



Medal of the Order of Australia for Sue

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QLD program a world leader in services and support to hearing-impaired children and their families

"It's about promoting resilience and confidence. School is a new listening environment. Sometimes hearing-impaired children can be like floating ducks. Everything looks calm on the surface but deep down they are paddling hard every day."

Launch of Accesshub and closure of www.relayservice.gov.au

Accesshub will be a new, central source of information on the range of communication options available to people who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or have a speech impairment. Accesshub replaces the existing National Relay Service (NRS) website.

Hearing in noisy places

Some adults who have difficulty understanding speech in noisy listening environments have clinically normal or 'near-normal' hearing. The most commonly reported impacts for people experiencing difficulty hearing in noise include an inclination to avoid social situations due to an increase in disrupted conversation, tension and fatigue.



Australia Day Honour a sweet sound for Sue Walters

By Eva Kolimar for St George and Sutherland Shire Leader

Sydney's Susan Walters is part of a notable statistic this year. The Australia Day 2019 Honours list includes the highest percentage and number of female recipients (422), and the most ever awards for outstanding service or achievement in the community.

Nominated by those who work alongside her or by those she has helped along the way, Ms Walters received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to people who are deaf or hearing impaired. She is the president of the Cochlear Implant Club and Advisory Association (a member of Deafness Forum of Australia), and has worked as a clinical support officer at Sydney's Cochlear Implant Centre since 2002.



Susan Walters receives a national honour for supporting people with hearing problems.
Picture: John Veage

The recognition has personal meaning, as Ms Walters herself was the first recipient of a cochlear implant in Sydney, in 1984. Since then, she has run a support group for people with cochlear implants. Unlike hearing aids, which make sounds louder, cochlear implants do the work of damaged parts of the inner ear to provide sound signals to the brain.

"It's very nice that people think that I'm deserving of an award," Ms Walters said of her award.

"I have put a lot of effort into it in the past 35 years or so. It's a nice acknowledgement because we're a little grassroots core group."

She says helping people understand their hearing loss has been an inspiring journey – one that has also been lifted by the ongoing support of her family and friends.

"Hearing loss is not something people really care about until they've lost it. Then they're devastated."

"This is about trying to create awareness of a long battle, but you have to keep plugging away.

"I have so much admiration for people with hearing loss and in some way I felt I wanted to give back and become an advocate."

<https://www.theleader.com.au/story/5860779/australia-day-honour-is-a-sweet-sound-for-susan/>

Three Australian “hearables” firms make global splash

By Chris Griffith, technology reporter, Hot Copper

Nura, Nuheara and Audeara all tout capabilities that are not part of global brands. That’s the ability to adjust sound frequency by frequency to match hearing capability. They don’t target people with profound hearing loss, rather with mild to moderate loss who don’t need a medical hearing aid.

Audeara is the brainchild of Brisbane-based doctors James Fielding and Chris Jeffrey. Users create an “audiogram”, which is used to adjust volumes at different frequencies on its headphones.

Perth-based Nuheara’s IQBuds Boost earbuds similarly asks you to perform a 15-minute “ear ID” hearing test where you listen for faint tones.

Melbourne-based Nura’s headphones take 60 seconds to personalise hearing without asking for feedback. Nura says it uses sensitive microphones and signal processing techniques to measure sounds coming out of the ear to understand hearing sensitivity.

At this month’s Consumer Electronics Show at Las Vegas, Nura said it would market an earbud version of the Nuraphone headphones called NuraLoop.

It has wireless and analog options with a magnetic detachable cable for connecting to any music source such as an aeroplane seat and has active noise control.

Nuheara, meanwhile, is launching an updated version of IQBuds Boost, also with active noise cancellation. It uses three microphones to analyse and process sounds inside and outside the ear and five times more processing power than last year’s IQbuds Boost. Nuheara also has released an adaptor that accesses TV sound called IQstream TV.

Nura co-founder Dragan Petrovic said the company had focused on the consumer market “although we have received quite a bit of attention and quite a bit of interest from musicians and music professionals in general”.



Nura’s NuraLoop earphones

He said singer Stevie Wonder visited Nura's booth at this month's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. "We've heard word from his manager just recently that he's been using it so much that he ran out of battery but forgot (left) the charging cable back in Las Vegas."

