

## **Re: Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia**

To the Community Affairs References Committee

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

I became deaf when I was 13 years old due to meningitis. I received support and assistance from Hearing Australia and was always impressed by their professional support and friendly staff. I continued to receive their support as I was on a disability pension while studying full time at University. However once I got full time work, all services were cut off. It is confusing to have to find an audiologist- there are so many needs to consider. Each new audiologist wants to test your hearing and these are not always free. I enquired from all my deaf friends of audiologists they used but most people went without the support of an audiologist for as long as possible after losing the services of Hearing Australia.

I feel there is a definite need for support for deaf and hearing impaired people who are no longer eligible for Hearing Australia. There should be the option of continuing with the service while paying some fees; or another organisation that provides support, information and advice about services in the community that deaf people can access. Another option would be for Hearing Australia to have a follow-up service for people that are no longer eligible. Whereby Hearing Australia are able to offer an additional 10hrs of support following ending of services to refer to an appropriate audiologist, advise on fees we are likely to need to pay, have phone support to the deaf and ease them into independent audiologist use. And there should be greater sharing of medical information so that the new audiologists can review our hearing needs rather than test us again.

Hearing aids equipment and services are very expensive. Even for a person working full time, the cost is too great. I feel there is a huge need for some government subsidy/support with buying hearing aids. Even if there was a system set-up like HECS where we could pay back the government for the hearing aids. As it is, the only option is to get out loans and it makes the cost of living for deaf and hearing impaired persons quite high compared to other Australians.

I have been to UK where there appears to be a reliance on the government from deaf people- the government pays their rent, hearing aids, pensions etc even if they have full time work. I don't think this is beneficial to the health and wellbeing of deaf people- as well as community perception of deaf people. I would not like to see this in Australia. We just need more advice and support so that our needs are not taken advantage of by independent audiologists, and monetary support so that our hearing needs are met realistically- i.e the cost of hearing aids does not exceed 50% of our wages.

Thankyou very much for the opportunity to comment and for reviewing our needs. I look forward to the outcome. '

Kind Regards

Julie-Anne Kiyega