My name is Shirley Edwards and I am hearing impaired. Being hearing-impaired for me means that I miss out on a lot of things. For example at my work I have a responsible job, I cannot attend meetings and courses and training because my employment will not providing captioning. As a consequence I have missed out on promotion because I cannot access the training. I'm also limited in that I cannot hear on the phone, and while the Relay Service is there for the Deaf and hearing-impaired, I find it really time consuming sometimes taking up to more than an hour, whereas if I had a captioned telephone, it would be so much easier as I can speak normally, and this would save so much of everyone's time.

Enquiry into Hearing Health in Australia

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I cannot hear train announcements as when the person is speaking the sounds distorts and it sounds to me like Donald Duck. As a consequence I have missed trains, gotten lost, and couldn't use a phone to call a cab to get home.

With people with accents, I have to ask them to repeat themselves over and over again, as I simply cannot lipread or hear what they are saying. It is very frustrating.

When I take my cochlear implants off at night I am totally deaf……..if there is a fire I wouldn't hear the alarm. If I am alone in the house, I wouldn't hear an intruder break in and I am always on guard about this……..

I enjoy the movies, but there are very very few cinemas that will provide captioning. TV programs can be frustrating when captioning is not provided. Entertainment for me, is very, very limited.

It can be a battle out in public and in public institutions as hearing loops are rarely provided.

In hospitals it is the same. There is no staff training on how to communicate with the hearing-impaired. I don't use sign language, don't understand it, and I am always embarrassed when I have a medical appointment and the staff (if they know I am hearing-impaired) assume I know sign language and get an interpreter in. Most of the doctors in hospital are foreign and it is hopeless trying to lipread or hear them.

Hearing loss is invisible – you can't see it, yet someone who is blind, in a wheelchair appear to have everything provided for them. We have a disability too, but most of the time no one wants to know, or doesn't know how, or doesn't think we need help.

With my cochlear implants I pay $40 for a packet of 10 batteries every two months. Children up to 21 can get these batteries free, and then after that, if you are not on a Centrelink Benefit, you have to pay up to retirement age. The high cost of assistive listening devices means I have to go without when I shouldn't have to.

I live with my hearing loss all the time, every day is a frustrating one. The enquiry into Hearing Health is long overdue, and a very welcome one.

Shirley Edwards