

The 2001

Libby Harricks

Memorial Oration



Libby Harricks Memorial Oration number 3

Honouring the Deafness Forum's first president & profoundly deaf achiever

Elisabeth Ann Harricks AM 1945 – 1998

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About the Deafness Forum

Introduction

Deafness Forum is the peak body for deafness in Australia. Established in early 1993 at the instigation of the Federal government, the Deafness Forum now represents all interests and viewpoints of the Deaf and hearing impaired communities of Australia (including those people who have a chronic disorder of the ear and those who are DeafBlind).

Structure

The representational base of the Deafness Forum is divided into five Sections:

- a) Hearing Impaired Section - persons with a hearing loss who communicate predominantly orally,
- b) Deaf Section - i.e. the Deaf Community - those persons who consider themselves to be members of that community by virtue of its language (sign language known as Auslan) and culture,
- c) Ear Disorders Section - persons with a chronic ear disorder (such as Tinnitus, Meniere's Disease or Acoustic Neuroma) and
- d) Parents section - parents or legal guardians of persons who are Deaf or hearing impaired,
- e) Service Providers section - service providers to the Deaf and/or hearing impaired communities.



Objectives

The Deafness Forum exists to improve the quality of life for Australians who are Deaf, have a hearing impairment or have a chronic disorder of the ear by:

- advocating for government policy change and development
- making input into policy and legislation
- generating public awareness
- providing a forum for information sharing and
- creating better understanding between all areas of deafness.

Community Involvement

The Deafness Forum is consumer-driven and represents the interests and concerns of the entire deafness sector, including:

- the Deaf community
- people who have a hearing impairment
- people who have a chronic ear disorder
- the DeafBlind community
- parents who have Deaf or hearing impaired children in their families

Introduction to the 3rd Libby Harricks Memorial Oration

By Mr. Stan Batson, Deafness Forum Chairperson



David Harricks and other members of his family, Senator Margaret Reid, Mr Peter De Graaff, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Board of Deafness Forum it gives me great pleasure tonight to welcome you all to the 3rd presentation of the Libby Harricks Memorial Oration.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the Deafness Forum's most grateful thanks to the Office of Hearing Services for its generous sponsorship of the Oration, and invite you all to visit the display that the Office has set up at the back of the room. We very much appreciate the interest and support of the Office and, particularly, its National Manager, Peter De Graaff, who is with us tonight.

Finally, I would acknowledge the generous donations of time and money contributed by a significant number of people, including members of the Harricks family, the Oration organising committee, some members of the Deafness Forum and the staff of our national secretariat office in Canberra.

The 3rd Libby Harricks Memorial Oration is to be delivered by Senator Margaret Reid, Senator for the ACT and President of the Senate.

Senator Reid graduated in law from the University of Adelaide and later moved to Canberra where she practiced as a barrister and a solicitor. She was appointed to the Senate to represent the Australian Capital Territory in 1981, following the death of Senator John Knight.

Senator Reid has held a number of senior positions within the organisation and the parliamentary party. These include President of the ACT Division of the Liberal Party, and Deputy Government Whip and Opposition Whip in the Senate. She became the first woman to hold the position of Deputy President and Chairman of Committees of the Senate, before being elected President in 1996.



During her career in the Senate she has been an active member of parliamentary committees, including the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the New Parliament House and the Joint Select Committee on Certain Family Law issues, of which she was appointed Deputy Chairperson in 1993.

As President of the Senate, Senator Reid, together with the Speaker of the House of Representatives, administers the various Parliamentary Departments, in addition to taking a ceremonial role when foreign Heads of State visit Australia. The President also receives overseas parliamentary delegations and represents the Parliament at international conferences.

In 1999 Senator Reid was appointed Chairman of the Board of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and in September 2000 Senator Reid was elected President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Senator Reid is deeply committed to the Canberra community. She is Patron of sixty organisations, and a member of many others. She is well known for her support of community events and issues, from a school fete to a major political event. She has a special interest in people with disabilities, care for older people, the needs of children, family law and women's issues.

