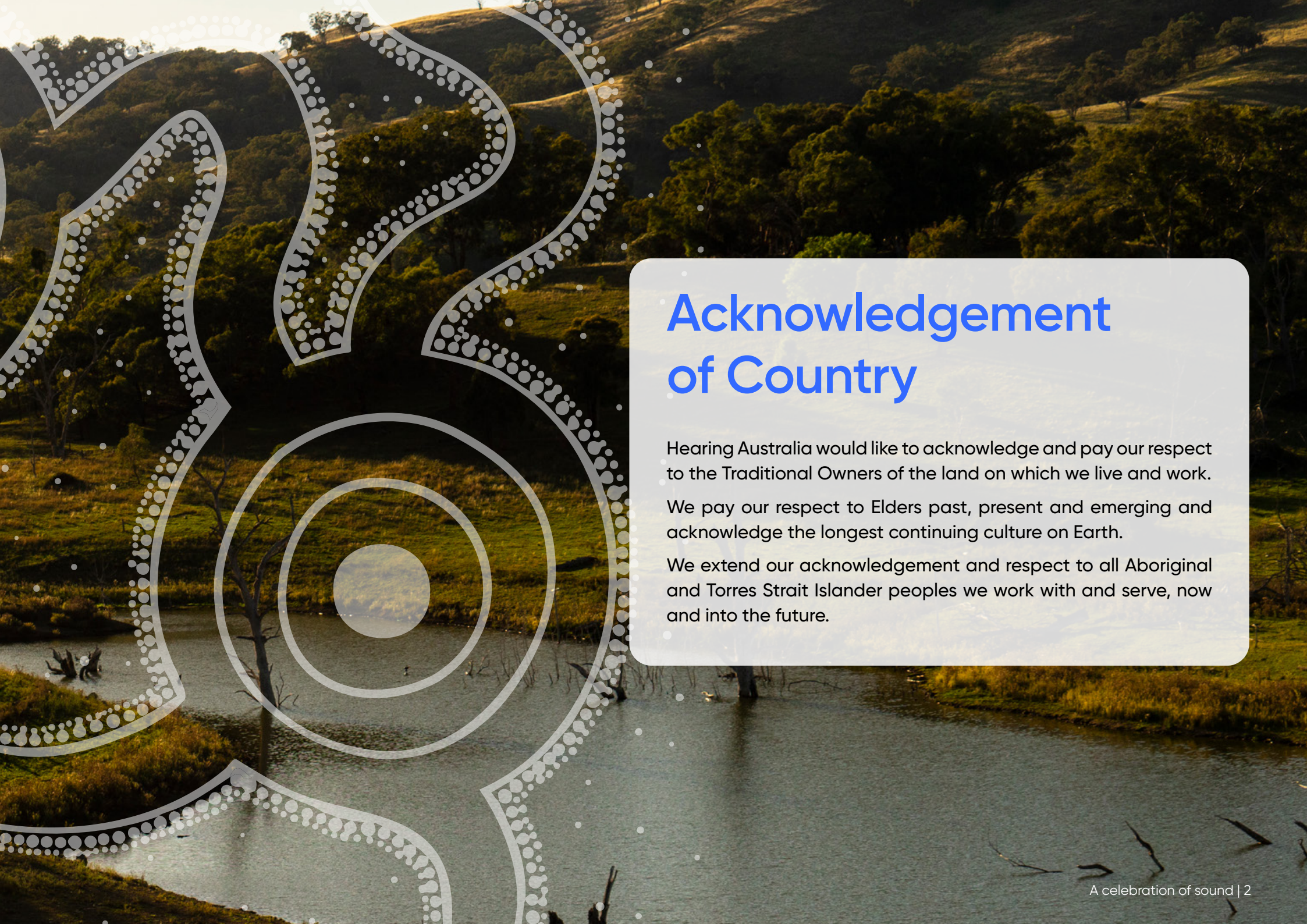
# A celebration of sound

## The history of Hearing Australia

Changing lives for 75 years through innovative, world-leading research and expert hearing care

Hearing Australia



# Acknowledgement of Country

Hearing Australia would like to acknowledge and pay our respect to the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work.

We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the longest continuing culture on Earth.

We extend our acknowledgement and respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we work with and serve, now and into the future.

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Hearing Australia

# Foreword

It is with great pleasure that Hearing Australia presents this commemorative book to mark a very special milestone, our 75th anniversary.

75 years is a big achievement and Hearing Australia's journey has been an extraordinary one. Starting with our support to returned war veterans in 1947, we've built on our models of care and expertise, becoming a world leader in the delivery of research and hearing services. We remain laser focused on the wellbeing of all Australians impacted by hearing loss.

I trust you will enjoy this journey through our history and join us in celebrating the creativity and innovation that over time, has allowed us to change the lives of hundreds of thousands of Australians suffering hearing loss. It's a privilege to play a role in transforming people's lives and through Hearing Australia's dedicated staff, their expertise and unwavering focus on care, we do that each and every day.

We have a proud history and have come a long way in a changing world, but one thing hasn't changed – our commitment to keeping people at the heart of everything we do.

**Elizabeth Crouch AM**
**Chair**

*"My adventure with Hearing Australia began when it was a mere fledgling back in 1947. I was young then too, just 21, and newly returned from RAAF service in the Philippines.*

*I joined the RAAF as a telegraphist and then learnt Japanese kana morse code. My job involved signals intelligence, which meant long hours of listening in on enemy signals traffic. Often the signals would come through very loudly and it ultimately affected my hearing. When I got back, I realised I had problems.*

*Lucky for me Hearing Australia, or Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratories as it was known then, was there to help me. And now, 75 years on, it continues to keep me in touch with my family and friends and with what is going on in the world.*

*I've seen a lot of wonderful changes over the decades but the care and focus on me as a person has always stayed the same. With the support of Hearing Australia, I've had the opportunity to experience some wonderful adventures and live a very full life.*

*In all this time, I've never once thought to go anywhere else for hearing help.*

*Happy birthday, Hearing Australia!"*

Ron Hansen, Hearing Australia client of 75 years

# Introduction

## Hearing Australia, celebrating the joy of sound

"Hearing Australia has just kind of always been there for me, a bit like a good family GP. Before me, they were there for my grandfather, too."

*– Brendan Pearce, Hearing Australia client and Disability Rights Advocate*

## At Hearing Australia, what we do changes lives.

To commemorate 75 years of progress and celebrate the joy of sound, we have developed this book to capture how we have positively impacted the lives of over 1.5 million Australians with our care, compassion, professionalism, and innovation.

Since our story started in the 1940s, helping returned Second World War veterans and young children affected by the rubella epidemic, Hearing Australia has celebrated important milestones, world-firsts and other achievements in our mission to provide world-leading research and hearing services for the wellbeing of all Australians.

For 75 years, we have been committed to working with our partners to improve the lives of people with hearing difficulties. We have been:

- Helping Australians discover and rediscover the joy of sound
- Keeping Australians connected to the life and people they love
- Leading research that changes lives
- Making positive differences that impact whole communities
- Working to prevent hearing loss in high-risk industries and communities, especially in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Currently, approximately 3.6 million Australians have hearing loss, and this number is expected to double by 2060*. While our history is rich and diverse, our role continues to be significant and important, as we work towards preventing avoidable hearing loss and improving hearing health outcomes.

*In reading this book, we trust you will understand more about who we are, what we do, who we help, where we've come from, and what's next for Hearing Australia.*

* Deloitte Access Economics (2017), The Social and Economic Cost of Hearing Loss in Australia, June 2017, commissioned by the Hearing Care Industry Association (HCIA)

**Photo:** A pure tone audiometer test of a girl's hearing using a screening audiometer. The test is being carried out by Mr. Roland H. Farrant, Chief Psychologist (now carried out by audiologists) at the Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratory in Melbourne 1949.

