

Form Submission 565473

Question	Answer
Agreement	Yes, with these details:
Can we publish your submission?	Yes, with these details:
Name of organisation or individual making this submission	Hearing Matters Australia Inc
Authorised delegate/contact person	Christine Hunter
Position	President
Organisation	Hearing Matters Australia Inc
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In what capacity are you making your submission?	other

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If other, please specify	Hearing Matters Australia Inc is a voluntary, not for profit consumer organisation which advocates for & provides unbiased advice & support for people with hearing loss.
Is this a personal submission or on behalf of a professional body or organisation (please specify)?	professional body or organisation
If a professional body or organisation, please specify the organisation	Hearing Matters Australia Inc
Do you currently have, or have you previously had, a work-related hearing loss claim?	No, I've never had a work-related hearing loss claim
What would you rate the current system for workers with work-related hearing loss?	2
Are there barriers to workers accessing their work-related hearing loss entitlements?	Yes
Can improvements be made in the following areas?	access to benefits, worker outcomes and experience, employer support and information

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For any options you selected above, what changes can be made?

Access to benefits: There needs to be a clear pathway for people with hearing loss to access benefits particularly in relation to the ability of those who assess the need of workers for hearing assistance. They need to have a clear understanding of the relationship between hearing loss & its effect on a worker's functionality, or ability to function effectively in the work place. e.g. a worker may have a mild loss but this may severely restrict the way they perform their job.

Worker outcomes: There is a stigma associated with hearing loss & this may affect the way a worker with hearing loss is treated in the workplace by employers & by workmates. Hearing loss or the presumption by others that a person cannot do the job effectively because of it (even though they may have been fitted with assistive devices) may limit opportunities for advancement. More needs to be done in the workplace re making co-workers and employers more aware of effective oral communication techniques & suitable working/listening environments that assists better hearing for all. Other assistive devices (e.g. microphones in meetings, volume controlled phones, captioning etc) used in the workplace can also enhance better communication for people with hearing loss (& all).

Employer Support & Information: More information is needed for employers on the causes of hearing loss in the workplace and in particular the effects & legal implications of consistently noisy workplaces. There should be induction programs also for all workers on the dangers of excess noise in their workplace & the signs & effects of hearing loss, plus the dangers of not addressing it.

What would help to improve workers' use and benefit of hearing aids?

Workers need to be tested & optimally fitted by professionally trained audiology service providers. They need to also be counselled before & after fitting to ensure that they understand their loss & the service provider is aware of the specific requirements of the client in relation to their lifestyle & workplace hearing needs. The client needs to also be psychologically ready for hearing devices & after fitting they need to be supported with followup

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appointments to check their progress with the aid(s) & also to learn how to complement the aids through the use of other oral communication techniques.

How can the use of hearing aids for work-related hearing loss be evaluated?

Without hearing aids for work related hearing loss a person is unlikely to be able to function effectively in the role for which they are employed. They may face demotion or they may not be able to work at all or in an area that they are trained in. This has significant economic & health consequences ranging from depression from the isolation that is caused to a greater incidence other health morbidities, thus placing a greater burden on the health & economic systems of the country.

On the other hand, a person who is optimally fitted with hearing aids & is receiving appropriate support from the service provider & in the workplace has a much better chance of being able to effectively function in the workplace, achieve career ambitions, enjoy workplace equity & contribute more to society.

How can the process for servicing devices and the provision of batteries and replacement aids be improved?

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Hearing aids are constantly evolving with new technology and improvement. How can hearing aid

Hearing aids are expensive & most of this is due to the research & development that is constantly occurring. At one end of the market there are basic hearing aids that are just amplification devices while at the other end there are much more sophisticated models that will meet the

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<p>quality and function be balanced with overall device cost?</p>	<p>specific hearing needs of an individual & have a range of functions & compatibilities with other electronic devices (e.g. directional microphones, bluetooth connectivity to phones, television, computers etc.)</p> <p>The balance occurs when there is a range of hearing aids available in the marketplace which cater for a wide variety of hearing needs. Not everyone needs all of the "bells & whistles" of a top of the range hearing aid which is usually very expensive. Service providers need to focus more on the provision of hearing aids that meet the specific lifestyle & hearing needs of the individual they are fitting rather than often trying to meet sales targets & up-selling to an more expensive model with features that are not required.</p>

Please include any other general comments not addressed above.

Workplaces can be noisy environments of which many employers may not be fully aware. Many workplaces such as cafes, retail & office spaces are noisy without there being a lot of awareness of the damage that can be done due to noise exposure of a period of time (e.g. consider 7-8 hours per day, 5 days per week in a retail shop that has loud background music playing or even a busy cafe or club environment that is constantly noisy). Some of this is due to poor building design particularly in relation to the materials used in interior spaces, where an abundance of hard surfaces cause sound to bounce. Workers & particularly employers need to be made more aware of this & of the potential for future claims to be made for work related hearing loss.