Tonight, Senator Reid will deliver the 3rd Libby Harricks Memorial Oration. Please give Senator Reid a warm welcome.

THE POLITICS OF DEAFNESS

The 3rd Libby Harricks oration was delivered by Senator the Hon. Margaret Reid, Senator for the ACT and President of the Senate, at the National Press Club, on the 2nd April 2001.



David Harricks, Libby's widower, Betty Heath, Libby's mother and members of the organising committee; Stan Batson, Chairperson of the Deafness Forum (Stan is from Signing Deaf, the first such person ever to be appointed to the position); members of the Deafness Forum of Australia and the Libby Harricks Memorial Oration Committee; representatives of the many associations for the hearing-impaired; family and friends of Libby Harricks; ladies and gentlemen:

I should like to thank you all for inviting me to deliver this third Libby Harricks Memorial Oration. It is an honour and a privilege.

In 1998, following the death – from cancer - of its first president, Libby Harricks, The Deafness forum of Australia established a "Libby Harricks Memorial Oration" to honour and remember the outstanding work Libby did on behalf of people who are deaf or hearing impaired – what she called the 'invisible disability'.

In launching the Oration and its associated Libby Harricks memorial Fund, the Deafness Forum sought to reflect and continue the spirit of Libby as expressed in her own words: "I look back over these years since I became hearing impaired and realise that any efforts that I have made have been returned to me threefold. I have found talents I never knew I had, I have gained so much from the many people I have met and worked with to improve life for people with disabilities and through self help I have turned the potential negative of a profound hearing loss into a positive sense of purpose and direction in my life".

The inaugural Oration was delivered by Emeritus Professor Di Yerbury AM, Vice Chancellor of Macquarie University. At the national launch of hearing Awareness Week in 1999. Her oration was entitled "Hearing Loss: A Personal, Institutional and Public Concern".



Professor William Gibson AM, MD, FRACS, FRCS, Professor of Otolaryngology, University of Sydney and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, delivered the second Libby Harricks Memorial Oration, the subject of which was "Advances in the Understanding and Treatment of Menieres Disease and Tinnitus."

The Oration program aims to create greater public awareness of the hearing problems associated in the broadest sense with the Deafness Forum's constituency, to publicise the Deafness Forum's national role and to highlight the work done on behalf of the deaf and hearing impaired communities by voluntary groups throughout Australia.

I cannot go further without mentioning Libby's story. It is one of courage and triumph over adversity by utilising the knowledge of her own severe hearing loss to help others.

Libby started to lose her hearing following a bad dose of flu in the English winter of 1969. Returning to Australia in 1970, she began to find difficulty in understanding conversation and instructions, particularly on the telephone, which was very important in her profession of pharmacy. She often wondered why her two sons learnt to sleep through the night so quickly or why friends remarked on their loud voices!

When the doctors said there was little medical science could do to help her, she decided to help herself. She tried hearing aids and found they helped. She learnt to lip read and found she had a talent for it.

Libby's will to win led her, with the help of others, to get involved with the setting up of a support group – Self Help for Hard of Hearing people. She set up the first Hearing Information and Resource Centre, and initiated a quarterly publication. The Centre provided reliable information on and demonstrated assistive listening devices for hearing impaired people. Through this interest

Libby became an enthusiastic user of technology, and with electronic aids was enabled to join in a full social life with family and public.

Libby became President of Self Help for Hard of Hearing people in 1986 and began to develop her role as an advocate for hearing impaired people generally. She became involved in ACCESS 2000, under the auspices of the Australian Deafness Council, and a member of the Disability Council of NSW. Her horizons broadened further as Vice President of the Australian Deafness Council and then as the first, and two-term president of the newly formed national peak body in deafness, the Deafness Forum of Australia.

