that provides an excellent roadmap and framework for individuals with hearing loss, and their communication partners, to know what to do and how to live their best life with hearing loss. I think it’s a must-read for the hearing care health professionals too! The book is a great read and I thoroughly recommend it.

Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss

ISBN978-1-77458-161-2(e-book)

ISBN 978-1-77458-160-5 (paperback)

RRP \$34.99

HMA End-Of-Year *Lunch and Games* Event 2022

After a tough 18 months of Covid restrictions, we were lucky enough to hold the first HMA End-of-Year Lunch and outdoor Games Event in December 2021. HMA members, volunteers, and friends had a lovely catch-up and chat over food and games outdoors on a beautiful, sunny summer day.

The end of year HMA event was also an opportunity to say thank you to our amazing volunteers and wish everyone a happy year ahead.



For another wonderful face-to-face interaction this year, HEARING MATTERS AUSTRALIA invites Volunteers, Members and Friends to our **2022 End-Of-Year Lunch and Games Event**.

DATE: Friday 2nd December

TIME: 12pm - 2pm

LOCATION: The lawns in front of the Australian Hearing Hub

16 University Ave, Macquarie University

(For bad weather, we will move indoors)

- A light lunch will be provided
- Raffle tickets will be sold at our event in support of HMA
(Tickets are \$5 each or 3 tickets for \$10 will put you in the running for a special prize)
- **RSVP your attendance** by **23 November 2022**
to Ida at admin@hearingmattersaustralia.org or Phone/Text 0477 785 525

We look forward to seeing you on 2nd December!



Image is a derivative work. Original image by: Jernej Furman (CC BY 2.0)
Original image source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/91261194@N06/44774257824/>

Notice Board

Announcements and Forthcoming Events

DOOLEYS Club Community Grant for Hearing Aid Bank Program

HMA's Hearing Aid Bank (HAB) is the recipient of a community grant, awarded to assist HMA support those in the community with unmet needs, in terms of receiving hearing devices. In August 2022, HMA received \$9,635 as a grant from Dooleys Lidcombe Catholic Club. The grant is specifically awarded to HMA to support applicants to the Hearing Aid Bank. The grant means HMA can provide financial assistance to those most in need, who have low/no income, but are not eligible for publicly funded programs. HMA's partnership with Macquarie University's Speech and Hearing Clinic ensures that those fitted with donated hearing aids through the hearing aid bank receive professional assessments, recommendations and hearing aid fittings. The grant ensures that those who can demonstrate that they cannot pay the costs of associated audiology services can receive financial support for those services, as well as be fitted with donated hearing aids. Details of eligibility criteria are available from the HMA website -> Services -> Hearing Aid Bank page.

Contact us, if you are interested to:

- know more how our HAB program works; or
- join our HAB volunteering team to assist with the HAB program administration work; or
- become a HAB program outreach speaker

2023 HMA Cafe & Chat Sessions

The 4th Cafe & Chat this year will be our 2022 End-of-Year Event on 2nd December. For more details, please refer to the End-of-Year invitation on page 21.

With the positive feedback from participating members in our face-to-face Cafe & Chat sessions this year, we will continue to host free and face-to-face HMA Cafe & Chat sessions for our members, their families and friends on a quarterly basis for the new year.

Our face-to-face Cafe & Chat sessions will be on the first Fridays of February, May, August, and November at the Australian Hearing Hub, starting with a morning coffee and tea at 9:30am for a group chat from 10am to 11:30am.

To meet interested members' requests to attend HMA events online, two online HMA Cafe & Chat sessions will be trialed on the first Fridays of March and July via Zoom at 10am to 11:30am.

Contact us, if you are interested to:

- attend any face-to-face and Zoom Cafe & Chat sessions; or
- share your personal experiences and/or tips in managing hearing loss (face-to-face and/or online); or
- display your own hearing assistive devices in use which are helpful for your daily life at home and/or at work (face-to-face and/or online)
- become a volunteer to help organise Cafe & Chat (face-to-face and/or Zoom sessions)

2023 HMA Drop-In Peer Support Open Days

Peer support days will be offered from 2023 in Sydney at the HMA office located at the Australian Hearing Hub. The days will run as open days with two volunteers available to offer face-to-face peer support with lived experiences to members, members' friends or family members who drop in.

Dates for drop-in peer support open days will be on the first Wednesdays of April, June, September and October from 10am to 2pm.

