



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2018 - 2019

Deafness Forum of Australia is the peak national body representing the interests of the 3.5 million Australians who are concerned with the quality of their hearing and the effects it has on their lives and the people around them.

Deafness Forum aims to provide balanced and realistic advice to government to inform public policy to build a fairer and more inclusive nation.

Our membership includes people living with hearing loss, ear and balance disorders, people who communicate in Auslan, and their families. Membership also includes organisations that represent these people; and individuals and associations which provide services that promote hearing health and wellbeing.

### **Deafness Forum Ltd national office**

Open Systems House  
218 Northbourne Avenue  
Braddon ACT 2612  
Tel: 02 6262 7808  
info@deafnessforum.org.au  
[www.deafnessforum.org.au](http://www.deafnessforum.org.au)

ABN 49 008 587 611

## FROM THE CHAIR OF DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

3.5 million Australians are currently living with hearing issues, growing to an estimated 7.8 million by 2060, with a current estimated economic impact of \$33.3b in costs to the health and disability systems, and in lost taxes.

Five percent of people who are deaf or hearing impaired will be eligible to enter the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Hearing health needs an integrated national plan to provide the high-level policy platform for addressing the personal and social costs of hearing health in this country.

We must all work towards creation of a National Action Plan for governments, business and the community.

The year commenced with the introduction of the Roadmap for Hearing Health for Australia by the then Minister Ken Wyatt AM MP involving 11 sector leaders including Deafness Forum of Australia. It involved several months of committee meetings and working groups throughout the Deafness Sector.

Once the Roadmap was finalised (<https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/news-and-issues/roadmap-for-hearing-health/>) it was important to encourage governments to implement what they could of the 140 recommendations that would improve hearing health services in Australia. A Hearing Health Sector Alliance was formed ([www.hearinghealthsectoralliance.org.au](http://www.hearinghealthsectoralliance.org.au)) with Deafness Forum being a founding member. This alliance is the next step forward to working towards a *whole of Australia* approach to address hearing health awareness, prevention, industry improvements, and support for marginal groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. None of this would have been possible without the support of all our member organisations and friends across the deafness sector.

Deafness Forum of Australia's work did not stop there. We continued to build strategic relationships with Federal and State Parliamentarians. Two long term milestones were achieved in the past year – the establishment of the first Parliamentary Friends of Hearing Health and Deafness groups in both the NSW and Federal Parliaments. Already, it is paying dividends: it enabled our member organisations to reach out to NSW Parliamentarians to alert the Premier of NSW and Emergency Services Minister to the need for Auslan interpreters to be part of public emergency announcements on TV and the internet. I was excited to learn that our members in other states are planning to create their own Parliamentary Friends' groups.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is 4 years old and Deafness Forum has been working behind the scenes with the NDIA on gathering vital community wide information to inform the hearing pathway. Like any new social impact scheme, there is always room for improvement, and we were proactive to utilise our networks and authority to bring the right information to the decision-makers in the Agency. In March-June we hosted a series of community and provider forums, then compiled a high-level report that shared the new knowledge with the NDIA. I would like to acknowledge the tremendous effort and expertise provided by our adviser Margaret Dewberry and the support of Leonie Jackson in this project.

We continue to work with Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) and other Disability sector organisations across all issues involving disability in Australia. We are very ably represented on the board of AFDO by the chair of Hearing Matter Australia, Christine Hunter. The NDIS impacts 500,000 Australians when it is fully rolls out, however there are 5 million declared Australians with a disability plus their families and communities who relies on us to keep the Government informed, and to encourage them to support and improve the National Disability Strategy so we can achieve real diversity and inclusion across our nation.

Our program to enhance hearing care in aged care settings provides learning resources for volunteers, or students and teaching staff in the Diploma of Nursing HLT54115, Certificate III in Individual Support CHC33015 and in Cert IV in Ageing Support CHC43015 and also for CPD purposes. Our program was recently accredited by Audiology Australia and the College of Audiology. This work is crucial - over 70% of Australians aged over 70 have some hearing loss, increasing to around 85% in residential aged care. However, staff of age care service providers and in hospitals are seldom adequately trained to assist those with hearing loss. I am pleased to acknowledge Deafness Forum's volunteers Basil Turner and Emma Scanlan for making this program real.