For her work on behalf of hearing impaired people, Libby was made a member of the order of Australia in 1990 and was made QUOTA South Pacific Area Deaf Woman of the Year in 1993.

She was appointed by the government to the Board of Australian Hearing Services, and was asked to represent the needs of hearing impaired on the Olympic Access Committee.

Libby was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1995 and died peacefully on 1 August 1998.

Libby's words that I read earlier on her hearing impairment and her life, have brought and will bring, encouragement and inspiration to all those with a disability and their carers, family and friends.

Incidence of deafness and hearing impairment

Most people do not regard deafness as a disability. But if you cannot hear or can only partially hear, you cannot take part fully in any facet of life. You miss asides, you cannot hear if you have your back to someone, telephone conversations are difficult, large group discussions are not easy to follow, you cannot easily follow a television program or film.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, more than one million Australians have a hearing loss that is significant enough to affect their daily lives. It is generally thought that somewhere between 1 and 3 million people in Australia has a hearing



impairment. In addition, there are also approximately 30,000 people who comprise the Deaf Community and use Australian Sign Language.

A 1998 study entitled 'Hearing Impairment in an Australian Population', undertaken by the Centre for Population Studies in Epidemiology in the South Australian Department of Human Services is the first published report of a South Australian study to investigate the prevalence of hearing loss and its importance as a public health problem.

The key finding of the study is that the prevalence of hearing impairment in the Australian population aged 15 years and over is estimated to be 22%. That means the number of 'adult' people in Australia with a hearing impairment can be estimated at 3.25 million. When you add the number of children under 15 years with a hearing impairment, it is no wonder the report notes that the study's findings confirm the status of hearing impairment as the most common of disabilities in the Australian population.

The study found that:

- The prevalence of hearing impairment increases steeply from 51 years onwards. About 28% of people aged 51 to 60 years have a hearing impairment. This rises to 73.5% of people aged 71 and over.
- The increase is more pronounced for men than women.
- Almost 8% of the population have a moderate hearing impairment, and 2.5% a severe impairment.
- Demographic trends mean that the number of hearing impaired will increase by 20% in the next two decades if prevalence remains at the current level.



The Commonwealth Hearing Services Program

I would like to discuss the issues of importance to the deafness sector and to let you know what the government is doing and where we stand on these issues.

First, though, I think it important to give you a brief overview of the Commonwealth Hearing Services program:

The Commonwealth Hearing Services program funds hearing services for eligible adults and for children under 21 years of age, special needs clients and research and development activities relating to hearing impairment, hearing rehabilitation and the harmful impact of noise. Last year, over 150,000 hearing devices were fitted in Australia, with the government providing around 80% of the services and the private sector providing the remaining 20%.

The provision and delivery of hearing services to Australians began with the establishment of the Acoustics Research Laboratory set up during World War II to investigate hearing and communication disorders in armed servicemen and women.

In 1947 the Acoustics Research laboratory changed its name to the Commonwealth Acoustics Laboratories as a result of its transfer to the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Between April 1947 and 1949, branch laboratories were established in all capital cities to provide clinical services throughout Australia. Psychologists engineers, physicists, technicians and clerical officers comprised the staff of the Commonwealth Acoustics Laboratories. Later, psychologists were replaced by audiologists following the development of audiological programs at Australian universities.

In 1968 government funded hearing services were made available to full pensioners through Commonwealth Acoustics laboratories.

In 1973, the Commonwealth Acoustics Laboratories were renamed the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) and it became a statutory authority in July 1992 and was renamed Australian Hearing Services. NAL is now the name of the research division of Australian Hearing Services.



Government Achievements in the Commonwealth Hearing Services Program

The Commonwealth Hearing Services Program is recognised as being a world leader in providing quality services and hearing aids to eligible members of the Australian community. The stated outcome of the Program is to reduce the consequences of hearing loss for eligible clients and the incidence of hearing loss in the broader community.