# Major milestones – a timeline

## 1947

The birth of what we now know as Hearing Australia! The Department of Health creates ***Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratories (CAL).***

Photo courtesy of State Library of NSW.

## 1948

We launch our first hearing aid, the Calaid. The Calaid would go on to shape Australia's acoustic history.

## 1954

Our Adelaide laboratory makes its first visit to an NT Aboriginal community.

## 1955

CAL has branches in every major city in Australia, as well as visiting sites. We begin helping all Australian children.

## 1965

We launch Australia's first in-the-ear hearing aid, the Calaid E.

## 1968

The Australian Government Hearing Services Program expands to include social security pensioners.

## 1970

A new approach to service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is developed.

## 1973

CAL becomes the ***National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL).*** Our 100,000th Calaid is fitted and we reach 250,000 clients.

**75 years of helping over 1.5 million children and adults with hearing loss.**

## 1991

In partnership with Bernafon, we design programmable in-the-ear hearing aids.

Australian Hearing

The Australian Hearing Services Act 1991 comes into effect. We become known as ***Australian Hearing Services***, established as a statutory authority. ***National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL)*** becomes our research division.

## 1997

The Australian Government launches the new Voucher Program.

Photo from our 50th anniversary

## 2009

Our mobile hearing check service starts with our first Hearing Bus hitting the road. This year our 100th centre opens.

## 2016

We create a new channel of communication, launching a website, online chat and helpline to make us more accessible and to help more people.

## 2020

Our centres remain open providing essential hearing services to help our clients and the community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters.

# Hearing Australia

## 1993

We design Australia's first digital hearing aids.

## 2005

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged over 50 become eligible to receive services under the Community Service Obligations component of the Australian Government Hearing Services Program.

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

## 2015

We become World Record holders for the most hearing checks performed in one day.

Hearing Australia

## 2019

We update our brand identity and change our name to ***Hearing Australia***.

The Hearing Assessment Program - Early Ears (HAPEE) commences.

## 2022

We celebrate 75 years of delivering innovative, world-leading research and expert hearing care.

# Part 1: Our proud history

## Through the decades: 1940s to today

As we explore and celebrate our 75 years of remarkable research and service delivery, it's important to understand the broader context of life in Australia. You'll be fascinated to reflect on many of the trends and key historical events that have taken place alongside, and sometimes intersected with, our own growth and transformation since the 1940s.

We hope you enjoy contemplating the significance of the power and wonder of sound as we explore our history, through the decades.

# 1940s

In the 1940s, the Second World War influenced the lives and livelihoods of all Australians. Approximately 550,000 Australian men and women (around one in 12) served overseas during the war. When the war ended in 1945, uncertainty made way for new beginnings and opportunities – the first Australian Holden motor car came off the assembly line and became a symbol of Australian prosperity, the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme starts construction, and popular radio serial *The Lawsons* was broadcast by the ABC.

Among the new beginnings and opportunities, though, were new problems that needed to be addressed. Returning veterans were experiencing war-related hearing loss, and a link between rubella and hearing loss was discovered following the epidemic of 1939-1941. This is where the story of Hearing Australia begins.

## The early days

We were first established when the Acoustic Research Laboratory (ARL), which had been initially set up by the National Health and Medical Research Council, was taken over by the Commonwealth Department of Health on 1 January 1947.

As the Department of Health took over the Laboratory, Hearing Australia was born, under the name Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratories (CAL). We were tasked with researching noise, hearing and communication in the armed services, as well as helping people with hearing loss including:

1. Returned veterans with hearing loss (mostly mild to moderate) caused by war-related noise damage.
2. Young children affected by the rubella epidemic. These children typically had a profound hearing loss and little speech, if any.

We were based at Erskine House, Sydney and the Director at this time was Mr NE Murray.

We had just four team members; a psychologist, two technicians and a secretary.

According to the Acoustic Laboratories Act, 1948, the Laboratories were *"for scientific investigation including that in respect of hearing aids and their application to the needs of individuals, and in respect of problems with noise as it affects individuals"*.

## First branch laboratories

Soon after we transferred to the Commonwealth Department of Health, we began expanding across Australia. The Repatriation Commission had asked for assistance with fitting hearing aids for ex-servicemen and agreed to contribute towards establishing and maintaining branch laboratories in the capital cities of all states in Australia.

In April 1947, the first branch laboratory was established in Perth, followed in December by smaller laboratories in Victoria and South Australia, then Queensland in 1948 and Tasmania in 1949.

**The Calaid – our first hearing aid**

Come 1948, we'd launched Australia's first hearing aid.

# 1950s

The 1950s saw the dawn of The Great Australian Dream, where home ownership represented success and security – for many people – in the period of post-war reconstruction. It is a decade driven by family-focused values and the introduction of labour-saving devices and appliances in the home, like washing machines and Victa lawn mowers. In 1956, advertising executive Bruce Gyngell launched commercial television and Melbourne hosted the Summer Olympic Games, the first held in Oceania.

Meanwhile, Hearing Australia was branching out so more Australians could enjoy the sounds that accompanied this new era of relative prosperity. This included its first visit to an Aboriginal community.

## Branches in every major city

By the mid-1950s, we had branches in every major city in Australia.

## Children aged under 21

We began helping all Australian children aged under 21. Fitting children and young people with hearing aids made for a shift in the way children with hearing loss were educated. More children were able to move out of special schools, as they were called at the time, and into mainstream schooling as they could learn more effectively with the support of hearing aids.

## New research functions

In 1952, we were given new and specific research functions to help hearing health:

- Investigations into audiology testing equipment
- Investigations into noise in industry
- Investigations into boilermakers' deafness
- Development of a preliminary test to measure susceptibility to deafness through noise
- Advice to armed services regarding noise problems.

Later, we also conducted research into the medical aspects of ultrasonics — sounds we cannot hear but which can damage hearing.

## Our first services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

In 1954, our Adelaide laboratory made our first visit to an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory. This visit marked the beginnings of our dedicated services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation, which continue to grow today.

***We fitted 1,120 hearing aids in 1954.***

# 1960s

In the 1960s, suburbs spread out and major shopping centres sprung up in a decade of great social change in Australia. It was marked by the birth of the civil rights movement, Vietnam War, moves towards equality for women in the workplace, and the beginnings of legal recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. American and British culture influenced our fashion, entertainment, sport, technology and food.

It was also an era of huge growth for Hearing Australia, with social security pensioners becoming part of the Australian Government Hearing Services Program and a growing demographic of elderly clients.

## Reaching those who need us

By the 1960s, we had grown to have seven branch laboratories and 10 country centres across Australia. Our South Australian Laboratory visited Darwin and Alice Springs three times a year, working with the school medical service to provide hearing tests for children and teens, including in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Our Queensland Laboratory also visited Papua New Guinea regularly.

## Hearing health and protection

An important part of our role was, and still is, to provide hearing protection advice. In the 1960s, we particularly focused on armed services, industry and children, conducting research, and providing education around prevention of hearing loss.

In 1963, then based in The Rocks in Sydney, we developed individually-moulded ear protectors which were used extensively in industry and by the Defence Forces at this time.

## Induction coils and hearing loops

In 1961, we incorporated induction coils into our hearing aids. This was a big step in terms of access as it meant people could use hearing loop systems, which help eliminate background noise and improve speech understanding. We set about helping schools install hearing loops so any of their students with hearing loss could get the benefits.

## Services to social security pensioners

In 1968, the Australian Government Hearing Services Program expanded to include social security pensioners. This made for a huge increase in service delivery. Services also shifted to reflect the growing demographic of elderly clients, who of course, have different needs to children.