The US is Nura's biggest market with about 30 per cent of users, followed by Australia and the UK. Headquartered in Brunswick, in inner Melbourne, Nura had gone from 12 to 48 full-time equivalent staff in a year.

Philip Newton said Nuheara was not targeting the Australian domestic market at this stage, but was focused on Europe.

Optical retail chain Specsavers in the UK had started to sell hearing aids and had approached Nuheara to assist the 65 per cent of clients who attended its clinics but didn't need medical hearing aids. Nuheara is also targeting the equivalent to Specsavers in Germany, Italy and France. It is also working with the UK National Health Service to pitch its hardware as an alternative to hearing aids for people with mild hearing loss, after winning the NHS tender in November last year.



Audeara founder James Fielding

Audeara says it has achieved growth in the lifestyle hearables niche with Amazon launches in Australia, the US and UK, along with a JD.com product launch in China as a specialty brand.

Chief executive James Fielding said Audeara had achieved more than \$250,000 in China sales since last month.

The Australian Hearing Services Program and NDIS registration were driving Audeara's growth nationally and the company has significantly increased its Australian retail presence through hearing stores since March last year.

This was in addition to the 70 Attune Hearing clinics where Audeara already sells. The company this year will launch in Canada and continue its US growth.

https://hotcopper.com.au/threads/nuh-media-thread.3155798/page-8218?post_id=37181859

Australia holds cricket coaching clinic for school girls

ISLAMABAD - Australian Acting High Commissioner Brek Batley and staff from the Australian High Commission visited underprivileged schools to watch the cricket coaching clinics, organised by the Australian High Commission with support from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

The girls from four schools were attending a five-day coaching clinic, conducted by first class women cricketers in the lead-up to a competition.



The initiative was designed to empower girls and provide them with an opportunity to learn the value of teamwork and sportsmanship and to expand their horizons, a press release issued by the Australian High Commission said.

Australia's Acting High Commissioner Brek Batley said: "The tournament and coaching clinic provide a platform through which we can empower young people, especially girls by building their self-confidence and encouraging them to push boundaries."

<https://nation.com.pk/17-Jan-2019/australia-holds-cricket-coaching-clinic-for-school-girls>



**Don't Ditch
Disability Advocacy**

Stand By Me Rally and Toolkit

Disability advocacy services are stepping up their campaign for permanent funding, with a big rally planned on Sunday 24 February in Sydney to support disability advocacy organisations.

For more information visit the www.standbyme.org.au

The program changing the lives of hearing-impaired children

By Denise Raward for the Gold Coast Bulletin

There were tears when James and Marta Rogers were told their tiny firstborn daughter was hearing-impaired and there will probably be tears again when she starts prep at a mainstream school later this month.

It has been a remarkable first five years for Lucia, who'll start school ahead of her age milestones thanks to a Queensland program that is a world leader in providing services and support to hearing-impaired children and their families.

It was a standard screening test for newborns that picked up a problem with Lucia's hearing. At first her failure to respond was thought to be linked to her small size — she was 2.5kg at birth or around 5lb 5oz on the old scale.



The Rogers family having fun at the Hear and Say Centre, Varsity Lakes, a facility for deaf and hearing-impaired children and their families. Left to right they are Marta Rogers, Daley Rogers 2, Lucia Rogers 5, and James Rogers. Picture Glenn Hampson.

Her diagnosis was confirmed at just two months old, setting the Rogers on a journey they never imagined they'd be taking.

"You don't know what the future holds," Marta says. "For me, it was will she be able to hear me say I love you? Will she be able to speak properly?"

For many parents, it's the unknown that magnifies their fears so it's comforting to hear a story of a well-oiled system that provides a clear pathway for children and their families to access the services they need.

Within a fortnight Lucia was fitted with hearing aids. It's now known sound should be introduced as soon as possible to babies to allow the crucial early wiring of auditory processing pathways in their developing brains.

James shows the moving video of Lucia experiencing sound for the first time in an audiologist's rooms.

Her eyes open wide in wonder and delight, she smiles and gurgles, her arms and legs jolt with excitement. It is, quite simply, beautiful to watch.

Two weeks later, the Rogers were at the Hear and Say Centre at Varsity Lakes, one of five in Queensland dedicated to helping deaf children access sound through technology and equipping them with the gift of language.

