

Hello,

I would like to make a submission to the Hearing Health Inquiry.

As someone whose partner is deaf I have experienced first hand how unfair and backwards having a hearing disability is in Australia.

One of the biggest disadvantages a deaf person has is the cost of hearing aids, hearing services and the cost of getting a cochlear implant. People are being excluded socially from communicating with other people by either having to buy the hearing aids they can afford which may not be best suited to their hearing loss or buying the expensive hearing aids which can be \$9000 a pair and having to sacrifice other things. A person with normal hearing isn't disadvantaged in this way.

There are also on going costs like hearing aid and cochlear implant batteries which can cost \$1 a battery. A cochlear implant requires 3 of these batteries which need replacing every 3 days - \$365 a year. In places like the UK these batteries are available for free from medical practices. By disadvantaging people with a hearing disability it is then hard for people to find a meaningful job as if they are not hearing to the best that they could with hearing aids this then discriminates them from finding a meaningful job resulting in either a low income job or a person on welfare. Due to the high cost of maintaining their hearing loss these people will always be disadvantaged both physically and economically.

Hearing services are also expensive and once a person reaches 21, they are no longer allowed to use Australian Hearing and consequently the Audiologist that they have been seeing usually their whole lives.

Other ways a hearing impaired person are disadvantaged include not being able to insure hearing aids or Cochlear Implants, or doing so at an insanely high cost. Only being able to watch TV between the hours of 5:30pm and 10:30pm as these are the only times that television networks are required to caption programs. Not being able to watch all DVDs as they don't have English captions. Not being able to go to the Cinema at a reasonable timed session.

What would I like to see changed?

Firstly Hearing needs to come under health, not the aging portfolio and treated similar to sight.

The services of Australian Hearing should be available to people over 21 years old.

Captioning of TV should be for all programs at all times, and all DVDs released in Australia should be required to have English captions.

Hearing Aids batteries should be available free of charge.

Hearing Aids should be available for people on low incomes for free and available as a tax deduction.

Regards,

Ben Obermayer