***In 1967 we had 115 full-time staff.***

# 1970s

The 1970s was a period of cultural and social change in Australia. In 1978 Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM, who was a chairman of the Northern Land Council (NLC), was announced as Australian of the Year.

Hearing Australia helped Australians to enjoy the landline telephones, FM radios and colour televisions that had begun to appear in homes. The sounds of the 1970s included artists like David Bowie and Led Zeppelin who had just hit the scene, along with disco music and the hit show *Young Talent Time*.

## We became the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL)

In 1973, we became known as the **National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL)** and celebrated a year of milestones, including:

- The 100,000th Calaid was fitted
- We reached 250,000 clients.

***In 1975, we fitted 24,500 hearing aids.***

NAL's research activities were extended to improve hearing aids and the methods of fitting them. Our research highlighted the significant benefits of binaural (two) hearing aids for children, which quickly became routine. We were the only hearing service in the world to fit newly-developed behind-the-ear hearing aids routinely to children. The widespread use of high-powered behind-the-ear fittings came from NAL's superior method for creating custom-fit hearing aids.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – a new approach

In the early '70s, a three-tier approach to service delivery was developed and we began training health workers in Northern Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in screening and referral techniques. NAL Darwin oversaw the hearing screening program provided by the Northern Territory Government and collected data on hearing loss across the territory.

Meanwhile, in Queensland, Palm Island was the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community visited from Townsville. NAL provided amplification devices in support of the Aboriginal Hearing Conservation and Treatment program run by the University of Queensland. This was the beginning of regular visiting services throughout the state that continue today.

# 1980s

The 1980s is remembered as a period of glitz, glamour and excess, often referred to as the 'Me Decade', characterised by big hair, fluro, Rubik's cubes, Walkmans, *Crocodile Dundee*, and a booming economy – until the stock market crashed in 1987, sending Australia into economic recession. In the 1980s, First Nations peoples began to make some gains in their land rights struggle and multiculturalism challenged traditional ideas about what it meant to be an Australian.

In many homes, microwaves changed our eating habits and videocassette recorders changed how we experienced entertainment. We were also seeing changes in hearing technology, with the launch of the Calaid FM Wireless hearing aid, and the introduction of Australia's first digital hearing aid just around the corner.

## A period of rapid growth

In the 1980s, our number of hearing centres climbed to 35. We also had 65 visiting sites across Australia. Our headquarters moved from The Rocks in Sydney to a new large purpose-built premise in Chatswood, Sydney.

## Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) criteria

Our 1982 research into community reaction to aircraft noise resulted in the Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) criteria, which was adopted by the Australian Government.

## Vibrotactile hearing aids

Around this time, we also began routinely fitting vibrotactile aids, which convert sounds to vibrations, for our profoundly deaf clients.

## Calaid FM Wireless

In 1983, our new hearing aid system was launched by the then Health Minister, Dr Neal Blewett, at the opening of our hearing centre in Tamworth. The Calaid FM Wireless system was hailed as a world leader in its field. The major roll out of the program involved 6000 children, which started in 1984 and went for three years.

***We fitted 42,000 hearing aids in 1983.***

# 1990s

In the early 1990s, Australia's economy was shifting. Grunge fashion became renowned, including flannel shirts and Doc Martens, while the film *Strictly Ballroom* was a smash hit. In 1991, we could share information through the World Wide Web, with home computers and the internet capturing our attention. The landmark 'Bringing Them Home' report was tabled in Federal Parliament in 1997, marking a pivotal moment in the healing journey of many Stolen Generation members.

Hearing Australia's services were becoming increasingly accessible to Australians with the launch of the government's voucher program entitling eligible Australians to government-subsidised hearing services, including devices. There were also further developments in services to First Nations communities.

## We became Australian Hearing Services

In 1991, the Australian Hearing Services Act 1991 came into effect and Australian Hearing Services, or Australian Hearing as we were later called, was established as a statutory authority. The National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) became the research division of Australian Hearing.

## Australia's first digital hearing aids

In the early 1990s, we designed Australia's first digital hearing aids. This was the beginning of a new era in hearing aids. Microprocessors made them smaller and more powerful, and as time went on, digital hearing aids became more and more customisable to the user until they became what you see in today's aids.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service developments

Our services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continued to grow. In 1990, we trialled a sound-field amplification system in an Alice Springs community school to make it easier for children with mild hearing loss to hear in the classroom. Later, in 1995, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service to train health workers and provide audiometric equipment that could be used in communities.

***In 1997, we had 60 hearing centres, with over 200 visiting sites, and 700 people. We also fitted 100,000 hearing aids.***

A cooperative program between NAL, NT Health Audiologists and Nurse Audiometrists, NT Aboriginal Hearing Program and Menzies School of Health Research saw the programs expand into many new communities. Working alongside other agencies including the Royal Flying Doctor Service, local hospitals, health teams and schools made for a coordinated approach to reaching those who needed us.

## Cochlear implants

As cochlear implants, small surgically implanted hearing devices, start to become more commonplace, NAL became a core participant in the Cooperative Research Centre for Cochlear Implant, Speech and Hearing Research. In 1992, Australian Hearing began supplying repairs and spare parts for clients with cochlear implants.

## A world-first in hearing technology accessibility

In 1991, we partnered with Bernafon to design programmable in-the-ear hearing aids. We were the only hearing service provider in the world to offer such sophisticated technology as standard. In 1995, a high-powered programmable hearing aid, the PB675 was introduced and exported in large numbers by Bernafon.

## Launch of the voucher program

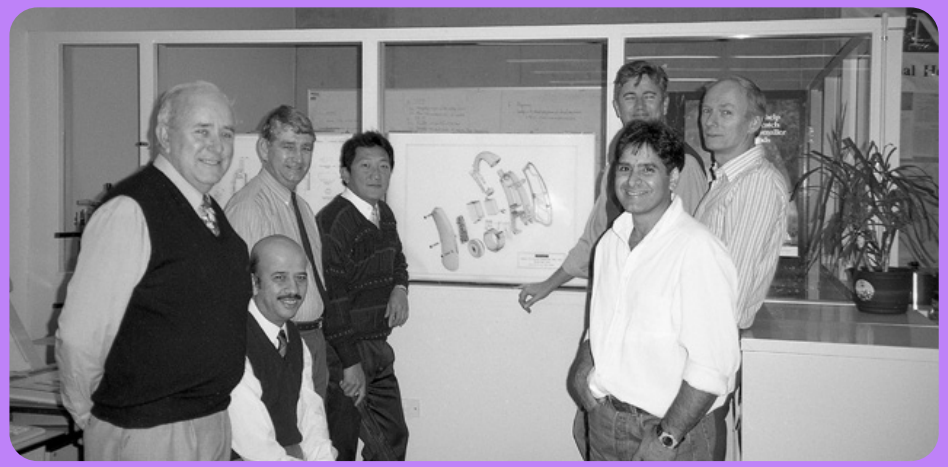
In 1997, the voucher program was established and it continues today. The program provides eligible Australians with government-subsidised hearing services, including devices. The Hearing Services Administration Act 1997 came into effect and the Office of Hearing Services was formally established to administer the voucher system and accredit providers of hearing services. The Community Service Obligations (CSO) component of the program was contracted to Australian Hearing Services to deliver to eligible groups.

## We celebrated our 50th anniversary

In the 1990s, we celebrated our half-century of hearing innovation and service to Australians. In recognition, NAL presented bound volumes of 620 research publications to the National Library and to universities who were providing courses in acoustics or audiology as an educational offering.

## NAL-NL1 hearing aid prescription

In 1999, we released the NAL-NL1 procedure for fitting nonlinear hearing aids, which aims to make speech more intelligible and keep the overall loudness at a comfortable level.



# 2000s

At the turn of the millennium, the Sydney 2000 Olympics showcased Australia to a global audience where, memorably, athlete Cathy Freeman lit the Olympic torch and won the 400m track event. In 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a formal apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly to the Stolen Generations.

