

**The Standing Committee on Health
Aged Care and Sport**

PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Chairperson

Submission to the inquiry into the Hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia

I am aware of the need for a better understanding amongst normal hearing people and business on how to assist Hearing Impaired people, being hearing Impaired myself. In better understanding the condition and the known means of addressing the issue, isolation of the hearing impaired would be significantly reduced. Secondly, if hearing impaired people, particularly the elderly were fully informed on the need to combine hearing aids with other known procedures, isolation and possibly depression could be significantly reduced.

I offer the following submission as an index of unmet need and a call for equity for every Australian who lives with hearing loss or impairment, a chronic ear disorder or tinnitus; are Deaf or deafblind; and their families.

Yours sincerely

Name: Richard Hancock

Submission to the inquiry into the Hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia

Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport

13 December 2016

Introduction

I/We would like to offer comments and recommendations to this Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry in relation to some/all of the terms of reference for this inquiry into the Hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia.

1. Community awareness, information, education and promotion about hearing loss and health care.

Some points that would be relevant to include in this section are:

- Areas of need eg medical profession (why should GPs take hearing loss more seriously), prevention programs
- Work done by community groups and organisations.
- Hearing Awareness Week.
- Lack of a national approach or funding. How could a national effort serve to improve hearing loss prevention, better services etc.
- Reasons for making hearing health and wellbeing a National Health Priority – what difference would it make to you or to Australia?

Australia has not had a substantive and systematic hearing loss prevention program since the 1990s. Evidence exists of isolated programs of excellence

e.g. various ear bus services targeting prevention of *Otitis media* in Western Australia. What do you think needs to happen in terms of hearing health prevention and community hearing health education programs? Tell the Committee about your ideas here and in the recommendation section below propose the kinds of programs that need to be run.

Recommendation:

I recommend that the Australian Government

1. Education of normal hearing people, on the effect hearing impairment has on the ability to understand the spoken words. It is a long way from being just a volume issue, which is primarily what hearing aids achieve. Hearing aids are only just aids, they do not restore good hearing. To promote correct procedures for addressing hearing impaired people. Greater promotion in the use of existing and new technology for the hearing impaired to be encourage for a wider use in Businesses and Public Venues, preferably by education but updated laws if necessary.

2. The education of the hearing impaired, particularly the elderly on the importance of the right hearing aid. Greater control is required on the selling of hearing aids, as most hearing impaired people are elderly and are exposed to being taken advantage of by not being provided with the correct hearing aid, or not adequately informed on the advantages and disadvantages of certain hearing aids. Through the structure of the industry there is a great tenancy to sell the brand of hearing aid that provides the greatest margin. Just as important, is education for the hearing impaired on those procedures that can be undertaken to enhance the benefits of hearing aid, of which there are many.

This education/awareness can be achieved through schools etc., Hearing specialists, media, Hearing Awareness Week and Groups like Better Hearing Australia with better funding.