

The 2016



Libby Harricks

Memorial Oration



Libby Harricks Memorial Oration number 18

Honouring the Deafness Forum's first president & profoundly deaf achiever
Elisabeth Ann Harricks AM 1945 – 1998



deafness forum of australia



**2016 Libby Harricks Memorial Oration
The Honourable John Howard OM AC**

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Introduction to the **18TH LIBBY HARRICKS MEMORIAL ORATION**

Christopher Lind, PhD,
Chairperson, Libby Harricks Memorial Oration committee



Welcome everyone to the 2016 Libby Harricks Memorial Oration held in conjunction with 9th National Deafness Sector Summit here at the Australian Hearing Hub in Sydney.

It is with great pride that I take this opportunity to open this session and welcome you all and our esteemed orator to this, the 18th in the series of Libby Harricks Memorial orations. Prior to introducing our orator for 2016, I wish to speak briefly about the person who has been the inspiration for this series of orations; Libby Harricks.

As some may know, Libby Harricks grew up with apparently normal hearing. Subsequently, as a young wife and mother, she developed a profound hearing loss. She not only educated herself with skills to manage her own hearing difficulties but soon became committed to advocating for all hearing impaired people. She was a founding member and long-term President of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Australia Inc. and amongst many other challenges was the inaugural Chairperson of Deafness Forum of Australia. In all of these purely voluntary roles, she worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the need for equal inclusion in life activities for hearing impaired people, and in doing so travelling widely throughout Australia to lobby for this on their behalf. In recognition of her advocacy work, Libby was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1990.

After her death in 1998, Deafness Forum of Australia, the national co-ordinating body for Deaf and hearing impaired issues, established the annual Libby Harricks Memorial Oration Series to honour her achievements. The Series aims to continue



her vision of working towards gaining appropriate recognition, awareness, and access, for Deaf and hearing impaired people. Over the years, Orations have been presented across Australia, and the Oration series has developed a well-deserved reputation for carrying forward Libby's commitment to raising awareness of issues relating to Deafness and hearing impairment. The reputation of the oration series is undoubtedly due to the great contributions of our outstanding Orators who have presented on a wide range of relevant topics.

In order to reach further than each Oration audience and indeed to make these important contributions available on an on-going basis the Orations have been available from the Deafness Forum of Australia website. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of the Libby Harricks Memorial Oration Committee and the Deafness Forum's board of directors, the sponsors and supporters for this event each year. I should note that copies of today's oration will be available in the coming weeks and to note that as of this year all monographs in the series will be available for free electronic download from the Deafness Forum website (www.deafnessforum.org.au).

It is now my great pleasure to introduce to you all our 18th Libby Harricks Memorial Orator, The Honourable John Howard, OM, AC. Born in 1939 in Sydney and educated at Canterbury Boys High and the University of Sydney, Mr Howard practised as a solicitor for 12 years during which time he joined the Liberal party of Australia. He was first elected as the member for Bennelong in 1974. He held various portfolios in both opposition and in government in the Lower House most notably as Treasurer and Deputy Leader of the party under the Prime Ministership of Malcolm Fraser prior to his taking up leadership of the parliamentary liberal party in 1985. He was elected as Australia's 25th Prime Minister in March 1996 and held the position until December, 2007. Mr Howard is thus the second longest serving prime minister after Sir Robert Menzies.



However, of possibly as great significance for today's oration, Mr Howard achieved his successes having been diagnosed with and undergoing surgery for otosclerosis in his teenage years, and having worn hearing aids during the majority of his school and University education as well as during his political career. In 2009, David Leser, a journalist and biographer, in reflecting on Mr Howard's hearing loss and his prime ministership wrote that **"Great men can break away from the most circumscribed of worlds."**

The complexities of hearing loss and all aspects of life are familiar to many if not all in the room today. Today we are privileged to have our orator present such a story from the perspective of someone who has held the highest political office in the land.

For his presentation today it is with great pleasure that I welcome to the podium Australia's 25th Prime Minister, and Patron of Deafness Forum, Australia to deliver the 18th Libby Harricks Memorial oration, please welcome The Honourable Mr John Howard.

2016 LIBBY HARRICKS MEMORIAL ORATION

The Hon John Howard OM AC
25th Prime Minister of Australia
Patron of Deafness Forum of Australia



I am especially delighted to be here in this magnificent facility. The Australian Hearing in Sydney hub is a fine example of what I might call co-location, because it is near the Cochlear facility and within a university. It is therefore readily available to people who are connected in so many different ways to assisting people who have varying degrees of hearing loss.

