

## The Senate Community Affairs References Committee

I have been wearing a hearing aid since 1985. I am a retired teacher now 80 years old. Since c. 1990 I have been a client of Australian Hearing Services run by the Commonwealth Government first through their Penrith NSW Office, in more recent years from their Orange NSW Office as they came to Lithgow and now their Springwood NSW office. All deaf people should have access to these services.

As my hearing has deteriorated it has been my experience that while those providing servicing do their best these offices are understaffed. To gain an appointment when faced with a problem with the hearing aids it is quite normal to have to wait 6 or more weeks for an appointment.

Technicians are not always available to repair the aid e.g. Penrith and Springwood share the one technician. When I was attending Orange it was not uncommon to be told that the repairs had to go to Penrith.

This year I was entitled to a hearing test but when the voucher giving permission for the test did not arrive I was told from Canberra to cancel the appointment for which I had already waited 2 months. I refused to do so. In the end I was given the number of the voucher over the phone. I should not have had to assert myself in that way.

The fitting of moulds for the hearing aid has become more trying. Often they do not fit and this requires quite long and painful periods of waiting for another appointment.

Those of us who happen to live in more isolated places face greater problems of access to these services.

Increasing deafness denies one social contact and even reasonable contact with one's family. It in effect cuts one off from normal communication with others. Using the telephone becomes a nightmare as you struggle to understand what is being said even with a volume control phone.

Every public building or hall should have a loop or similar device to assist those who are deaf.

Submission from Mary B. Reynolds