



Manager's Message

I would like to express a big welcome to all our members in this, my first edition of Eye Hear.

Having started late January, as Executive Officer of Better Hearing from Judith Voce, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Judith for all her wonderful hard work and her commitment to this organisation. It has been greatly appreciated and all the staff miss her dearly.

Rosemary Downey, our Executive Assistant is on extended leave at present, taking care of her health and everyone at Better Hearing send best wishes to her while she is away and are looking forward to her return. In the meantime we are fortunate to have Margot Hogarth-Scott helping me, along with the Members Forum, to develop a comprehensive marketing and membership strategy and plan to enable us better provide services to you – our members. We also want to focus on our volunteers.

Significantly acknowledgement is due to our volunteers for the important role they play in our organisation, and without their valued support, we would not be able to provide thorough services to both our

members and to the wider community as a whole.

I would also like to also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our Hearing Advisor team. This team, so very capably managed by Gwen Rosengren, consists of Julie McMillan, Carol Wilkinson and Tracey Steiner who work tirelessly and often long hours to provide free hearing advisory and information services to the community. Their enthusiasm and drive is thrilling to see. This service, which is fully funded by the Department of Human Services often takes our team to remote isolated locations and varying individual client circumstances throughout Victoria. So if you would like information on any hearing issue, or know someone who could benefit from our services, please feel free to call the office for a confidential free discussion.

We also have our wonderful Finance Officer Karen Di Zhang who has the complex job of managing our finances. This includes looking after all our book keeping and reporting requirements.

A special mention also goes to the Committee of Management, comprising Better Hearing Australia



members. This team has given up their personal time to ensure the organisation runs effectively and efficiently; and, for this we are truly grateful for their ongoing work.

We are extremely fortunate to have such a dedicated and supportive team to provide hearing services to the community. I have very much enjoyed my time with Better Hearing so far, enjoying the passion and commitment so evident around the office. I look forward to my continued work with the team and you – our members, to ensure Better Hearing is the leading advisory organisation for the hearing impaired, not only in Victoria but throughout the entire country.

Susan Fiori
susan@betterhearing.org.au

From the President

As reported in the last Eye Hear, our Executive Officer, Judith Voce has resigned and the Committee of Management decided to appoint an Office Manager to replace Judith for three months, so we could work out the position of Executive Officer.

We have been fortunate to appoint Susan Fiori to this position. Susan is highly qualified and has a Bachelor of Business, Master of Engineering & training qualifications from the University of Melbourne. She is also six sigma trained (green belt). She has strong organizational and operation expertise, with over 15 years experience in project, process and event management, business analysis and reporting, relationship and staff management.

We also welcome Margot Hogarth-Scott to the staff of Better Hearing and also Peter Whitnall to the Committee of Management.

Peter is filling in a casual vacancy on the Committee and is a qualified accountant whose expertise will be valuable.

As mentioned in Susan's report Rosie Downey has fallen ill and is on sick leave at the moment and we hope that she will soon be well and be with us again shortly.

We also call for nominations for the Committee of Management. Refer to page 2 of this newsletter for more information.

I am also pleased to report that we have started up two support groups. One at Lilydale and one at Brighton. This is a good start for members in these areas and we hope these groups will continue.

Ted Drowley

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We're on the web!

www.betterhearing.org.au

Members Forum

THANKS, VOLUNTEERS!

BHA Victoria has a great team of volunteers, who help the organisation in numerous ways, and to say a BIG THANK-YOU to these wonderful people, BHA invited them to a luncheon on 4th December. The yummy chicken & salad lunch was enjoyed by 25 people, though we did miss those unable to attend on the day.

Our special thanks go to 2 tutors who have retired, Emma Jensen (Dromana group), and Rosemary Downey (Lilydale group) – see articles elsewhere in 'Eye-Hear'.

Carol Gay, a member of the Committee of Management and Members' Forum for the last 2 years, has also retired, and our thanks go to Carol for her diligence on the committee, particularly when treasurer, and her enthusiasm with social functions.

Anyone interested in volunteering?

If you'd like to help to develop and enhance our activities, you may be interested in our sub-committees, especially the *Members' Forum*. This group meets once every 2 months, with the next meeting on

- Thursday, 26th March, 10.30am
- 5 High St. Prahran.

Please join us and be part of this wonderful group.

