

# **PRESIDENTS REPORT**

## ***YEAR ENDED 30<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2024***

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, the Council has met 8 times this year. It was pleasing to see the continuing involvement of individuals and organizations in the Councils activities.

Council meetings are now held in a manner that enable members to attend via Microsoft Teams.

### **PATRON**

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

### **STAN PERRON CHARITABLE FOUNDATION/DEAFNESS COUNCIL SCHOLARSHIP**

Anzo Patel is the \$3,000 Scholarship recipient for this year. Anzo was born with a bilateral profound sensorineural hearing loss due to a genetic mutation. He is attending Curtin University studying for a Bachelor of Honours in Engineering.

Following an increase in the donation received from the Foundation the Council agreed to increase the scholarship to \$5,000.

We thank the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation for their continuing support.

### **WORLD HEARING DAY / 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

Since 1979 the Council, during Hearing Awareness Week (HAW), has conducted events to focus the public's attention on the issues relative to Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. In recent years it has been agreed to use World Hearing Day (March 3<sup>rd</sup>) for this purpose. This year the Council conducted an event on February 28<sup>th</sup> with the focus on;

- Recognizing the theme for the year which was "CHANGING MINDSETS: Lets make ear and hearing health care a reality for all
- Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Deafness Council WA Inc
- Highlighting the key issues for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people that are still in need of attention

The evening included a panel discussion conducted by Geof Parry which focussed on the initiatives that have improved the lives of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people over the last 50 years. Mark Fitzpatrick then outlined some of the challenges that the Council needs to address in the future.

The Dr Harry Blackmore Award and Stan Perron Charitable Foundation Scholarship were also presented.

We thank the John and Bella Perry Foundation for their generous support of the evening.

## **DR HARRY BLACKMORE AWARD**

The State-wide Audiology Team were the recipients of the award this year. The teams pioneering initiative has significantly improved accessibility by introducing Advanced Scope Audiologists in public hospitals. The implementation of this service has proven to be highly successful, leading to a significant reduction in wait times for audiology and cochlear implant services from multiple years to six weeks.

## **CAPTIONING OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC INFORMATION ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council continues to lobby State and Federal Governments to caption all their public television announcements and to open caption with Auslan interpreters included in all emergency services public information announcements. It is pleasing to see that in many instances Federal and State government advertisements are closed captioned. We continue to point out to governments when they fail to do so.

## **JUVENILE JUSTICE SCREENING**

Mark Fitzpatrick has led discussions with the Department of Justice that has seen the implementation of a 12 month juvenile justice health screening trial that includes hearing and language screening.

## **DEAFNESS FORUM**

The Deafness Council is a member of the Deafness Forum and continues to contribute on a regular basis to submissions made by the Forum on behalf of issues affecting Deaf and Hard of Hearing people.

## **REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES INTO PEOPLE IN CUSTODY WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT**

The Council have had discussions with the OIC officers about their report into people in custody with a hearing impairment. Following the release of the report we have raised a

series of questions about the Governments response to the report in correspondence with the Minister. We are seeking a meeting with the Minister or senior Departmental staff to further discuss the issues raised in the report.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR COCHLEAR UPGRADES FOR NON-QUALIFYING PEOPLE OVER 65**

Non qualifying people over 65 face the reality of no assistance being available for necessary device upgrades that cost approximately \$9,000 per upgrade. The estimate is that this service could be provided for about \$100,000 per year, as it is in at least two other states. The Council has approached the Minister for Health seeking funding to support this small but important group of people.

## **REGISTRATION OF AUDIOLOGISTS**

Following some incidents in Queensland and South Australia concerning errors made with cochlear implants in children, the Federal and State Ministers for Health announced that they were considering the registration of audiologists. After debating the issue the Council resolved to support the registration proposal.

## **GUEST SPEAKERS**

During the year the Council have been fortunate to have heard from several excellent guest speakers including;

- Ryan Quinn and Natalie Gibson from the Office of Custodial Services
- Clory Carrello CEO of Cockburn Integrated Health
- Donna Faragher MLC Shadow Minister for Community Services
- Pia Leeming Parent Support Facilitator, Newborn Hearing Screening at Perth Children's Hospital
- Dr Peter Friedland ENT specialist

## **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 organisations is very much appreciated.

**BARRY MACKINNON**  
**PRESIDENT**