But here I have to say that the success of the Commonwealth Hearing Services Program is due in a major part to organisations such as the Deafness Forum and their constant lobbying for improvements and advances. Their commitment and dedication have ensured that governments listen and respond to the needs of people with hearing disabilities.

The Government recognises the importance – necessity – of hearing and has targeted the hearing Services program to provide assistance to children and young adults under 21 years of age, pensioners, part-pensioners, and certain categories of veterans. This recognition is also about hearing being a vital aspect of communication and ensuring the participation of eligible clients in their communities rather than allowing hearing loss to result in social isolation.

Government Reforms

Following the Government's 1996/97 Budget decision to introduce new arrangements for the delivery of government funded hearing services, a number of reforms were made to the provision and delivery of hearing services.

In July 1997 the government established the Office of Hearing Services to administer the Hearing Services program and to develop and implement a Voucher System to purchase hearing rehabilitation services for eligible adult clients from Australian Hearing and a national network of private service providers.

The Hearing Services Administration Act 1997 provided for the establishment of the Hearing Services Voucher System from 1 November 1997.

One of the principal reforms was the introduction of client choice of hearing service providers. The Voucher System provides each individual client with choice of service provider. Eligible clients can also choose to 'top-up' and purchase hearing devices with additional features beyond those necessary to achieve a satisfactory rehabilitation outcome.

Certain categories of clients with special needs including children and young adults under 21 years, as well as eligible Indigenous Australians, are funded as a Community Service Obligation. The Office of Hearing Services pays Australian Hearing to provide these services.

In addition, the National Acoustic Laboratories (also funded as a Community Service Obligation) play an important role in achieving the Program objective through ongoing research into hearing loss and with community education.

In the Voucher System for eligible adults there are around 350,000 active clients, with about 120,000 receiving a new or return voucher annually. Some 40,000 young adults and children, and almost 11,000 adults with special needs receive specialist services from Australian Hearing under Government-funded Community Service Obligations.

In the 1999-2000 Budget the Government provided an additional \$209.5 million over 4 years to meet the needs of the target groups and to ensure that demand for vouchers for hearing services is met in a timely way, and that contracted service providers continue to provide quality services. The funding will allow more eligible adult Australians to participate more fully in family and community life by providing access to quality hearing services that may otherwise have been unaffordable.

\$12 million of this additional funding has been provided over four years for Community Services Obligation activities.

These reforms have brought total funding for the Commonwealth Hearing Services program from \$96 million in 1996-97 to \$142 million in 2000-2001.



As part of the new arrangements, the Hearing Service Advisory Committee was established under Ministerial authority in December 1997. The role of the Committee is to provide an independent channel of advice to the Minister for Aged Care on issues arising from the provision of hearing services under the Hearing Services program. The Committee consults with the Commonwealth, consumers, service providers and hearing device manufacturers and reports on a variety of hearing services related matters.

Issues

I would now like to discuss some of the priority issues concerned with deafness and hearing impairment, and to tell you where the Government stands and how it is helping to improve the lives of those with hearing loss.

The Deafness Forum has lodged a submission with the Government regarding a range of issues, including the need for hearing screening of newborns.

I believe that hearing screening of newborn children is essential. The sooner hearing impairment or deafness is identified, the sooner parents can seek advice. They need to be able to make informed judgements about how best to assist their child. I undertake to follow up the submission of the Deafness Forum with the Minister for Health.

I will also raise another issue addressed in the Forum's submission, that of extending eligibility for the Hearing Services Program to a wider range of persons on low incomes.

Education

As you know, access to education for people with a hearing impairment varies considerably. Even where the hearing impairment can be treated satisfactorily with an appropriate personal hearing device, many students still encounter impediments to education based on their hearing disability.

Some universities and other tertiary institutions are well prepared to cater for students who are hearing impaired or Deaf, although many do not have adequate access facilities for the hearing impaired in lecture theatres, and the inadequate supply of interpreters makes it impossible for many tertiary institutions to provide them when needed.