Throughout the 2000s, we grew increasingly concerned about global warming, and embraced new giant social media platform, Facebook. It was the decade of the first iPhone, and Hearing Australia went mobile – in a different way.

## Reaching all Australians – our first hearing bus and our 100th centre

In 2009, we opened our 100th hearing centre, in Robina, Queensland. In the same year, our first Hearing Bus hit the road, heralding the beginning of our mobile hearing services – and demonstrating our commitment to delivering world-class hearing services to all Australians.

From that one bus, we now have a network of buses which tour Australia. They're custom-equipped and able to operate in remote areas of the country. Visitors to the bus can get a free 15-minute hearing check, chat with the team about hearing health, and access information on a range of hearing issues.

## Further expansion for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services

In 2005, we expanded our services to include all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged over 50, under the Community Service Obligations component of the Australian Government Hearing Services Program.

***In 2007, we had more than 90 permanent sites, with over 220 visiting sites and 978 people.***

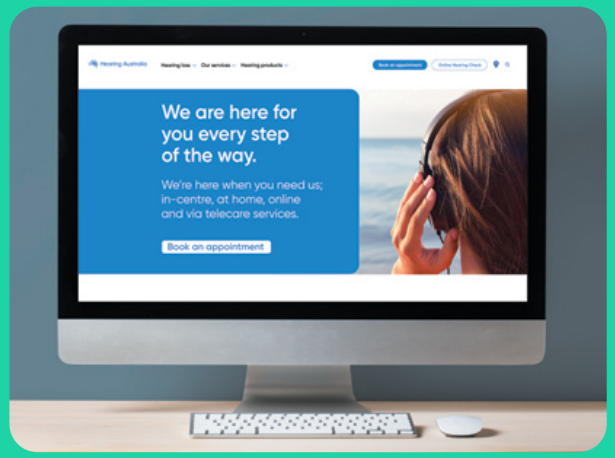
# 2010s

In the 2010s, Julia Gillard served as the 27th Prime Minister of Australia (2010-2013) – the first female prime minister in our history. Australians voted in favour of marriage equality in 2017 in a historic postal survey and became more focused on the real-life impacts of climate change.

Our love of the online continued and social media was shifting the way we communicated. For Hearing Australia, it was a transformative decade too with the launch of a whole new online way to reach our clients, and a whole new brand.

## The release of NAL-NL2

In 2011, NAL-NL2 was officially released, our second generation of prescription procedures. Today, it's the most widely used fitting prescription for hearing aids helping more people around the world experience sound.




## A world record

During the 2015 National Hearing Awareness Week, we urged the nation to get their hearing checked in record-breaking style. Our Port Macquarie centre tested 712 people in just eight hours, shattering the previous world record of 494.

## Online hearing advice

In 2016, we created a new online channel of communication for our clients. We launched a new website with online chat and a clinical helpline to improve quick access to professional hearing advice for all Australians.

## We became Hearing Australia

In 2019, as part of our commitment to deliver better services to clients, we updated our branding and changed our name to Hearing Australia. The new name and branding were developed in direct response to our clients' feedback, based on research involving 1,500 people. The change was designed to help more people connect with us, and to better reflect who we are and how we're able to help Australians.

## Healthy ears are HAPEE ears

In 2019, we launched the Hearing Assessment Program - Early Ears (HAPEE). The program was developed following consultation between Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service representatives, the Department of Health, key people from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander hearing health sector and Hearing Australia. HAPEE provides free diagnostic hearing assessments and follow-up treatment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-6 who do not yet attend full-time school.

# 2020s

While it's been a tumultuous start to the 2020s, with extreme weather events and a global pandemic, the importance of science has been put in the spotlight, as we find our way in the era of our 'new normal' in Australia with optimism and resilience.

At Hearing Australia, we're playing a part in this by helping all Australians hear the sounds they love. Around the world people are benefiting from our world-leading innovation and research. This is all thanks to our people, our clients and our supporters.

As the states and territories have navigated lockdowns and natural disasters, we have responded by adapting to changing circumstances to make sure Australians are able to access hearing help whenever they need it. And for the first time, during the pandemic our services were available even to those who weren't eligible for government-subsidised services.

## Today

In 2022, we have over **480 locations** across the nation, helping over **270,000 clients** and delivering more than **570,000 services**. Our team of more than **450 trained clinicians** remain focused on finding the best hearing solutions for our clients and families. We provide a wide range of high-tech, discreet hearing aids and assistive listening devices.

We continue to work with communities across regional, rural and remote Australia to tackle high rates of hearing loss in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Hearing Assessment Program – Early Ears, dubbed HAPEE is a result of a $30 million investment by the Australian Government and will help us achieve our goal of reducing the rate of hearing loss in First Nations children by at least half by 2029.

Through the National Acoustic Laboratories, our world-renowned research division, we're contributing to new technology that's improving hearing health globally.

Here we are, in 2022, acknowledging an incredible 75 years of hard work, growth, persistence, innovation and leadership that with the support of our many partners, has ultimately brought the wonder of sound to more people across Australia. We will continue to strengthen the work we do, every day to keep people connected to their families, friends, communities and the life they love.

# Part 2: The proof of our success

## How good hearing health changes lives

**The joy of sound is universal.**

From hearing the laughter of a child and the voice of a loved one to a conversation with friends and the crashing of waves at the beach – sound connects us with the people and places around us.

This is why hearing health matters.

Each week at Hearing Australia, we help thousands of children, adults, pensioners and veterans live life to the fullest through the online, in-home and in-centre services we deliver across the country. We value our clients, partners and people, who all contribute to our success, and we would love you to learn more about our programs and innovations, which have changed the lives of many Australians for the better.

# Our clients

## Brendan

*"My first memories of Hearing Australia are full of fun. I loved the marble games used for assessments, the soundproof booths, different headphones and best of all, the tactile putty they use to make ear moulds. Sometime,s I was even allowed to take some putty away with me to play with at home.*

*I was born with hearing loss and Hearing Australia has just kind of always been there for me, a bit like a good family GP. Before me, they were there for my grandfather too. He was a WWII veteran who had hearing loss that we believe was related to his time in service. Hearing Australia helped him as a Department of Veterans Affairs client, something my family remains grateful for.*

*I'm honestly not sure where I'd be in society without the services Hearing Australia has provided me throughout my life. What they offer goes way beyond running assessments and fitting hearing aids. They've helped me and my family as I've gone through school and they've supported my ongoing passion as a disability rights advocate.*

*It hasn't always been easy living with hearing loss but it's mostly down to other people's perceptions rather than the hearing loss itself, and it's those perceptions that need to change. I had a tough time with other kids at school but that's what eventually motivated me to stand up and correct injustice.*

*During my senior years in high school, I took up advocacy work. I was elected State Youth Member for Lismore, and a Minister and Shadow Minister in the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament, Young Lions President and I went on to run as the youngest ever Local Council Candidate in New South Wales at the time. Aged 20, I flew to the United Nations headquarters in New York to speak before 500 world leaders at the Conference of States Parties on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and express my belief that we need to better support the inclusion of the views of young people at the decision-making table.*

*A role that provided a fantastic opportunity to shape how hearing services look for children and young people, was my time on the Hearing Australia Paediatric Advisory Committee. It meant I could get involved in the organisation that has helped me so much over my lifetime at a deeper level and be a voice for younger clients. I ended up serving on the committee for nearly six years, three of them as Chair.*

*I'm passionate about seeing a society where people with hearing loss are simply included in everyday life and not judged for their capabilities. I don't see how wearing hearing aids limits you any more than someone who wears glasses. I do think as a society we are getting there, and that progress is exactly why the work of Hearing Australia is so important. I, for one, am grateful to have had them in my corner all this time."*