Another volunteering role is to put together this newsletter and journal for posting, a job undertaken by our 'MAG —WRAPPERS', who meet once a quarter, usually on the first Thursday. 'Mag-wraps' are a great social occasion where we meet with other BHA people for a chat, morning tea and lunch (all provided), and although there is a bit of work involved, it is nice to feel that you are contributing to your organisation. Can you help?

If so, please give the office a call.

PLANNING FOR 2009 - 2010

The Members Forum, together with staff, is working on developing a marketing strategy aimed at boosting membership and activities and promoting our organisation. Again, you can contribute to BHA Victoria by letting us know your ideas of how the organisation can help you and others in the community.

NEWSLETTER

We hope you like the 'new-look' newsletter. Remember that this is your newsletter, so we are happy to receive your contributions. By the next edition we will be planning some *social functions* so watch out for these.

Carole McCarthy

Support Groups

BRIGHTON Better Hearing Support Group meets monthly at Brighton Library Meeting Room, Wilson St., on 2nd Tuesdays, 1 - 2.30pm. All welcome.

MT ELIZA Better Hearing Support Group meets at Mt. Eliza Village Neighbourhood Centre, Canadian Bay Rd., on 2nd Fridays, 1-2.30pm. All welcome

LILYDALE:

Thank you Rosie — it was with much regret when late last year Rosemary Downey told the Lilydale Branch of the BHA she would not be taking our class in 2009. Rosie, together with Carole McCarthy, has been our long time tutor and we have been very lucky to have them. We have learnt so much under their guidance and really appreciate the effort they put in.

Rosie always arrived with her wonderful smile and prepared interesting, and often amusing, classes. We particularly enjoyed hearing about her family celebrations and her holidays with their friends - many of the classes were based on her travels. We always felt Rosie was our friend as well as our teacher. We will miss you Rosie - good luck for 2009 and thank you.

Judy Ferguson

DROMANA:

Thanks to Emma who has been a long time tutor for the Dromana Ongoing Hearing Loss Management Support Group and after some 20 years she has decided it is time to finish this part of her volunteer work with BHA (Vic). A few remaining members of Emma's group will continue to meet socially in their own homes.

Thank you Emma for all your efforts and contribution over such a long period. The Committee of Management showed their appreciation for Emma's services in this area with a farewell presentation at a recent meeting. Emma is also a member of the Committee of Management and is continuing in this capacity even though she travels quite some distance from the Mornington Peninsular in order to participate.

Gwen Rosengren

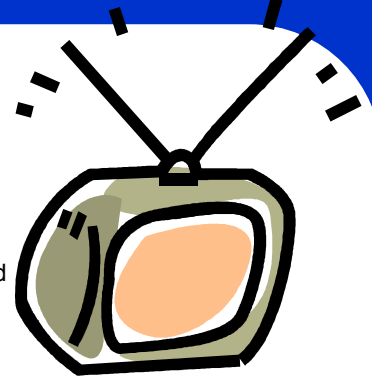
Nominations for Committee of Management

We are now receiving nominations for the Committee of Management. Be part of the main hub who runs this wonderful organisation for people with hearing loss. Presently the Committee of management meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 5:00pm and is responsible for the governance of the organisation in all its financial, legal and policy matters. Terms of office is one year from September 2009.

If you're a member of BHA (Vic), then you can offer yourself to be elected. Call for nominations close **22 May 2009**. Nominations go out next newsletter (June 2009).

If you are interested in nominating or would like to know more about serving on the committee, or know someone who would, please contact Susan Fiori (susan@betterhearing.org.au) / (03) 9510 1577.

The Delights & Frustrations of DVD Viewing



For Christmas, my sister-in-law gave me a lovely present—a DVD player. This new toy has certainly come into its own during the television “silly season” when there is nothing much on TV over January!

Many of us now have DVD players, but for those of us with hearing impairments, there are frustrations, as well as delights, in this form of home entertainment. Certainly, DVDs do make movies far more accessible to people with hearing loss, as so many of them have English for hearing impaired subtitles. So, we've been able to catch up on movies we missed at the cinemas, due to lack of cinema captioning.

But in my DVD watching, I've found disappointments too. Many TV series DVDs aren't subtitled, - very disappointing when we've seen and enjoyed a particular series on our Teletext TV sets.

For instance, the *Midsomer Murders* DVDs aren't subtitled, and I would have loved to “veg out” with these excellently acted favourites. I did find a series of *New Tricks* subtitled discs, though—but these were a rarity among TV series discs.

