

## *Zoe Williams ... Libby Harricks Award Winner 2017*

Zoe Williams won the 2017 Libby Harricks Award this year. She is currently a manager at Australian Hearing, Melbourne and Sunshine. We asked Zoe a few questions and she shared her thoughts:

### ***What are your thoughts on the prominent challenges facing the Hard of Hearing in today's society?***

Previously there have been fewer educational opportunities for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. However with advancements in research, technology and early intervention, we are seeing improved language and educational outcomes for children with hearing loss. With this, organisations are naturally becoming more diverse and are looking for different skillsets in their employees. Employing people with hearing loss makes organisations re-think on how to be more inclusive. This makes their organisation more accessible for their employees which then flow on to their client interactions. Approximately 5% of Australian Hearing workforce identify as having a hearing loss. In response to this, Australian Hearing has created a Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. I encourage other organisations to expand their horizons and embrace people with hearing loss have to offer.



### ***It seems that within Audiological Practice, there is a heavy focus on the technological means to help hearing loss (i.e hearing aids). Do you see a re-emergence in the near future of Audiologists spending equal time outlining communicative strategies to patients?***

Audiologists have always spent time discussing communication strategies with clients. I believe there has been a focus in the media on hearing aids and commissions to audiologist and neglected to focus on the time spent discussing strategies.

There is plenty of time spent discussing communicative strategies in the clinic and this requires a behavioural change from the clients. We know old habits die hard and people wait so long before walking into a hearing clinic that they have developed unhelpful listening behaviours.

This is not a 'one-size-fits-all discussion' and we need to make sure we support clients that are not naturally strong self-advocates.

### ***What are your thoughts on the current governments action/inaction in regards to hearing loss? Does more need to be done?***

Australian Hearing is a testament of what the government has done and supported.

We are now in our 70th year of operations and our paediatric program is world class. National Acoustic Laboratory (NAL) has been instrumental in progressing Audiology what it is today and also leads other parts of the world. We ought to be proud of that.

Of course there is always more to be done, the government needs to make Hearing in the top 10 National Health Priority. You can contribute by liking the facebook page "Break the sound barrier."

### ***Has there been any advice that you have received in regards to hearing loss that has resonated and stayed with you throughout your journey? If so, would you mind sharing it with the Hearing Matters readers?***

I have a few close to my heart – but the one that I practiced in everyday life would be, as we all know when having a hearing loss, we struggle with people mumbling, talking quietly, missing the punchline of the joke. As an audiologist with hearing loss I am unable to detect feedback in the hearing aid like my hearing colleagues can. I am unable to listen to hearing aids with the stethoclip like my hearing colleagues but I have been able to find other mechanisms to get around and have done so successfully. I have plenty of strategies so often what I do is more superior to what hearing people do. Also my hearing loss enables me to be a role model for my clients. So here is the quote I live by.. "when there is a will, there is a way."