## Uncle Harry

*"When I walk through the doors of my local Hearing Australia branch, I know I'll always get a happy welcome from the team and they'll help me with whatever I need, whether it's an annual assessment or just some new batteries for my hearing aids. It's been a long time since I started coming to Hearing Australia and I've got to know the staff so well they almost feel like family.*

*As Hearing Australia celebrates 75 years, I will turn 80 in December. But I'm still keeping myself busy. Variety is the spice of life, so I try to do a sprinkling of everything in my leisure time – movies, restaurants, socialising with friends and visiting the local shops. I'm also very involved in community organisations and sit on several committees working on health, culture and indigenous issues. The fact that I can do all these things at my age is just wonderful.*

*I've only recently stood down as the inaugural Royal Australian Air Force Indigenous Elder, having been appointed in 2012 after serving between 1966 and 1989. It was early on in my time with RAAF that my hearing declined, with the exposure to loud noise during training and service doing irreparable damage to my hearing. Back then, we weren't so used to health and safety measure, I suppose.*

*Eventually, I went to Hearing Australia for help, as a veteran. I'd been having trouble hearing at meetings and my wife noticed I had the volume on the TV up high. The team at Hearing Australia was amazing and as soon as I had my hearing aids, I felt able to participate properly in life again. Even if I was sitting at the bottom of the table in meetings, I could still hear the discussions, and my wife was happy to have the TV at a normal volume.*

*When it comes to favourite sounds, I have plenty but among the best would have to be music, whether it's recorded or a live show. I love a good musical show! To hear the finer details of the instruments blending together is a lovely feeling and I feel privileged that I can experience that."*

> *"I have a lot to thank my hearing aids for. At the end of the day, they allow me to continue to do the things I love most, and for that I feel like a very lucky man."*

Photo courtesy of Aircraftwoman Emma Schwenke

*“Hearing Australia is still an important part of May Li’s life.”*

## Doreen and her daughter May Li

*“Hearing Australia has been part of mine and my daughter May Li’s lives since she was around two years old when her early childhood centre picked up that May Li wasn’t hearing properly. An assessment from the team at Hearing Australia confirmed that she had profound hearing loss in both ears.*

*May Li was born with Down Syndrome, which meant her ability to communicate could also be affected, so it was imperative that we got the right support to give her the best chance at life. She was immediately fitted with hearing aids in both ears and with the support of a range of services over the years including early intervention and special schools, she learned to lip read, sign and use some vocabulary. She also learned to read text so she knows what something says if it’s written down.*

*May Li is now 35 and has recently transitioned to independent living. She loves to socialise, listen to music and dance, explore the city and go shopping with friends from her educational centre. She also works one day a wee, which she thoroughly enjoys.*

*May Li’s hearing aids have played an important role in keeping her connected to the world around her as not many people can use sign language. Although she is not able to respond verbally, her hearing aids have enabled her to hear what people are saying and understand them. The hearing aids have helped her much more than just simply observing from afar, but also actively participating in many different activities around the community with family, friends and loved ones.*

*Hearing Australia is still an important part of May Li’s life. Her hearing is continuously changing and she knows how to control her hearing aids in line with what’s going on. She still visits for her regular check-ups and adjustments, including any repairs. We’ve tried various gadgets and technologies but it is the hearing aids that have made the biggest difference over the course of her life so far. I don’t know where she would be without Hearing Australia, so I am very grateful to them and the work they do in supporting my daughter.”*

## Claire

*"What I love about my audiologist at Hearing Australia is that she focuses on what can be done instead of what can't. This is so important to me because in the past, at times, I've found it hard to come to terms with my hearing loss and the impact it has on my life. I have learned that staying upbeat definitely helps, and she's always a positive influence.*

*As a musician, to find out you have permanent hearing loss is daunting, to say the least. Music is a language you use to speak with other people and a huge part of your identity. I spent years touring Australia and internationally, I've sung for a crowd of 30,000 people at the Bledisloe Cup and written and recorded my own music. When I was diagnosed in my mid-thirties after a sudden loss of hearing I had to work hard to find ways to adapt.*

*My hearing aids made a big difference, of course, but I also invested in technology that helps me hear what I'm singing more clearly when I'm performing on stage. I find I'm now relying on my memory of pitch when I perform too. It's not ideal for me but it must be working because I'm still performing 15 years on.*

*Because of the nature of my hearing loss, I'm now on the waitlist for a cochlear implant, which feels like a big step for me. It will obviously improve my hearing but I'm not sure how it will affect my music as my brain will have a lot of adapting to do with one hearing ear and one hearing sound through the implant. But, it's something I know I need to do and I'm really looking forward to the benefits it will bring to my life. Being able to properly hear people when we're speaking will be amazing.*

*Hearing Australia is helping me in preparation for the cochlear implant, making sure my hearing aids are working to keep my ears stimulated to get the best outcome, and obviously helping maximise my hearing for everyday life in the meantime. I know they'll be a great support during and after the transition period as well.*

*I love the ongoing relationship I have with Hearing Australia and my audiologist, they're honestly the best and I truly have a lot to thank them for."*

## Jenny

*"I'll never forget the day I took my eldest son, Ryan, to Hearing Australia for a hearing test aged four. I actually hadn't noticed he had a problem but someone had suggested it might be worth checking. Well, it's just as well they did because to my surprise it turned out he had a severe hearing loss. Because of his results they suggested testing both my daughter, Logan, and me as well. I was in for another shock. Not only did Logan have hearing loss, but so did I, and I had done probably all my life without knowing. I suppose it made sense that I hadn't noticed the children weren't hearing well, when I wasn't myself!*

*I have to admit I initially felt devastated. I was worried about what was in store for my kids. When I was younger, I hadn't been able to understand what the teachers were saying and they put me in the too-hard basket. I ended up leaving school as soon as I could. I thought the same could happen to my kids and I was scared for their futures. It soon became clear, though, that my fears were unfounded. I went on to have two more children, including Cassidy who also has a hearing loss, and because their hearing was treated early, it just hasn't held any of them back at all.*

*Hearing Australia helped us so much over the years, fitting us with hearing aids and building the kids' confidence, encouraging them to do everything they want to do, helping them with special gadgets and, importantly, making sure they could actually hear through school.*

*They are adults now, aged 27, 25 and 22. Ryan got an apprenticeship from school and loves his job as an earth mover. Logan works full-time in accounting and manages to fit in study towards a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Accounting. As for Cassidy, she's working as a paralegal while at university and is on her way to becoming a lawyer at the end of this year. So, they're all doing really well for themselves.*

*Everyone we've met at Hearing Australia has been so caring and understanding, their support to my family has just been wonderful and I'm so grateful to have had them at our side as my kids have grown into the independent adults I'm so proud of today".*

# Our people

At Hearing Australia, we are about being caring and having a positive impact on people's lives. These values are reflected in each of the more than 1,300 wonderful people who currently make up the team. Here is what some of them have to say about our work.