Some outstanding movies weren't subtitled either—*Lantana*, *Gosford Park* and *Miss Potter* to name a few. *The Queen*, brilliantly acted by Helen Mirren, originally wasn't captioned, but lobbying by deafness organizations resulted in a subtitled version being produced. There is a need for legislation for all DVDs to be subtitled, so that deaf people have complete access to movies for viewing with family and friends.

A further shortcoming is that the special features of DVDs are usually not subtitled, though the movie itself is. I really wanted to see the interview with Helen Mirren on *The Queen* disc, but it wasn't captioned.

To date, the only “special feature” captioning I've encountered was with the *Lord of the Rings* disc trilogy. Special features need captioning too, so deaf people can access and enjoy these features.

You need to experiment to access the “English for hearing impaired” captions. Mostly, you get them via the disc's interactive menu, by going to “setup”, “languages”, “subtitles”, “English for hearing impaired”. If only “languages” is shown, it means the disc isn't captioned.

Still, there are thousands of DVDs that are subtitled, including foreign language “art house” movies, giving fascinating insights into other countries and cultures; these have automatic “open” English subtitles. So, if you haven't already got a DVD player, get one—a whole new world of home entertainment will open for you.

Kaye Gooch

Entertainment & EASE

A reminder that the Arts Access EASE Ticket Service offers practical information, personal service and affordable ticket prices to ensure more people attend arts and entertainment events. EASE membership is for people whose access to booking services, venues or choice of seating is reduced due to physical, intellectual or sensory impairment.

For further information, go to www.artsaccess.com.au attend or contact BHA (Vic) for a brochure.

Hearing Loops installed in Medicare Offices

We always welcome information about the installation of hearing augmentation systems in any premises and establishments. As we advise, the best way to know if hearing access assistance is available is to look for the international Hearing Access sign and / or to ask if a loop or other assistive listening system is installed. This helps more places become aware of the needs of such a large part of the population. We welcome the news of the installation of Audio Induction Loops across the country in some Medicare Offices and in Victoria at **Bentleigh**, **Camberwell**, **Glen Waverley** and **Rosebud** offices.

Round Table Discussion

The November **Round Table** Discussion on “Implant Technologies” was our best attended so far and we received very positive feedback from many who attended. Our sincere thanks to our guest speaker Jodie Oakley from Cochlear and to Margaret Robertson and Kaye Gooch for sharing their personal experiences of cochlear implants.

The program for this year gets off to a flying start with

Wednesday, March 25th

“Eating Out – Enjoying the food *and the conversation*”

Geoff Barnes from Acoustical Design will be speaking about noisy eating venues and strategies for overcoming problems associated with this. Noise in restaurants can affect enjoyment of the “eating out” experience for everyone, but especially for people with hearing loss.

Wednesday, May 27th

“Terrific Technology for Hearing Better”

Andrew Willis from Word of Mouth Technology will give an update on the very latest in assistive technology and hearing access.

Venue: 5 High Street, Prahran

Time: 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Please note the new starting time of 1:00 pm which we hope will make the discussions more accessible to those travelling from country areas. If you would like to attend, please let me know (for catering purposes), or if you would like further information.

Look forward to seeing you soon - everyone welcome!!! **Julie McMillan**

RSVP: Julie@betterhearing.org.au

Advocacy.....

The bulk of Hearing Advisor's working time is devoted to providing assistance on an individual basis to the many people who contact us for information and advice on managing their hearing loss and to providing community education on hearing loss. However, from time to time opportunities arise for us to comment on issues facing people with hearing loss, usually in relation to the services or systems other organizations offer. In some cases we receive direct invitations from those organizations to attend forums and meetings and contribute to discussions. Sometimes, information is sent to us either by mail or e-mail inviting comments and information from a hearing loss perspective. When these opportunities are relevant to enquiries we have had and when time permits we do pursue these advocacy opportunities. Some

examples are as follows:

Consumer Affairs Victoria:

In 2006 a draft document was sent to us regarding warranties and refunds on disability aids and equipment. It was noted that no mention of hearing aids or devices was made. I made contact with staff at Consumer Affairs which has led to an ongoing exchange of information about the concerns we hear from people on a daily basis and an increased interest by Consumer Affairs staff in practices surrounding hearing aid sales. Late last year we were contacted by a person who had been refused a refund on her unsatisfactory hearing aid at the end of the trial period by the hearing aid provider. We were able to put her directly in touch with the appropriate staff at Consumer Affairs and as a result of their involvement she was able to obtain her refund.

