

THE JOURNAL of SHHH AUSTRALIA INC.
Self help for Hard of Hearing People

Hearing Matters

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SHHH Australia Inc
1334 Pacific Highway
Turrumurra NSW 2074



***Elizabeth Mathias
– Libby Harricks
Achievement Award
Winner 2014***

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COVER PHOTO: Elizabeth Mathias, 2014 Libby Harricks Achievement Award winner

**DEADLINE FOR
NEXT ISSUE:**

15th October 2014



**Remember,
hearing help
is available
wherever you
see this symbol**

SHHH Mission

SHHH Australia Inc. is a voluntary organisation giving services and support to hearing impaired people throughout Australia who communicate orally.

Editor Wanted!

Do you enjoy reading Hearing Matters? Would you like to make a real contribution to the lives and well-being of some of the millions of Australians who struggle with hearing loss?

Hearing Matters provides independent, informative and inspirational reading to many people affected by hearing loss, their families and the professionals who work with them. Our magazine needs a person with a desire to make a positive impact on the lives of people living with a hearing loss, by putting together the content of this publication four times a year. The editorial role doesn't require technical expertise, other than basic computer skills and the editor is strongly supported by our team of volunteers.

We are looking for someone with the time and interest to take over the helm of this publication that was launched as SHHH News 28 years ago and is still going strong. The current editor is stepping down after a decade in the role and it is time to update and improve the magazine. It is not a paid position, but re-imburement of expenses and technological and other support will be provided. Hours are flexible, and you can work from home or our office. If you have family commitments or a yen for travel, then this role would be an ideal way to give something positive to a needy disability group while enjoying a varied lifestyle.

If this sounds just a little bit interesting, and you would like to know more, please contact Richard Brading at shhh@netspace.net.au for more details.

SHHH is on Facebook!

Do you like Facebook? If you do, then try our new SHHH Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/160071054087557/> And tell your friends!

SHHH Australia

- Operates a hearing information centre
- Produces Hearing Matters as a quarterly newsletter for members and subscribers
- Runs an active Facebook page
- Supports and encourages local SHHH groups
- Maintains an extensive information service, with a series of fact sheets on aspects of hearing loss and its management
- Provides speakers as part of its extensive Outreach Program
- Administers a Hearing Aid Bank, in conjunction with the Audiology Department of Macquarie University in Sydney and other participating providers
- Acts as an advocate to government, industry and other organisations to make them more aware of issues concerning hearing loss

Word of Mouth Technology

Looking for a great deal on assistive listening devices? Word of Mouth Technology will provide SHHH members with a **10% discount off retail products**. You must advise Word of Mouth of your membership at the time of ordering.

This offer does not include TTY phones, or commercial hearing assistance systems and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Employment of people with a disability is a controversial issue at present, with some media outlets suggesting people with a disability, particularly a mental disability such as depression, are bludgers.

People with disability are more likely to be out of paid employment than other people of working age, with a labour force participation rate of 54 versus 83 per cent. Forty-five per cent of people with disability are also near or below the poverty line.

A recent report by Patrick McClure, former head of Mission Australia, commissioned by the Commonwealth Government, recommended moving many of the 830,000 recipients of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) onto lower levels of payment, such as Newstart, or cutting off their benefits completely. An article in The Australian on 30th June, quoted McClure as suggesting that people with mental illnesses could be one such group. McClure said "Thirty per cent of people on a disability support pension are people with mental health conditions and these conditions are often episodic in nature, for example, severe depression or anxiety. In talking with experts in the field... what they recommend is a vocational rehabilitation approach, which makes sense when you think about it".

The 2014-15 Federal Budget introduced compulsory work-focused activities for DSP recipients under age 35, who have an assessed work capacity of at least eight hours per week. Activities will be focused on support to prepare for, find and maintain employment. They could include connecting with an employment service provider, work experience, education and training, or rehabilitation activities, to overcome individual barriers. DSP recipients who do not complete their activities may have their payment suspended or cancelled. There will also be a re-assessment of the capacity for work of those on a DSP aged less than 35 years, with a work capacity of eight or more hours a week.

People with Disability Australia President Craig Wallace said, "We want to see more people in jobs, not on welfare. PWDA believes that any young people re-assessed and found ineligible should be offered a job, apprenticeship or training opportunity, rather than pushed onto Newstart or Youth Allowance. Young people need a restart to embark on a life of opportunity and the Government should provide wage subsidies to them as a first priority. Re-assessing people without jobs to go to, will mean they are tossed onto Newstart or Youth Allowance and into greater poverty."

Hearing loss is a major obstacle to gaining employment. This year's Libby Harricks Achievement Award winner, Elizabeth Mathias, could have given up the struggle to gain and keep employment and may well have ended up on the Disability Support Pension. She provides a good example of overcoming the challenges faced by those with a severe or profound hearing loss.

What experts, politicians and media commentators fail to understand is how the process of endless rejection and failure damages the human spirit. In my many years of disability advocacy, I have never met a person on the Disability Support Pension who would not prefer to be in the workforce. Mostly they see themselves as less valuable and respected than those who can work.

Employment discussions among unemployed hearing-impaired people frequently focus on the question 'when to disclose' a hearing loss. Job seekers find that if they disclose their hearing loss up-front they never get to an interview. If they disclose their hearing loss at the interview, then they never get the job. Or if they don't disclose their hearing loss at all, they may not get the job if they failed to hear some important part of the conversation and the employer thought they were stupid. It is a sad fact that so few employers in Australia are willing to take on a person with a hearing loss.

The excellent speech by David Brady of Deafness Forum, illustrates some of the ways in which employment is important to the hearing impaired and other groups in our sector.

If we are serious about reducing the number of people on Disability Support Pension, then there needs to be significant resources allocated to rehabilitation and to make jobs accessible. In particular, employers need to be educated about how and why they should treat people with a disability fairly when they apply for employment, and how to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace. Some incentives to employ people with a disability are also needed, and perhaps a "name and shame" campaign to motivate recalcitrant employers, including government, to lift their game



Richard Brading
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