



Research into Hearing Health

The Australian Government, through the Hearing Services Program (the program), is committed to reducing the impact of hearing loss on the lives of Australians and to reducing the incidence and consequence of avoidable hearing loss in the Australian community. As well as providing access to high quality hearing services and devices, the program supports research and prevention activities that

- contribute to the development of improved policies and service delivery, and
- enables the Department of Health to better identify the needs of the community in relation to hearing loss.

Funded research and development activities into hearing health, prevention and rehabilitation is undertaken by the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) and various research institutions, through the Hearing Loss Prevention Program (HLPP).

Context

Hearing loss can reduce the capacity to communicate and participate in social situations and can affect a person's education and employment opportunities. Whilst hearing loss can affect anyone, prevalence rates for hearing loss are primarily related to the ageing population.

Other factors which are known to contribute to hearing loss are excessive exposure to occupation or recreation noise. Exposure to toxins (ototoxicity) and the use of some medications are also known to cause damage to the ear and affect the ability to hear.

Research Objectives

Research into hearing loss and hearing devices occurs around the world, yet there are still critical knowledge gaps that exist in hearing health. These gaps include, but are not limited to

- accurate, descriptive and predictive models of hearing loss incidence, prevalence and impacts,
- an understanding of the relationship between ageing and hearing loss,
- an understanding of patterns of comorbidity associated with hearing loss,
- investigating the relationship between ototoxic substances and hearing impairment and the implications for preventing hearing loss,
- an understanding of the relationship between risky behaviors and noise induced hearing loss and the design of effective hearing health and hearing loss prevention campaigns,
- a mechanism to effectively measure and mitigate health, social and economic effects of hearing loss, and
- an evaluation of benefit, satisfaction and cost effectiveness of interventions and devices for hearing loss.

The National Acoustic Laboratories

The [National Acoustic Laboratories](#) is the research division of [Australian Hearing](#) and conducts scientific investigations and research into hearing, hearing rehabilitation, and the effects of noise on people, including the prevention of hearing loss. NAL's research aims to enhance the lives of people living with hearing loss through developing a better understanding of the processes of hearing, hearing loss and hearing devices.

Information regarding [research undertaken by NAL](#) is available on their website

NAL was also involved in the development of [Sound Scouts](#), a game designed to test the hearing of children.

The Hearing Loss Prevention Program

The HLPP was a four year funded program established in 2007-08 in response to the 2006 Access Economics report - [Listen Hear! The economic impact and cost of hearing loss in Australia \(2006\)](#).

The HLPP, administered by the [National Health and Medical Research Council](#) (NHMRC) on behalf of the Department of Health, provides funding into research that helps to reduce the incidence of hearing loss in the general community and its subsequent effects of productivity.

The HLPP has supported research through multiple funding streams including Projects Grants and Centres of Research Excellence. Historical information on research that has been funded under the HLPP is available on the following links

- [HLPP Completed Projects](#)
- [HLPP Projects Awarded and in Progress](#)

No new funding is available under the HLPP. Parties interested in seeking other research funding may wish to consider the funding opportunities available through the [NHMRC](#).