

**MEDIA INFORMATION**

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**COMMUNITY URGED TO HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT HEARING ON WORLD HEARING DAY .... AND BEYOND**

Cost of hearing loss exposed with Ear Science Institute Australia and World Health Organisation urging hearing action.

In a world where hearing loss is increasingly prevalent, having a conversation about hearing loss can be a major challenge with many people and their families simply avoiding the issue.

But on Friday March 3 when World Hearing Day is internationally celebrated Ear Science Institute Australia's head of clinical research Professor Peter Friedland is urging people experiencing a loss of hearing and their families, friends and business associates to have a conversation about hearing.

Professor Friedland, who before moving to Western Australia was ENT surgeon for South Africa's celebrated president Nelson Mandela, said that when people address their hearing loss their lives can change in many positive ways.

"As an ENT I see the impact of hearing loss on a daily basis and it is not only the individual who is impacted. Hearing loss affects a person's whole life including their professional work life, family life and social life as they lose the ability to enjoy the world around them and communicate with confidence, yet there is a tremendous reluctance by many people to acknowledge their hearing loss," he said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the cost of hearing loss internationally, due to unemployment and premature retirement, is US\$105 billion per year.

American research shows that people with untreated hearing loss earn 50-70% less and in Europe people with hearing loss are twice as likely to be unemployed as a person with normal hearing.

Professor Friedland said hearing loss was a global issue that had a huge impact on individuals and the community with World Hearing Day presented an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the cost and implications of hearing loss and the huge benefits created by taking positive action.

"Hearing loss is a subject that is rarely talked about at great length in the community but at Ear Science Institute Australia we want to urge people to have a conversation about hearing and address their hearing loss as there are many options available to help people hear better. More than that, delaying treatment can have a significant effect on a person's cognitive ability."

The internationally recognised ear specialist said that World Hearing Day was a way to shine a light on the global issue of hearing loss with the World Health Organisation promoting awareness of the financial impact of hearing loss to the community and individuals through its 2017 campaign Action for Hearing Loss: Make a Sound Investment.

By focusing on the bottom line of how hearing loss impacts countries around the world, Professor Friedland and WHO hope to encourage the broader community to take action and in Western Australia, that first important step is for individuals to have a conversation about a subject that affects a large part of the population.

"There are simple, cost-effective ways that people can prevent forms of hearing loss by protecting their ears from loud sounds and by recognising and treating ear infections", said Professor Friedland.

"It is also important to address actual hearing loss by using devices such as hearing aids, with many tiny, unnoticeable devices now available, effective and well accepted.

“There is no longer a need to put off having a conversation about hearing loss or finding out about options,” he said.

“Just as poor sight was once a major issue for many and can now be easily resolved through spectacles and other treatment, loss of hearing has become today’s health, home and lifestyle issue but with options to address hearing now available, it no longer needs to hold people back.”

Ear Science Institute Australia provides information on how to prevent hearing loss and if required, to address hearing loss.

“As a not for profit organisation, we greatly support the World Hearing Day and WHO message and encourage everyone to take a proactive approach to the prevention of hearing loss. If you do have a hearing loss, take action today and seek assistance”, said Professor Friedland.

“This action will provide benefits beyond those experienced by the individual alone. It will reach into wider circles of family relationships, work life and community,” said the Ear Science Institute Australia’s hearing specialist.

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