In 2017, the centres recorded an incredible 100 per cent success rate in preparing children in their Early Intervention Program to enter mainstream schools.

In a world where so much attention is given to services that aren't working, Hear and Say has been quietly getting on with its mission.



Townsville Hear and Say centre student Harrison Caplick, 1, from Cairns, was the first child to go through the Townsville Hospital's cochlear implant program. Picture: Zak Simmonds.

The centres were founded by Brisbane speech pathologist Dimity Dornan who was inspired by the progress of auditory-verbal programs in teaching deaf children to speak in other parts of the world and started working with six children in her husband's physio rooms in 1992.

To date, Hear and Say programs, through its centres in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Townsville and Toowoomba, have helped more than 9000 children.

Historically, hearing-impaired children were taught sign language which effectively restricted them to communicating only with those who also knew signing.

The Hear and Say philosophy is to teach children — and their families — the skills that will help them not only to talk but to flourish in the real world.

The Varsity Lakes Centre's clinical manager Jessica Balfour-Ogilvy is one of only a handful of certified listening and speaking speech pathologists in Australia. The Varsity facility in fact has two of them.



Aswathy Aishi, 33 of Ipswich, making music with her daughter Aishi Arun, 5, who has a Cochlear Nucleus 6 implant, Hear and Say centre, Ashgrove. Photographer: Liam Kidston.

"We work in partnership with families," she says. "We teach them the skills and guide them so they can work at home with their children every day. For the work we do here, the families do it times ten because they play such a big role in developing the listening and language skills."

For the Rogers family, it meant starting what is called "radio commentating", the habit of describing to Lucia everything around her.

"She can't hear what's far away so when you see a truck, you say 'that truck goes brmmm brmmm' so you can establish that connection for her," James says. "We got into the habit of talking about everything. It's just part of our life now."

The Hear and Say techniques also reward children for making sound.

"She went through a stage where she wanted to point at things," Marta says. "You have to encourage her to speak, to make any sound to start with, then to turn it into a meaningful sound."

The chatty home environment has had the added benefit of advancing their second-born Daley's verbal skills.

The two-year-old is just as at home at the Hear and Say Centre as his sister, having been part of his life as well.

“He understands Lucia needs her hearing aids,” James says. “Even from a young age, if he ever grabbed them, he would never put them in his mouth. He would always give them to his sister.”

The Rogers later learned Lucia’s hearing impairment is genetic, with both James and Marta carriers of a set of genes linked to hearing impairment in female children.

“The geneticist was quite amazed,” James says. “I’m from Australia and Marta comes from El Salvador (she migrated to Australia with her family when she was five).

“He was pretty excited, saying what are the chances you would both have this when you’re from other sides of the world?”

It’s not a question they dwell on. Their focus has been on giving Lucia a normal childhood experience.

Hear and Say has been there to provide support and advisory services to others in Lucia’s life as well, including her day carer and later her kindergarten.



Lucia Rogers loves to paint. Picture Glenn Hampson.

The next step for Lucia is what’s called the ROCKET program, designed for children entering prep to help them advocate for themselves at school and take ownership of their situations.

“We teach them the technology belongs to them, it’s their responsibility, and that they have to speak up for themselves,” Jessica says.

“It’s about promoting resilience and confidence. School is a new listening environment. Sometimes hearing-impaired children can be like floating ducks. Everything looks calm on the surface but deep down they are paddling hard every day.”

The path through school will no doubt present its challenges, as it does for all children, but the Rogers are heartened Lucia’s prep teacher at Hillcrest Christian College has already accessed Hear and Say training off to better equip the school to help Lucia in the classroom this year.

The centres are also welcoming the National Disability Insurance Scheme rollout which will enable them to continue providing services to their graduates throughout prep and perhaps beyond.

The centres must rely on philanthropy and their own fundraising to continue their work, which includes ongoing research, access for rural and remote children, hearing screening programs for school-aged children and advocacy work.

For families like the Rogers, the centre has been the guiding light for their journey.

“Hear and Say has been involved from the start,” Marta says. “Once you’re in the system, it feels like everything is taken care of. It’s such a weight off your shoulders. It’s not just coming in for therapy — it’s coming to playgroup and having the parent to parent support you get through the centre. It’s one big community.”

