

25th February 2010

To the Community Affairs References Committee,

RE: Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia

I would like to add my submission to the above inquiry.

I have a severe hearing loss and wear two hearing aids.

I speak orally and I was born prematurely and the extended time spent in the humidicrib has damaged my hearing for life.

I am a father with two young children 3 & 4 year old

Three years ago we agreed to a payment plan to purchase two new hearing aids as we are on a single low income which included interest at 33%, we have only just managed to pay these off and now my current hearing aids are damaged, as I work outdoors my current hearing aids have corroded internally and need to be replaced.

Our financial position has not improved if not deteriorated we are now under great financial duress,

I have rang several services that I believed would have some advice for me and my family,

It was suggested by Centrelink for me to quit work and go on a disability pension (which in fact is on par with our current wage), to receive hearing aids and then return to work. I was amazed with this suggestion – I am a deaf person, to be employed and financially self sufficient (even with our current situation) is an achievement not only with my deafness but also with my self confidence. We cannot afford to get new hearing aids and will have to sell our car (which my partner uses to attend college) which will only cover less than half of the requirement – approx \$5000 - \$12000.

I have been to a private audiologist and could not afford their care anymore at over \$80.00 per consultation.

We cannot afford private health cover and certainly not the excess needed for hearing aids which will only give a 10% rebate.

I am very frustrated that I only have two choices....

- Quit my job to hear my family and to achieve some self worth - ,
- Continue providing for my family as best I can and miss hearing their sounds of laughter and sadness,

Miscommunication is the basis for all my frustration and depression –this is at its highest in our current situation

- **I believe that having one central phone number to get advice on hearing matters would be beneficial in cutting out confusion upon what the consumer is eligible for.**
- **I believe Hearing health is neglected in its current portfolio, it should be moved from the Ageing portfolio in the Federal Government to the Health portfolio, alongside eye health.**
- **I believe that the current hearing health system only entitles pensioners, children and unemployed persons to the liberty of hearing**

- **I believe that hearing aids and implements should be free or minimalised in cost – even a weekly payment plan that is not at such a high interest rate. for these recommendations to be implemented into our health system.**
- **I believe that all hearing aids, cochlear implants and other hearing health aides should be able to be claimed as a tax deduction as these devices assist these people in their occupation. Currently you can't claim hearing aids or other devices as a tax deduction.**

It is very unfair that many low income earners work hard, stay in the job and not get those benefits, we pay taxes and the services from Australian Hearing (Federally Funded) should be available for **ALL DEAF AUSTRALIANS**.

This needs attention; everyone Australian should have **equal and affordable** access to hearing care,

Thank you for reading my submission,

Aaron Brown