

# step up.

Welcome to a special edition of HCIA's newsletter *Step Up for Hearing Awareness Week*.

HCIA is a Platinum Sponsor of Hearing Awareness Week which commences on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

The week will start with our attendance at the [Communications Expo](#) being held in Parliament House on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August. We will take the opportunity to show parliamentarians and their staff the range of services and technology that are now available to hearing impaired people in Australia. A number of senior practitioners from HCIA member companies will attend the Expo to showcase some of the very good work the members companies are now doing.

Our sponsorship also gives us the opportunity to [speak at the official launch of the Expo](#). We intend to issue some challenges for Government. Whilst I intend to congratulate the government on having a world class hearing services program, I will also make the point that the average age of people accessing the program is 79 years old, and given hearing loss is a

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major issue of productivity, fairness and social justice, then the current program needs to change. We will call for the program to be extended to all Australians, subject to an eligibility and means test and if this is not possible, we will call on government to lower the age of entry to the program to 45 years, noting that employment rates for people with hearing impairment between the ages of 45 and 64 are up to 20% lower than for people with hearing loss. [Click here see a copy of my speech.](#)

On Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August, we will host a **Parliamentary breakfast**. Professor Harvey Dillon from the National Acoustic Laboratories will speak about exposure to leisure noise and hearing loss in young people and the Chair of the Deafness Forum, David Brady and a young deaf sportswoman, Melinda Vernon, will speak about living with hearing loss.

We have published a new brochure to distribute to all parliamentarians and the media. [Click here to download a version.](#)

## The Senate Inquiry into Hearing Healthcare

The Government responded to the Senate Committee Report on Hearing Health in June this year. A short summary of their response is as follows;

- They accepted in principle the recommendations that the program be extended to include all Australians, subject to an eligibility and a means test; that former clients of AH remain eligible for support until the age of 26 and that the Office of Hearing Services (OHS) review its policy on the replacement of speech processors for clients over 21.

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- They accepted in principle the recommendation that the OHS investigate (with relevant stakeholders) the relationship between the voucher program, top ups and the financial viability of private health services and that the OHS investigate whether the extension of the capacity of audiologists to bulk bill Medicare directly would have any impact on the financial viability of private health services (eg would it ameliorate the need to push top ups).
- They accepted in principle the recommendations in relation to funding for NAL to undertake research into the long-term aspects of recreational noise; fund research into occupational noise exposure; fund research into the reasons for underuse of hearing aids; and look at how the Department of Health could work with Meniere's Australia to identify opportunities for further research.
- They noted the recommendation re a national public awareness campaign and said they are also a matter for state and territory governments...however, they added that the Department will discuss the proposal for a hearing awareness campaign with the states and territories and explore whether there is an appropriate role for providers in this campaign.
- They accepted the recommendation that changes be made to Medicare to enable specialists and practitioners to receive public funding for ear health services provided remotely via ear tele-health.
- They referred a number of matters to the state and territory governments (like noise safety regulations for entertainment venues; the development of a national



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qualification standard for teachers of children with hearing impairment; patient assisted travel schemes; e-technology based programs; newborn screening; national standards for interpreters; supply and maintenance of sound field systems in all new classrooms; induction programs for teachers posted to indigenous schools to emphasise the likelihood of hearing impairment; provision of hearing assessments for people in jail; development of guidelines for police interviews with hearing impaired indigenous Australians; the provision of hearing loops in all police stations and courtrooms and review of correctional facilities to improve the needs of hearing impaired Australians).

Clearly there is a lot of work to be done over the next period of Government. HCIA will continue to work closely with Government and others to ensure a number of recommendations actually come to fruition.

## Ongoing Input into Policy

HCIA has made a number of submissions over the past few months – two worth noting are those to the Productivity Commission and to The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council.

The first concerned the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Aged Care and the second Unregistered Health Practitioners. Both submissions can be found on our [website](#).



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## Accreditation of HCIA Clinics

The work continues. The Members have now had the opportunity to hear from a number of external bodies who may be able to assist HCIA undertake independent audits of their clinics. A decision on the preferred provider will be made in the coming months.

## Liaison with the Professional Bodies

HCIA is now meeting on a regular basis with the other professional bodies as well as the Deafness Forum. We are looking at ways to build the profile of the profession and the services it provides to members of parliament, the public.

Please feel welcome to contact us.....we are always looking for suggestions about what you would like to hear about.

**Donna Staunton**  
CEO