

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October

Question: E11-167

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: PROMOTION OF HEARING LOSS AND NOISE EXPOSURE AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

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Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Does the promotional material that the Hearing Services Program is putting out include areas where young people gather and those sorts of things?

Answer:

The Office of Hearing Services (OHS) provides communication material to hearing services providers and general practitioners, about eligibility for and services available under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the Program). However this material is not promotional material relating to hearing loss prevention more broadly.

The OHS funds research on hearing loss prevention under the Hearing Loss Prevention Program (HLPP) which includes promotional material and messages about the research outcomes. Funding has been provided under the HLPP for the following research projects:

- Edith Cowan University - to promote awareness of the dangers of excessive sound exposure and to change the listening habits of young people to minimise the risks to hearing of excessive noise. The project will include the design of a mobile science museum exhibit which is expected to be exhibited at museums nationally and which involves an interactive demonstration of the difficulties and frustrations experienced in communication while listening to simulated hearing loss and tinnitus. The project will also include the design of a comprehensive hearing conservation message using advertising aimed at young people who use personal music players. The project is due to be completed in May 2012.
- The University of Western Australia (Ear Science Institute of Australia) – to develop downloadable applications for iPod type devices that score music tracks, monitor usage, present warnings when safe exposure levels are exceeded. The project will also establish an information website for matters related to high noise exposure and a hearing health education course for school aged children. The project is due to be completed in April 2012. Project outcomes will be disseminated through press coverage, national and international journals and meetings, educators, and allied health professionals.

- Funding has also been provided under the HLPP to the National Acoustic Laboratory (NAL), the research arm of Australian Hearing, to undertake research into the prevalence of hearing loss and its relationship to leisure sound exposure in adolescents as well as a complementary study to provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of noise exposure for young people. As part of its research funding under the HLPP, Australian Hearing, through NAL, established stalls in shopping centres, city squares, railway stations and other busy places and offered free iPod volume tests and advice to the general public. This research was completed in June 2011 and is available on the OHS website at [www.health.gov.au/hear](http://www.health.gov.au/hear). A number of papers have also been prepared for publication and selected findings of the study will be submitted for oral presentations at conferences, both in Australia and overseas.

OHS provides funding to Australian Hearing to deliver the Community Service Obligations component of the Program. A proportion of this funding is provided for research activities conducted by NAL.

One of the research reports prepared by Australian Hearing was the Binge Listening report released in May 2010. NAL co-opted young adults to wear noise dosimeters to nightclubs and parties to provide information for the report. This report received a significant amount of general media coverage and proved very beneficial in raising awareness of the dangers of leisure noise. Dissemination of research outcomes included academic journals, conferences and youth based media.

Australian Hearing has a number of information sheets on the dangers of noise. These are disseminated to clients and the general public at various Australian Hearing sites, Hearing Awareness Week, community talks and from their hearing bus. The information sheets and the Binge Listening report are also available on their website [www.hearing.com.au](http://www.hearing.com.au)