

Hear For You

mentoring young
deaf people

annual report 2014-15

Hear for You is the only organisation offering an award winning mentoring program for deaf teenagers.





HEAR FOR YOU IS THE ONLY ORGANISATION IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND OFFERING AN AWARD WINNING MENTORING PROGRAM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING.

If you have any feedback about the publication, requests for permission to reprint material appearing in the publication or would like to comment on the content please contact David Brady on email: david.brady@hearforyou.com.au.

Opinions expressed in this published are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect Hear For You policy.

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HIGHLIGHTS

HIGHLIGHTS

- ★ Hosted its first ever formal fundraising lunch, with special guest speaker and patron of Hear For You, Mr John Howard AC being interviewed by NSW mentee Bettina Liang
- ★ First public speaking workshops hosted in Brisbane and Sydney, providing Hear For You mentees a platform to speak to an audience about issues that matters to them
- ★ #TeamHFY successfully complete in two fun runs; City2Surf NSW and City2South QLD. It provided mentees an opportunity to experience fundraising for community projects and Hear For You.
- ★ Hear For You returns to Western Australia in partnership with the West Australian Foundation for Deaf Children.
- ★ The NSW Government provides Hear For You its first grant for 2015 as part of its Youth Development support strategy
- ★ After the success of the Auslan program in QLD, Hear For You positioned itself through partnerships and funding to provide Auslan programs in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, and Sydney
- ★ Social Media and Website visits and hits continue to grow and expand its audience and reach
- ★ Launched the new Community Fundraising Program as an opportunity for local community groups to support mentees to attend the national award winning programs, as well as encourage mentee and their parent engagement with their community supporters.
- ★ New Zealand successfully completes five years.
- ★ Conexu Foundation partnership support continued.



ABOUT US

VISION

For all young people who are deaf to reach their potential in life.

MISSION

Mentor and inspire young people who are deaf through evidence based programs and services that are accessible to all.

VALUES

- Professionalism
- Inclusiveness
- Enthusiasm
- Ethical
- Experience
- Progressive

WHO WE SERVE

Hear For You is designed for young people aged 12 – 18 years who are deaf or hard of hearing.

HISTORY

Hear For You was established in 2007 by Olivia Andersen who has profound hearing loss from birth. This was in response to her personal and professional awareness of the issues affecting teenagers who are deaf and hard of hearing during their high school years. Her desire was to help young deaf people develop the confidence and faith to achieve their dreams.

Since 2007, Hear For You operated with the assistance of funding in:

- Sydney from 2007 to present
- Melbourne from 2011 to present
- Auckland from 2010 to present
- Christchurch 2014
- Brisbane from 2013 to present
- Perth from 2010 to 2011, revived 2015
- Rural and Regional Australia 2014 to present

Since 2007, Hear For You has reached out to more than 800 deaf or hard of hearing Australians between 12 – 18 years. Our licenced partners in New Zealand had similar success reaching the five year mark this year with another successful workshop series delivered in Auckland.

Last report we spoke of our success being measured by the positive feedback from parents and the graduate mentees themselves on how Hear For You had inspired their confidence to pursue their personal goals. Another mark of success is the willingness of now over 90 adult deaf or hard of hearing/hearing impaired Australians and New Zealanders who themselves inspire the notion of the volunteer spirit.

The volunteer mentors come from a wide spectrum of their community and society. They include doctors, lawyers, shop owners, animators, sports managers, Deaflympians, parents, community leaders, and so on. All Mentors have a unique experience of being deaf or hard of hearing, and in their own eyes are successful and want to share. Their inspiration led to some of our early year mentees following similar paths to become mentors themselves on day.

Over the course of its short history, Hear For You has provided high level support for the programs on a bare minimum of resources that are mainly supported by private individual and organisational donations. Any donation or support, private or government, has enabled Hear For You to meet the demand for its programs in other parts of Australia. The board, mentors, and staff work hard to find the most cost effective and innovative way to ensure that a mentor



is there for deaf and hard of hearing teenagers today, as the most common reason explained by our mentors in their feedback is “I wish there was Hear For You mentoring program around when I was a teenager”.

Recently as a small organisation, it is now entering the new era of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which will bring new challenges for seeking funds and donations as the competition to be included in each NDIS participants plan will intensify over the coming years at each launch site.

Hear For You is planning to meet the challenge of supporting the mentees who won't be eligible for the NDIS, due to ineligibility of hearing loss level, nationality, or simply they are not in the launch site. It is hoped that the Community Fundraising Program will be one way to meet this challenge along with donations and funding from foundations and trusts.

Hear For You is proud to be a not for profit charity that has been established by deaf people, run by deaf adults, to connect, to communicate, and mentor deaf teenagers.

THE NEED

Hearing loss increases social isolation and potential for mental health issues.

In terms of young deaf people who are oral, despite medical devices such as cochlear implants and hearing aids a deaf teenager will not have their hearing fully restored to or as that of normal levels.

Hear For You implements prevention strategies addressing the key problems affecting education and career outcomes:

Problem: Social Isolation

- 12 – 20 young deaf people at risk participate and directly connect and engage with each other, and with 4 – 6 young adult mentors who are deaf through evidence-based mentoring programs.

Problem: Reliance on communication technology and access

- Presentations on accessible technology options and tactics.
- Assertiveness and social awareness mentoring.

Problem: Parents don't understand

- Parents of mentees to attend parent presentation and improve understanding of issues their child faces and networking with other parents. In fact 90% of parents of Hear For You mentees have no prior experience of deafness or hearing impairment within their lives prior to their child's.

WHO HEAR FOR YOU HELPS

Primary beneficiaries:

- 12 – 18 year old Australians who are hard of hearing, or hearing impaired, who communicate orally or in Auslan;
- One in four are at risk of mental health issues. High costs supporting their hearing loss also contribute to financial challenges for their families.

Secondary beneficiaries:

- Volunteer mentors – young adults 18 – 35 years who are deaf or hearing impaired and trained as mentors in the Hear From You program curriculum;
- Parents of mentees (12 – 18 yr old deaf teens) – On average most parents of mentees have their hearing and have difficulty understanding and managing their child's challenges.

Social Outcomes

- Improve confidence, communication, team work, leadership, knowledge, decision making skills and attitudes of teenagers both mainstream Oral deaf and Auslan signing deaf communities.
- 95% workshop attendance by registered participants
- 85% of mentees indicate they are satisfied with the program
- Over 50% indicate an improvement in knowledge, confidence and general feeling of happiness.
- 90% of mentors indicate satisfaction with program and its positive impact on them;
- 90% of parents indicate satisfaction with the program and the positive impact it has had on their child.

“Hear For You introduced me to other teenagers going through the same life challenges, looking for our place in the hearing world.”

The Hear For you mentors pointed me and my fellow mentees in the right direction. Knowing what we were going through having already been there before, they offered advice and guidance that continues to the day, to help and motivate us to future aspirations.”

Sam Cartledge – Former Hear For You mentee Studying Bachelor of Arts - Architecture Representative Basketball, Mentor and staff member.

ACTING CHAIR'S REPORT

Mentoring programs with a difference and life long results

This is my final year as Acting Chair and I couldn't be more pleased with the results and direction of Hear For You. As you will read in this report, the organisation is growing into new locations, programs and support bases. The highlights on page 2, shows the momentum behind the team and its important service delivery to teenagers who are deaf.

This year, I was reminded of the important outcomes our mentoring programs deliver. Hear For You provided a series of public speaking workshops, with presentations from our mentees to intimidating crowds. Our mentees presented in front of Ministers, business leaders, education leaders, clinical specialists and our ambassador the Hon. John Howard.

Our young presenters spoke eloquently and with confidence as they shared their life experiences and the role mentoring has played in their life. Importantly, we heard of the connections Hear For You makes at a vitally important stage when they are starting to feel isolated from people their own age. Life-long friendships are made at these programs and I have no doubt we have future leaders in our midst.

