



Coordinated nationally by Deafness Forum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Noise destroys

Hearing Awareness Week 24-30 August 2008

The major preventable cause of hearing loss is noise injury. ¹

In the past it was industrial deafness. Today, hearing loss is mainly on the increase due to leisure activities such as personal stereo players (PSPs) and social and recreational noise.

Young people and farmers are at great risk. Why farmers? Because they turn their PSP up louder to block out machinery noise (such as tractors). This noise injury also increases their risk of tinnitus.

This noise-related hearing loss among young adults is concerning: their ears are ageing faster than they should be. Hearing is damaged by the loudness of the signal, the amount of time you are exposed, and how often. In other words, the louder it is, the less time is required before your hearing is damaged. Listening to loud music through personal earphones can damage your hearing.

As a basic rule, if the person next to you can hear your music, it is up too loud.

The type of ear phones you use with your personal stereo player can have an effect. Some earbuds are poor-fitting, and users may turn up the volume to try to block out background noise, which increases the risk of noise injury.

During HAW 2008 Deafness Forum will launch an innovative new personal stereo player message. Targeting users of portable stereo players, the message will only be heard by the people who need it, at the moment they need it most - right before they do damage to their hearing. An audio message is attached to the beginning of various downloadable podcasts. It can only be heard if the music player's volume is at a dangerous level.

Some countries have introduced legislation limiting recreational noise, such as in discos and nightclubs. That is not yet the case in Australia.

Noise induced hearing loss occurs from exposure to loud sounds. Sounds, that are sufficiently loud to damage sensitive inner ear structures, can cause hearing loss irreversible by any presently available medical or surgical treatment. Hearing loss associated with noise exposure can occur at any age and is often characterised by the difficulty in understanding speech and the presence of tinnitus. This form of hearing loss is almost entirely preventable.

Main events being held during Hearing Awareness Week

A media conference at 10.00am on Tuesday 26 August 2008, with both the Minister for Human Services and the Minister for Ageing and the Deafness Forum of Australia. Australian Hearing will showing 3 minute mpeg video which can be hosted onto other websites for educational purposes (e.g. YouTube, news websites). Additional research to support Australian Hearing's recent hearing health report *Is Australia Listening?* will also be announced at the media conference.

Deafness Forum will launch their PSP message at the same press conference. CDs with the message will be available on the day.

Hearing screenings and PSP testing for all MPs, Senators and staff of Parliament House on 26 – 27 August, 2008 to coincide with HAW. The screenings will be held at Parliament House in MG63.

Free hearing screenings and talks around Australia.

Visit the Hearing Awareness Week website www.hearingawarenessweek.org.au for more events.

Quick Facts about deafness

1. One in six Australians has some form of hearing impairment – that's 3.55 million people
Deafness is one of the most common disabilities worldwide.
2. *The number of Australians with deafness is expected to increase to 1 in 4 by 2050².*
This is largely due to the ageing population, but indications are that young people are also damaging their ears.
3. Having trouble hearing? Have a hearing test today.

During Hearing Awareness Week, many audiology clinics offer free hearing tests. See www.hearingawarenessweek.org.au for a listing

4. Captions help people who are Deaf or have hearing loss to understand and follow the soundtrack. *Captioning ensures that everyone has the ability to access broadcast messages. Captions differ from subtitles, which translate from one language to another.*
 5. Tinnitus is a constant ringing or other noise in your ears, when no such sound physically exists.
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About Deafness Forum of Australia

Deafness Forum is a national peak body for people who are Deaf, have a hearing impairment or chronic disorder of the ear. Deafness Forum is the national coordinating body for Hearing Awareness Week.

Interviews

Nicole Lawder CEO Deafness Forum of Australia Voice telephone: 02 62627808 (BH), 0404 037 177(MOB) Text (TTY) telephone: 02 6262 7809 (BH) (will be at Parliament House on 26 August)

Sharan Westcott, Principal Audiologist, Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre (Deafness Forum Board member) voice phone 0407 272 968

Professor Harvey Dillon, National Acoustic Laboratories phone (02) 9412-6828 (will be at Parliament House on 26 August)

¹ "Noise injury is the single most common cause of hearing loss. 37% of hearing loss is due to noise injury. That means it could have been prevented. "The economic cost and impact of hearing loss in Australia" Access Economics 2006

² Ibid, Access Economics 2006