

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**NOT-FOR-PROFIT EAR SCIENCE INSTITUTE AUSTRALIA AND LIONS HEARING CLINICS  
WELCOME ACCC HEARING INDUSTRY PROBE TO SUPPORT PATIENT INTERESTS**

Following the release of an ACCC report into the hearing industry referencing issues of concern relating to the sale of hearing aids Western Australia's prestigious not-for-profit Ear Science Institute Australia and Lions Hearing Clinics have embraced and welcomed any enquiry that would ensure the best interests of patients are met by the industry.

The two organisations respected for their progressive work in ear research and hearing support said that while their own Lions Hearing Clinics were commission free and did not receive any personal benefit from the sale of a hearing aid they recognised a growing level of community concern around this in relation to the wider industry that would benefit from a review.

Sandra Bellekom, Chief Executive Officer of Ear Science Institute Australia said that as a not for profit organisation, Ear Science Institute Australia welcomed this ACCC report into the hearing aid industry.

Mrs Bellekom said she hoped the report - which would look into issues including whether sales may be driven by commissions rather than by consumer need, the cost and performance of hearing aids and the treatment of vulnerable customers - would encourage the industry to review its current practices and implement processes and procedures more in line with the best interests of the patient.

"Through our Lions Hearing Clinics we provide hearing services, including the provision of hearing aids to tens of thousands of Western Australians. We are proudly evidence-based with our qualified clinicians using the latest research to help patients whether through testing methods, rehabilitation or in identifying the most suitable device for their needs, and are not governed by sales targets.

"We fully understand that our patients have needs from a budgetary perspective and also have a need for the right hearing aid to provide benefits for their own unique hearing needs," she said.

"Our clinicians are all commission-free. We do not receive any personal benefit from the sale of a hearing aid with any profit reinvested back into our institute and used for research. This provides us with the ability to find new and better ways to assist people with hearing loss and perhaps even find a cure for hearing loss in the future," said Ear Hearing's CEO.

"Our audiologists spend on average six years studying to be qualified and with a commitment to our not for profit values they have an innate drive to provide the best level of patient care possible with our Lions Hearing Clinics encouraging and supporting this through ongoing education and training."

Lize Coetzee, head of Lions Hearing Clinics, an experienced audiologist whose profession was prompted by experiencing misguided hearing treatment of her own brother when he was a child said Lions Hearing Clinics had very high expectations of the team with everyone that was involved having an absolute commitment to putting the patient first.

"This is a key part of our induction process and a requirement of their role at a Lions Hearing Clinic," she said.

"My first experience with the industry was when my brother, who has a hearing loss, received poor treatment when seeking assistance. He was declared "completely deaf" when he was not, and the distress it caused him and my family was immense," said Mrs Coetzee.

“Luckily for us, this was not an accurate diagnosis but the lack of empathy, professionalism and testing from the clinician spurred me on to become an audiologist and ensure this never happened to anyone else ever again.”

“This experience continues to inspire me in the management of our Lions Hearing Clinics to seek the best audiologists possible and to instill in them that the patient comes first - always.

“Our team is focused on the outcomes for the patient and we work with the best hearing aid technology and suppliers in the world. We also work closely with our Ear Science Institute Australia researchers to continuously improve patient outcomes and many times our patients are happy to be part of research studies as well,” said Mrs Coetzee.

“The Lions Hearing Clinics have a close tie with Lions Hearing Foundation of WA and Lions Clubs, from where our name originated and we share these same Lions values in looking after people,” said Mrs Coetzee.

“Our clinicians are never paid a commission and they choose to work for Lions Hearing Clinics because they share our beliefs for patient and family-centred care and know that profits are reinvested back into research, not into anyone’s pay packet.

“I hope this ACCC report will encourages more clinicians to put the patient first and provide a level of care that we, as an industry, can be proud of,” said the Lions Hearing Clinics’ head.

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