Strong financial results in 2014/15

Not-for-profits, and particularly those in the disability sector, are facing turbulent times with reduced growth in charitable giving year on year. Hear For You has remained focused on its goal of supporting deaf teenagers. To this end, it successfully built on long-term relationships and sought new partnerships to deliver growth in 2014/15. As you can read in the financial report on page 36, the organisation has made an impressive turnaround and delivered \$76,360 profit for the year. Growth is still being managed carefully as we prepare for changes in the new National Disability Insurance Scheme environment.



Preparing for the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Board and CEO of Hear For You are guided by a strategic plan that keeps the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) high on our future planning priorities. Already, we have identified NDIS pilot areas supporting our teenagers and this is only going to increase as more States and Territories launch into the NDIS. Hear For You will be prepared to support teenagers in all locations and is also enacting fundraising plans to assist teenagers who won't qualify for NDIS funding but still feel they need the confidence building which comes from our program.

New Board Directors to guide outcomes and sustainability

To help guide the organisation through the NDIS transition, Hear For You has been fortunate enough to attract two highly qualified and influential Board Directors. Stephen Coutts, who brings the organisation important Government Relations guidance and connections into the NDIS developments along with fundraising networks. Kim Jones, who brings Hear For You considerable marketing, digital and financial expertise with a

passion for effective governance in not-for-profits. The founder Olivia and myself, have welcomed this additional support and expertise along with the returned support of Kate Obermayer who holds an important perspective on the Hear For You programs and access to new sources of potential funding.

The Board and CEO is guided by a 3 year strategic plan which is supported by a detailed operational plan, marketing plan, fundraising plan, budget and regular cash flow updates.

Our programs exist through the ongoing support of our partner organisations

Hear For You, and the future success of the teenagers it supports, is only made possible through the vital contributions of our corporate partners donating both financial and in-kind support.

On a national level, Hear For You received support from Conexu Foundation Ltd, Shine a Light Foundation and Deaf Lottery Australia. On a State level, Hear For You was able to deliver programs through the contributions of UN Ltd – Mayday Trust, West Australian Foundation for Deaf Children, Snow Foundation, NSW Government Youth Opportunities and Commonwealth Bank.

A special thanks must also be made to our growing number of individuals and fundraising teams which supported the organisation. This included many of our mentees, mentors and program staff who participated in local events whilst raising important funds for Hear For You. We thank you for selecting us, supporting us and being impressive role models in the community.

Final note of thanks

Finally, I would like to personally thank Olivia Andersen, Founder and David Brady our CEO, for taking me on an incredible journey. You both have an unwavering passion to support the next generation of deaf teenagers and I'm very grateful to have worked alongside you as the organisation has developed and grown. I look forward to continuing my connection to Hear For You through my next role on the Special Advisory Council.

Zoe Black

Acting Chair



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Looking back on the 2014 - 2015 financial year, it was one that saw Hear For You take yet another step towards being the leader in the provision of mentoring space for deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing impaired youth in Australia and New Zealand. We moved closer to our goal of providing mentoring programs throughout the whole of Australasia, becoming a truly national charity in the deafness sector and the only organisation that is run by deaf people for deaf teenagers.

In July 2014, Hear For You was in dire financial circumstances. It was run by myself and two casual staff members working from home or in a shared office. It was a bleak outlook and a daunting time for the board and my team of staff and volunteers. Instead of giving up and cancelling all the great work of our founder Olivia Andersen and the many contributions and from others, we pushed on with the resources we had at hand. We undertook a review of the program looked into ideas and innovations and capitalised on the values shared by every mentor and member of the Hear For You team - passion and belief.

In my younger days when I was working at Sydney University Sport, my CEO at the time let me into a secret of success for a small organisation. It is to tap into the power of passion that exists within an organisation. This is what inspired us to turn around a loss of \$130,000 at June 2014 to a surplus of \$70,000 a year later. It also saw the following achievements:

- Established a national headquarters in North Sydney through donations from Pickles Foundation, various donors, and a special negotiated rate with the landlord. This meant that the CEO and NSW Coordinator could work in a professional office environment with desk space available for volunteers to help Hear For You's fundraising efforts and the Community Fundraising Program



- Re-established Hear For You in Western Australia in a three year partnership arrangement with the West Australia Foundation for Deaf Children
- Re-established a presence in Victoria in January 2015 through a Memorandum of Understanding with Deaf Sports Australia and support from UnLtd and Deaf Lottery Australia; and employed a casual staff member and former mentee Sam Cartledge
- Secured funding from the NSW Government for the first time to commence an Auslan program through a MOU with NSW Deaf Society; and enabling John Lui to transition to a more regular roster.
- Generous donations and support were received from Conexu Foundation and pro-bono providers enabled Hear For You Queensland to continue and provide both Oral and Auslan programs
- The first Rural and Regional Australia Program was a success and brought in mentees from rural Queensland, NSW and Victoria.

- Hosted the first Hear For You Public Speaking workshops in Brisbane and Sydney, with the Sydney event attended by the NSW government Minister for Youth
- Hosted the first Hear For You Leaders Luncheon, with our Patron Mr John Howard OM AC interviewed by NSW mentee Bettina Liang.
- Appointed Kim Jones and Stephen Coutts to the board, and welcomed Kate Obermayer back from maternity leave.
- Appointed new Hear For You Ambassadors - Emilie Biggar who appeared in My Kitchen Rules 2015 and Alexander Jones who is a disability sector leader and actor who appeared in Blue Healers and All Saints.

All of these achievements would not have been possible without the passion of our entire team and supporters. Looking to the future, the biggest challenge for Hear For You remains the ongoing effort to secure sustainable funding so that deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing impaired teenagers can access mentoring; and so that mentors have the professional high quality support and training they need to be effective. Every workshop and training session must have full communications accessibility to ensure that all who attend Hear For You events are given every opportunity to be an active part of them. To underpin this we need the organisational resources to focus our efforts in the right areas and provide best value for the funds we receive.

2015 to 2016 will see a continued focus on maintaining our commitment and passion. We will roll out the new Community Fundraising Program that will encourage mentees to become community fundraisers by closely linking each mentee to their community fundraising groups. We will roll out further Public Speaking workshops as part of each program in line with our objective to provide opportunities for young deaf people to express themselves in a public setting. A 2nd Leaders Luncheon is planned for mid-year 2016. There will

be more innovative programs and practices that will be introduced in the course of the new financial year.

As your CEO I ask this question: Is this enough to excite corporations, foundations and governments to contribute to Hear For You? Time will tell, but in the meantime with your help we will leave no stone unturned.

I would like to thank our board of directors - Zoe, Kim, Stephen, Kate, and our forever passionate founder Olivia Andersen for their guidance and support throughout the year. To my team of John, Sam, Rebecca, Samia, and Ashlee, and all the volunteers, thank you for your time and expertise. To our donors and other funders both large and small, including our platinum supporter The Conexu Foundation, thank you for believing in the work of Hear For You in a tangible way. You are making a very real difference.

Dave Brady
Chief Executive Officer



2013-2016 STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION:

For all young people who are deaf to reach their potential in life.

MISSION:

Mentor and inspire young people who are deaf through evidence based programs and services that are accessible to all.

VALUES:

- ★ Professionalism
- ★ Inclusive
- ★ Enthusiasm
- ★ Ethical
- ★ Experience
- ★ Progressive

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Establish a leading not for profit charity with strong business practices and financial base to be able to provide mentoring for over 210 deaf teenagers per annum by 2016.

