

Deafness Forum of Australia

Deafness Forum is the national voice for 4 million Australians and their families living with hearing health & well-being issues.

A broad national membership includes people who have a hearing impairment or chronic ear disorder, people who are Deaf or deafblind, and parents of such a person; and also associations of, or for these people, and individuals and associations which provide services that promote their health and well being.

Deafness Forum provides the Government with access to both systemic and specific advice. It is closely connected to the 'grass roots' in its sector, to ensure Government is aware of both individual and social perspectives. It:

- Represents and promotes the health and wellbeing of people who are hearing impaired, Deaf, deafblind or have a chronic ear disorder, and their families, through national consultations, information sharing and advocacy.
- Is a forum for organisations and individuals to promote these interests; and a conduit to service providers, the wider health and disability sectors, and the community.
- Encourages, conducts or aids relevant research and sharing of knowledge and experience.
- Advises the Government on strategic policy development and reform.

Today, one in six Australians is affected by hearing loss. For many it is so debilitating that it affects their family and social lifestyle and their employment. With an ageing population, hearing loss is projected to increase to 1 in every 4 Australians by 2050. A significant component of acquired hearing loss (37 percent) is due to excessive noise exposure from workplace noise and leisure activities such as inappropriate listening behaviours, and this is largely preventable. Hearing loss is associated with increasing age, rising from less than 1 percent for people younger than 15 years to three in every four people aged over 70 years. About 18 percent of the population live with ear disorders such as Tinnitus and Meniere's.

Hearing loss represents a significant and quantifiable economic cost to Australia. In particular, given our ageing population, and the need for all Australians to stay productive for longer, impact of hearing loss on productivity in the workforce must be viewed as a critical matter than can be addressed. People who want to participate in the labour force and have a hearing loss face challenges that are unfamiliar to most of their hearing peers: for some, the barriers become evident, start at or before the process of searching for work and, for many, they become more acute during the selection process or at work. A loss of hearing acuity can also lead people to exit the labour force sooner than they would like to, and before their intended age of retirement.

Foundation principles

- Each person knows their own world better than any outsider, including the expert who makes policy.
- Those who are the object of policy should have the opportunity to participate, not only in specific decisions, but in the definitions of the situation on which these decisions are based. (Peter Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, 1977)

Strategic Plan 2015-17

1. Be the trusted, independent adviser to the federal government and opposition with authority to speak on matters of relevance and importance to the national deafness and hearing impaired sector

- 1.1 Form and advocate realistic, actionable recommendations for reform by engaging with our members and the broad sector.
- 1.2 Develop productive relationships with federal politicians, advisers and officials.
- 1.3 Be represented on strategic committees to provide input during public policy development.

2. Dedicate our resources to exert influence on key systemic and important emerging issues

- 2.1 Address impediments in education, training, assistance (accommodations) and negative attitudes that limit full and equitable inclusion in the Australian workforce.
- 2.2 Optimise the number of Deaf or hearing impaired or Australians with an ear or balance disorder who have access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- 2.3 Improve communications access for the deafness sector in transport, the workplace, media, public venues and residential care facilities.
- 2.4 Raise awareness in the community of hearing, chronic ear and balance disorders to enhance prevention, early intervention and treatment.
- 2.5 Advocate informed personal choice for individuals in their decision-making on hearing health options.
- 2.6 Encourage national consistency in universal newborn hearing screening.

3. Be a focused, accountable and sustainable organisation that efficiently and effectively implements its strategic initiatives on behalf of members and other stakeholders

- 3.1 Maintain an up to date, relevant and targeted annual Strategic Plan that clearly communicates what our constituents want to achieve and how we will achieve it.
- 3.2 Conduct programs and activities of a quality, timeliness and effectiveness that are consistent with our strategic objectives and resources.
- 3.3 Ensure accountable contributions and practice of the board, its representatives and staff.
- 3.4 Communicate with purpose and integrity.
- 3.5 Manage our resources responsibly, efficiently and effectively to build an organisation that will be equipped to represent the future aspirations of the people and organisations we represent.

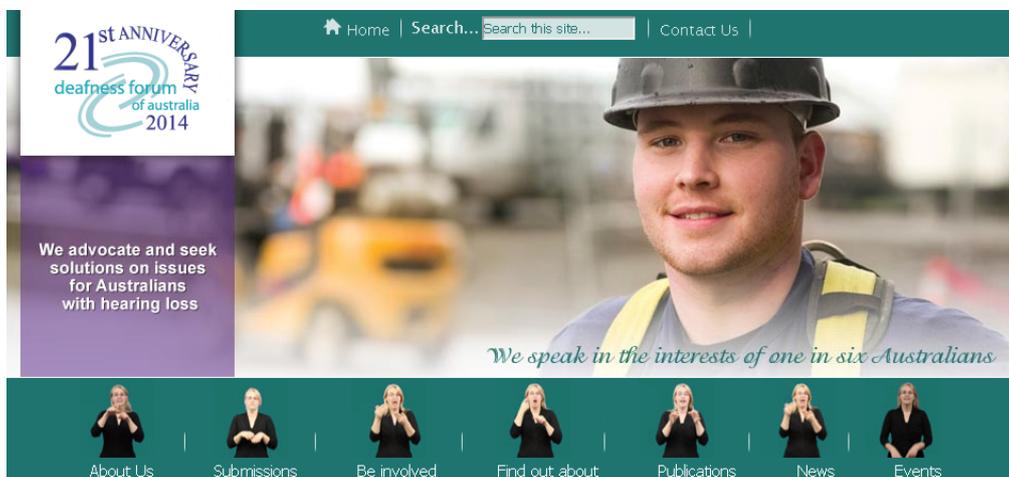
Events are a key part of our outreach program

Events help us connect with the people we represent and the people we seek to influence, such as parliamentarians and the media.



We communicate with authority and integrity

The fortnightly e-newsletter One in Six, through Facebook and our website, www.deafnessforum.org.au



How we are organised

The Board of Deafness Forum sets the policy on key issues, based on the consensus of our members. It ensures our organisation is focused on its purpose and strategic objectives, and manages its resources efficiently and effectively for the future.

The composition of the Board reflects the broad nature of the deafness sector and the disability sector at large. The specialist backgrounds and interest of Board members, coupled with the Deafness Forum’s activities and consultative processes, ensures the Deafness Forum is consumer-driven and with the authority to represent the interests and concerns of the entire deafness sector.