I have been invited today to give an oration in honour of Libby Harricks, somebody who is in many ways an outstanding example of the self-help capacity of the Australian community.

There are many things about Australia that I admire, and we all admire. And one of these that doesn't get quite the recognition that I believe it deserves is our capacity to be innovators when it comes to responding to public health challenges.

Hearing loss is a deeply personal thing for those who suffer it, but it is also in every sense of the word a very significant public health challenge. One of the things I have learned to appreciate in the time I was Prime Minister of this country is that Australia has learnt many things about public health service. Australia has been undoubtedly at the forefront in the world with action on smoking.

Lest anyone think I am delivering holier-than-thou lectures on that issue, I know the effects of smoking, as I smoked between the ages of 29 to 39. I gave it up when I was 39, and I turned 76 last year, so it was a fair while ago.

My point is that we were at the forefront of that campaign, the smoking reduction achievements we made are very significant.

We campaigned to educate the public about HIV AIDS in the 1980s. The campaign was not entirely successful, but compared to many other societies, an outstanding success.

When I ceased being Prime Minister in 2007, I was approached by other bodies to become their ambassador. I felt I couldn't while I was still Prime Minister. If I gave patronage of the Office to one organisation, other organisations were perfectly entitled to expect the same treatment. But I have been very happy to help in different ways, I hope over the years, and I continue to be willing to do so to further understand the challenges of people who have varying degrees of hearing loss.

I'm very confident that many people here today suffer more severe hearing loss than I have. Just for the record, I should say I was first diagnosed with hearing impairment when I was in primary school at nine years of age. That was the result of a doctor visiting my school in what would have been late in 1947. The doctor was conducting hearing tests and said, "He has a problem." From then on, my hearing loss accelerated through adolescence and late adolescence.

In my first years at university, dubious was the only way I could describe my hearing. Old-fashioned hearing aids had something running down to your shirt pocket and made lots of noise. Of course, in those days, you did not have online

lectures. I often tell myself, I wish I had online lectures.

Life went on. In the days before I turned 2 I had an operation, stapes mobilisation. Two years later, I had an operation, a stapedectomy; and five years later, another operation on my right ear.

Some years after that, when hearing aids progressed in both effectiveness and size - in other words, got smaller - I began wearing hearing aids most of the time I was Prime Minister. And to complete the narrative, I am now wearing two hearing aids.

So I have made full disclosure. Everyone has to be transparent these days, even former Prime Ministers.

I finally convinced my audiologist to talk in percentages, and I was told I'm 85% down in the right ear and 45% down in the left. That was not as bad as it had been earlier in my life. Clearly, with the assistance of hearing aids I am much more fortunate in terms of hearing loss, and not as severe as most people in the room today.

To return to the person whom this oration is delivered to honour, Libby Harricks. When you read her story from adulthood and into early marriage, she suffered deteriorating and accelerating hearing loss. It's a reminder of the shock of adjustment for many people. Her story is an inspiring one for so many people, who turned the disability that they might have into an opportunity because of that experience, to help others who might be suffering the same disability.

She started SHHH, Self-Help for the Hard of Hearing in Australia. She formed a bond with an organisation in the United States, which was likewise named. And through the efforts of other volunteers she began reaching out, to use an American expression, to so many others suffering the same disability.

Through organisations such as SHHH, and the organisation that morphed into the current Deafness Forum of Australia, people who had a hearing problem were encouraged to share their experiences to bring about changes in attitudes.

How much attitudes in Australia have changed towards preventing hearing loss. Indeed, in all sorts of areas of public health.

When I was a child, I had seen people using jackhammers in the street without any ear protection. If anyone here has been connected with the Armed Forces, they will tell stories about how decades ago, particularly in the artillery units of the armies here and around the world, they were provided with no protection.

Of course, we have the modern jackhammer challenge, if I can put it that way, of unbelievably noisy pop music concerts. .