OBJECTIVES:

Key Results

1. Programs
Be the program that all deaf teenagers in Australia and New Zealand want to participate in
2. Business Processes
Achieve best practice in business systems, structure and processes
3. People
Build a strong network of key stakeholders including mentors, volunteers, mentees, supporters
4. Profile
High national profile and number 1 in social media for deaf teenagers by 2018
5. Financial
Set up innovative fundraising and establish long term government funding, to have a cash reserve of \$500,000 by 2016

KEY DIFFERENTIATOR:

Hear For You is an organisation that is **“founded by deaf people, run by deaf people, for deaf people”**.

OUR PEOPLE

OUR PATRONS

Australia – The Honourable John Howard AC
New Zealand – Mr Lance Cairns

AMBASSADORS

Alex Jones
Emilie Biggar

Alex Jones

The Honourable John Howard AC

Lance Cairns

Emilie Biggar

THE BOARD

Founder and Chair – Olivia Andersen

Qualifications

- Bachelor of Design, UNSW
- Business Management, RMIT UNIVERSITY

Experience

- Managing Director of Hear For You 2007-2013
- Creative designer for magazines, Maree Clare, Elle, and Shape Up
- Churchill Fellow

Acting Chair – Zoë Black

Qualifications

- BComm, University of Queensland
- MBA, University of Queensland

Experience

- Director of Strategy and Planning, Australian Communication Exchange
- Vice President, Business Communicators Queensland
- Member, Australian Institute of Management





Director – Kim Jones

Qualifications

- BSc (Hons) Dip Ed MAICD

Experience

- a Graduate Diploma of Education,
- RG146 accreditation
- Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors
- Women On Boards.
- Kim's career spans a range of organisation types and sectors.

Director – Stephen Coutts

Qualifications

- BA (Hons) University of Sydney
- Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors



Experience

- Staff of The Hon Nick Greiner, Premier and Treasurer of NSW from 1988 to 1992
- Chief of Staff to the Hon. Jim Longley M.P., NSW Minister for Community Services, Assistant Minister for Health, Minister on Ageing and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.
- 2007 he established Richardson Coutts Government Relations an advisory firm which advises clients across different industry sectors on doing business with the public sector at both a Commonwealth and State level
- member of the Advisory Council of Washington based Public Policy Network Capitalis <http://www.capitalis.com/index.php>.

- Prior Director appointments includes the Motor Accidents Insurance Board of Tasmania, a former Observer on the Board of Soccer Australia and a former Secretary of the Australia Asia Young Leaders Program

Director – Kate Obermayer

Qualifications

- BAComm (Journalism), University of Technology Sydney

Experience

- Global Web Marketing Specialist, Cochlear Limited
- Director, Deafness Forum of Australia 2008 to 2011
- Director, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network 2009 to 2010



STAFF

- Chief Executive Officer – David Brady (Full-time)
- Queensland and Rural and Regional Australia Programs Coordinator – Rebecca Driscoll (part-time – 1 day per week)
- NSW Programs Coordinator – John Lui (part-time – 2 days)
- Victoria Programs Coordinator – Sam Cartledge (part-time – 1 day)
- Western Australia Programs Coordinator – Samia Ahmed (part-time – 3 days)
- Administrations Support – Ashlee Banhyard (part-time – 2 days)
- New Zealand (under licence) – Elena Keith



ADVISORY COUNCIL

Hear For You is proud to have the following volunteers with high level experience and expertise as members of its Advisory Council:

- Mark Carnegie
- Angus Gemmell
- Jack Heath
- Sophie McCarthy
- Cass O'Connor
- Harold Scruby

LEADERS LUNCH

On 30th June 2015, Hear For You hosted its first ever annual Leaders Lunch at the Mint in Sydney. The concept of the lunch is to provide a special fundraiser with a twist, that is to have a leading personality or celebrity be interviewed by a mentee from one of the Hear For You programs. The mentee who received special coaching and practice by mentors to conduct the interview armed with questions from different mentees from programs around the Hear For You network.

The event was made possible by the generous in-kind support from Jennifer Sharrock who provided her expertise and time over six months to manage the design, then the staging of the event.

The inaugural lunch saw an audience of 90 people witness Hear For You's Patron the Hon John Howard OM AC being interviewed by NSW Mentee and yr11 Fort Street High School Student Bettina Liang on a series of questions about his life and in particular about his hearing loss. The interview revealed some key insights into the life of Australia's 25th Prime Minister and how he managed to navigate the demands of the job, especially with his hearing loss. Bettina Liang was openly praised by Mr Howard for her skills interviewing him and it has no doubt provided a confidence booster for her future career aspirations.

The event was sponsored by Conexu and Cochlear Australia and New Zealand.



PUBLIC SPEAKING EVENTS

Queensland held its first Hear For You public speaking workshop in November 2014 with selected mentees from the Oral and Auslan programs in front of parents, industry professionals and potential donors at Quest Breakfast Creek Apartments. Tara, Rosa (both current Oral mentees) and Cameron (2013 Oral graduate mentee) presented, with support from mentors Aleks, Jillian and Julian, on their personal stories and answered questions the audience had for them.

The year saw the first of the break off specialise programs that are offered by Hear For You, of which one is the Public Speaking events. This was created as an opportunity for the mentees to have the opportunity to speak in a real live public forum about a given topic through their personal experiences. Each mentee are supported and encouraged by their mentors in the lead up and during the Public Speaking.

This year we saw these events offered in Brisbane and Sydney, both sessions very well attended by an audience consisting of parents, teachers, audiologists, and supporters of the programs. The NSW program speakers are Bettina Liang, Aarsi Jha, and Jackson Tait, where in QLD the mentees speaking are Tara Elvery, Rosa Barwick, Cameron Schofield, Tiahna Hurst, and Emily Jones.

In the later part of 2015 it is planned to host a Public Speaking event in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, and Sydney, creating more opportunities for mentees in each program to have a go at conquering one of the most common fears; Public Speaking. We are seeking sponsors of future public speaking events. If interested please contact Hear For You at info@hearforyou.com.au.

OUR MENTORS – A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Hear For You acknowledges all of the listed individual mentors for volunteering more than an average of fifty hours throughout the year to providing and sharing their experiences with over 150 mentees per annum at the Hear For You workshops. The whole basis of Hear For You operates on the generous time donated by each of these deaf or hard of hearing mentors, without them there would be no Hear For You.

Thank you.

**Mentor Hours donated in monetary terms -
\$160,000 in 2014-15**

QLD ORAL MENTORS

Julian Scharf
Aleks Petrusevic
Kate Wilson
Jillian Ash
Rebecca Driscoll
Melinda Vernon
Holly Reedman
Josh Devenny

VICTORIA AUSLAN MENTORS

Hannah Britton
Matthew Norman
Ramas Rentelis
Sherrie Beaver
Edan Chapman
Phillipa Russell
John Bennett
Ashleigh Kedge
Julia Murphy

NEW ZEALAND ORAL MENTORS

Joshua Foreman
Elena Keith
Joshua McLean
Michael Allen
Anna McNab
Natasha Barnes
Eva Bergler
Sam Taylor

RURAL & REGIONAL ORAL MENTORS

John Lui
Sam Cartledge
Rebecca Driscoll
Peta Charnock
Aleks Petrusevic
Lucy Eels

WA ORAL MENTORS

Ben Ipkendanz
Jessica Round
Sharyn Burgess
Jenelle Macri
David Brady
Sam Cartledge
Jillian Ash

WA AUSLAN MENTORS

Gary Ware
Dave Clark
James Carr
Tammy Chan-Oteri
Natasha Ravlich
Therese Robertson
Marie Ware
Liat David-Trimboli

NSW ORAL MENTORS

Heather Hunt
John Lui
Lucy Eels
Bec Stewart
Elizabeth Seares
Joshua Sealy
Adrian Chau
Teneale Houghton
Daniel Harris