Contact us, if you are interested to:

- become a volunteer to provide peer support on Open Days; or

- learn from the volunteers how to provide peer support on Open Days

2023 HMA Membership Renewal

The HMA membership period follows the HMA financial year. At the HMA Special General Meeting held on 23 April 2022, the financial year of HMA was approved to change from the calendar year (commencing on 1 January and ending on 30 December) to Australia's financial year, commencing on 1 July and ending on the following 30 June. As such, the transition of the financial years of HMA consist of the following:

- a) From 1 January 2022 to 30 December 2022
- b) From 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023
- c) From 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

To align your HMA membership with the revised HMA financial year and also to smooth the transition process, HMA has a SPECIAL OFFER for your 2023 HMA Membership to be **18 months, commencing on 1 January 2023 and ending on 30 June 2024** at the same membership fee as per previous years.

- Full membership - \$45;
- Full Membership (Pensioner/Concession/Student)- \$35
- Corporate Membership - \$190

2023 - 2024 Membership renewal will start from 1st January 2023. We will send out renewal details to you in advance via post and email.

2023 HMA Membership Engagement Events Summary

January	Sun, 1 Jan 2023	HMA Membership renewal starts
February	Fri, 3 Feb 2023 (9:30-11:30am)	Cafe & Chat (Face to Face) <i>RSVP</i>
March	Fri, 3 Mar 2023 (10-11:30am)	Cafe & Chat (Zoom) <i>RSVP</i>
April	Wed, 5 Apr (10am-2pm)	Peer Support Open Day <i>Drop In</i>
May	Fri, 5 May 2023 (9:30-11:30am)	Cafe & Chat (Face to Face) <i>RSVP</i>
June	Wed, 7 Jun 2023 (10am-2pm)	Peer Support Open Day <i>Drop In</i>
July	Fri, 7 Jul 2023 (10-11:30am)	Cafe & Chat (Zoom) <i>RSVP</i>
August	Fri, 4 Aug 2023 (9:30-11:30am)	Cafe & Chat (Face to Face) <i>RSVP</i>
September	Wed, 6 Sep 2023 (10am-2pm)	Peer Support Open Day <i>Drop In</i>
October	Wed, 4 Oct 2023 (10am-2pm)	Peer Support Open Day <i>Drop In</i>
November	Fri, 3 Nov 2023 (9:30-11:30am)	Cafe & Chat (Face to Face) <i>RSVP</i>
December	TBC	2023 HMA End-of-Year Event

* All the face-to-face events in 2023 will be held in the Sydney area at the Australian Hearing Hub

* Drop in location for peer support open days is at the HMA office address

* HMA event invitations and reminders will be sent out to members via HMA printed journal and emails

* Contact us at admin@hearingmattersaustralia.org or Phone/Text 0477 785 525 re: enquiries, RSVPs, volunteering interests, and others.



HEARING MATTERS AUSTRALIA

Support from real life experience

HEARING MATTERS AUSTRALIA, INC.

- Operates an **information centre**
- Produces **HEARING MATTERS** as a **quarterly magazine** for members and subscribers
- Runs an active **Facebook page**
- Supports and encourages local **HMA groups**
- Maintains an extensive **information service**, with a series of fact sheets on aspects of hearing loss and its management
- **Provides speakers** as part of its extensive Outreach Program
- Acts as an **advocate** to government, industry, and other organisations to make them more aware of issues concerning hearing loss
- Administers a **hearing aid bank**, in conjunction with the Audiology Department of Macquarie University in Sydney and other participating providers

BUDDY PROGRAM

Would you like to get in contact with another deaf or hard of hearing (D/HoH) person in your area? HMA tries to introduce members so they can meet for a coffee, conversation, and to share experiences. If you would like to try our buddy program, contact the HMA office (*details on this page*).

DONATIONS

HMA needs your financial support. All donations to HMA, Inc. of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

BEQUESTS

If you wish to make a bequest to HMA, please contact our office on (02) 9878 6089.

HEARING MATTERS

This magazine is conceptualised, designed and produced by volunteers. Articles have been reproduced from several sources. Some articles have been specifically written for the magazine.

In reproducing articles, HMA, Inc. acknowledges the sources.

HMA, Inc. thanks and acknowledges our corporate members, who are pleased to assist members and their friends with hearing help.

HMA INFORMATION CENTRE

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