



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## ***Deafness Impacts & Solutions Centre Stage at this Week's National Deafness Sector Summit***

The National Deafness Sector Summit on 23-24 April will turn a spotlight on the critical issue of hearing disability that affects more than 3.5 million Australians.

There are 10,000 deaf children in Australia and 160,000 Australians are out of work because they cannot hear. The number of Australians with hearing disability is expected to rise with an ageing population

"This provides Australia with major social and economic challenges – but also major opportunities. The opportunities will be a key focus of the Summit," said Nicole Lawder, the CEO of Deafness Forum of Australia.

The Summit's keynote speakers include the Hon. Bill Shorten MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, the "white knight" for disability reform, who will address social inclusion for people with disability. The Hon. John Howard AC, Deafness Forum Ambassador, will address the Summit.

Ms Lawder said the Summit would also highlight initiatives such as those of deafness services innovator Ai-Media, a company that will reveal details of a new service it has developed to enable deaf and hearing impaired students to participate fully in mainstream schools. Deaf children in mainstream classes currently have more mental health issues than other students and are 2.4 times less likely to finish high school.

Ai-Media CEO Tony Abrahams said: "We have developed a captioning innovation for deaf and hearing impaired students that transforms their ability to participate and succeed in mainstream classrooms.

"With a better education, these students can secure better jobs and benefit themselves, the community and wider economy," Mr Abrahams said.

According to Access Economics the cost to the Australian economy of excluding people from education and employment opportunities because of deafness exceeds \$12 billion a year. Today, one in six people have a hearing loss and this is expected to rise to one in four by 2050.

The National Deafness Sector Summit is being held from 23-24 April at the Grace Hotel, York St, Sydney. Details can be found at: [www.deafnessforum.org.au](http://www.deafnessforum.org.au)

**MEDIA RELEASE ENDS**

**For further details or interviews contact Nicole Lawder CEO Deafness Forum of Australia mobile 0404 037177**

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

[www.deafnessforum.org.au](http://www.deafnessforum.org.au)

### **About the Deafness Forum:**

Deafness Forum is a peak national systemic advocacy body for deafness in Australia. Established in early 1993 at the instigation of the Federal government, the Deafness Forum now represents over 60 deafness and hearing health organisations and all interests and viewpoints of the Deaf and hearing impaired communities of Australia (including those people who have a chronic disorder of the ear and those who are Deafblind).

The Deafness Forum exists to improve the quality of life for Australians who are Deaf, have a hearing impairment or have a chronic disorder of the ear by:

- advocating for government policy change and development
- making input into policy and legislation
- generating public awareness
- providing a forum for information sharing and
- creating better understanding between all areas of deafness.