QLD AUSLAN MENTORS

Dan Jarvis
Willos Callaghan
Hillary Morton
Bradley Jardine
Sigrid MacDonald
Nic Taschke
Guiled Mohammed
Rebecca Driscoll
Kym Mellington
Shannon Kettleton
Brianna Fleet

VICTORIA ORAL MENTORS

Patrick Lane
Sophie Li
Alysha Tan
Andrew Selby-Smith
Ashleigh
James Leonard
Stephanie MacDonald
Stuart Corstorphan
Zoe Williams
Sam Cartledge

NSW AUSLAN MENTORS

Josh Sealy
Rachael McQuillan
Dana Pitt
Sally Bevan
Christiane Kassab

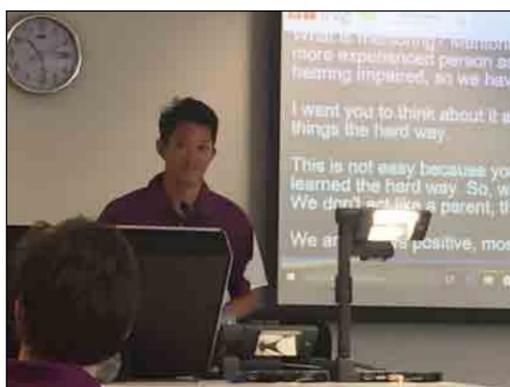
SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

In the period from July 2014 to June 2015, Hear For You experienced a growth in social media and communications through its website, Facebook page, Twitter, and opened up Instagram. As a charity that works with young deaf people, and one that presents another level of communications accessibility due to the need to ensure videos are captioned, and information relating to Auslan are accompanied by a video translating text into Auslan, the language of the Australian Deaf Community.

SOME KEY SOCIAL MEDIA STATS FROM THE 2014 TO 2014 FINANCIAL YEAR...

Between June 14 to July 15 – the Hear For You website had:

- 189,731 visits
- 1,811,437 hits across its pages
- Most popular downloaded PDF file was 557 copies of the last annual report
- 3,878 combined plays of all Hear For You videos
- Top video is the Regina Tappin Testimonial at 187 plays throughout the year
- Top Mentor video is Alysia, Victoria Oral Mentor at 96 plays throughout the year
- Combined total of mentor video played in 2014-15 – 3,871 plays



FACEBOOK



Average Reach – 272 people per posting

Highest Reach of the year – 13,367 people for a posting



Total likes as of June 30th 2015 –

Milestone – broke the 1,000 likes barrier on 29th May 2015



TWITTER

Impressions – 25,600 for the year



Top Tweet – 908 impressions for the Q&A for the leaders lunch featuring John Howard AC





COMMUNICATIONS

A unique feature of Hear For You is the fact that all staff and the mentors are either deaf or hard of hearing/hearing impaired, and exacerbated by the fact that all staff and their mentors are located six different capital cities across Australia and New Zealand. This is a real challenge and one that has been met with the advent of technology, smart use of communications supports, and the provision of Auslan interpreters, live-online captioning, and use of FM systems made possible by smart use of donations and the employment assistance fund (EAF) which is a Federal Government program.

Meetings between staff are made as accessible as possible through the hire of Auslan interpreters, and use of live on-line captioning if the funds are available. However there are times when this is not possible due to budget constraints or lack of EAF funds (each EAF is capped per person for the year). The alternative is all staff to communicate via Auslan and use at times of the whiteboard as an aid to further explain any complicated matters or points.

In training and presentations, Hear For You provides live-captioning for the Oral program and both captions and Auslan interpreters for the Auslan program. It is an expense, however it is important that all mentors and staff are able to access the information clearly so that they are able to mentor to the best of their ability. Our staff also use captions, their FM systems, or Auslan interpreters when they attend presentations or meeting with external stakeholders if the funds are available.

Meetings on-line are usually through Skype messenger or depending on the number of meeting attendees, via skype or video conferencing. However in the case of video, there are regional variations of internet speed which can be challenging. The Hear For You team sometimes use teleconferencing with Live-Captioning and for those who use Auslan as their preferred communication, use the National Relay Service to be able to share information in the meeting.

Our external communications through the use of phones are supported by the National Relay Service, use of a Video Relay interpreter, or by use of phone loops/FM Systems. The staff are determined to be able to utilise the communications technology that is available and on an even level as that of a

mainstream business environment. Every day the technology is pushed beyond its boundaries within budgetary means to ensure that the Hear For You mentoring programs are delivered to deaf and hard of hearing/hearing impaired teenagers.

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION

Volunteers

- Mentors 2,721 Hours preparation and workshops, hence over \$160,000 worth of time
- Board Members – meetings and support to the CEO and staff
- CEO & and 4 part time staff – over deliver on paid hours
- Social Money Solutions
- Jennifer Sharrock – for the Leaders Lunch 2015

Resources

- Conexu Foundation – in house support and Phil Harper technology workshops.
- Konica Minolta – National Office printer/copier
- Beyond Focal Point – Muffy Churches – advice and guidance for Mentor training programs and workshop program structure
- ASG Solicitors – pro-bono legal advice and services
- Successful Alliances – support to CEO for book keeping and MYOB
- The following university or venue suppliers
 - University of Canberra
 - Griffith University
 - HearingCRC / University of Melbourne
 - WAFDC
 - Hearing Hub / Macquarie University
 - VicDeaf and Deaf Children Australia
 - The Deaf Society
 - Quest Apartments Breakfast Creek QLD
- Deaf Sports Australia – office support
- Leaders Advisory Group

OUR PROGRAMS REPORTS

2014 to 2015 saw the most programs delivered for the year to date, with over 100 deaf or hard of hearing/hearing impaired teenagers mentored throughout the year. The content of the programs have been modified to accommodate the changing world faced by the teenagers, as well as with input by Beyond Focal Point's Muffy Churches, modifications to enable the mentors to share more of their experiences and the power of hindsight. The year has also seen the re-introduction of Western Australia and addition of Auslan workshops to NSW and Victoria.

QUEENSLAND

ORAL PROGRAM

2015 – Queensland celebrates three years of delivering mentoring workshops to Brisbane-based Oral deaf teenagers. The official 2015 Queensland Oral Program starts late August 2015, so far we have a good number of mentees enrolled with many returning from 2013 and 2014 programs respectively. This shows us that they want to keep connecting with



**Rebecca Driscoll –
QLD Programs Coordinator**

our mentors and other teenagers year after year as they grow into confident young people.

The annual mentor training workshop was held in March 2015. We welcomed three new volunteers to the team – Melinda Vernon, Holly Reedman and Josh Devenny. Melinda spoke at a NSW Oral workshop in the previous year on her sporting career as a professional triathlete. We were very fortunate when we'd learned she'd moved to the Gold Coast from Sydney and that she wanted to do more than speak at a workshop that she jumped on board to become a Hear For You mentor.

While the 2015 program is yet to commence, we have been busy delivering presentations to groups including a youth event at the Hear and Say Centre in Brisbane and a camp for hearing impaired students on Moreton Island. We welcome opportunities to talk with families, schools and groups on what we do, in return they can get an early introduction to some of our mentors before workshops commences.

For the second time in two years, a team was set up for the City2South run event to raise awareness about Hear For You. The team in question for 2015 absolutely loves running they also wanted to show Hear For You's name proud. This year's team comprised of mentee Tara, her mum Julie and Toowoomba-based mentor Kylie Sheedy. Last year, Tara and her mum completed the 5km event,



this time they took on the 14km challenge, at the same time they raised significant funds towards Hear For You once again. Thank you to those who have shown their support for our cause to continue providing quality mentoring and putting on awesome workshops for Queensland-based deaf teenagers. Next year we hope to have a bigger team at these types of events to show the community who we are and to have fun as a group outside the workshops. If you are interested in taking part, I would like to hear from you!

