

Good afternoon,

I would like to make a submission in relation to the Senate Inquiry into deafness.

In my experience, there is a lack of emphasis or readily available opportunities for Australians when they deal with a hearing loss.

I am a profoundly deaf person, which was at first discovered at 9 months old, and was rehabilitated with hearing aids until I was 6 years old. Thereafter, I was given a Cochlear Implant, which I still continue to use to this day. I am currently 23 years old, a young professional working in Australia and also a part time law student.

I have had numerous audiologists throughout my life and I found none that I have felt comfortable with or nor did they have a clear or empathetic understanding of a child or a young adult experiencing their deafness in their everyday life. For an example, a recent check up with an audiologist from Cochlear Implant Centre tried to convince me that I should have my right ear implanted to obtain the maximum benefits, without any thought of my emotional or financial situation as it is extremely costly/emotional process. Her answer was, 'If you have a private health cover, you should be able to set all of this up then you'll be right'. There are numerous examples throughout my life where I just felt belittled. To this day, it is still an isolating experience.

Australian Hearing Services and Cochlear Implant Centre provided me a tremendous assistance until up to the age of 21 years old with providing me batteries, repairs, and map check. Since living independently from my parents at 17 years old (after completing my HSC), and living on a low wage while trying to establish myself as a financially independent person, and without the assistance from the Australian Hearing Services with providing me batteries, it would have been an extremely detriment to myself to the Hearing world - work, university and social.

Suddenly at the age of 21 years old, I found it difficult to find the means to obtain batteries and maintaining my cochlear implant equipment on all my own. A piece of rechargeable cochlear implant battery can cost up to \$500 or a couple of hundreds if I need to replace a part. Luckily the map check is still covered by Medicare.

At only 23 years old, this is a lifelong commitment, and in order to remain integrated with the Hearing world, it is expensive and perhaps a little unfair that I should have to pay when a normal hearing person does not have to deal with those emotional and financial issues. Not only that, these expenses are added on top of my health insurance, maintaining contacts/glasses/eye check, health expenses incurred etc etc.

I quote Kate Locke's recommendations in her submission (<http://katelocke.wordpress.com/2009/10/01/submission-australian-senate-inquiry-hearing-health/>) which is stated as follows:

- I would like to see the following changes made to the way hearing health is dealt with in Australia:
  1. Hearing health should be moved out from under the Federal government Ageing portfolio, and placed under the Federal Government Health portfolio, alongside eye health. It currently does not receive the attention it deserves under the Ageing portfolio.
  2. Subsidised government services should be offered via 'Australian Hearing' to people between the ages of 21 and 65 if they are on a low income, unemployed, full time students, or part time students. In Australia there is currently no help for these people in affording hearing aids, implants and other hearing health services.
  3. Insurance companies should cover hearing aids and cochlear implants if they are lost or broken. Currently most insurers will cover silly things like iPods, but not a cochlear implant processor, which is \$8,000 to replace, and vital for many to be able to hear.
  4. Former child clients of Australian Hearing who are not unemployed, students, or on low incomes should not be suddenly cut off from services of Australian Hearing. They should be able to pay for services to stay on at Australian Hearing with their audiologist.

5. All hearing aids, cochlear implants and other hearing health aides should be able to be claimed as a tax deduction once someone starts work. Currently you can't claim expensive hearing aids as a tax deduction. (Kate Locke's Submission)

Thank you for considering my submission.

Regards,

Adelaide Ryan