



Images from our Tinnitus Awareness Week 2017 morning tea on launch day

## Tinnitus Awareness Week 2017

February 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> marked Tinnitus Awareness Week 2017 (TAW2017) in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This was the first time that awareness of the debilitating condition was publicised concurrently in all three countries with the aim of having a bigger impact and making sure the message was really heard, globally.

Better Hearing Australia (VIC) drove the Australian involvement with international organisations the British Tinnitus Association and the American Tinnitus Association.

Forming the Tinnitus Australia Alliance alongside us were Blamey Saunders hears, Dineen Westcott Moore Audiology,

HearService, Independent Audiologists of Australia, The HEARING CRC and The Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital. It was a privilege to work together with all of these organisations.

On launch day we held a morning tea at Better Hearing House in Prahran. The tea coincided with the official launch of the Tinnitus Australia information and resource website, available at [www.tinnitusaustralia.org.au](http://www.tinnitusaustralia.org.au).

A fantastic turnout of 40 people at the morning tea included screen and stage star Rob Mills and Academy Award nominated and BAFTA award winning composer David Hirschfelder appearing alongside representatives of the Tinnitus Australia Alliance and

organisations including Vicdeaf, Rotary Club of Toorak, Musicians 4 Hearing, our board and staff, tinnitus sufferers and many other supporters.

For the entire week we were busy pushing out our key messages online where users from around the world followed using #TAW2017 on all the major social media platforms. Agnieszka, Senior Audiologist, spoke on ABC News 24 and Carol, Hearing Advisor, was interviewed on ABC radio in Melbourne, Hobart and Adelaide.

We'd like to say a big, public thank you to all those who made TAW2017 possible, including pro bono support from RED Agency for PR and Thai Tran for website design and development.

## Message from the President



It's unbelievable just how fast this year seems to be passing us by! As you will read in our first 2017 edition of Better Hearing Today, we have been super busy and there's lots happening. It is a challenging yet exciting time as we identify opportunities to honour and build on the legacy of our founding members and increase the impact our organisation has in helping the hearing loss community.

As you will read below, Michele Barry resigned from her role as Executive Officer. I echo the words below and wish Michele all the best in her future endeavours and look forward to continuing to work with her in her role as President, Better Hearing Australia (National).

As a board, we recognise the importance of recruiting a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that has the knowledge and experience in leading the organisation through the next phase. We have increased the role to a full time position and have been undertaking an extensive recruitment process, of which we are in the final stages. I look forward to making an announcement and introducing you to our new CEO shortly.

Future funding and the full rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in

our region from 1 April 2018 is one of the main matters we as an organisation are dealing with at the moment. Better Hearing Australia (VIC) currently relies heavily on funding from the Victorian Government to provide the services that we offer, however, in the run-up to the NDIS rollout that funding will be reduced and subsequently cease. We have been working closely with government and key stakeholders as we plan for the future and to ensure the survival of our organisation and ensure the hearing loss community has access to independent services.

I look forward to keeping in touch and working with you throughout 2017.

Georgie Stayches  
President

## Farewells in the office

The first few months of 2017 saw us say goodbye to both Michele Barry, CEO and Carol Wilkinson, Hearing Advisor.

Michele commenced at Better Hearing Australia (VIC) in May 2013 and saw the organisation grow and change as it moved into a new era with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We would like to acknowledge and thank Michele for her energy, effort and contribution to Better Hearing Australia (VIC) over the last 3 ½ years. We know our paths will continue to cross in the future, particularly with Michele's work as President of the Better Hearing Australia (National) board.

In the interim, acting CEO Marcia Baron has been in place to continue the important work of meeting our service requirements and help the organisation prepare for the impact of the full roll out of the NDIS, including important pathway mapping and service delivery planning.

Carol started with us in November 2008 and retired

in March. Carol's work has had an invaluable impact on the organisation and her legacy will continue to live on. One of Carol's roles was as our resident tinnitus expert and regularly represented us at external forums and in the media, most recently on local radio as part of Tinnitus Awareness Week 2017.

The board, staff and members of Better Hearing Australia (VIC) wish both Michele and Carol all the very best for their future endeavours.



Michele Barry (left) and Carol Wilkinson

# Looking to the future of our organisation

As mentioned in our 2015/16 annual report, in mid-2016 the board and staff collaborated to compile a revised three-year strategic action plan for Better Hearing Australia (VIC). With the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rollout just over one year away, continually evolving technology, services and competing providers in our market, as well as shifts in the needs of the hearing loss community, it was important we reviewed where we were at as a business and where we saw ourselves heading in the future. We don't want to one day find ourselves left behind other organisations, unable to fulfil our mission and see our vision realised.