I'd like to thank our mentors especially to those who've been with us since the first year of Hear For You in Brisbane. Their passion and enthusiasm to work with deaf teenagers is just awe-inspiring. Lastly, thank you to our program supporters Conexu Foundation

and Griffith University. We continue to use Griffith University's facilities for our workshops.

Rebecca Driscoll
QLD Programs Coordinator



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AUSLAN PROGRAM

Queensland Auslan Program Report 2014 marked the first year of the Hear For You Auslan program in Queensland with first workshop on 10 August 2014. It concluded 12 October 2014.

Nine teenagers signed up to this program with Auslan as being their primary communication method. Mentors for the first Queensland Auslan program were: Bradley Jardine, Dan Jarvis, Willos Callaghan, Nic Taschke, Guled Mohammed, Sigrid Macdonald (bilingual mentor who also mentored in the Queensland Oral program in 2014) and Hilary Morton (who was involved in Hear For You's first Auslan program ever in Melbourne in 2013).

Mentors did an outstanding job, they also had an added challenge of one mentee who'd recently moved to Australia with her family and spoken English and Auslan were not the family's first language. This did not deter our mentors, it encouraged them to be more creative in communicating effectively and making sure she was included every part of the program.

This experience is shared across the board with mentors and coordinators in other programs. We welcomed guest speakers including Phil Harper from Conexu Foundation on technology and Brett Casey, CEO of Deaf Services Queensland, on his career. We held a session never held before in the Hear For You programs on how to work with interpreters in the workplace and in the community.

This was delivered by two accredited Auslan interpreters giving up their time to speak with our teens to prepare them for life outside of school. Mentees gained a great insight on what to do/what not to do, ethics and role of interpreters in different situations.

In workshop 4, mentor Nic coordinated the drama session and mentees' performance for parents. It was a superhero and villain-themed workshop and performance where each mentee was a superhero in

some form. It was quite entertaining and fun for the audience consisting of parents of these mentees.

In November 2014, Auslan program mentees Tiahna and Emily took part in Brisbane's shared Public Speaking workshop with three Oral mentees. Tiahna and Emily spoke on their journey as a child to now and what frustrates them in terms of communication and access.

This gave the audience some food for thought. Both girls were supported by mentor Bradley. As of June 2015, preparations are underway for a second Auslan program for Brisbane to commence end of August 2015. The team of volunteers continues to grow with Kym Mellington, Shannon Kettleton and Brianna Fleet joining the team.

I would like to say a special thank you to our partners, supporters and education providers. We look forward to continuing providing workshops to deaf teenagers who prefer to use Auslan to communicate – every workshop run by deaf young adults. We are happy to provide information sessions at schools, camps etc to give students an early opportunity to meet our mentors before programs start.

Rebecca Driscoll

QLD Programs Coordinator



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NEW SOUTH WALES

ORAL PROGRAM

The Hear For You scene in New South Wales is continuing to grow steadily as we continue the implementation of new events to supplement our flagship NSW Oral Program.



**John Lui –
NSW Programs Coordinator**

The first half of 2015 saw yet another successful edition of the Oral Program which took place from April to July. We had 12 mentees with a consistent spread throughout Year 7-12. In particular, it is pleasing to see that the Year 11-12 mentees are returning mentees who have been with us for 2-3 years. This attests to the enduring quality of our mentoring as the mentees grow in their confidence and self-esteem and learn new skills as they become young adults during the potentially turbulent high school years.

We have planned a second series of the Oral Program to take place in October-November for Years 7-10 to cater for those who are eager to continue their Hear For You journey or were unable to attend the first series due to scheduling clashes with school or sport or family events, or simply new enrolments who have just not heard about us yet!

After bidding adieu to two mentors, Dave Carter and Sam Cartledge, it is pleasing to report that we have recruited and trained five new mentors this year – Elizabeth Seares, Joshua Sealy, Adrian Chau, Teneale Houghton and an former mentee, Daniel Harris.

Bec Stewart who was a Casual mentor last year, has stepped up as a Full Mentor this year in superb fashion, joining the all-star cast of Lucy Eels and Heather Hunt.

All mentors have been exceptional in donating their time and effort to provide quality mentoring during the workshops as well as helping to promote and fundraise for Hear For You at various events and functions.

August saw 13 people consisting of mentors, mentees, siblings and parents join in the annual City 2 Surf fun run from Hyde Park to Bondi Beach on a brilliant blue-skied day, raising over \$5000!

So, thank you all as there would be no Hear For You workshops without you guys!

AUSLAN PROGRAM

In early February this year, after consultations with the Deaf Society of NSW, we were delighted to secure a Memorandum of Understanding with the aim of establishing an Auslan Program with their full support and connections with the Auslan deaf community.

We had four new mentors who participated in the Mentor Training for the Auslan Program – Rachael McQuillan, Dana Pitt, Sally Bevan and Christiane Kassab. They are all fantastic additions to the NSW programs and we look forward to seeing them in action during the 2016 workshops!

Excellent work to Grace Troughton, Jackson Tait, Metessa Stewart, for raising well over \$500 each which meant we smashed Queensland's total! It made this Program Coordinator one very happy man after another dismal State of Origin loss yet again last year.

Many thanks to the mentors, Daniel Harris, Bec Stewart, Lucy Eels and Ashlee Banyard for all their help fundraising and support during the race – it was a great day out and I look forward to next year!

Thank you to all the mentees, their parents and our mentors for making the NSW Programs such a success thus far in 2014 and 2015. The work you continue to do in the workshops is invaluable and it really does make a huge difference in the lives of all the teenagers we meet on our journey.

I look forward to seeing Hear For You reach out to and connect with teenagers right across NSW in 2015 and onwards.

John Lui
NSW Programs Coordinator



Program Donations



Oral Program Venue Provider



Auslan Program Venue Provider



VICTORIA

ORAL PROGRAM



Sam Cartledge –
Victoria Programs Coordinator

The 2015 Victorian Oral Program re-established itself with a new coordinator, new hot desk, new venue and a new sponsor. The oral program saw 12 mentees enrol and attend the workshops with 9 mentors, 5 experienced and 4 new showcasing their freshly trained mentoring skills.

The Victorian Program begun in February with Samuel Cartledge, a former mentee and mentor appointed Programs Coordinator thanks to the program receiving much needed funding. Hear for You moved back into VicDeaf negotiating a hot desk with Deaf Sports Australia allowing the program to operate in Victoria.

Before the recruiting of mentors began, a connection was made with the University of Melbourne who kindly offered their facility, the Hearing CRC to host the workshops. Based in Carlton on Swanston street, in a family friendly location highly ideal for families to access the city after dropping their teenagers off. Also UnLtd, a non for profit foundation representing the marketing industry came on board as the official program sponsor.

With the foundations in place, mentors were recruited, some who had been involved in the program in the past and some new faces ready to share their life experiences. Volunteer mentors were trained and inducted with the 2015 program being thoroughly updated based on the previous program surveys and feedback. Muffy Churches from Beyond Focal Point was on hand to talk the mentors on how to best connect to the mentees on a personal level without becoming a generic teacher or parent figure. To do this Mood cards were introduced to the program for the first time which have become a favourite activity to utilise to allow everyone to open up on a personal level without expressing much spoken vocabulary

and using cards to spark ideas in mentees head and do most of the talking for them.

Talks and activities were run at different schools to promote the program as well as information and networking taking place with numerous deaf departments across the state. These activities will continue as we look to reach out and encourage deaf teens to attend our workshops next year and boost the Hear For You profile here in Victoria.

The first workshop saw a great parents session after the introductions that saw some tears shed over the hardships that their teenagers have faced and gone through at school and everyday life. Dave Brady was on hand to talk about the NDIS and community fundraising scheme which has emerged as a key component to the program this year to raise funds for the program. Mentees enjoyed the first workshop so much that mentors had to start digging into the second workshop plan for activities to run!