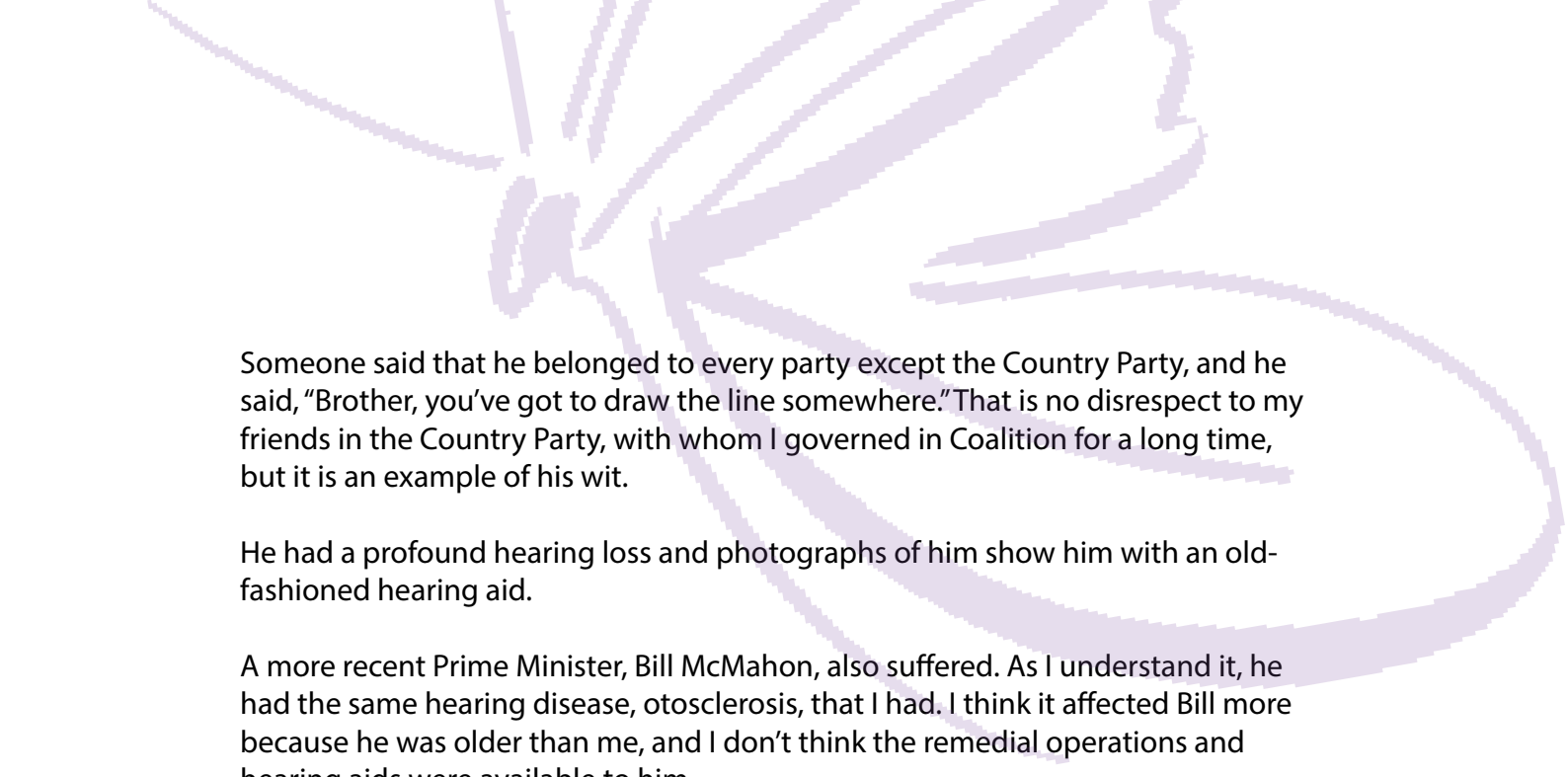
But over the decades, we have become better as a society. I pay tribute to the late Libby Harricks and the Deafness Forum for bringing public attention to the need to guard against hearing loss.

There are sadly so many people in the community who have a natural loss of hearing. It is a terrible shame that a society adds to it, and also introduces it to others through neglect for those who have it.

Deafness Forum of Australia, of which I am proud to be a patron, has done an enormous amount of good work.

There are three publicly known hearing-impaired Prime Ministers in the history of Australia. There was me, Bill McMahon and Billy Hughes, who was Prime Minister of Australia during the first World War.

Billy Hughes was an interesting man. He was elected to the Federal Parliament in 1901, the very first Federal Parliament. And he remained in it until he died in 1952, 51 years later. He was interesting not only for longevity, but he had a certain flexibility when it came to his political allegiance. When he was first elected to Federal Parliament, he represented the area surrounding and including Balmain in Sydney. It goes without saying that he therefore was a member of the Labor Party in 1901. When he died in 1952, he was the Liberal member for the Federal electorate of Bradfield on the North Shore of Sydney that encompasses suburbs such as Gordon, Killara and Pymble.



