



**CONNECT:** Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc is increasing its online interaction with hearing services users.

## We're working to extend our reach in the community

Michele Barry,  
Chief Executive

Welcome to the first edition of *Better Hearing Today*, the newsletter from Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc.

For more than 80 years, we have supported thousands of Victorians with a range of hearing-related issues.

One in six people has hearing loss and this is expected to increase to 25 per cent of the population. Emerging hearing loss will have a huge impact on all parts of society.

In early April, we relaunched our



**'Emerging hearing loss will have a huge impact on all parts of society'**

website ([www.betterhearing.org.au](http://www.betterhearing.org.au)), which features information about our services, hearing-related issues for the general public and how to help us find everyone the right hearing solution.

We don't sell hearing aids or assistive technology and are grateful for support from the State Government of Victoria,

our partners, donations and bequests.

In this edition, we have details on the Victorian Hearing Aid Bank, our tinnitus management service and two upcoming events: drama production, *The Sound of Waves*, and exhibition of some Australian political cartoons, *Behind the Lines 2013*.

We also have a great piece from Josie Sidoti, a current board member, about her decision to have a cochlear implant, plus hints on adding captions to movies.

I hope you find this edition informative – please share.

# The gift of better hearing

Victorian Hearing Aid Bank helping those in need

Hearing aids play an important role in overcoming hearing loss, improving quality of life, and gaining or retaining employment. However, some people who need hearing aids cannot afford them and are ineligible for the Australian Government Hearing Services Program.

The Victorian Hearing Aid Bank supports many of these people thanks to the donations of hearing aids from people who no longer need them. It is the only one of its kind in Victoria.

Donated hearing aids are reconditioned and reprogrammed so that they can be personalised and provided to people who would otherwise be unable to access new ones, which can retail from \$3000 to \$12,000.

Hosted by Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc for many years, the Victorian Hearing Aid Bank assists a range of people in need, including students, new arrivals, apprentices, and those who have young families or have previously been eligible for government hearing aids. Eligibility is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If you have any hearing aids that are no longer used or needed, the Victorian Hearing Aid Bank would appreciate your donation. Please post, or drop off, hearing aids and any batteries or cases to Better Hearing Australia (Vic) Inc, Better Hearing House, 5 High Street, Prahran, VIC 3181.

For more information, visit [www.betterhearing.org.au](http://www.betterhearing.org.au).

**SUPPORT:** Victorian Hearing Aid Bank client Briana has her devices fitted.



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## Josie Sidoti shares her story: 'My decision to have a cochlear implant'

My hearing loss started about 60 years ago, and it has been a lifelong battle.

I found it very difficult to study as a mothercraft nurse and lost a lot of confidence, although I did pass all my exams.

My hearing loss – 'otosclerosis' – is a bone disease in the middle ear. I had two operations; one a success and the other a complete failure.

I battled on, married and had four children. At this time, my good ear started to deteriorate. I became very isolated and insecure, withdrawn, and found it hard to communicate. I tried every hearing aid on the market.

I heard about Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc and decided to go along to see what was on offer. I didn't realise what an impact this decision would have on my life. I instantly became a member and joined lip reading classes.

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### 'I tried every hearing aid'

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It was a great experience and an education for me when I realised I was not the only person in the world with hearing loss. I learnt many skills in coping with my deteriorating deafness.

In 1995, I began a two-year diploma course and one-year hearing advisor's

course at Better Hearing under the guidance of Carole McCarthy – a great teacher. I could then help and support others with similar problems to me.

During this time, I was finally diagnosed as eligible for a cochlear implant. The decision was easy. I felt I had nothing to lose and went ahead with the operation in 1995. It has been a great success.

With renewed confidence I became an ambassador, a tutor, a foster carer and a member of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital Consumer Advisory Committee and Stonnington Council Disability Access Committee. I was Better Hearing President for two years and am currently a board member.

# Crowds set for visual feast in the Sound of Waves

Actress with cochlear implant starring in tale of hearing loss



A local actress with a cochlear implant will take her story to the stage in October in a production involving Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc.

In the Sound of Waves, Jodie Harris performs the whimsical and touching story of Shelly, a girl who becomes submerged in and triumphantly escapes from a metaphoric ocean of isolation, despair and hearing loss.

Shelly finds refuge in a world under the sea only to find that one day, the sea is not enough, and she must learn to walk on land again.

Jodie's solo performance portrays six characters representing different aspects of Shelly as she journeys from isolation.

Jodie was diagnosed with moderate to severe hearing loss at the six years of age and was profoundly deaf by 13. She went to a 'normal' school and is the only person in her family who is deaf.