<http://online.isentialink.com/couriermail.com.au/2019/01/12/d3821165-168c-408a-9853-a17caebbad4f.html>

Scholarship - ABC Regional Storyteller

ABC Regional is seeking to champion emerging voices in the disability community in rural and regional Australia.

This is an early career opportunity for two people with a lived experience of disability and an interest in telling factual stories that connect with Australians.

Successful applicants will spend three months working in an ABC regional station, developing their ability to create high quality, compelling content for a variety of ABC platforms, supported with a mentoring experience based on location, needs, and goals.

2018’s winner, Eliza Hull, produced an excellent series on [ABC’s Life Matters](#) titled [We’ve Got This: Parenting with a Disability](#). It explores the complexities that parenting with a disability brings, while also challenging the stigmas and stereotypes.

Applications close 14 February 2019.

<http://careers.abc.net.au/caw/en/job/500183/abc-regional-storyteller-scholarship>



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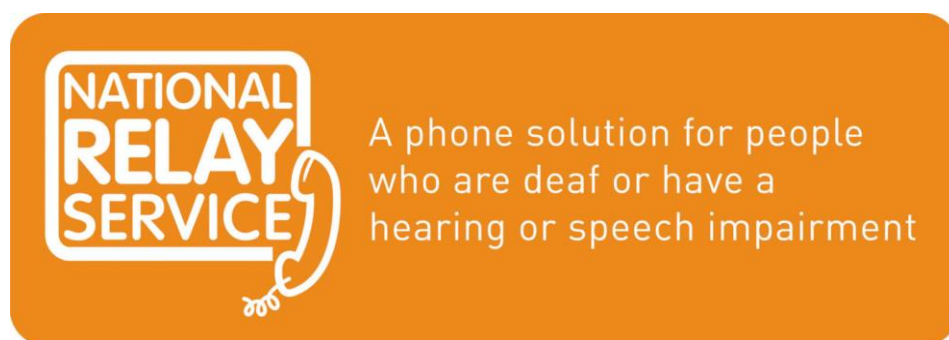
- activities (with 3 levels for easy tailoring to suit individual needs)
- step-by-step guides
- listening goals
- spoken language goals
- cognition and theory of mind goals
- key strategies to use during your therapy, and printable resources for each lesson and activity

<https://blog.medel.pro/rehabilitation-lesson-kit-20-colors/>

Launch of Accesshub and closure of www.relayservice.gov.au

The federal Department of Communications and the Arts will launch Accesshub on its website today.

Accesshub will be a central source of information on the range of communication options available to people who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or have a speech impairment. Accesshub will replace the existing National Relay Service (NRS) website (relayservice.gov.au).



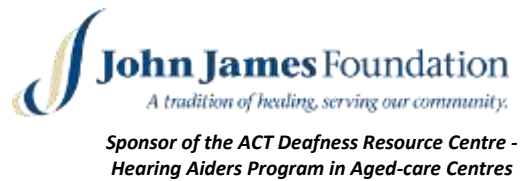
The NRS will continue to work in the same way it does now, providing the same range of call options, including Internet Relay, Video Relay and SMS Relay. Accesshub will provide all the information needed to use and access the NRS. The NRS Helpdesk will continue to operate.

Advances in technology mean the NRS is just one of a broad range of tools available to support communication. Other options include text, app or video-based alternatives, SMS and instant messaging. Information about these options can also be found on Accesshub.

From today (6 Feb), traffic to www.relayservice.gov.au will be automatically redirected to Accesshub.



At a meeting of the Equal Access to Democracy Disability Reference Group hosted by the NSW Electoral Commission - Hearing Matters Australia (formerly SHHH) representative Kevin Rabe and Deafness Forum's Steve Williamson.



DO YOU SUFFER FROM HEARING LOSS?

Join us for the ACT Deafness Resource Centre Hearing and Health Expo

WHEN: 7th March 2019 10:00am - 3:00pm

WHERE: Hellenic Club, Woden ACT

Once again **Hearing Awareness Week** gives us the opportunity to bring together the Hearing Industry under one roof. Australian Hearing will be in attendance on the day, to provide **FREE** hearing screening tests - but you must book first on 6232 3200.

If you can't make it to the Expo, drop in to the DRC at anytime and talk to us about how to best manage your hearing loss.