Over the second and third workshop it was amazing to see how much mentees came out of their shell and grew in confidence. It was at different rates for everyone but awe inspiring for the mentors to look back at where they had started to now. Favourite activities throughout the workshop included the game silent sign whisper, where a message must be passed one person at a time from one end of a line to the other without oral communication. It was fascinating watching how mentees improved the strategy of keeping the message as short as possible to ensure clear and concise communication throughout the line without errors.

Program Ambassador and former My Kitchen Rules constant, Emilie Biggar attended the third workshop where she showcased her technology and apps that she uses as well as socialising and participating with the mentees throughout the day.

The graduation saw a parent session by Matthew from Conexu who talked to the families about the new technology and apps available today for the deaf and hard of hearing followed by three amazing drama performances all constructed by the mentees



WEST AUSTRALIA

January 2015 saw the return of Hear For You to Western Australia after a few years through the support of the West Australian Foundation of Deaf Children (WAFDC). The WAFDC have committed to working with Hear For You for three years from 2015 to 2018 to re-establish the national award winning programs in Perth/Fremantle.



Samia "Georgie" Ahmed – WA Programs Coordinator

Hear For You's CEO David Brady have been working with the WAFDC to establish the new foundations of the program which is based at the old Western Australia School for deaf children in Cottesloe. With the a secure venue for the program administration and the workshops, a lengthy recruitment process occurred and concluded with the appointment of the program's coordinator Samia (Georgie) Ahmed. Samia, a Perth local and bilingual, recently returned from London, UK, to her home town, brings experience from both the UK and from growing up in Perth.

Samia with a tight timeline commenced the mentor recruitment for both Auslan and Oral programs in Perth, as well as the same time promote the program for deaf teenagers in the Perth/Fremantle area. It was through some consistent promotions that by June 2015, Hear For You was able to start the program in Perth for the year. Eight Auslan and Six Oral mentors were recruited and trained, along with 15 deaf teenagers, seven Oral and Eight Auslan attended the meet and greet.

There will be more on the Perth program in the next annual report as workshops 2 and 3 was taking place during the time of writing.



Donations / Venue Provider

showcasing their inner acting skills and confidence levels. All performances exhibited the skills that they had learned over the program and it was an eye opener to see where they had started to where they are now. It was truly touching to hear the testimonials of some parents and mentees and how they now want to give back to the program in any way that they can. The program still isn't over this year with mentees and families committing to give back by taking on the City 2 Sea to try and beat their NSW counterparts!

At the time of publishing we are about to commence our revamped Auslan Program! Mentors have been selected and trained with workshops commencing on the 13th of September. The program us being run out of VicDeaf and promises to be an entertaining program.



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NEW ZEALAND

This year the New Zealand Hear For You Program celebrated their big milestone of 5 years. The programme has gone from strength to strength and has operated out of Christchurch and Auckland since 2011. There has been a strong demand for the programme in New Zealand and some of our teenagers have been right through and now are looking to become mentors themselves. The parent session this year left me a little tearful as I realised that some of the teenagers that we have worked with for the last 5 years have now finished with Hear For You and they're going out into the big wide world to do amazing things and I do hope that they keep in touch with us to let us know of their adventures.

We're very fortunate to have the same mentors that started with us in 2011 and it has been wonderful to see their growth as mentors and to see them bringing their wisdom and experience to the programme. Since the programme started some have graduated from University and are now working in their chosen fields. One of them has set up her own Chartered Accountancy practice and two are pioneers in their industry in that they are the first New Zealanders with a cochlear implant to work as a paramedic and surgeon.

One of our mentors, Michael Allen, volunteered in an orphanage for deaf children in Africa and he said it helped him to appreciate how lucky deaf kids are in Australia and New Zealand to have access to a programme like Hear For You.

We'd like say a very special thank you to James O'Connell, Finn's dad, who rowed 100km to raise money for our programme in Christchurch. This was a phenomenal effort and we're so very grateful for his support. I'd also like to mention the EB Firth Trust who have supported Hear For You for the last 5 years along with the Vodafone Foundation and a special thanks to mentor Josh Foreman who raised funds by participating with a team in the Tough Mudder challenge last year.



Lachlan Bartlett, one of our graduates from the Christchurch programme, was asked to lead the student body in 2015 as Head Boy at St Bedes. We were just delighted with this news and not at all surprised. Lachlan was a standout mentee with his calm, confident and good natured approach to life and is a great role model for other teenagers. Over the years that we've worked with the teenagers the mentors are always amazed with what our mentees are capable of. Some times the only thing holding them back is themselves and we hope that by going through the Hear For You programme they learn that their hearing loss is only a difference, not a disadvantage.

Finally I'd also again like to mention our team of mentors, they're an outstanding team of volunteers and I'm indebted to their professionalism, commitment and enthusiasm for making Hear For You an invaluable and fun programme for hearing impaired teens.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

FROM MENTEE TO MENTOR: DAN'S JOURNEY

By Daniel Harris

Hear For You helped me to foster a positive attitude and view of myself as a young Hard-of-Hearing person during high school and beyond.

My time at Hear For You as a mentee in 2009, when I was a Year 11 student, was a profound and formative cornerstone in my development as a teenager and into young adulthood. My experience in high school as one of the only Hard-of-Hearing students was a fairly miserable and challenging few years, whereby I threw myself into academia and chose to shun social interactions to a large degree due to a sense of shame and self-denial about being Hard-of-Hearing, and due also to my misplaced belief that I was a 'freak' and unworthy of attention.

However, this period in my life was eventually overcome in no small part by the influence of the Hear For You program and the time I spent with my fellow mentees and the older mentors. Hear For You provided me with the first real opportunity to hang out and interact with other people who were just like me and enabled me to see clearly that having a hearing loss is not a barrier towards a happy and full social life.

My involvement in Hear For You's first program helped me to realise that I shouldn't ever allow my hearing loss to negatively affect my decisions, and this provided me with the impetus to nominate myself as a candidate for my high school's Year 12 leadership positions, which were to be selected by the student body through popular vote. I was elected as a Captain's Prefects - a role which saw me involved in acting as a voice for the students and enabling the student body as a whole to have an influence in school decisions. This leadership role provided me with further public speaking experience and was a gratifying conclusion to my high school years.

Following the completion of high school I received an



unexpectedly high ATAR score, an achievement which enabled me to pursue a Graphic Design bachelor's degree at UTS. My four years at UTS, including my honours year, was a period of self-discovery, and the self-confidence and self-esteem which I had lacked in high school increased considerably. My fond memories of Hear For You continued to influence my determination to always strive to achieve my goals and dreams.

Graduating from university with honours was a surreal milestone to reach! Following the conclusion of my studies, life post-degree has been a period of adjustment, including the realities of looking for work. Finding a full-time job has proved to be challenging and time consuming, however I have enjoyed doing internships and paid freelance design work in the interim.

I contacted Hear For You regarding the possibility of volunteering as a mentor because I wanted to give something back to the program that I fondly remembered. My time as a mentor has had me forging new connections with other mentors and mentees alike. It has also given me the opportunity to

share my experiences and successful communication strategies with the mentees and this has been a richly rewarding experience.

While life has been full of challenges, this has made it all the more vibrant and meaningful. My experiences at Hear For You as both a mentee and mentor have prepared me well for the future and I can't wait to see what exciting challenges are still to come my way!

A MENTEE SHARES HER EXPERIENCE

By Lara Trickett

Hi I'm Lara, and I'm a 14 year old girl attending Indooroopilly State High School in Grade 9 here in sunny Queensland.