Specialist teachers, as well as interpreters, are in short supply everywhere, especially in rural and remote areas. Also children who are deaf and have another disability may not have access to an environment where both disabilities can be catered for.

These are matters which the government is looking at closely.

Film captioning in cinemas

Film captioning appears to be driven at the moment by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC). During 2000, the Commission oversaw a trial of captioned films involving most of the large cinema chains in Sydney and Melbourne .

Industry representatives reported that the response from people attending the screenings was overwhelmingly positive, but expressed their concern about the low attendance rates and the supply and print costs associated with open captioned movies. Representatives from community organisations questioned some aspects of the promotion and organisation of the trials and noted that with any new technology there is always a build-up period for people to get used to it.

Currently, captioned movies are only available from one source in the USA and the choice is limited. The development of digital technology may make it easier for movies to be captioned in the near future.

In November 2000, participants in the trial agreed in principle to consider extending the captioning trial with a greater number of movies, in more cities and in more accessible timeslots. The issue of captioning movies has been on an ongoing basis, particularly as digital technology becomes more widely available.



Participants include the Deafness Forum, as well as the Australian Association of the Deaf, the National Working Party on Captioning, Hoyts Cinemas, Greater Union Cinemas, Village Roadshow, United International Pictures, Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia, Buena Vista (Walt Disney), Consolidated Press Holdings, Australian Caption Centre and the HREOC.

I am delighted to report that, as a result of the trials and further discussion and lobbying by interest groups, there will now be three screenings a week of captioned latest release movies in the five main State capital cities in CBD areas, followed two weeks later by three screenings of the same movies in CBD areas of Canberra, Hobart and Darwin. A steering committee is also to be established to extend the arrangement throughout Australia.

Hearing loops do appear in most modern cinemas. Some cinemas are completely looped and some just loop part of their seating. Some cinemas and even cinema complexes do not have hearing loops installed at all.

Many conference venues, lecture theatres, public buildings, train stations and business locations do not have permanently installed hearing loops, and the vast majority of venue users do not think about the need for loops.

A loop or FM assistive listening allows many wearers of hearing aids to gain access to amplified sound without interference from background noise. I hope it will become common for publicly used places to include a loop. I hope architects and builders will advise it and that the advice will be accepted.

Television captioning

From 1 January 2001, Federal Government legislation requires all free-to-air television programs shown between 6 p.m. and 10.30 p.m. to be captioned, and all news and current affairs shows outside of this time period. There are no captioning requirements on payTV broadcasters.

Regional networks have until 2004 to comply, so some viewers in regional and remote areas may not be benefiting at the moment. Captioning on analogue sets will be supported until 2008, after which it will only be available in digital format.

Only one brand of video recorder is currently available which records captioned shows. As captioning becomes more popular, this will undoubtedly change.

Some people with a hearing impairment have installed a hearing loop in their living room to assist with television hearing and some use alternative listening devices, particularly when they need hearing assistance predominantly for hearing the television and radio.

Mobile phones, teletype writers, etc

The level of interference experienced by a hearing aid user will vary. For some, the interference actually causes pain in their ears, while for others the interference is an annoying buzzing sound that is heard through their hearing aid.

Solutions to this problem include the purchase of a hearing aid that is more resistant to digital phone interference or the purchase of a special loop attachment to use with hearing aids equipped with a T-switch. Both are acceptable solutions, but introduce further cost to the individual.

Digital phones operating in the new CDMA environment are compatible with most hearing aids available.



Since 1995, the Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued standards which manufacturers of hearing aids must meet in regard to interference levels from mobile phones. Since July 1, 1999, new hearing aids are required to be such that users can use hand-held mobile phones effectively. This is a stringent standard and consultation with industry is underway to determine a reasonable time-frame for mandatory compliance.

Options to replace a telephone ring include a vibrating phone for mobile phone users and, for home phones, a visual alarm (such as a flashing light) or a hearing dog. The onus is generally on the individual to meet the cost of these assistive measures.

