

## MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed: 25 August 2016

### NEW AUSTRALIA-WIDE SUPPORT LINE PUTS HEARING HELP AT EVERYONE'S FINGERTIPS

A new free support service, backed by the world renowned hearing specialists at Australian Hearing, has been launched to coincide with Hearing Awareness Week (21 – 27 August 2016). The new website and helpline, called **Hearing Help**, is set to be a game-changer, helping the millions of Australians<sup>1</sup> who are impacted by hearing loss and find it difficult to seek impartial advice and support.

Hearing loss is often referred to an 'invisible disability' due to there being no obvious early signs or symptoms. However, it would appear that guidance on where to go for independent expert hearing advice is just as 'invisible' as the condition itself.

New Australian Hearing research<sup>2</sup> indicates people are in a quandary when it comes to accessing guidance on hearing support and this may contribute to people waiting on average eight years to take action for their own, or their loved one's hearing loss<sup>3</sup>.

**Hearing Help** reduces the need to physically visit a GP, or Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist for initial hearing advice. It now allows easy and direct access to a hearing specialist from the comfort of your own home, free of charge.

Whilst there are general medical helplines available in Australia, **Hearing Help** is the first that is purely dedicated to hearing, putting people directly in touch with a fully qualified hearing specialist, either over the phone or via live web chat, incurring no out-of-pocket expenses.

Gina Mavrias, Australian Hearing Chief Operating Officer, said the new service has been created to address the barriers that face many Australians with hearing loss, in today's rapidly evolving society:

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<sup>1</sup> Listen Hear! Access Economics, <https://audiology.asn.au/public/1/files/Publications/ListenHearFinal.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Australian Hearing Customer Listening project, Ipsos Australia

<sup>3</sup> Listen Hear! Access Economics, <https://audiology.asn.au/public/1/files/Publications/ListenHearFinal.pdf>

“**Hearing Help** is about making hearing advice convenient and easily accessible - whether that's browsing the website for resources, asking for help through online chat, or picking up the phone to chat directly with a hearing specialist. This way, we're not asking people to physically travel to a hearing centre.”

“We can help with all manner of hearing associated questions. We can help people wanting information on hearing related conditions, such as tinnitus. We can share knowledge on the most technological advances on hearing devices, or help someone wanting to know how to get a hearing check. We're also a convenient option for those living in rural or remote areas where there might be less access to a GP.”

But it's not just people with a hearing loss that are set to benefit from Hearing Help. Studies show that untreated hearing loss negatively impacts a person's relationships, especially those closest to them<sup>4</sup>.

“Good hearing is essential to communication, but when it starts to decline, frustration can creep in. That's one of the many reasons why we created **Hearing Help**; as a valuable support line for the entire family.”

“We can help time-poor parents who appreciate instant access to information for their child. We can also help loved ones wanting to know how they can help their partner communicate again,” says Ms Mavrias.

In addition to the free phone and web chat support, **Hearing Help** is backed by a new resource hub, which also includes a free hearing test. Australians can call a fully qualified hearing specialist on Freecall 1800 740 301 or visit [hearinghelp.com.au](http://hearinghelp.com.au).

To celebrate Hearing Awareness Week, Australian Hearing is urging Australians to take the online test today: [www.hearinghelp.com.au](http://www.hearinghelp.com.au).

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For media interviews, please contact Hannah Rayment on +61 0425 329 921 or [hrayment@webershandwick.com](mailto:hrayment@webershandwick.com)

**Notes to editors:**

- Hearing Help is an initiative of Australian Hearing, the country's largest provider of Government subsidised hearing services, and its world renowned research division, the National Acoustic Laboratories, established in 1947.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.healthyhearing.com/report/52619-The-impact-of-hearing-loss-on-relationships>

- It is estimated that one in six Australians have some form of hearing loss and struggle to hear every year<sup>5</sup>. This number is expected to rise to one in four people by 2050.
- Australians living in regional areas need to wait on average twice as long as city dwellers to see their preferred doctors, even though rural GPs are twice as likely to work longer hours. Those statistics are part of a seven-year survey conducted by the Australian National University, which found an average wait time of six days in rural areas compared to three days in metropolitan areas.

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<sup>5</sup> Listen Hear! Access Economics, <https://audiology.asn.au/public/1/files/Publications/ListenHearFinal.pdf>