

August 2015

# *Hearing Matters*



In this issue  
Audiology  
In Wellington

# Contents

## Feature

Audiology in Wellington 4

## Other Features

President's Message 2

The Wellington Declaration 5

Cath Bonnes 6

Book Review 7

Dealing with the workplace 8

Emma Scanlan's Trip Diary 10

SHHH Digest 12

The SHHH Noticeboard 14

Subscription form 15

The Letter Page 15

## Deadline for next issue - October 5

Dear reader, member,

Contributions are very welcome. Please don't hesitate to tell us your story, or write to us if you have something interesting to share. The editor reserves the right to use or edit as necessary. Ideas and opinions expressed in *Hearing Matters* are those of the author and not necessarily those of SHHH Australia Inc.

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### SHHH Mission:

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

### SHHH is on Facebook!

Try our SHHH Facebook page:

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# President's Message

## Community Service Obligations and the NDIS

You've all heard of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by now, so what is happening? I recently attended an information session about the government's plans for the NDIS and Australian Hearing. Proposed changes to the entire way in which the Commonwealth government supports disability will have profound impacts on consumers and service providers.

The NDIS is currently operating in a number of trial sites around Australia. It only applies to people under 65 years. Those over 65 will remain eligible for the voucher program operated by the Office of Hearing Services. Changes to eligibility for pensions will flow on to eligibility for the voucher program.

The full NDIS will not start until about 2019-2020. Most people with a profound hearing impairment will be eligible for the NDIS (around 45 dB minimum loss in the better ear), but the rest of us will have to hope that existing programs will continue. Existing clients will remain in programs funded by the Office of Hearing Services if they do not move to the NDIS program.

The Commonwealth government is currently negotiating with the States for the transfer of State compensation schemes, such as workers compensation, to the NDIS.

The Community Service Obligation (CSO) program provides hearing services to a number of vulnerable groups under 65. Currently, Australian Hearing is the sole provider of government funded hearing services to the CSO client groups. AH provides CSO services to:

- Hearing-impaired and deaf children and young adults up to the age of 26
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people between 50 and 65
- Those participating in the Remote Jobs and Communities Program
- Adults with complex hearing rehabilitation needs.

The government intends to expand the voucher program to include the CSO group. A number of concerns arise from this proposal, including:

- Will deaf and hearing impaired children be better or worse off under the changes? This is an issue of great concern to parents' groups who have fought long and hard over many years to get the current level of service for their children.