

6<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Re: Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia

To the Community Affairs References Committee ([community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)):

I wish to make a submission to the Hearing Health Inquiry as I believe there is immense room for improvement.

Firstly a little background about myself. I am 51 years of age and a bi-lateral cochlear implantee. I live in rural Queensland and work as a teacher aide within the State schooling system.

Below are some examples of inadequacies within our current health system for the deaf and hard of hearing as well as highlighting the personal expense in being deaf.

- Hearing aids and cochlear processors prove to be an ongoing expense to maintain as both require batteries. Unless you are under Australian Hearing there is no available assistance to offset this cost.
- Private health insurance only covers a small portion of the cost of hearing aids
- For the replacement of cochlear processors (which is necessary approximately every 5 years) some private health insurance companies only pay a rebate equivalent to hearing aid rebates (approx. \$300.00 to \$600.00 every 3 years). Replacement processors are currently \$8,500.00 depending on you provider. In my personal situation I have had to change my private health insurance provider (Australian Health Management) because of this. As a bilateral cochlear implantee I was facing an outlay of approximately \$17,000 every 5 years. How many people can afford this just to be able to communicate in a society where the spoken word is the accepted form of communication?
- The cause of my deafness was Menieres Disease and when I was fitted with my hearing aid I had to continually travel to Brisbane to be monitored with hearing tests. To do this I was reimbursed with Government Travel Rebate BUT these tests could have been done locally here in Mackay through Australian Hearing. Because I was not on any 'benefits' I could not access this local facility because it is a 'cashless' centre. This system causes inconvenience to the deaf and hard of hearing as well as an unnecessary extra expense on Government money. If this system was rectified more money would be available for Health resourses.
- From my experience - for the Deaf to receive a disability pension they are means tested – whereas – the blind or 'hard of seeing' people receive the disability pension WITHOUT a means test. This system is discriminating and should be rectified immediately. Blind people do not have the added expense of putting batteries into their glasses to 'see'.

My hope is that changes will be made to the way hearing health is currently dealt with in Australia. Deafness is often referred to as the silent disability and can be an unseen affliction but, let me assure you, its impact can be both seen and felt.

As a Cochlear Awareness Network ambassador, I would be only too happy to assist further with this Hearing Health Inquiry if needed. Do not hesitate to contact me. So that you can gain a further insight into the challenges that hearing impaired / deaf people encounter I encourage you to visit our Cochlear Awareness Network website and read the personal stories from recipients. I am confident that if you do so, you will receive a greater understanding of what it is like to experience life in a world of silence. The website address is [www.c-a-network.com](http://www.c-a-network.com) .

Thanks for accepting my submission

Yours faithfully

GLEND A FROYLAND