

DEAFNESS FORUM AUSTRALIA

Chairperson's Report, November 2022

I believe that Deafness Forum Australia enjoys the trust and support of citizens and others in the hearing health and disability advocacy sectors in Australia. We have wide networks and deep relationships.

We consistently provide advice to help governments improve their public policy for the benefit of people with a lived experience of hearing challenges and those who use Auslan.

I did the sums recently and I noted that in the past decade we have worked with six Prime Ministers, eight Health Ministers, eight Social Service Ministers, and five NDIS Ministers. There is lesson in this – don't assume that the gains you have achieved will be respected by new management. But at the same time, never give up on your objectives because a new minister or a new government can change the game for you.

We are determined, as your Disability and Health Peak, to be a 'Voice for All' representing the views and interests of the 4 million Australians who live with hearing loss, have ear or balance disorders, people who also communicate using Australian Sign Language, and their families and supporters.

Our mission is to make hearing health & wellbeing a national priority in Australia. Through our collective voices we champion the message that hearing loss is the largest disability per head of population in adulthood. It affects 1 in 6 Australians today and 1 in 4 by 2050. The annual financial cost to Australia exceeds \$30B and will continue to rise without the interventions of governments at all levels.

During the year Deafness Forum had representatives in 14 committees and reference groups, including the:

- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations,
- Australasian Early Newborn Screening Committee
- Australian Hearing Health Alliance
- World Hearing Forum hosted by the World Health Organisation
- International Federation of Hard of Hearing People.

In the 2021-22 financial period, with the support and engagement of our members, we contributed to 124 inquiries, position papers, policy reviews, workshops, and research papers. Some of the organisations we engaged with included:

- The Commonwealth Department of Health
- Department of Social Services
- NSW, ACT, and Western Australian Governments
- World Health Organisation.

We also:

- contributed to the creation of the 2021-2031 Australian Disability Strategy
- kept the National Disability Insurance Agency on its toes to ensure a proper transition of the Hearing Services Program to the NDIS
- together with other sector representatives, advised on and promoted Australia's Hearing Health & Wellbeing Roadmap.
- promoted the work of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, to write submissions and to encourage people to tell their stories
- assisted the audiology profession develop Australia's first teleaudiology guidelines. We were the lead consumer voice in a multi-discipline working group.

I am so proud to have had the privilege of leading a great team of fine directors: Rae Walker and Jeff Johnson (WA), Michelle Courts (SA), Dwin Tucker and Rhonda Locke (NSW). Each has given generously of their time and knowledge to ensure good governance, prudent financial oversight, and active stewardship of our strategic plan. I thank all of them for their dedication and the support they have given me and each other.

I would like to thank our CEO Steve Williamson and the many volunteers and member organisations that support him in his extensive role.

Looking forward to the next financial year, we are so excited to be appointed as a new National Health Peak from 1 July 2022 in addition to our crucial role as a National Disability Representative Peak body. The announcement came in the final days of the Morrison Government when then Minister for Health Greg Hunt formally endorsed our mandate to represent all citizens in our constituency in matters of health and wellbeing. It has enhanced our capacity to meet the objects and purpose of our constitution and to tackle our ambitious aims on behalf of the community.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the anniversary in 2022 of the 75 years of service to the nation by Hearing Australia: an organisation that has improved the lives of so many Australians in their hearing journeys.

Looking back, it was not always an easy year for advocacy. With so much going on amid the underlying social disruptions caused by the COVID pandemic, it had been hard to have our voice heard at times. But success comes with persistence.

There is so much more work to be done and you can count on Deafness Forum to be a voice for all.

Best wishes



David N Brady
Chairperson



The board of Deafness Forum Australia met in Adelaide on 4, 5 June 2022. It was the first in-person meeting held since the start of the health pandemic.

Directors come from many parts of Australia and some joined remotely to finalise the goals, workplan and finances for the next financial year.

In the photo from left, special guest Barry MacKinnon, President Deafness Council Western Australia; Steve Williamson Deafness Forum CEO; board members - Dwin Tucker (on screen), Rhonda Locke (via phone – not pictured), Michelle Courts, Jeff Johnson and chair David Brady. Raelene Walker could not attend the meeting.

Meet the Minister



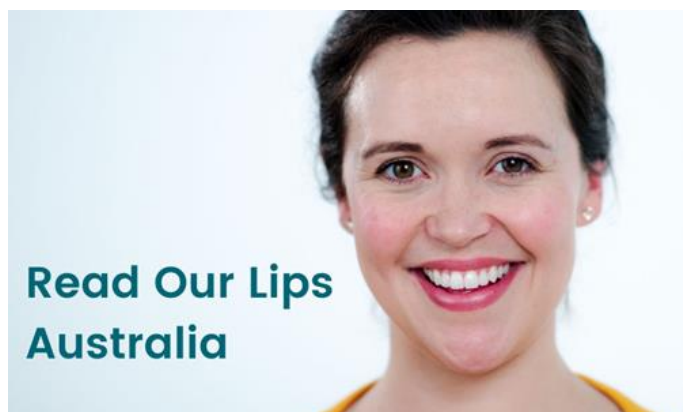
The Federal Minister responsible for hearing and ear care, Mark Coulton MP is pictured with the chair of Hearing Australia Dr Peta Seaton and Deafness Forum chair David Brady.

World Hearing Day

**To hear for life,
listen with care!**



World Hearing Day was observed on 3 March 2022. Deafness Forum joined the World Health Organization in its calls on government, industry partners and civil society to raise awareness for and implement evidence-based standards that promote safe listening.



Deafness Forum Australia launched its innovative online course to teach you to lipread. Read Our Lips Australia was created by experienced lipreading instructors and guides users through online modules at their own pace to identify key mouth movements. Created by Deafness Forum Australia, it was made possible by a grant from the Australian Government Department of Social Services.