Someone said that he belonged to every party except the Country Party, and he said, "Brother, you've got to draw the line somewhere." That is no disrespect to my friends in the Country Party, with whom I governed in Coalition for a long time, but it is an example of his wit.

He had a profound hearing loss and photographs of him show him with an old-fashioned hearing aid.

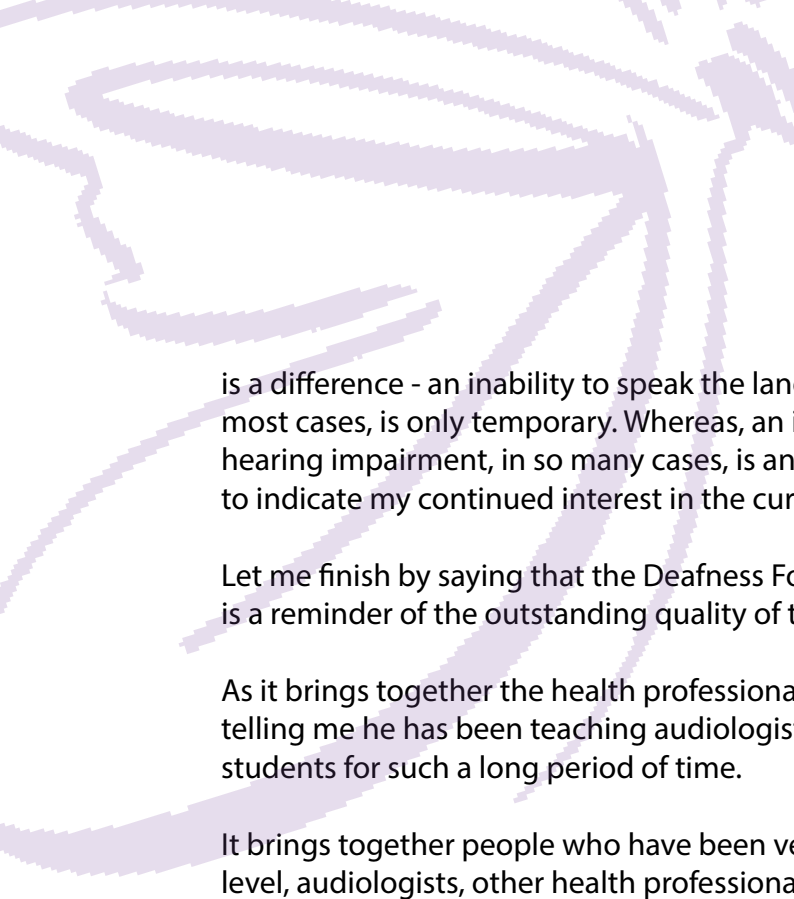
A more recent Prime Minister, Bill McMahon, also suffered. As I understand it, he had the same hearing disease, otosclerosis, that I had. I think it affected Bill more because he was older than me, and I don't think the remedial operations and hearing aids were available to him.

There may well have been others, particularly the people who had served in World War I - and several of our former Prime Ministers did serve in World War I - and several in the second World War may well have suffered hearing loss.

I mention this because it is interesting, historically, in the context of a gathering such as this. But it is also important to constantly remind ourselves that hearing afflictions penetrate every part of society, and the way in which people cope with it is very important.

In the time that I have been ambassador and patron of Deafness Forum of Australia I, of course, retain very close contact with your organisation, remain intensely interested and want to be constantly informed of any challenges that are rising with the transition to the NDIS, the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

I have had some representations from people who are concerned about the proposals to transfer the Auslan interpreting services from their existing stand-alone arrangement into the NDIS. Some of the representations I have had are nervous about the consequences of the transfer. I think it is very important that if special treatment can be given in relation to the NDIS for language interpreting services, which apparently is going to happen, I would have thought there is an argument for doing it in relation to the Auslan translation services. Because there



is a difference - an inability to speak the language of the country, one presumes in most cases, is only temporary. Whereas, an inability to communicate because of a hearing impairment, in so many cases, is anything but temporary. I mention this to indicate my continued interest in the current debate.

Let me finish by saying that the Deafness Forum of Australia and this conference, is a reminder of the outstanding quality of the Deafness Forum.

