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READ OUR LIPS AUSTRALIA MAKES EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION EASIER

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An innovative online training program has been launched to help Australians combat the effects of reduced capacity to communicate caused by hearing loss.

Hearing loss creates barriers to getting education, employment and access to public services, as well as affecting personal relationships, individual self-esteem and confidence.

Read Our Lips, the first of its kind in Australia, is a self-paced online learning course by the national consumer advocacy body Deafness Forum Australia, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

It is an online learning program designed to improve people's lip-reading ability. Created by experienced lip-reading instructors, users are guided through online modules at their own pace to identify key mouth movements. It's a skill that can be improved with regular practice.

By improving the understanding of what someone is saying in different environments and contexts, Read Our Lips Australia assists users to fill in the blanks when they cannot understand speech by listening alone.

The widespread use of face masks to reduce the potential of transmission with COVID-19 has highlighted the reliance on lip-reading for many people.

It's estimated that 3.6 million Australians live with hearing loss in Australia. With an ageing population, this figure is predicted to increase to almost 9 million people by 2050. Serious hearing loss is a known contributor to isolation, depression, anxiety, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

David Brady, Chairperson of the Deafness Forum Australia has significant hearing loss.

"It affects my ability to communicate, especially in noisy environments, and I have been considering learning to lip-read for some time," Brady said.

"I found the Read Our Lips online program to be an extremely valuable introductory learning tool which has significantly improved my skills and confidence when communicating with others."

Background noise, distance from the speaker, room lighting, and many other factors play a role in how well someone can hear. Lip-reading can significantly improve an individual's ability to communicate and understand another person's speech.

Read Our Lips Australia will be another important tool to help people with hearing loss to understand more speech, have better comprehension, improve their self-determination, and ability to communicate with confidence.

"I can only imagine the positive change it could have upon the wider community affected with hearing loss who struggle in social situations," David Brady said.

Learn more about lip-reading and the online course at www.readourlips.com.au

For media enquiries: Emily Shepard Read Our Lips Australia support@readourlips.com.au +61 414 743 074

For general enquiries: Steve Williamson, Chief Executive, Deafness Forum Australia
Steve.Williamson@deafnessforum.org.au +61 452 388 069