*"I feel truly honoured to be leading a team of such committed, caring and expert professionals in our important work delivering value to our clients, the government and to the communities we serve. People are at the heart of what we do. People are also the drivers of our transformation, in our innovations and in our creativity. They are the reason Hearing Australia has been able to bring the joy and wonder of sound to Australians for 75 years – and counting. An organisation is only as strong as its people. That's what makes us the powerful force we have been for such a long time, and that we will continue to be into the future."*

- Kim Terrell, Managing Director since 2018

*"I have been very fortunate to work with so many talented and passionate people at Hearing Australia. People that care about our clients and work with them to help them realise their goals. Hearing Australia has an amazing history and purpose, one that I am proud to be part of. We don't just help people hear; we change people's lives."*

- Gina Mavrias, Chief Operating Officer and Hearing Australia team member of 34 years

*"I love working with such a wide range of interesting, caring and clever people, both within Hearing Australia and in other parts of the sector. My work has both intellectual and emotional rewards. We meet children and their families at a most vulnerable time in their lives, and walk beside them with expertise, support and technology to help them achieve their goals. Seeing them grow and develop is one of the things that makes me feel the way I do about working here - just so fortunate."*

- Alison King, Principal Audiologist for Paediatric Services and Hearing Australia team member of 37 years

*"There are no words to describe how it feels to be able to bring care and technology that helps a child hear, direct to their community. The look of joy and amazement when a child is fitted with a hearing device is always a moment of complete and absolute pure emotion. We get through a lot of tissues. Sound is a gift that is all around. It can be happy, sad, joyful, engaging, teaching, safety, soft, loud. Every single Hearing Australia team member, regardless of their role, helps our clients to experience this gift. We push boundaries and we work to make sure our clients get the absolute best of what we have to offer. We care."*

- Sherilee McManus, Cultural Leader NSW and Hearing Australia team member of 14 years

*"It should go without saying that it is a huge honour and a privilege to have spent the last 37 years working to help children and adults across Australia to hear. I will never underestimate the ripple effect of what we do on friends, families, communities and on society as a whole. We are helping children to access their potential as leaders, reconnecting families and allowing people experiencing cognitive decline to tap into long-term memories through sound. Importantly, we are helping to improve opportunities and health outcomes for First Nations peoples. As an outreach worker in Central Australia and Far North QLD, I see for myself the far-reaching impacts of improving hearing and the significance of conveying the importance of sound to everyone. I experience a lot of emotions in my work but one remains stable, it's always exciting!"*

- Graham Gartshore, Senior Audiologist and Hearing Australia team member of 37 years

*"Being a part of the team at NAL is an absolute joy. As someone who's passionate about people-focused research and evidence-based outcomes, I love having the opportunity to ideate, discover, learn, follow my research interests and help people all at the same time. A personal highlight would be leading the first formal exploration to understand how the concept of empowerment exists within hearing healthcare use. It meant stepping out of my comfort zone, and ultimately, it deepened my understanding of how critical it is to translate research findings to create frameworks that enable change in hearing healthcare for the entire community."*

- Paola Incerti, Senior Research Audiologist and NAL team member of 13 years

*"I find it so rewarding to be able to make such a difference in hearing health within an organisation that has such an amazing reputation. My current role involves creating innovative technology solutions to address the needs of people with hearing loss, and it's exciting to be able to collaborate, brainstorm, pitch and get to work, knowing the significant impact the end result will have. We have such a diverse range of research that has informed hearing healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, paediatric, and adults with hearing loss worldwide. Releasing the NALscribe app was an especially proud day for me. People contact us to say how it has changed their lives and allowed them to reconnect with family. That, in itself, is motivation to keep doing the great work we do."*

- Nicky Chong-White, Principal Engineer and NAL team member of 18 years

*"Sound enriches our lives every day in ways that many of us aren't even aware. My son is hearing impaired and we've been lucky enough to be supported by Hearing Australia, so I know on a personal level the impacts our support has on families. It feels good to now be part of the team helping people to hear. What I love most is getting to know the clients. There are so many stories and characters out there and I feel lucky to have the opportunity to hear and meet them. I also enjoy helping staff develop and seeing their successes. It's so rewarding. There are many reasons why our work is important, and an enormous amount of evidence showing how critical hearing is for learning and development, not to mention the social aspects. I feel genuinely so lucky to be carrying out such meaningful work."*

- Matt Waddingham, Manager Launceston and Kings Meadows and Hearing Australia team member of one year

*"What is the key to NAL's success? I think NAL's integration in a service organisation is critical. Being part of a service organisation thrusts practical problems in front of NAL's researchers, and imposes strong practical constraints on potential solutions that focus the minds of researchers.*

*When I first joined NAL (in 1979) NAL researchers were focused on developing clinical procedures that would improve client outcomes without requiring any additional clinical time! Hearing aid prescription formulae that needed only an audiogram and cardboard slide rule to use were a major solution. The need for more efficient services was not unique to Australia, so it's no surprise that successive innovations from NAL took off everywhere else as well."*

- Professor Harvey Dillon AO, former NAL Director (2000–2017)

*"I was only 20 months old when I first experienced the impact of Hearing Australia's work. Diagnosed with a severe hearing loss, I was promptly fitted with hearing aids and into adulthood received leading-edge support and technology from the team. As a young adult, I wanted to give other young people the same opportunities I'd had, so I trained in audiology and here I am! I loved the years I spent as a specialist in paediatric audiology and the opportunities I've had to contribute to innovative projects, like developing infant hearing aid evaluation protocols in collaboration with the NAL team. I now enjoy training and mentoring other clinicians around the country as a clinical coach. It feels amazing to be able to change people's lives through our work, and just so inspiring to be part of an organisation that's been doing so for 75 years."*

- Simone Punch, Clinical Coach and Hearing Australia team member of 19 years

# Our supporters and partners

Hearing Australia has a long and proud history of collaboration with industry partners and supporters who have helped us become who we are today. Our shared vision and commitment to taking action has helped us transform the lives of so many people with hearing loss. The proof in our collective achievements is that together we are, indeed, stronger, and we thank all of our partners for their ongoing support and commitment.

Here is an overview of our existing partners.

Audeara
Audiology Australia
Aussie Deaf Kids
Australian Government
The Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery
Better Hearing Australia
Bionics Institute
Cochlear Pty Ltd
Deafness Forum of Australia
First Voice
GN Hearing
Hearing Matters Australia
Lions Outback Vision
Macquarie University
Menzies School of Health Research
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
National Disability Insurance Agency
National Indigenous Australians Agency
NextSense
Nuheara
Oticon Medical
The Poche Centre for Indigenous Health
The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne
The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital
The Shepherd Centre
Sonova
State and Territory Governments
Telethon Speech and Hearing
Uniden
Universities of Charles Darwin, La Trobe, Melbourne, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia
Vision Australia
Word of Mouth Technologies
WS Audiology
We also partner with many local health services, hospitals and pharmacies nationally

*"Macquarie University aims to transform hearing health in Australia and around the world with a unique combination of research, education and clinical expertise. Hearing Australia is the nation's largest provider of government-funded hearing services and its research division, the National Acoustic Laboratories, is internationally recognised for its research into hearing loss and innovation in hearing technology solutions.*

*The enduring, open and collaborative partnership between Macquarie University and Hearing Australia strengthens the impact of both parties in the community through improved interactions around hearing research, training, clinical education, outreach and public policy. Our important partnership, commenced more than a decade ago, continues to use the evolution of audiology services within the community and the knowledge created through our collaboration to provide a global voice for a better future.*

*We value our ongoing collaboration and shared vision and commitment to improve the lives of people with hearing loss."*

- Professor S. Bruce Dowton, Vice-Chancellor and President, Macquarie University

*"The Cochlear and Hearing Australia partnership spans nearly 30 years, proudly supporting increased access to and awareness of implantable and bone conduction hearing technologies. Together, we continue to support over 4000 Cochlear and Acoustic Implant recipients annually. A testament to our common objectives to serve Australians with hearing impairment was the opening of the first ever co-located Hearing Australia and Cochlear Care Centre clinic in Dandenong, VIC in 2019, a milestone in our collaboration. We continue to be inspired by Hearing Australia's outreach programmes, and in particular their effort to increase the standards of hearing care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Cochlear is truly proud of its association with Hearing Australia whose services are both remarkable and relevant to addressing the growing prevalence of hearing loss in Australia."*