Victoria Legal Aid:

Just last week we were invited to attend a Stakeholder Forum regarding the Draft Disability Action Plan produced by Victoria Legal Aid. My interest in attending this was sparked by recent contacts including a retired person with a paralegal background who uses bilateral hearing aids and the difficulty he had hearing in court when helping to represent a friend as well as requests to lend assistive listening equipment to people attending court proceedings. I believe attendance at this forum was highly beneficial in raising awareness about hearing access in courts and the difficulties faced by people with hearing loss, which had been given very little consideration. One of the lawyers present was particularly interested in the hearing loss information and perspectives presented and expressed the wish to maintain contact.

As long as the Hearing Advisory Service continues, we will of course assist people with difficulties at an individual level. However there are opportunities for advocacy and these are just two examples of how we can provide input that helps to improve services for people with hearing loss at a structural level.

Julie McMillan
Hearing Advisory Team

HEARING AWARENESS WEEK 2009

23-29 AUGUST 2009

HEARING AWARENESS WEEK 2009 WILL
BE HERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.

SO MARK YOUR DIARIES NOW!



Servicing.....

SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT

Hello to everyone from the Hearing Advisor Team and we are off to a busy start after a short office closure between Christmas and New Year. There are always people waiting for response to their hearing loss needs as soon as we return from this leave break. As we have said before, often it is the family situations over the holiday season that raises awareness of hearing difficulties and prompt people to do something about their hearing loss. Since then one or more members of our Hearing Advisor Team has been here to make sure we are available to answer calls, make appointments and begin our planning for the next 6 months of our Department of Human Services contract. Already we have been out and about for various services of home visits, hearing screening, information talks and other meetings and networking. Our Hearing Clinic has been fully booked for hearing tests, hearing aid adjustments and the Community Assistance Scheme hearing aid fitting program.

Remember for yourself, and also to raise awareness in your various communities, of the services we offer assisting in so many aspects of hearing loss, from when people are first concerned about their hearing, to any stage along the way in Hearing Loss Management.

Our services stretch across a continuum and people can be assisted at any points of the 'journey'.

It was necessary to cease our services out of *Mornington Community Health Centre* at the end of 2008 as Caroline Cocker took up another position in charge of the Newborn Infant Hearing Screening program at the Frankston Hospital. We congratulate Caroline on obtaining this position and at the same time thank her for her contribution to BHA (Vic) and wish her well.

A new supply of our brochure with some necessary adjustments for 2009 is available. Titled *Hearing Advisory Services* it outlines the range of programs offering Information, Advice, Support and Training. We can distribute as needed.

Gwen Rosengren

(Hearing Advisory Team Leader for Julie McMillan, Tracey Steiner & Carol Wilkinson)

HAVE YOU NOTICED?

Listen and silent have the same letters!

Community Assistance Scheme “Aided” by Phonak/Unitron

Better Hearing Australia (Vic) is the only organisation in Victoria to run a Community Assistance Scheme for hearing aids. This service helps those who are unable to afford a hearing aid, and are ineligible for a free aid through the Government Hearing Service, to be fitted with a second hand, reconditioned unit.

There are strict criteria for eligibility and we are limited in the number of fittings we can accomplish as our stocks are limited.

However, we are indebted to Unitron Hearing Australia for a significant donation of hearing aids that they are no longer using.

David Rundell, the CEO of Phonak / Unitron recognises the unfortunate position of some of our clients and sees the Community Assistance Scheme as a valuable service. Thank you to David and Phonak / Unitron

Better Hearing in Retirement Villages

The Better Hearing Advisory team will be spending some time at Retirement Villages this year. No, we're not retiring from active employment! We are visiting a number of villages to provide information to the residents and staff.

Included will be information about hearing loss and tinnitus. We will talk about the signs and symptoms of a hearing loss and the impact it can have on your life. Importantly we will cover some of the things that can help and particularly aspects that have relevance to Retirement Village living.

This is an introductory session and we anticipate further visits to some facilities and the possibility of helping individuals and perhaps finding that there are potential members out there.



If any current members are living in a retirement village and believe there may be some interest in the services we are offering please contact the Hearing Advisory team to discuss the details.

Carol Wilkinson (above)
Hearing Advisor
carol@betterhearing.org.au

Scam Awareness Week 2009

As part of our continuing contact with Consumer Affairs Victoria regarding consumer protection issues, BHA (Vic) has been invited again this year to participate as a community partner in “Scam Awareness Week”. The aim of this initiative is to raise community awareness about scams and to educate consumers on recognizing and protecting themselves from scams. Whilst not specifically targeting people with hearing loss this consumer protection information is valuable to all of us.

