

## Better Hearing Australia (VIC) – Branch update for National Conference National Conference –October 2017

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It has been a busy 12 months for the Victorian branch, like most branches, and I am pleased to provide this update on behalf of our board and staff.

### Staffing

- In January, following her resignation, we farewelled Michele Barry as CEO. Michele commenced at Better Hearing Australia (VIC) in May 2013 and certainly saw the organisation grow and change as it moved into a new era with the NDIS. We would like to once again thank Michele for her energy, effort and contribution to Better Hearing Australia (VIC).
- The board immediately set about recruiting and appointing a successor and after a comprehensive recruitment process, was thrilled to appoint Athina Georgiou to the role. Athina has brought with her a wealth of industry, government, health sector and management experience along with critical clinical governance expertise.

I am pleased you will get to meet Athina during this conference.

- We have had a number of other staff changes with some staff leaving due to retirement or to explore other opportunities – we wish all these staff well. We have since welcomed a number of new staff including:

**Kaushalya Troy** - Kaush is an accredited audiologist in Melbourne with clinics in Camberwell, Richmond and Altona Meadows. She completed her Masters of Clinical Audiology at the University of Melbourne in 2007. She is passionate about hearing health for all ages and has specialised in Cerumen management, Auditory Processing Disorder, Tinnitus and Hyperacusis management. She enjoys both the diagnostic side of audiology as well as fitting hearing aids and other devices.

**Jenny Smith** - Jenny is an accredited audiologist with a breadth of experience with both adults and children in Australia and the United Kingdom. For 15 years she provided audiological training at an international level, with a focus on hearing aid provision in developing countries particularly across Asia. Her specific areas of interest are models of best practice with a focus on adult rehabilitation and changing hearing aid technologies. She is passionate about improving standards of audiological care and ensuring high quality service provision for hearing-impaired people of all ages.

## Strategy

- As we mentioned last year, we spent considerable time as a board & staff last year developing a Strategic Plan – aptly named ‘Transition’, to see us through the next 3 years. It has been an action plan, a call to arms for us to prepare for changes and ensure we are in the strongest possible position.

This Strategic Plan, with eight strategic intents, is shaping much of the work we do as we become more resourceful and build more partnerships and collaborations.

We continue to review the Strategic Plan throughout the year.

- Some of these partnerships and collaborations include:

**Tinnitus Awareness Week (January)** – held in conjunction with the British Tinnitus Foundation and American Tinnitus Foundation.

We oversaw the creation of the Tinnitus Australia website as well as created resources for branches to use.

In Victoria we held a morning tea which was attended by key stakeholders and supporters and also had a successful PR campaign which attracted great coverage.

This was all done with the assistance of pro bono support from the web designer and PR agency

**Hearing Awareness Week (August)** – participated in conjunction with Deafness Foundation

We participated in the Hearing Awareness Week event at Abbotsford Convent

**IBM** – We were thrilled to secure a grant from IBM for their Social Impact Grant. This highly sought after partnership has seen them provide advice and guidance for our social media plans, content and engagement.

This included a full day workshop with some key stakeholders. We look forward to rolling these recommendations out soon to continue to grow the information service we provide online.

**La Trobe University intern program** –

- Better Hearing offered a new audiology graduate, Alina Stefanescu, a one year clinical internship, which is nearly completed,

A one-year Clinical Internship must be completed by both Australian and overseas graduates of Masters-level programmes.

The experience has been very positive for both the organization and Alina, our intern.

We have developed a close relationship with La Trobe University audiology training college resulting in a post graduate student training program located at Better Hearing's premises in Prahran

- Better Hearing has commenced a Volunteer Program working with our assisted hearing devices.
- Another part of the Strategic Plan has involved a review of our current premise and in the last year, the board has made the decision to sell our current premises and seek suitable offices for our service needs and to better serve the community.

- We have also undertaken considerable work as a board to identify the relevant skills and experience we require on the board – in order to provide best governance. This has included a detailed skilled matrix.

## Services

- We continue to deliver our services and over the last year provided services to the Hearing Aid Bank, Hearing Services and Information Services.
- We continue to focus on NDIS transition and securing our income along with challenges of navigating the NDIS system like everyone. We have found that our networks and partnerships with other Not For Profit organizations are incredibly important as we along the NDIS rollout – for support, shared learnings and potential collaborations.
- We have had regular contacts with our funding bodies: the state Dept of Health and Human Services; the federal Department of Health and local members of Parliament, so that we remain abreast of developments and ensure our voice is continuing to be heard.

Following the closure of the Tasmanian Branch, we were gifted with resources from them and also received a donation to the Tinnitus Australia alliance. We were very sad to hear of the closure of the branch but recognise the huge work they did in the local community, particularly with Tinnitus awareness and management. We look forward to keeping in touch with them.

At a Special General Meeting held with members in June, we discussed that every decision we make comes back to how we do best serve people with a hearing loss and/or tinnitus and our members, which importantly includes how do we ensure longevity of the organisation through this changing time in the sector.

This responsibility has weighed heavily on us all but we are also energised by the opportunity it presents.