- Dig Howitt, CEO, Cochlear

*"In the 50 years The Shepherd Centre has been in operation our partnership with Hearing Australia has been absolutely critical for the many thousands of children we've helped. We're dedicated to making it possible for children who are deaf or have a hearing loss to be able to speak, hopefully as well as any other child. The successes that these children achieve would be impossible without our close working relationship with Hearing Australia. The depth of the professional and personal relationships between our teams results in outcomes that can't be imagined elsewhere in the world. Together, we've helped thousands of children to live happier and more included lives, and I'm looking forward to helping many more in the years ahead."*

- Dr Jim Hungerford, CEO, The Shepherd Centre

*"As founder and CEO of Aussie Deaf Kids, I value the services and support that Hearing Australia provides to all children and young people with hearing loss, and their families. The 75 years of operation that Hearing Australia is now celebrating have changed so many lives for the better. Having access to high-quality listening devices, audiological expertise and leading research into childhood hearing loss will continue to help children and young people who are Deaf or hard of hearing to become the people they want to be, and for that I congratulate them and offer my sincere thanks."*

- Ann Porter AM, CEO and Founder, Aussie Deaf Kids

*"Everywhere I go around the world, everyone knows and admires NAL's leadership in hearing healthcare over so many years and how that leadership has improved the lives of children and adults with hearing loss. Fundamentally, the work of the NAL team has driven evidence-based innovation. I feel very proud to have collaborated with colleagues at NAL throughout my career and was even lucky enough to have a previous director, Dr Denis Byrne, supervise my PhD."*

- Professor Louise Hickson AM, Associate Dean (External Engagement), Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, University of Queensland

*"Since I was diagnosed as having a profound hearing loss at 10 months old, Hearing Australia from then to now has been part of my journey in life. From hearing my first sounds, to learning how to use my hearing aids, adjusting to technological upgrades of hearing devices and witnessing the ever-shrinking hearing testing platforms. All my life, I've had the privilege of witnessing Hearing Australia's impact on the lives of millions of Australians from young to old. Now, as Chair of Deafness Forum of Australia for over 10 years, I see their wonderful work with remote, rural and regional communities, First Nations communities and our vulnerable Australians in aged care facilities. Congratulations on 75 years of world-class service."*

- David Brady, Chair, Deafness Forum of Australia

*"With a 162-year history, NextSense has been in the field of service delivery to people with hearing loss since well before the advent of Hearing Australia in 1947. However, our work with Australian children took a quantum leap forward after 1947 with the ready availability of hearing assessment services and hearing devices for all Australian children. Today, Australia enjoys a position as a world-leader in service delivery for people with hearing loss, particularly children. The systems that have been implemented and the outcomes that have been achieved in Australia are, without doubt, at the forefront of service quality and capability internationally. Together with a wide range of associated agencies, Hearing Australia continues to be an essential part of a service delivery system that remains the envy of the world."*

- Professor Greg Leigh AO, Director, NextSense Institute

# Our programs

People are at the heart of everything we do, and we help anyone in Australia who needs us. Our community programs focus on keeping all Australians connected to the people and life that they love, through the joy of sound.

# Our community services

Each year, over 70,000 Australians with long-term or permanent hearing loss receive free or subsidised hearing services from us through the Community Service Obligations (CSO) component of the Hearing Services Program. Funded by the Federal Government, the program has been running since 1997, working to ensure all Australians have access to quality hearing assessments, devices and professional support to connect with the people and sounds around them.

## Babies, children and young people

Our specialist paediatric clinicians work with children and young people with all degrees of hearing loss, all abilities and ages, providing services that centre on the individual child and their family.

What we do goes beyond fitting hearing aids. We provide hearing support across all areas of life such as education (including installing remote microphone systems in schools), home life and leisure to ensure that young people have the best opportunity to participate as they desire.

Our paediatric clinicians also work closely with our research division, the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), to enable research findings to be quickly translated into our practice. In addition, this relationship allows NAL to keep in touch with which issues are most pressing for our young people, and prioritise research accordingly.

## Adults with complex hearing needs

Adults who have complex hearing and communication needs may have severe or profound hearing loss or a poor understanding of speech, or they may have an additional disability which impacts on communication. Through the CSO program, these people receive support from a highly-specialised team who tailor the service carefully to maximise their communication. This helps these clients to continue to take part in activities they enjoy and to stay connected. Each year, we provide this vital support to around 30,000 Australians.

## Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Our work with First Nations peoples centres on addressing the high rates of ear disease and hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children. We collaborate on programs to deliver on our commitment to improve hearing health for First Nations communities, including reducing the rate of hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by at least half by 2029.

*"Both of my sons have been assisted with their hearing through the HAPEE program. Zion was first seen through HAPEE prior to and after insertion of grommets. Then, when I realised that my son Joseph was not responding to the other kids, not really looking when they were making a lot of noise and he was just sleeping through the noise, I asked the nurse for a referral to HAPEE for Joseph as well. HAPEE has been very helpful because we have more understanding about their ears and how Zion's grommets are working. HAPEE has been really good for us and I would recommend it to others. I am so happy that my boys are now able to hear and it's great to see them happy and able to listen to the people and sounds around them."*

- Natasha Walker, mother of Joseph and Zion

### First Nations Services Unit

In 2021, we established our First Nations Services Unit to bring together the delivery of our government funded services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The unit helps us provide effective, coordinated and culturally appropriate services across Australia and we collaborate with many partners, including peak bodies, ear health coordinators and other key health stakeholders.

### HAPEE Ears for Early Years

HAPEE is our free hearing assessment program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-6 not yet attending full-time school. We developed HAPEE with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and First Nations hearing health practitioners and we now run the program right across metropolitan, regional and remote Australia.

As well as carrying out free hearing checks, the HAPEE team helps local health workers to conduct their own hearing screening and organises activities in the community to raise awareness around the importance of hearing. On average, we screen over 10,000 children a year in more than 240 communities through this ever-growing program with one in four being found to have undiagnosed ear disease or hearing loss that needs clinical care.

### Listen to Learn

The Listen to Learn program is nationwide and improves listening, learning and communication in First Nations children aged 3-8. With Listen to Learn, we focus on helping early childhood educators to identify hearing and listening concerns, increasing screening in early childhood services and schools and improving connections between families and services so children get the help they need, earlier.

### Outreach

Our outreach services are a vital component of our CSO work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children, allowing us to reach some of the most remote parts of Australia. The outreach program's success has been built on strong connections and we tailor the service to suit the specific needs of each community. Our visits last anything from half a day to several days between four and 25 times per year and we work from health services, schools and aged care homes, sometimes teaming up with other health services like Ear, Nose and Throat specialists. As well as testing and fitting hearing aids, the team works hard to educate the community, including schools and teachers, about the needs of people with hearing loss.

# Helping all Australians

Hearing Australia has provided government funded hearing services to pensioners and veterans across Australia for most of the past 75 years. We see these clients in our hearing centres, in aged care settings and in their own homes, and every year we achieve client satisfaction rates of over 85 per cent.

We're also committed to supporting anyone who needs hearing help, and our expert hearing care is available to all Australians, including those who are not eligible to receive government funded hearing services.

Our self-funded clients are of all ages and different backgrounds, and we thank them for choosing us for their hearing care, devices, rehabilitation and maintenance of their hearing aids.

From a small number of veterans in 1947, today our dedicated team cares for some 300,000 pensioners and veterans and more than 130,000 self-funded clients.

Our highly skilled clinicians help clients manage their hearing loss, give recommendations on how to achieve their hearing goals, offer support through counselling and rehabilitation, and provide information on how to maintain their hearing devices so they continue to stay connected to the people and sounds they love.

