



ANNUAL REPORT

2019 - 2020

Deafness Forum of Australia is the peak national body representing the interests of the 3.5 million Australians who live with hearing loss.

Hearing loss is the most common disability of adulthood.

Our mission is to make hearing health & wellbeing a national priority in Australia.

Social problems demand social solutions. It's not just about hearing aids.

Our work encompasses the full human experience and includes accessibility in communications and the made environment, human rights, justice, education, employment, transport, health and aged care. These aspects of life align with, and are drawn from the National Disability Strategy, a high-level policy framework to give coherence to, and guide government activity across mainstream and disability-specific areas of public policy.

Our constituency is people with hearing loss, ear and balance disorders, people who communicate using Australian Sign Language, and their families. Membership also includes organisations that represent these people; and individuals and associations which provide services that promote hearing health.

We are the peak representative for Australian consumers in the World Hearing Forum, a global network of organisations promoting hearing and ear care in the World Health Organization.

Deafness Forum Ltd national office

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DEAFNESS FORUM'S MEMBERS

For reasons of privacy, we do not publish the names of our individual members, except for our office-bearers and Honorary Life Members.

This is a list of organisations that are members of Deafness Forum.

- ACT Deafness Resource Centre
- Audiology Australia
- Audiometry Nurses Association of Australia
- Aussie Deaf Kids
- Australian Association of Teachers of the Deaf (AATD Vic)
- Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
- Better Hearing Australia Brisbane
- Better Hearing Australia Canberra
- Better Hearing Australia Central Coast
- Better Hearing Australia National
- Better Hearing Australia Victoria
- CICADA Australia
- CICADA Club WA
- Clearasound
- Cochlear Limited
- Deaf Advocacy Sport & Recreation ACT
- Deaf Society NSW
- Deaf Sports Australia
- Deafness Council of Western Australia
- Ear Science Institute Australia
- EARtrack
- First Voice Australasia
- GN Resound
- Hear and Say Centre for Deaf Children
- Hear For You
- Hearing Australia
- Hearing Matters Australia
- Independent Audiologists Australia
- MED-EL Implant Systems
- Centre for Inclusive Design
- National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf
- National Hearing Care
- Oticon Australia
- Parents of Deaf Children
- Phonak
- Princess Alexandra Hospital Audiology Department
- Quota Campbelltown
- Quota Illawarra
- Royal Institute for Deaf & Blind Children
- Shepherd Centre
- Sivantos
- Sonova Australia

- St Dominic's Centre for Hearing Impaired Children
- Sydney Opera House
- Telethon Speech & Hearing Centre for Children
- UsherKids Australia

Deafness Forum's network reaches beyond its membership. Deafness Forum is a member of:

- World Hearing Forum, a global network of stakeholders promoting ear and hearing care is hosted by the World Health Organization
- ACCAN Standing Committee on Disability Issues
- Hearing Health Sector Alliance
- NDIS CEO Forum
- Disability Support Services Committee (Department of Social Services)
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Aviation Access Forum (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government)
- Australian Electoral Commission Disability Advisory Committee
- Museum of Australian Democracy Disability Reference Group
- Standards Australia Committee FP002 (Fire detection)
- Transport for NSW Accessible Transport Advisory Committee

Deafness Forum created for the entire sector:

- Federal Parliamentary Friends of Hearing Health and Deafness
- NSW Parliamentary Friendship Group for Hearing Health and Deafness

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 meets to advance matters between board meetings.

The Board has a permanent Audit and Finance Committee.

- David Brady, chair and member of World Hearing Forum, nominated by Hearing Matters Australia
- Beatrice Tarnawski, vice chair, nominated by Better Hearing Australia Brisbane branch
- Cameron Miller, vice chair representing Auslan users, co-opted
- Michelle Courts, nominated by Aussie Deaf Kids

- Jeff Johnson, nominated by Deafness Council of Western Australia
- Raelene Walker, nominated by WA Foundation for Deaf Children
- Anthony Whelan, nominated by Better Hearing Australia National

STAFF

Deafness Forum of Australia is managed by Steve Williamson. He represents the organisation and its members on the National Disability Insurance Scheme CEO Forum; Australian Federation of Disability Organisations; World Hearing Forum; Hearing Health Sector Alliance executive; Disability Support Services Committee, convened by the Department of Social Services; and groups focussed on communications accessibility.