**We are located in the Grant Cameron Community Centre,
Level 1B, 27 Mulley Street, Holder ACT 2611
Visit our Website: www.actdrc.org.au or Phone us on: 02 6287 4393**

The ACT Deafness Resource Centre is a registered provider supports from 11 June 2014
Provider Registration No. 60297041

Underlying causes and impact of speech-in-noise difficulties in normal hearers

By Dr Joaquin Valderrama, Ingrid Yeend and Jermy Pang, National Acoustic Laboratories, Sydney, Australia



Professionals working in hearing health care have been aware for some time that a portion of adults who attend the clinic, reporting difficulty understanding speech in noisy listening environments, have clinically normal or 'near-normal' hearing.

This presents a challenge for clinicians as the underlying issues causing this problem are not clear and there are currently no available diagnostic tools or rehabilitation therapies.

National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) research has recently shown that understanding speech in noise is a complex process that depends on multiple factors. Three factors that our research identified as particularly important for adults in their mid-years were (1) extended high-frequency hearing thresholds, testing this evaluates a person's hearing sensitivity to tones above 8000 Hz, which is above the frequency range typically tested in clinics; (2) working memory, which gives an indication of a person's ability to store and process information; and (3) attentional skills, which allows a person to sustain, select and switch their focus onto relevant information.

Our research has also shown that the most commonly reported impacts for people experiencing difficulty hearing in noise include an inclination to avoid social situations due to an increase in disrupted conversation, tension and fatigue. It also revealed that this population is more likely to be intolerant of loud background noise and use more effort and concentration during conversational listening.

We are now collecting data on the experiences of people with normal hearing or mild hearing loss who have greater-than-normal difficulty understanding speech in noise, as well as the clinicians who see these clients.

The aim of this research is to further understand the difficulties experienced by this population and to develop effective treatment options for them.

If you are interested in sharing your insights with us and participating in a personal or phone interview, contact Dr Joaquin Valderrama (NAL) via joaquin.valderrama@nal.gov.au

You can also complete our 15-min online survey:

- ✓ For people with speech-in-noise difficulties: <https://bit.ly/2U3Fdw7>
- ✓ For clinicians / audiologists: <https://bit.ly/2TVfaH7>

This research is approved by the Australian Hearing Human Research Ethics Committee (Ref no. AHHREC2018-34). NAL is the research division of Australian Hearing, an Australian Government statutory authority.



For many people, making decisions about legal issues surrounding institutional child sexual abuse can be difficult, and may cause significant distress.

knowmore employs specialist counsellors and social workers who are experienced in dealing with survivors of sexual abuse. They will support clients to help them obtain legal assistance by identifying and making links with other agencies who can assist them in the longer term.

It is a free service offering legal advice and information to help you consider your options about compensation, redress and other legal issues related to abuse. It was established by, and operates as a separate program of, the National Association of Community Legal Centres, with funding from the Australian Government.

knowmore staff are here to help you and act in your interest.

There is an Auslan video on the **knowmore** homepage: www.knowmore.org.au (see: About knowmore video) and also on YouTube at <https://youtube/qng7Tmo-ZhQ>

Australian Hearing support for Auslan and the Deaf community

Article provided by Australian Hearing

Australian Hearing agrees and believes that every Deaf and hearing impaired child has a right to communicate effectively and that there are many paths to achieving this goal.

Their approach to supporting children and families is based on international research and best practice guidelines. The paediatric audiologists at Australian Hearing complete extensive specialist training which includes information on Deaf culture. Early intervention agencies, including organisations that provide Auslan as a communication option, also provide presentations at their training courses.

Australian Hearing's protocols for services to children require their audiologists to provide families with information about:

- the range of early intervention options that are available to support their child
- all available communication options, including Auslan

Australian Hearing encourages families to investigate these options with specialist early intervention agencies and it refers them to parent mentors when available if this is of interest to the family.

In addition, Australian Hearing provide Auslan interpreters for their clients and actively supports the Deaf community, including sponsoring events.

Further information is available at www.hearing.com.au

Australian Hearing welcomes suggestions for improving its services. Please send your feedback to communications@hearing.com.au

Know someone who might like to receive it next year?

Drop us a line to hello@deafnessforum.org.au

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