# The National Acoustic Laboratories

Whether as the Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratories or National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), for 75 years we have conducted important research in the study of hearing loss and hearing healthcare to improve hearing health, not just for Australians but people across the globe. The team at NAL is multi-disciplinary and made up of talent from around the world working across four main spheres; adult hearing loss, paediatric hearing loss, technology and human behaviour. We use both traditional and cutting-edge techniques to deliver world-leading, evidence-based research and innovation that improves the lives of people with hearing loss. We conduct rigorous research on new solutions, investigate benefits of devices other than hearing aids, as well as develop our own technology solutions.

*"NAL has been a leader in hearing healthcare research and innovation for 75 years. Those of us at NAL today are proud to continue its legacy of helping people with hearing loss in Australia and around the world through the impact of its research and innovation."*

- Dr Brent Edwards, Director of NAL since 2017

These are some of the more recent highlights of NAL's work.

## Paediatric hearing loss

Since 2009, the Longitudinal Outcomes of Children with Hearing Impairment (LOCHI) study has been providing data around the effectiveness of early intervention that has unprecedented potential. This study, over 16 years in duration and still ongoing, directly compares the developmental outcomes of children with hearing loss who received early or later intervention. It has been instrumental in helping people understand when and how to help children with profound hearing loss and has influenced policy-makers worldwide.

## First Nations children

Hearing Australia has committed to reducing the rate of hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by half by 2029. One of the most pressing issues has been the early detection of ear and hearing problems. To help with this problem and identify hearing problems in First Nations children earlier in life, NAL researchers collaborated with other organisations to develop the Parent-evaluated Listening and Understanding Measure (PLUM) and the Hearing and Talking Scale (HATS). PLUM and HATS are screening tools developed by NAL researchers together with Western Sydney University, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal primary health and early childhood professionals. PLUM and HATS are simple checklists that can be used on children who speak any language and that ask the right questions to successfully identify children who may need our help so we can reach more children, sooner.

## The Hearing Services Program

Our research on Defining Outcomes for the Hearing Services Program was developed with over 70 stakeholders including clinicians, consumers, device manufacturers, professional organisations and client advocacy groups. The result was a set of recommendations on outcomes that should be used to measure the success of hearing rehabilitation. This will support the development of important improvements to the Hearing Services Program as well as broader clinical, technology and service delivery standards.

## Technology and solutions

NAL develops technology and products that are used by clinicians and people with hearing difficulty around the world. We focus on solutions for urgent unmet needs of hearing healthcare workers and those with hearing difficulty, and everything that we develop is evidence-based with laboratory and real-world validation of benefit. Our solutions include the most popular hearing aid prescription in the world and NALscribe, a real-time speech captioning app, as well as diagnostic and rehabilitation technology used by clinicians worldwide.

NAL applies agile and innovation principles in how it works, as evidenced by the rapid development of solutions to address the problems people with hearing loss were experiencing due to the global pandemic. Mask Adjust, as an example, was welcomed by clinicians in Australia and overseas as a way to improve speech understanding of people wearing masks. The research resulted in clinical guidance on particular adjustments to hearing aids to help users manage issues associated with mask-wearing and get the best out of their hearing aids.

## Our partners

NAL has a proud history of collaborating with globally-recognised research institutes and industry partners to transform the lives of people with hearing loss.

*"Research conducted by NAL has been transformative in improving the treatment of children with hearing loss."*

- Dig Howitt, CEO, Cochlear

# The Calaid – our first hearing aid

In 1948, we launched our first hearing aid – The Calaid. During the more than 40 years of its production between 1948 and 1993, more than one million Calaid hearing aids were produced and fitted to Australians of all ages and backgrounds. The Calaid would go on to shape Australia's acoustic history. Here are the series of events that led to its invention.

## Why was the Calaid invented?

The Calaid was invented because Australian health authorities were faced with two new and quite distinct groups of people who were hard of hearing following the Second World War: Ex-service personnel and young children affected by the rubella epidemic in Australia (1939-1941). Typically, these children suffered profound hearing loss, with little or no speech. Their parents, who had normal speech and language, wanted their children to grow up being able to experience sound.

With no existing model anywhere in the world to manage the hearing problems presented by these ex-service personnel and young children, the Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratories (CAL), was born.

Initially, we imported hearing aids from the USA. However, the expense of repairing parts and the cost of the US dollar demanded a new solution. It was decided hearing aids would be designed and manufactured in Australia, by CAL. This is where the story of the Calaid began.

## The Calaid: models and milestones

### Calaid Type 1

Calaid Type 1 was a body-worn type with a button earphone attached by a cord. It came with two controls, a tone switch and a volume control.

Calaid Type 1

### The Calaid T

The Calaid T was launched in 1955. It was a smaller body-worn hearing aid with a more efficient amplifier.

The Calaid T

### The Calaid E – Australia's first in-the-ear hearing aid

The Calaid E was launched in 1965. It was less powerful than the body-worn aids so was best suited to people with milder hearing loss looking for a more discreet hearing aid. 75% of all hearing aids fitted at this time were Calaid E.

The Calaid E

### The Calaid C and Calaid G

The Calaid C and Calaid G were a new range of body-worn aids to replace the Calaid T. They had a plastic frame, which held the electronics and battery.

### The Calaid H - Australia's first behind-the-ear hearing aid

The Calaid H launched in 1974 and was Australia's first behind-the-ear hearing aid. It was made in three power ranges and included a choice of two microphones.

### The Calaid P

The Calaid P launched a few years later. It was another behind-the-ear hearing aid but it was high powered and best suited to people with severe or profound hearing loss.

### Calaid V

In 1982 we released the Calaid V, which was a new improved behind-the-ear range of hearing aids.

### Calaid FM Wireless

The Calaid FM Wireless System, launched in 1983, was a short-range system that coupled to conventional hearing aids. It was hailed as a world leader in its field. Developed by NAL and CSIRO, the final production and design was undertaken by Plessy Australia.

### The Calaid J

The Calaid J was a new in-the-ear hearing aid introduced in 1991. It was given the marketing name SONATA.

### Digital hearing aids

While our first digital hearing aids, introduced in the early 1990s, heralded the beginning of a new era in hearing aids, the Calaid will always be remembered as playing a significant part of Australia's hearing health and acoustic history.

The Calaid C and Calaid G

The Calaid H

The Calaid P

Calaid V

Calaid FM Wireless

The Calaid J

# Part 3: What's next?

**We are exceptionally proud of our history. What we do has been changing lives since the 1940s, an extraordinary privilege. In celebrating our first 75 years of providing world-leading research and expert hearing services for the wellbeing of all Australians, what's next for Hearing Australia?**

We will continue our important work to help people achieve their goals and stay connected to the life and people that they love. We will continue to bring the joy of sound to everyone across the nation and the world through our innovation.

Our key priorities in research and hearing service delivery will drive us forward into the future – into the next 75 years – as we make it easier, faster and better for our clients to access our help.

NAL will remain at the forefront of technology and research. As attitudes change, we're shaping policies and thinking around hearing health and caring for people with hearing loss, creating innovative life-changing solutions.

We are significantly increasing our collaborative efforts to prevent avoidable hearing loss in high-risk communities and have a target of reducing the rate of hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by at least half by 2029. Working with local communities and our hearing care partners, together we can achieve our goal.

We will remain deeply committed to improving hearing health and bringing the joy of sound alive for everyone, and at the heart of everything we do, will always be – people.

# Acknowledgements

**Hearing Australia would like to thank all the people involved in creating this beautiful book to commemorate our 75 years of service to the people of Australia. This includes our wonderful Hearing Australia people, clients and collaborative partners who have contributed.**

We would like to extend a special thank you to Barry Clinch. Barry joined the National Acoustic Laboratories in 1972. He was a research engineer and part of the NAL team for more than 40 years. His tireless research has helped us bring together this informative reflection of our extraordinary history.

Information in this book has come from the Hearing Australia library and sources including annual reports, research reports, historical press clippings and articles.

Hearing Australia

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