I went deaf when I was eight years of age due to the CMV virus. This was a virus that I actually caught from my Mum when she was pregnant with me. This wasn't picked up until after I went deaf and they did some tests, including an MRI and looking at blood samples taken from when I was a baby (the heel prick tests that all new borns have). I don't recall too much about what my life was like prior to going deaf. I went deaf quite suddenly (my parents noticed a difference over a 2 week period). I was diagnosed as profoundly deaf in 1 ear and severely deaf in the other. This was just before Christmas and it was a few weeks before I could get fitted with a hearing aid in my severely deaf ear which still had some remaining hearing. My parents remember communicating with me via note writing over the Christmas period. They don't remember this as being a fun time. At least I could read and write with no worries. On the 20th April the following year (it's an easy date to remember as it's a day after my Dads birthday), I went into hospital and was fitted with a Cochlear Implant. I'm really proud that this is an Australian invention and my parents would love to meet Professor Graeme Clarke one day and shake his hand. He is the next door neighbour of a friend of my grandparents so they may well do that one day!!



I learnt how to hear again with my Cochlear Implant with the help of the Hear and Say Centre here in Brisbane. Their support was fantastic and they were surprised that I learnt so quickly. After 3 months I finished my therapy but I still attend the Hear and Say centre at least every 6 months for mappings and an annual review. For a long time I said to my Mum that I had a didgerdoo playing in my ear, but eventually that sound just went away.

My parents have asked me if I want an implant in my 2nd ear as I actually hear better with my implanted ear, but I still like the fact that I can still hear a tiny little bit with 1 ear with no implants or hearing aids in so I'll hang out for as long as I can.

I get a little bit frustrated about being deaf sometimes as sometimes I'm not sure if I'm actually hearing the correct sounds. I love listening to music on my tablet.

We can choose electives in year 9 and not surprisingly 2 of my favourite subjects are my electives. I enjoy English, Art (called Visual Media Technology) and ITD (Industrial Technology and Design). Right now I'm not sure on what I want to do when I finish year 12.

Indooroopilly State High School is a great high school for someone like me since as well as lots of international students there are AUSLAN students as well. In classes where we have AUSLAN students there is a speaking teacher as well as a signing teacher, as well as a note taker, so for all my core subjects I am in classes with other AUSLAN kids and so we have lots of extra support. I know a little bit of AUSLAN now but have never really had to use it.

I have attended the Hear For You program each year for the last 3 years and it's great mixing with kids and Mentors with a similar hearing loss to mine. I really enjoy all the activities that we do and I appreciate the advice we get from the mentors about preparing for the future. Oh, and I also love the food.

A MENTEE'S PARENTS STORY: NICOLA VARNFIELD

By Suanne and George Varnfield

Nicola, our daughter came fighting into this world on Anzac day 25 April 1999 born at 26 weeks premature, weighing little more than a tub of butter only 674g.

Doctors and nurses told us her chances of survival would be less than 50%. Her first big battle was the first day I had to leave her alone in the hospital and go home. As we arrived home the phone was ringing, it was the hospital! Nicola had suffered a collapsed lung. As we arrived at the Neonatal, Nicola was in the middle of the room on a bed covered in blood. The nurses told us to keep talking to her and keep touching her as she would be able to hear us

and know we were with her. Nicola's pediatrician told us that they were not expecting her to survive through the night. Both George and I spend the night watching and praying for her.

Nicola made it through the night.... Nicola again defied all the odds and conquered another two hurdles where they told us again there was no more hope. Through all this Nicola's hearing was destroyed as she was given the antibiotic "Gentamycin". Gentamycin destroys the hairs in the cochlear and this drug is used regularly on neonates to fight infection. This drug also caused some nerve damage as a result she developed mild cerebral palsy in her arms and legs. We have been uncertain what else was damaged during this time, as she was really not meant to have survived or even expected to have been able to walk.

Nicola was given the nickname of "The Little OZZIE battler" We are so grateful for Nicola and can't imagine how life would have been without her. She has taught us so much in her short life.

Nicola had severe to profound hearing loss and had her first Cochlear implant at 18 months old in Sydney by Prof Gibson. Nicola had a big support system in Sydney through The Cochlear Centre, she also went to the preschool that was part of the Royal institute for the Deaf and Blind Society. After that Nicola went to St Gabriel's School (Catholic school for deaf children). Nicola communicated orally and with Auslan at St Gabriel's. We had to leave at the end of year 4 as we had to relocate to Brisbane due to work commitments. Nicola ended up going to Warrigal Road state primary school in Brisbane. Through all the support Nicola was getting, she was struggling to understand and keep up with her peers. It was a year after we arrived that Nicola ended up getting her second cochlear implant. It has been an on going battle with Nicola's language and no one has been able to guide us and let us know why she has been struggling in this way. I

Nicola has a brother that is 7 years younger than her and yes! An 8 year old and a 16 year old ...well just

use your imagination.... the situations we get into and the arguments!

Nicola has always been a cheerful, happy child always embracing whatever challenges she has had to face. Nicola's was born with this stubborn streak and we know that it has saved her life a few times, but it does get in the way with many arguments in the home. As Nicola is in a very challenging time in her life and also due to her limited language, communication does lead to many misinterpretations. Nicola's Father also suffers from hearing loss and wears hearing aids. This becomes a challenge when the two of them keep misunderstanding each other.

Nicola does not have many friends and due to Nicola's age and language ability, she struggles to

fit in. She spends most of her time reading, listening to her music and drawing. Nicola also enjoys photography and enjoys been out in the Australian bush.

Nicola has taken part in a few of "The Hear for You" workshops since they started in Brisbane. She has always enjoyed them and fitted in well. Each experience & understanding of the experience has been different for Nicola and as she matures and develops the more relevant they have become for her. It helps Nicola to realize that she is not the only one with these challenges and there are other people her age with similar problems and many of the mentors have been in similar situations as Nicola, therefore can relate to her frustrations. The Mentor's have been amazing! The program is inclusive and very accepting. They communicate with Nicola from a teenage level and not from a parent or teacher. The mentors are an inspiration for Nicola, showing her that she has the right to be a valued part of our society just like everyone else and if she searches hard enough she will also have an exciting future to look forward to.

Thank you to "The Hear For You" team for your valuable time and support and positive influence's that you play in our children's lives!



ERIN GROWING UP

By Erin Davies

Erin was born into a Deaf and Hearing family. A family that knew that Deaf Culture and Language would be very important for her as she grew up. My husband, John is Deaf, raised in a Hearing family, and I, myself am Hearing, raised in the Deaf Community, as my Dad is Deaf and my Mom is Hearing.

When Erin was born, I knew she was Deaf. The nurses on staff wouldn't believe me, but I know from experience. Erin has 2 older siblings; a brother, Joseph (Deaf) and a sister Kimberely (Hearing). When I was in the hospital with Erin, she behaved the exact same as her brother Joseph, when he was born. Always having to be near me or family members. They wouldn't settle in the nursery for anyone. Erin also has a younger brother, Benjamin (Hearing).

We don't know the exact cause of Erin's Deafness, and that was never a priority for us to find out. Most people say it's hereditary or genetic, but what was important to us was that she was healthy.

It's quite ironic with our family 3 boys, 3 girls; 3 Deaf, 3 Hearing.

When Erin was a few weeks old, we took her for an AABR (Automated Auditory Brainstem Response) test. The appointment was booked for her normal nap time, as she needed to be asleep for the test. But due to the long drive to the Specialist (1 ½ hours). She wasn't tired when we arrived. I tried everything to get her to sleep. When she was finally nodding off, I had to lay her on a leather couch, I wasn't permitted to hold her. Every time I tried to lay her down she would wake up. It was like a never ending battle. So the Specialist went ahead with the testing even though she wasn't asleep. The results were inconsistent. But I knew she was Deaf.

We took Erin to our favourite Audiologist, which was 8 hours away (my old home town). They were able to get better results from Erin. Then we ordered her first pair of hearing aids.