As it brings together the health professionals such as Professor Lind , who was telling me he has been teaching audiologists for 20 years and interacting with students for such a long period of time.

It brings together people who have been very heavily involved at the volunteer level, audiologists, other health professionals and people who in different ways, because of a close relative or friend who has had a hearing loss, at every range from mild to profound, and potentially debilitating.

Deafness Forum needs government help, it needs corporate help and community help, but it also needs, like any other successful organisation, thousands of hours of volunteer help. This is an occasion to thank everybody who volunteers their time, makes a personal commitment because of concern for a loved one, or because they feel it makes the country work better.

I thank all of you, and in doing, so we remember Libby Harricks, the first president of the Deafness Forum, a person who was so much an exemplar of a person who was willing to help fellow countrymen and women who have a disability to overcome that disability and to get the help they so richly deserve.

LIBBY HARRICKS

MEMORIAL ORATION SERIES



Since 1999, Orations have been presented annually throughout Australia by a series of outstanding Orators. To achieve wider and more permanent coverage, the Oration Series is published by Deafness Forum of Australia at www.deafnessforum.org.au

In order, the Orations to date are:

- 1999 *Hearing Access Now!*
Emeritus Professor Di Yerbury AM (Sydney)
- 2000 *Recent Advances in the Understanding of Meniere's Disease and Tinnitus*
Professor William Gibson AM (International Federation of Hard of Hearing Conference, Sydney)
- 2001 *The Politics of Deafness*
Senator Margaret Reid (National Press Club, Canberra)
- 2002 *The Prevalence, Risk Factors and Impacts of Hearing Impairment in an Older Australian Community: The Blue Mountains Study*
Professor Paul Mitchell (XXVI International Conference of Audiology, Melbourne)
- 2003 *Disability Law and People with Hearing Loss: We've come a long way (but we're not there yet)*
Ms Donna Sorkin MCP BA (Hons) (Macquarie University, Sydney)
- 2004 *A Sorry Business: Lack of Progress in Aboriginal Hearing Health*
Dr Peter Carter (3rd National Deafness Summit, Brisbane)
- 2005 *Deafness and Disability Transformed: An Empowering Personal Context*
Alex Jones (Blue Mountains NSW) (This Oration was presented in Auslan)
- 2006 *Hearing Loss: The Silent Epidemic: Who, why, and what can we do about it?*
Professor Harvey Dillon (4th National Deafness Summit, Perth)

- 2007 *Hearing and Communication – A Primary Concern in Aged Care*
Richard Osborn (9th Rural Health Conference, Albury)
- 2008 *Access, Equity and Hearing Loss in Australia in 2008*
Professor Robert Cowan (5th National Deafness Summit, Canberra)
- 2009 *The Bionic Ear: From an Idea to Reality*
Professor Graeme Clark AC (GP Continuing Education , Sydney)
- 2010 *Early Identification of Hearing Loss in Australia: Well Begun is not All Done*
Professor Greg Leigh (6th National Deafness Summit, Sydney)
- 2011 *Molecules,Managers or Mentors: How Can We Minimize Noise Damage in the Worksite?*
Dr Robert Patuzzi (11th National Rural Health Conference, Perth)
- 2012 *A Report Card on the Social Well-being of Deaf and Hearing Impaired People in Australia*
Dr Anthony Hogan (7th National Deafness Summit, Melbourne)
- 2013 *The Consequences of Being Born Deaf in the 21st Century*
Dr Laurie Eisenberg (Australian Hearing Hub Inaugural Conference Macquarie University Sydney)
- 2014 *Making Connections*
Professor Susan Brumby (8th National Deafness Summit/XXXII World Audiology Congress, Brisbane)
- 2015 *Towards a new model for the deaf infusion of leadership in early hearing detection and intervention services*
Professor Christie Yoshinaga-Itano (Australasian Newborn Hearing Screening Conference, Sydney)
- 2016 *The 2016 Libby Harricks Memorial Oration*
The Hon John Howard OM AC (9th National Deafness Sector Summit, Sydney)



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 1969 and 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.

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”.




ABOUT DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

The Australian Government funded the establishment of Deafness Forum in 1993 to provide quality advice to it on behalf of the entire deafness sector. This advice, offered consistently over two decades has informed government policy and played an important role in building a fairer and more inclusive nation.

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

- advocating for social change
- providing input to government policy and legislation
- generating public awareness
- being a forum for information sharing

www.deafnessforum.org.au



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