Teletype writers are commonly used by deaf people in the place of a telephone. These can only interact with other teletype writers. Phone companies are required to provide one instead of a phone if a justified request is made.

The Australian Communication Exchange operates a National Relay Service, which is an Australia-wide telephone access service available to everyone at no charge other than the charge for the call being made. People who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, or use a teletypewriter or a computer with a modem can access in the wider telephone network by having their communication relayed by a trained relay officer.

Safety

The main community and self-help groups for people with a hearing impairment, such as the ACT Deafness Resource Centre, Better Hearing Australia and Self Help for the Hard of Hearing provide assistance so that people with a hearing impairment can make their environment safer. This involves the use of aids such as visible alarms, tactile alarms and hearing dogs.

Police Issues

The level to which people with a hearing impairment are catered for in police and judicial settings varies between States and Territories. All new Federal courts are required to fit hearing loops and Auslan interpreters are to be made available if necessary, but their cost is not always funded by the court.

Figures on the facilities available in police stations are unavailable. Given the number of police stations, especially compared to courts, it is unlikely that any but the largest stations are equipped with devices designed to assist people with a hearing impairment. It is likely that metropolitan stations and stations in large rural centres would have access to an interpreter. Most rural and remote centres would not, providing a particular problem for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where hearing impairment is common.

Protecting one's hearing throughout life

Noise induced hearing loss is emerging as an extremely widespread problem, particularly prevalent among workers and young people.

Hearing damage among workers is continuing, despite widespread legislation.

Compliance to legislation and adherence to safety procedures appear to be the main problem, and it appears worse among men (who make up the bulk of workers in noise-affected workplaces) and in small to medium workplaces, including those who are self-employed.

Workplace-related noise induced hearing loss is a far greater actual and potential problem than music-related NIHL among young people. The fact that workers in noisy workplaces tend to underestimate their own hearing loss exposes such workers to further hearing damage and governments to greater costs in hearing services and related social services.



It has been estimated that 12% of Australians work in dangerously noisy workplaces. The top three most noisy occupations are plant and machine operators and drivers; tradespersons; and labourers and related workers.

Farmers are another occupational group for which noise is an issue. A 1992 survey of hearing levels in western New South Wales found that 82% of farmers and farm workers tested had significant noise induced hearing loss. This is being addressed to some extent by the Rural Hearing Conservation Program – a pilot program operating in NSW as part of the Farmsafe program.

Evidence from a 1994 survey of 2,000 Australians showed that the ears of young people are ageing three times faster than the ears of their parents.

Partnerships – government and industry – to address these issues and to provide funding

The Department of Family and Community Services funds two peak groups in Australia: the Deafness Forum and the Australian Association of the Deaf. These groups are the most prominent in Australia in terms of advocacy for people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment.

The Office of Hearing Services in the Department of Health and Aged Care, also liaises closely with hearing aid manufacturers, distributors, hearing health professionals and hearing consumers in order to facilitate positive hearing outcomes for clients. The Office also administers funding to the National Acoustic laboratories for hearing health promotion research.

Possible action by key private sector or industry players

I would also like to encourage further action by the private sector. For example:

- Could tertiary institutions help themselves by seeking to train more interpreters?
- Could Pay TV networks caption programs like free-to-air networks are doing?
- Insurance companies that make the majority of the payouts on industrial deafness claims could enter into a partnership with the Deafness forum to better inform and educate workers and achieve a reduction in hearing damage and, therefore, claims.



The Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The revised Commonwealth Disability Strategy was launched in October last year. The Strategy aims to enable the full participation of people with disabilities, by requiring all Commonwealth organisations to remove the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from having access to Federal programs, services and facilities.

In practical terms, this means ensuring that people with disabilities have the same access to buildings, services, information, employment, education, sport and recreational activities, as everyone else in the community.

