

Inquiry into hearing health in Australia

Sorry my submission to the senate is late, but we did not even know of the inquiry earlier. If we as parents of 2 deaf children didn't know about the inquiry, we believe there would be many more parents out there. These parents would have concerns about hearing health that they would like looked at by the Australian government too.

We are parents of three boys, 2 of which are profoundly deaf. Our eldest was late diagnosed as newborn screening had yet to be introduced into South Australia. We suspected a problem with his hearing and even had testing done and speech therapy and still his hearing loss was not detected until he was 2 years of age. He then had hearing aids for a short period before receiving his first cochlear implant. We proceeded to study into the possibility of him having a second implant, as it was a relatively new idea to have a second implant in South Australia. Funding was not available for the second implant through Medicare, so we had to look for funding else where. Thank God for Variety club as they funded his second implant and is a tremendous benefit to him. Ethan started kindy with only 2 words in a sentence and went onto school this year and doing extremely. Our Eldest's language is still delayed but is doing well and catching up to be age appropriate. He has a teacher of the deaf come in once a week to work with him, whom we don't want to see disappear due to lack of funding. **So Funding for School Support is very important to students.**

Our second son is hearing and our youngest son is also profoundly deaf. The boys are deaf due to a hereditary trait, connexin 26. Our third son was diagnosed early and therefore received his Hearing aids and now Cochlear implants earlier than our first child. Early intervention is a necessity, as this helps the deaf child learn language on par with their hearing peers. Our youngest is 16 months and already has verbal words – mum, up, arf for woof, moo for cow, car, ar for star (st is too hard at the moment), ar for plane for example, he has just learned to say hello as well. Without the help of our Early Intervention centre (which is only partially funded by the government) such great progress would not be possible. So this is where we make my point that **Funding for Early Intervention is so crucial.**

We need to make the point that with out Newborn hearing screening children would not be diagnosed early and therefore get an early access to language through the help of hearing aids and/or cochlear implants plus appropriate therapy.

Some of our concerns are when our sons turn 21 years old. As it stands at the moment they will not be able to access Australian hearing for any services. We were told by a staff member of Australian Hearing that once the boys turn 21 years of age they can't even buy batteries from Australian hearing. We think this needs to change, even if they have to pay an increased annual fee to access these services.

At the moment the boys go through the hospital to get parts/loan processors etc for their cochlear implants, but once they turn 21 years of age they again can not access this service. Our sons have bi-lateral Cochlear implants which help them hear much better than one, but this will also come at a higher monetary cost. We want our sons to work in the mainstream work force which they can with the help of their cochlear implants. If our sons can not afford to run and maintain their implants they will not be able to contribute to the working society which will have a negative impact on them and government expenditure. **So we believe that deaf people over the age of 21 years of age need better assistance.**

Thanks for taking the time to read our submission

Michelle and Matthew Braendler