

A Submission to the Inquiry into the Hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia

I am an elderly man in good general health, but with a deteriorating hearing disability similar to that experienced by my father. I have been diagnosed with Meniere's disease resulting in usually mild short term recurring balance disorders.

I am not dissatisfied with the attention that I receive under the Australian Government program which assists pensioners who have a hearing impairment, and appreciate the aids and appliances that I receive to assist me hear. It is, however, unclear whether the value of 'add-ons', sold to improve on the free issue aids are of good value, or the best available when audiologists also fill the role of a marketing outlet for hearing aid manufacturers. I feel that the government scheme could also be complemented by an advisory outlet to assist those obtaining aids in their decisions.

Such an advisory service, however, perhaps should not be limited to the area of choice of aids. A number of the people with whom I socialise appear to lack the incentive to enquire about, obtain, and wear hearing aids. Without them many have challenges in vocal interaction and thus endure a degree of social isolation, and for some this affects mental wellbeing.

Concurrently I have noticed that an increasing number of service providers and commercial organisations are relying solely on telephone conversations and recordings through which to convey important information, or even to secure a contractual agreement. An initial written communication, written in the hope of receiving a written reply, often concludes or is finalised by a telephone conversation at the organisation's insistence, resulting in uncertainty for the purchaser or client.

I am therefore suggesting, in summary, that there would be benefit in a program of awareness being promulgated for both people with hearing deficiencies and those people and organisations who provide services for the public.

Michael North