The Office of Disability has produced a range of booklets that give organisations practical guidance in implementing the Strategy. These booklets aim to raise awareness of the need to use Australian sign language interpreters, telephone typewriters, hearing induction loops in meeting rooms, clear written material and appropriate communication strategies.

We have come a long way in providing the necessary assistance and services to people who are deaf or who have a hearing impairment, but we still need the advice and comments of those who have a disability and bodies such as the Deafness Forum.

I would also like to see the media assisting with awareness raising in respect of the issues of concern. The various organisations within the deafness sector must work together and with a diverse range of other community, government and private sector bodies, achieve needed improvements.

Finally, I would like to say a special thank-you to those who have worked on behalf of those with this 'invisible disability'

Libby's Story



Libby's story is one of courage and triumph over adversity by utilising the knowledge of her own severe hearing loss to help others.

Libby started to lose her hearing following a bad dose of flu in the English winter soon after her marriage in 1969. Having returned to Australia in 1970 she began to find difficulty in understanding conversation and instructions, particularly on the telephone which was very important in her profession of pharmacy.

In spite of advice to the contrary, Libby tried hearing aids and found they helped. Had she heeded the negative advice, Libby believed she might never have embarked on the road to self-help, which so enriched her own life and that of many others.

She thought her two boys quickly learnt to sleep through the night and her friends remarked they had loud voices, which was the boys' mechanism for coping with a deaf mother!

The more the doctors said nothing could be done to help, the more Libby looked towards self help and so she learnt to lip read, a tool she relied on heavily in her quest to help others.

Libby's will to win led her, with the help of others, to get involved with the setting up of a support group, which became SHHH - Self Help for Hard of Hearing people. The American founder, Rocky Stone, was invited to Australia in 1982 and did a lecture tour entitled "The Hurt That Does Not Show" which cemented the bonds between the US and Australian groups and helped the local SHHH develop.

Libby, with others, then began SHHH News, a quarterly publication, and with Bill Taylor set up the first Hearing Information and Resource Centre at "Hillview", Turrumurra with support from Hornsby/Kuringai Hospital. This centre provided reliable information on, and demonstrated, assistive listening devices for hearing impaired people. Through this interest, Libby became an enthusiastic user of technology and with her handbag full of electronic aids was enabled to join in a full social life with family and public.



Libby became President of SHHH in 1986 and began to develop her role as an advocate for hearing impaired people generally. She became involved in ACCESS 2000, under the Australian Deafness Council, and a member of the Disability Council of NSW. Her horizons broadened further as Vice President of the Australian Deafness Council and then as the first, and two terms, President of the newly formed national peak body in deafness, the Deafness Forum of Australia. In this latter role Libby made a huge contribution to bring together all the different organisations into a central body, and actively lobbied on behalf of Deaf and hearing impaired at the highest level - the archetype of a successful achiever despite her profound hearing loss.

For her work on behalf of hearing impaired people Libby was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1990. Later she was appointed by the Government to the Board of Australian Hearing Services and was asked to represent the needs of hearing impaired on the Olympic Access Committee.

Unfortunately, Libby faced another hurdle when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1995. Following surgery, she continued her family and volunteer work with undiminished vigour. She would wickedly show off her wig at public functions after her chemotherapy, and talked openly of her "mean disease". She died peacefully on 1 August 1998 and was honoured by hundreds who attended her Thanksgiving Service on 6 August.

In her own words, Libby related her outlook:

"I look back over these years since I became hearing impaired and realise that any efforts that I have made have been returned to me threefold. I have found talents I never knew I had, I have gained so much from the many people I have met and worked with to improve life for people with disabilities and through self help I have turned the potential negative of a profound hearing loss into a positive sense of purpose and direction in my life".

The Libby Harricks Memorial Oration program is supported by the Libby Harricks Memorial Fund of the Deafness Forum of Australia. Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Please see enclosed donation form for full details.

Donations should be made payable to Deafness Forum. Additional donation forms and general information regarding deafness can be obtained from:

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*I became hearing impaired and realise
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