During her classes, Jodie would only pick up around one-third of what was going on as she relied on lip-reading.

But after receiving a cochlear implant while at

the Victorian College of the Arts in her 20s, Jodie realised how difficult her life had been. She was constantly on high alert and this tension often caused a build-up of rage directed at the people closest to her.

At the Victorian College of the Arts, Jodie began working with voice coach Geraldine Cook and writer Gareth Ellis.

## 'Jodie would only pick up around one-third of what was going on'

The Sound of Waves will showcase Jodie's talents as she uses a visual metaphor for her gradual progression to darkness. It was not the loss of sound that was destroying her, but rather, the inability to be herself and to be with her loved ones without great difficulty.

Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc is a partner of the production. It will run from October 2-12 at fortyfivedownstairs, 45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

For more information, visit the event website, [www.soundofwaves.com.au](http://www.soundofwaves.com.au).

## Connect 24/7 via Facebook

Stay updated on local, national and international hearing-related news and events through Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc's Facebook page.

Send us a message if you'd like to share your own stories and photos.

While you're visiting, remember to show your support by adding to our 'likes'.



## Know that your gift counts

As a registered, deductible gift recipient charity, Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc values your support.

And, you may be able to claim a deduction for money donated to us before June 30 on your tax return for 2013-14.

To donate to Better Hearing Australia (Vic) Inc, visit [www.betterhearing.org.au](http://www.betterhearing.org.au).

# Want to add captions to films? Here's how...

Making the most of subtitles is easy, with member **Ian Boucher's** tips.

## 1 Download your chosen movie

Save the movie and take note of the folder.

## 2 Search for the subtitle file

Find a '.srt' subtitle file for your movie by googling '(movie name).srt subtitles download' or using a website that lets you search .srt subtitles; you could try [www.srtfiles.com](http://www.srtfiles.com). Remember that movie titles must be exact.



**OPPORTUNITY:** Subtitles can be added to a range of movies.

## 3 Download the file

Once the .srt file has been downloaded, save it in the same folder as your movie. Ensure the subtitle file has the same name as the movie file, except for the extension; for example, 'Road To Morocco.avi' and 'Road To Morocco.srt'.

## 4 Save to a memory stick

Add the files to a memory stick to play on a digital television with a USB port. As long as the .srt file and movie file are in the same folder, the subtitles will appear when the movie is played.

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## Go Behind the Lines for top political cartoons

An upcoming exhibition is giving Auslan users a chance to reflect on the past – and rather turbulent – year in Australian politics.

Behind the Lines 2013 is an annual exhibition hosted by the Museum of Australian Democracy, which reviews the political year through the work of Australia's best cartoonists. It will run until 4 May at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Civic Reserve, Dunns Road, Mornington.

Auslan will be available for each display via OpenMI Tours, a free smartphone app which provides enhanced access options to cultural venues. Communication options available at Behind the Lines 2013 include audio with captions, Auslan with captions and audio description.

For more on Behind the Lines 2013, visit [mprg.mornpen.vic.gov.au](http://mprg.mornpen.vic.gov.au). To read about OpenMI Tours, visit [conexu.com.au/services-projects/openmi-tours](http://conexu.com.au/services-projects/openmi-tours).

## Tinnitus support

Locals with tinnitus can expect more seminars on this condition after an inaugural session run by Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc in March was hailed a success.

The two-hour seminar, held at Better Hearing House in Prahran on 2 March, aimed to help people with tinnitus, their partners, families and friends learn more about this problem, which can be debilitating in some cases.

Its informative and interactive style gave attendees a chance to better understand some of the issues surrounding tinnitus, and talk to professionals and others with the condition about management strategies and ongoing assistance.

The feedback was excellent, with attendees indicating they wanted more access to similar sessions.

Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc will continue to run the seminars and is investigating other options for helping people with tinnitus.

Anyone interested in attending a tinnitus seminar should contact Better Hearing Australia Victoria Inc by calling 1300 BHA VIC (1300 242 842).

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### Better Hearing Australia (Vic) Inc

**Address:** Better Hearing House, 5 High Street, Prahran, VIC 3181

**Phone:** 1300 BHA VIC (1300 242 842)

**Email:** [victoria@betterhearing.org.au](mailto:victoria@betterhearing.org.au)

**Visit our website:** [www.betterhearing.org.au](http://www.betterhearing.org.au)

**Find us on Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/betterhearingaustralia](http://www.facebook.com/betterhearingaustralia)

**Editor/design:** Vanessa ilicic, [vanessa.ilicic@internode.on.net](mailto:vanessa.ilicic@internode.on.net)

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