The future of the National Relay Service has been a cause of community concern. A new contract to manage the Service was awarded and the funding limit has been capped well below the actual cost of running the Service in recent years. Members will be aware that in recent months we have been working to find a way to preserve the CapTel service (<https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/captel-in-spotlight-at-senate-estimates-hearing/>).

Our Libby Harricks Memorial Oration committee saw a changing of the Chair this year with Prof Christopher Lind stepping down after 4 years of steering the committee to be replaced by Prof Catherine McMahon. This year's Orator was from London, Professor Andrew Smith who spoke at the Macquarie University Indigenous hearing health symposium. As always, the Oration brings real hearing health and deafness issues to the agenda based on evidence and experience.

In making this report I am conscious of the danger of overlooking important other contributors. For this I apologise.

During the year we participated in many varied groups and projects that we believed contributed to our work on behalf of our constituents.

Australian Consumer Communication Action Network	Disability Advisory Forum
Department Social Services City of Sydney	National Disability Strategy beyond 2020 forum Draft policy and guidelines for inclusive and accessible public spaces and events
Department of Social Services Australian Human Rights Commission	National Disability Strategy to 2020 onwards Rights Talk: Refugees with Disabilities
Preparation for the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability	
Department of Health Transport for NSW / Sydney Trains Australian Trade and Investment Commission	National Injury Prevention Strategy roundtable Inputs to 10-year strategy for disability access services Beyond Tourism 2020 (disability theme)
Department of Health	Roundtable - Inquiry into the 2017-18 Annual Reports of the Department of Health and Australian Hearing
NDIS	Formed a national community of practice among sector stakeholders to inform NDIS hearing stream
NSW Electoral Commission	Equal Access to Democracy Disability Reference Group
National Disability Insurance Agency	Attend NDIA CEO Forum (advisory group) Melbourne
Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport	Contribute content and case studies to Australian Federation of Disability organisations' submission
National Disability Insurance Agency	Test and provide feedback on revised NDIS website
National Disability Insurance Agency	Parent workshops, hearing stream
Department of Health	Ministerial reference group - Hearing Health Sector Committee - Roadmap
University NSW	Roundtable consultation on implementation of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020

I wish to thank my vice chair Jordanna Smith who represented Deaf Auslan users in the community and Beatrice Tarnawski who represented people with ear disorders. Also, my thanks to the Finance Committee members Alex Phillips and Tony Whelan; Michelle Courts who represented the board on the Australasian Newborn Hearing Screening Committee; and Raelene Walker who was active in the NDIS community of practice project. It was great to have the views of Western Australia included in our discussions through director Jeff Johnson. Margaret Dewberry, Ann Porter, Fleur Henderson, Barry MacKinnon provided expert advice on the future of hearing services under the NDIS. Thanks to our chief executive Steve Williamson who facilitated and coordinated our work. Thanks also to the Department of Social Services and the NDIA which provided small amounts of funding to do important consultations and projects on their behalf. And finally, our thanks to our volunteers and members for their ideas, involvement and support.

David Brady



## PEOPLE

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Deafness Forum sets the policy on key issues, based on the consensus of our members. It ensures the organisation is focused on its purpose and strategic objectives and manages its resources efficiently and effectively for the future.

The composition of the Board reflects the broad nature of the deafness sector. The various life experiences and interests of directors, coupled with the Deafness Forum's activities and consultative processes, ensure the organisation is consumer-driven and with the authority to represent the interests and concerns of the entire deafness sector.

The Board Executive comprising the chairperson and the two vice-chairs meets via teleconference on an *as needs* basis.

The Board has a permanent Audit and Finance Committee.

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Deafness Forum of Australia is managed by its chief executive Steve Williamson.

He represents the organisation and its members on the National Disability Insurance Scheme CEO Forum, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations and other groups involved in communications accessibility.

### GOVERNANCE

Deafness Forum's governance arrangements are reviewed annually.