Since July 2016 our subcommittees for *Fundraising and Engagement* and *Asset Management* have been working hard.

In conjunction with Wendy Brooks Consulting we have been developing our messaging and understanding what makes us stand apart from other similar organisations. We look forward to shortly rolling out the fruits of our labour and

engaging in even more meaningful and beneficial ways with the hearing loss community.

Understanding the impact of the NDIS is no simple matter, not helped in part due to the lack of and sometimes conflicting information that comes from the National Disability Insurance Agency, the organisation implementing the NDIS. Over the last few months however we have made considerable progress in our understanding of what it means for hearing loss sufferers and Better Hearing Australia (VIC). We are excited, eager and ready for what our new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will be able to do in light of the work performed.

It cannot be denied that our sector is facing considerable, disruptive change right now with a relatively short timeframe to adapt, but with our excellent staff, dedicated members, stability and skill diversity in our board member composition and excellent support from our stakeholders, the future of Better Hearing Australia (VIC) is assured.

## World Hearing Day



### World Hearing Day

Friday March 3<sup>rd</sup> was World Hearing Day 2017, an initiative of the World Health Organisation. Around the globe, people and organisations took the opportunity to promote and discuss matters of hearing loss and hearing health. We participated by posting throughout the day on both Facebook and Twitter. Collectively, all of our Facebook posts received over 840 views which is great exposure of the Better Hearing Australia (VIC) brand.

## Board Builder Conference

In March, board vice-president James Caws attended and represented Better Hearing Australia (VIC) at the Board Builder Conference at Moonee Valley Racecourse, hosted by Our Community.

"The day was unbelievably informative and I met and saw some truly inspiring people" James said. "I think hearing the founder of the Autism Advisory & Support Service, Grace Fava, tell the story of how she grew her organisation from an idea to an NDIS registered, full service

provider with 24 hour telephone support hotline was the most inspiring thing I've heard in a long time and I saw similarities with our organisation there too" he added. James met board members from MacKillop Family Services and EARS Inc. who he described as "inspiring and passionate people".

Conferences such as this ensure our board members are actively raising awareness and the profile of our organisation, as well as learning and making invaluable connections.

## Run Melbourne

Run Melbourne takes place on July 30<sup>th</sup> 2017. There are three run options: 5k, 10k and 21.1k. A Better Hearing Australia (VIC) team has been created that you can join at the time of registration to show your

support. President Georgie Stayches and Vice-President James Caws have signed up for the 10k and we look forward to welcoming more to the team. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for details on fundraising, coming soon.

# Gentleness and caring goes a long way



*Glynis Smalley wrote the following piece after she brought her mum in to see us recently.*

For many months my mum's hearing had slowly been getting worse. Recently her hearing got so bad she couldn't hear me even when I was talking to her about 5cm from her ear. Mum isn't on a pension so it meant the nursing home where she lives was unable to use their in-house supplier.

I was so glad I contacted Better Hearing Australia (VIC). Audiologist Alina Stefanescu was so gentle

with mum, trying to include her in all discussions even though mum was struggling to hear. Alina quickly saw that both mum's ears were blocked by wax. She recommended we make an appointment with Crystal Clear Ears to have them 'vacuumed' – that's what I call the machine – as it would be the safest way to remove the wax.

Now with the wax gone mum's hearing is back and we are looking forward to Alina's follow-up appointment.

She has kindly offered to come to the nursing home so it is easier for mum. Alina will check to see if there was any damage caused by the wax build up and recommend a hearing aid if necessary.

Without Better Hearing Australia (VIC), mum would still be struggling to hear and living a miserable existence as she loves a chat with the staff at the nursing home.

Thank you Alina and staff for your caring and respectful treatment of my mum. And helping her get her hearing back.

## Agnieszka to the Philippines



Agnieszka, second from right, is pictured with her husband, members of the Rotary Club of Toorak and staff and board members from Better Hearing Australia (VIC)

In February we were proud to see Agnieszka, Senior Audiologist, head to the Philippines as part of Rotary Club district's D9800 Group Vocational Exchange 2017. She spent four weeks on the cultural and vocational exchange program for professional business men and women, aged between 25 and 40 years. Development programs like this help enhance the skills of individuals which they then utilise as part of their work when they return. Agnieszka reported on her return just how underserved the hearing impaired are in the Philippines, in some cases being prescribed vitamin B tablets as "a cure".

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