For more details, visit www.scamwatch.gov.au and see enclosed information.

Other Access News

Also news from Deafness Forum that they are currently working on other access issues such as access to **premises, airports/airlines** and **public transport** - and this is to do with hearing access for deaf and hearing impaired people. For example Qantas has just formalised its services to customers who are Deaf and hearing impaired and you can find information on this at:

www.qantas.com./info/flying/beforeYouTravel/specialNeeds/mobilityAssistance

Assistive Devices



Julie, one of our Hearing Advisors (left) is demonstrating one of the assistive devices available to people with hearing loss.

We have a display room at our Prahran office designated to assistive devices.

Assistive devices include telephones, door bells, personal television amplifiers, alarm clocks and other digital communication aids.

If you want to learn more, or have a demonstration / test the devices for yourself, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Bushfires

Better Hearing Australia Vic Inc is trying to ensure that hearing impaired people who have been effected by the recent Victorian bushfires get as much help as possible.

Do you know anyone in the bushfire affected areas? Are they in need of any assistance because of loss or damage to hearing aids or other assistive listening technology?

If so please let them know they can contact Better Hearing Australia Vic Inc at the Prahran office, 9510 1577. Ask to speak to a Hearing Advisor. They don't need to be a member for this service.

What is Tinnitus

Tinnitus is a term for any sound in the ears or head that is not coming from an external stimulus. Though often described as ringing in the ears, it may be a buzzing, high pitched whistle, hissing, humming or even a cicada-like sound. It can be present in one or both ears or can be perceived as a more central "in the head" sound.

Tinnitus is quite common.

It is estimated that approximately 20% of Australians experience Tinnitus. If you develop Tinnitus you're advised to see your doctor and possibly an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist. This will ensure that any identifiable cause for your tinnitus is investigated. Tinnitus is often associated with hearing loss but can occur when hearing is within the normal range.

There are a number of possible causes of tinnitus.

Tinnitus cannot harm you in any way but it can be extremely annoying or distressing. Tinnitus is not a disease, it merely indicates that there is a problem within the auditory system. Tinnitus can be associated with: damage from exposure to loud noise, head or neck injuries, diseases that affect the ear, changes due to the aging process and the side effects of medications.

Other conditions of the ear can lead to tinnitus and hearing loss, so you are encouraged to see a medical practitioner for help. However, in many cases no treatable cause is found.

Tinnitus management

About three-quarters of people who develop tinnitus actually get used to it over time. This is called *habituation*. It means that although the tinnitus is still there, you usually don't notice it unless you actually start thinking about it. Consequently, you no longer feel anxious and stressed by it.

Most of us routinely habituate to sounds around us, like noise from a ticking clock or traffic outside our homes. Over a period of time the brain realises that there is nothing to fear from tinnitus so we tune out.

Some people need help to manage their tinnitus.

If you have persistent tinnitus it is advisable to see an ENT specialist for a full assessment. You may also need assistance with an accompanying hearing problem.

Remember:

Tinnitus is a relatively common disorder. You are not alone. The noise is harmless in itself. There are lots of things you can do to improve your situation, You can get professional help.

Better Hearing Australia National Conference

"Living with Hearing Loss"

The Better Hearing Australia National Conference is scheduled for 3rd to 6th September 2009.

Please refer to the Better Hearing Journal for more information.

Our strength is our members. The next newsletter is June 2009. If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please contact Margot (right) on 9510 1577 or email Margot@betterhearing.org.au.

Closing date for submissions for next newsletter: **22 May 2009**



THE DIARY

MARCH

- 10th: Finance Meeting
- 13th: Strategic Planning Workshop
- 17th: Committee of Management meeting
- 25th: Round Table Discussion
- 26th: Members Forum
- 31st: Risk Management Sub-Committee

APRIL

- 14th: Finance Meeting
- 21st: Committee of Management Meeting
- 21st: Constitution Working Group
- 28th: Policy Sub-Committee

MAY

- 1st: Better Hearing Journal contributions due
- 12th: Finance Meeting
- 19th: Committee of Management Meeting
- 22nd: Eye Hear Newsletter contributions
Committee of Management Nominations Due
- 25th: Risk Management Sub-Committee
- 27th: Round Table Discussion



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