Being raised in the Deaf Community I knew the importance of Language and Culture. In our home we had flashing lights set up. We had a system established to indicate whether it's the doorbell, telephone, alarm clock, fire alarm, pager and a baby cry. I even had a "colour organ" set up for the children

when music was playing, coloured lights would flash to the beat of the music.

When Erin was born, I was homeschooling Joseph and Kimberely. We decided to homeschool when we discovered Joseph was Deaf. The closest Deaf School was 8 hours away and there was no chance for Joseph to mainstream in the local schools because I was the only interpreter in the district. I knew American Sign Language (ASL), and I found out that the Deaf school had Teachers that went to people's homes to make sure that the Deaf child is developing in language and other areas. So, when I knew I would have the support from the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville, I knew I could homeschool. To incorporate the use of hearing aids, I chose to use Total Communication with the children.

Erin did not see a speech therapist when she was young as I did not like the speech therapist that was provided in our district. We lived in the far north in Canada so there wasn't much of a choice. I tried to work with Erin from what I remembered when Joseph attended for two years.

In 2003, we moved to British Columbia. There was a Deaf School in Burnaby (south of Vancouver) that Joseph could attend and they had a pre-school program in the school that Erin attended. The Pre-school for Deaf children and also Hearing children that had either a Deaf parent or Deaf sibling in their family. They offered speech lessons there. So, that was Erin's first real exposure to speech therapy. Erin was very mischievous in that class. When it was speech time, Erin knew that once the jar was full of objects, her session was done. She would put the objects in the jar whether she heard anything or not. She was a challenge! Erin loved going to her pre-school! We were in British Columbia for only 9 months, as jobs were hard to find and our lease was coming to an end. We decided to give Australia a chance, as John, my husband was from there. We moved to Australia, but things didn't work out, so we moved back to Canada. It was there that we were offered a chance to travel as a family with another couple who's involved in ministry. So, from that it was hard to establish appointments with speech therapists. We travelled a lot between Canada and the USA. This went on for 5 years. During this time I always made sure that the kids Hearing Aids and

ear molds were up-to-date, because that was very important to me.

When Erin was 10 years old, we sold everything and went on a two year backpacking trip. We visited England, Scotland, Germany, Israel and Jordan. We did this in 1 ½ years. We then came to Australia to make things work.

While we were living in the Sunshine Coast, we heard about Hear For You through Australian Hearing. We wanted Erin to meet other Deaf teens. Erin was attending High School on the coast and she wasn't happy. She was by herself at that school, so it was important to meet others her age or even a bit older. She enjoyed the program so much and it gave her the joy and strength to stand strong as a Deaf person during her struggles at school.

Being new to the country, trying to find a home, job, immigration for myself. We only knew a handful of people on the coast, we didn't have a lot of support, especially lack of support for the Deaf in the family. When Erin was attending high school it was a real struggle as I wasn't sure what her rights were. So I just let the school set up whatever they could. But as the school year went on I met some other parents and I started to ask questions. Then the battle began. Because I found out that Erin's rights in the school were very similar to North America. So, we started to demand changes and things were not working out at the school and every time we would confront a situation, things became more difficult for Erin at school. That's when we decided to look for schools that had a Deaf support set up within the school. My husband went to Brisbane checking out the schools. We didn't have a vehicle at that time so he had to go by train and bus to the different schools. He couldn't visit all the schools in one day as it takes time with public transportation. So he made multiple trips to the city. When we decided which one would suit Erin's needs, that's when we decided to move to Brisbane. We still didn't have a car, no jobs, and no home. We were able to establish house sitting in East Brisbane during the last term. That gave Erin a chance to try out the school if she liked it or not. It took a while to adjust to being able to communicate with other students, because where she attended before she was just left on her own and there wasn't even a "buddy system" set up to help her around. When the school year ended our time at house sitting ended too. We went from living in holiday accommodations



to someone's home for a few weeks to tents. Rental agents didn't want to take chance with us as we didn't have jobs at the moment and we didn't have "official" rental history in Australia. Finally, one agency took pity on us and gave us a break. We moved into a house with absolutely nothing.

We now have things established in the home. Back in Canada we left Erin's favourite alarm clock with a friend to pass on to another Deaf person, but they never did. We were able to get the clock for Erin and convert the plug for it to work here. She was so happy to have something from her childhood from Canada.

Erin is attending Hear For You again this year. She loves the interaction with other teens and with her peers.

Erin's goals for her future are to either be a Veterinarian or a Teacher.

Thank you for your support for Erin and other Deaf teens.

REASONS TO SUPPORT HEAR FOR YOU

There are an estimated 20,000 Australians under the age of 21 years who are deaf or hard of hearing¹. This is associated with a broad range of consequences for a child's cognitive, social and emotional development, including limiting the ability to communicate. International research has shown that children who have problems making themselves understood are at high risk of social isolation and are four times more likely to have a mental health disorder².

Over 90 percent of deaf children are born to hearing families who have little or no experience of deafness³. More than 83 percent of deaf children and adolescents attend mainstream schools where they are often the sole deaf student in the class or even at school⁴.

Due to the success of cochlear implants and digital hearing aids (and other technical devices), an increasing number of deaf teenagers use spoken language as a one of or their main medium of communication. However, despite modern technology, 60 percent of deaf children function at levels below their hearing peers when it comes to school class engagement and community social engagement. This social isolation has implications for the mental wellbeing of young deaf people and puts them at greater risk of experiencing anxiety and depression. This in turn affects their education and future employment and career prospects.

Australian research shows that an estimated one in five children and adolescents is likely to suffer from a mental health problem before reaching adulthood⁵. Evidence from international studies investigating the mental health of deaf children and adolescents indicate that the prevalence rate for mental health problems can be over 40 percent in this population with a higher incidence of emotional, behavioural and attentional problems when compared to hearing children and adolescents⁶. Many deaf teenagers experience low self-esteem, poor self-concept in particular identity, isolation, loneliness, anxiety and depression. In addition to limiting their employment prospects, hearing loss places limitations on the individual's ability to interact with the community. This has a significant economic and physical impact on the lives of the individual, their family and society.



1. "Communication and behavioural disorders among children with hearing loss increases risk of mental health disorders" by A. Hogan, M. Shipley & L. Strazdins, A. Purcell & E. Baker, Australian & NZ. Journal of Public Health, 2011 vol 25 No.4.
 2. "Correlates of mental health disorders among children with hearing impairments", by J. Fellingner, D. Hotzinger, H. Sattel, M. Laucht, and D. Goldberg, in the online Journal of Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology, 6th January 2009.
 3. http://www.deafsocietynsw.org.au/families/parent_to_parent.html
 4. "The Characteristics and Extent of Participation of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students in Regular Classes in Australian Schools" by Des Power and Merv Hyde in the Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education., Fall 2002; 7: 302 - 311.
 5. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2003.
 6. van Eldik, 2005; van Eldik, Treffers, Veerman & Verhulst, 2004; van Gent, Goedhart, Hindley & Treffers, 2007; Vostanis, Hayes, Du Feu & Warren, 1997.

THANK YOU

Hear For You is a registered charity which relies solely on donations and support from the community in Australian and New Zealand. Without cash donations to employ the staff and provide resources to support the work of the volunteer mentors, it would be very difficult to ensure high quality programs delivered to the teenagers.

We are working towards improving our funding base by establishing a range of cost effective fundraising strategies.

The organisation's goal is to provide its services in all the major capital cities and in regional and rural Australia by 2020.

Your support in the form of in-kind assistance, or donations of services or cash will ensure that Hear For You is able to meet its ambitious strategic plan and its vision to empower the next generation of deaf and hard of hearing Australians.





For more information about Hear For You
please email info@hearforyour.com.au or
go to our website www.hearforyour.com.au