- Board Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Governance & Ethics Committee with authority to appoint external advisers
- Policy & procedures to deal with potential conflicts of interest
- Regular reporting on Board meetings performance
- Risk management strategy

In addition to the specific governance documents, the organisation has established policies and procedures in the following areas:

- Communications
- Electronic ballots
- Grievances
- Persons holding external representative positions
- Sponsorship
- Travel

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

- David Brady, chairperson, nominated by Hearing Matters Australia (formerly SHHH)
- Jordanna Smith, vice chair representing Auslan users, nominated by The Deaf Society (retired at 2019 AGM)
- Beatrice Tarnawski, vice chair, nominated by Better Hearing Australia Brisbane branch
- Michelle Courts, nominated by Aussie Deaf Kids
- Jeff Johnson, nominated by Deafness Council of Western Australia
- Alexander Phillips, nominated by Cicada Australia (retired at 2019 AGM)
- Raelene Walker, nominated by WA Foundation for Deaf Children
- Anthony Whelan, nominated by Better Hearing Australia National

## **PREVIOUS CHAIRPERSONS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER**

- Libby Harricks AM
- Dereck Ward
- Cath Bonnes AM
- Stan Batson
- Margaret Roberston
- Alex Jones

## **INDIVIDUALS AWARDED LIFE MEMBERSHIP**

- John Bartlett
- Stan Batson
- Victor Bear AM
- Dr Harry Blackmore AM
- Cath Bonnes AM
- Ruth Fotheringham
- Diana Hodgetts
- Hon Peter Howson, CMG
- Alex Jones
- Peter Lindley
- Dr Leo Murphy, OBE
- Robert Quail AM
- Harry Powell
- Margaret Robertson
- Brian Rope OAM
- Dr Jenny Rosen AM
- Andrew Stewart
- Kenneth W Tribe

## STRATEGIC PLAN

### 1. Be the trusted, national, independent consumer voice for the whole hearing health and deafness sector. This means

Forming realistic, actionable recommendations for reform by engaging with our members and other stakeholders within the sector.

Developing productive relationships with federal politicians, advisers and government officials.

Being represented on strategic groups to provide input during public policy development.

#### Priority actions

- Be an active member of the Ministerial advisory group to develop a Hearing Health & Wellbeing Roadmap for Australia.
- Advocate for public funding of community awareness of hearing health and issues.
- Contribute to the Commonwealth's National Disability Strategy: 2020 and Beyond.
- Contribute to the Royal Commission into Aged Care.
- Contribute to the Royal Commission into Disability.
- Advise the National Disability Insurance Agency on matters of consumer concern.
  - Contribute to planning the transition of Australian Government Hearing Services Program to the NDIS in 2020.

### 2. Be a focused, efficient, accountable and sustainable organisation. This means

Communicating with purpose, balance and integrity.

Ensuring accountable contributions and practice of the board, its appointed representatives and staff.

Managing our resources responsibly, efficiently and effectively to build an organisation that will be equipped to represent the future aspirations of the people and organisations we represent.

Maintaining an up to date and practical annual Strategic Plan that clearly communicates what our financial situation will allow us to achieve and how we will achieve it.

#### Priority actions

- Maintain a high degree of public and member visibility via newsletters, social media and websites.
- Seek funding and partnerships to fund and undertake the work of the organisation.
- Appoint and support office-bearers with relevant skills and experience to oversight the running and direction of the organisation.

## **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Deafness Forum seeks financial support from various sources to supplement its government grant, such as sponsorships, project funding, donations and bequests.

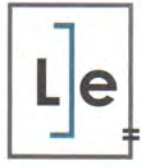
Deafness Forum maintains its financial records in accordance with the recommendations of its Auditor; and lodged all required advice and reports required by law.

The Board of Directors, via its Finance Committee, is provided with comprehensive monthly reports.

## **GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

We thank the Department of Social Services and National Disability Insurance Agency for project funding during the year.





## Independent Audit Report to The Members Of Deafness Forum Ltd Association

We have audited the special purpose financial statements of Deafness Forum Ltd for the year ended 30 June, 2019. The association's directors are responsible for the financial statements. We have conducted an independent audit of these financial statements in order to express an opinion on them to the members of the association.

Our audit has been conducted to provide reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. Our procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly, satisfy statutory requirements, present a view which is consistent with our understanding of the association's financial position, the results of its operations and its cash flows.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

### Qualification

It is not practical to establish control over receipts until their initial entry into the accounting records. Our audit was therefore restricted to the amounts recorded as received.

### Audit Opinion

Subject to the foregoing reservations, in our opinion, the financial statements of Deafness Forum Ltd Incorporated are properly drawn up:

- I. so as to give a true and fair view of:
  - A. the association's financial position as at 30 June 2019, and income and expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2019;
- II. to satisfy the requirements of subsection 72(2) of the Associations Incorporation Act to be dealt with in financial statements.

Les Ellis & Associates Pty

Les Ellis FIPA  
August 26, 2019