GOVERNANCE

Deafness Forum's governance arrangements are reviewed annually.

- Board Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Governance & Ethics Committee
- Policy & procedures to deal with potential conflicts of interest
- Risk management strategy

The organisation has established policies and procedures in:

- Communications
- Electronic ballots
- Grievances
- Persons holding external representative positions
- Sponsorship
- Travel
- COVID-19 strategy and policy

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Deafness Forum seeks financial support from various sources grants, sponsorships, project funding, membership fees and donations.

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.

Budgets are prepared for Board review before approval and updated biannually.

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

- Advocate for implementation of the national Roadmap for Hearing Health & Wellbeing.
- 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 Commissions into Aged Care and 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.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Requesting organisation	Topic
Australian Communications Consumer Action Network	Participate in a review of strategies and issues in the context of Disability Advisory Forum Publicise and submit a submission to a public consultation on button battery safety
Australian Human Rights Commission Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience	Human Rights and Technology virtual roundtable Advise on communications access considerations for a future update of the national Disasters Managers Guide
Australian Public Service Commission	Inputs to Commissioner on disability employment strategy
Department of Communications	Promote 'Talking Telco' library of free tips for dealing with your telecommunications service provider Maintain advocacy for government/agency emergency announcements on TV be open captioned
Department of Education, Skills and Employment	Contribute to review of the Disability Standards for Education
Department of Health	Disseminate Fact Sheets relating to Covid-19 Review updated Schedule of Service Items for service providers contracted to the Government's Hearing Services Program For the Therapeutic Goods Administration - safety hazards with button batteries in hearing aids. Discuss ACCC implementation of the 2016 voluntary code; participate in Post Market Review of Button Batteries in home use medical devices; next steps in providing devices that are safe and accessible
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development	Participate in meetings of the Aviation Access Forum
Department of Social Services	Advise on communications to consumers about changes to National Auslan Booking Service (NABS) and the need to apply for NDIS entry to have continued access to NABS Create Auslan scripts to inform consumers of changes to Hearing Services Program and relationship with NDIS from 1 July 2020 Participate in meetings of the Disability Services Support Committee to prepare strategies for people with disability in the context of COVID-19 Promote Disability Information Line Join weekly Hearing Services Communications Working Group meetings: members include including Department of Health, Hearing Australia, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and NDIA. Participate in development of a Disability Information Gateway service to provide centralised information for [people with disability seeking relevant services Advocate consumer issues and views on the transitioning of Australian Government Hearing Services Program to NDIS, via background briefings, workshop and stakeholder/member consultations

Elections ACT	Participate in meetings and out of session discussions with the Commission's Disability Advisory Committee
Health Department	Participate in workshops and discussions about the future of Community Service Obligation program and clients, including interface issues with the NDIS
Hearing Australia	Review and advise on its draft letters to Community Service Obligation clients relating to changes to Hearing Services Program and the soon to be introduced NDIS strategy for hearing services
National Disability Insurance Agency	Participate in NDIS CEO Forum meetings and workshops Participate in Service Improvement Plan and Participant Service Charter review
	Review and research inputs on draft Participant Service Improvement Plan and Participant Service Charter
	Contribute to the development of a NDIS Workforce Plan to build a capable and sustainable workforce needed to support NDIS participants Participate in NDIS Participant Service Guarantee workshops
Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety	Co-author a submission about hearing issues with the Hearing Health Sector Alliance
Royal Commission into Disability	Promote its work and encourage submissions Compile inputs to Rights and Attitudes issues paper from member organisations and individuals; make submission to Royal Commission Submit a submission in response to Employment Issues paper
	Prepare content for member organisations to promote the Royal Commission
	Submit a submission in response to the Emergency Planning and Response issues paper
	Advise the Royal Commission on the efficacy of, and recommendations regarding communications accessibility in a COVID-19 virtual engagement environment
	Provide advice on its 'Submission Form for Individuals' Provide advice on communications access requirements for Royal Commission webinars.
World Health Organization	Participate in World Hearing Forum ear and hearing care group
	Member of World Hearing Forum Working Group on World Hearing Report 2021
	Represent Australian consumers in the first meeting of the World Hearing Forum on 4 & 5 Dec 2019 in Geneva; and join working groups on World Hearing Health Report and preparation for World Hearing Day