

PRESIDENTS REPORT

YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE 2021

The ongoing objective of the Deafness Council is to pursue and promote issues that will improve the quality of life for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. To that end, despite the Covid 19 restrictions, the Council has met 9 times this year.

Our activities have included:

PATRON

The Council are privileged to have Harvey Coates AO, a noted Paediatric Otolaryngologist, as our Patron.

DEAFNESS COUNCIL/SANTOS LIMITED SCHOLARSHIP

The Scholarship for this year was awarded to Kelly Tran. Kelly is the daughter of Vietnamese migrants. Her first language is Auslan. Kelly has graduated from Shenton College and is now attending The University of WA to study medicine.

Santos limited have advised that this is the final year of their commitment to the scholarship. We thank Santos Limited for their much valued commitment to the Scholarship.

STAN PERRON CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The Stan Perron Charitable Foundation have agreed to be the Scholarship sponsor for the coming year. The Council is very appreciative of the support from the Foundation, a long term supporter of initiatives to support Deaf and Hard of Hearing people

HEARING AWARENESS WEEK

Since 1979 the Council has used Hearing Awareness Week (HAW) to focus the public's attention on the issues relative to Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Due to Covid 19 restrictions this year the HAW event was not held.

LIBBY HARRICKS ORATION

This year the annual Libby Harricks Oration was delivered by our patron Dr Harvey Coates. The oration entitled “Indigenous Ear and Hearing Health--- Tackling the silent Epidemic” was presented at the Telethon Kids Institute on March 5th. Senator Rachael Siewert attended and introduced Harvey. The oration is available on the Deafness Council web site.

DR HARRY BLACKMORE AWARD

Pia Leeming was the recipient of the Award for 2021. Pia is presently an audiologist at Pert Children’s Hospital. Pia’s programs and vision were instrumental in Telethon Speech and Hearing Centre being considered as one of the best Auditory Verbal practices in the world.

AUSKICK GAME

Covid 19 restrictions again led to the cancellation of the proposed Auskick game at an AFL match involving Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. We are hopeful that this game will be scheduled during the 2022 season.

REAL TIME CAPTIONING OF EMERGENCY SERVICES ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Council continues to lobby State and Federal governments to real time caption emergency services announcements in addition to the Auslan interpreting of the announcements. We have yet to receive a commitment from either government to do so. It is pleasing to see that in most cases call Federal and State government advertisements are now closed captioned. In addition, the Premier has also reported that “during lock down restrictions, open captioning was used across You Tube, catch up TV on demand and social media advertising”. The Council will continue to press for the introduction of this initiative.

HEARING SERVICES PROGRAM REVIEW

In September the Federal Government announced a review of the Hearing Services Program. The Review was to be conducted by an Expert Panel.

In response to the discussion paper released by the Panel, the Council participated with a sub-committee convened by the Deafness Forum to lodge a detailed response. The Expert Panel released a Draft Report in June and the Council responded, in detail, to the proposed recommendations. The final report is expected to be released in September 2021.

FUNDING FOR ADULT COCHLEAR EAR IMPLANTS

The Council has written to the State Minister for Health expressing concern at the low level of state funding being provided for adult cochlear ear implants in WA. For example, in Western Australia the program for adults is capped with funds sufficient to fund only 55 cochlear implants per year. In both New South Wales and Victoria the funding is uncapped, being demand driven. It is estimated that waiting times between a referral by a General Practitioner to final implantation equates to three years.

MEETING WITH STATE MINISTER FOR DISABILITY

The Council has scheduled a meeting in July with the State Minister for Disability, the Hon Don Punch MLA. The matters listed for discussion with the Minister include;

- Real time captioning of emergency services announcements and closed captioning of all Government advertisements
- The need to address the shortage of qualified EA Auslan interpreters
- Support for families to access assessments the need to access NDIS funding.

A discussion paper on each of these issues will be forwarded to the Minister prior to the meeting.

SUPPORT

We have again received wonderful support from our donors who we thank for their generosity.

The support of the many volunteers within the Council and associated organizations is also vital for our work. We thank them most sincerely.

DEAFNESS FORUM

The Deafness Council is a member of the Deafness Forum and during the year has participated in several submissions led by the Forum.

AUDITOR

Many thanks to our auditor Shakespeare Partners for a very professional job in auditing our accounts.

BARRY MACKINNON
PRESIDENT