

Hearing Conservation Program

The Hearing Conservation Program (the Program) facilitated by Organisational Safety and Wellbeing commenced in 2009. The Program has been established to meet the requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and Managing Noise and Preventing Hearing Loss at Work Code of Practice 2011. The Program includes employees most at risk of exposure to excessive noise and as a consequence, Noise Induced Hearing Loss. A hearing conservation program is aimed at achieving the safe management of noise within a workplace. The Program developed by the Department consists of four steps:

1. Monitoring of noise levels
2. Audiometric testing (hearing tests)
3. Hearing protection
4. Education and Training

1. Noise Monitoring

Preliminary assessments of noise levels throughout a sample of schools determined the following employee groups were most at risk of being exposed to excessive levels of noise. The Hearing Conservation Program therefore encompasses these employee groups:

- Instrumental Music Teachers and Instructors
- Manual Arts/Industrial Technology & Design Teachers
- Manual Arts/Industrial Technology & Design Teacher Aides
- Schools Officers (Janitor/Grounds staff).

2. Audiometric Testing (Hearing Tests)

The Hearing Conservation Program includes audiometric assessments (hearing tests) upon appointment to the Department and then at two yearly intervals.

Attune Hearing is the approved provider to conduct the hearing tests for all Education Queensland employees identified as part of the Hearing Conservation Program. Hearing tests are conducted through individual appointments and are staggered throughout regions in order to accommodate the 4000 employees now part of the Program.

Hearing tests are delivered in two different ways across the state; through clinic appointments or on site assessments with Attune Hearing's mobile testing facilities. School staff and school administration teams should work together to negotiate suitable appointment times.

For Schools in Far North, Northern, Central and Darling Downs South West Queensland Regions

Attune Hearing conducts hearing tests on site by travelling to schools throughout the region utilising their mobile testing facilities. For some remote schools where access can be difficult, other arrangements will be made to conduct the hearing test.

Schools (and staff) in **Far North, Northern, Central and Darling Downs South West Regions do not** need to contact Attune Hearing. All schools in the relevant region will be contacted by Organisational Safety and Wellbeing to begin organising the regional trip.

Staff and schools need to be aware that Attune Hearing will visit a region only once during the two year cycle. It is essential that:

- schools and staff respond to appointment requests from Attune Hearing; and
- staff attend the appointment time they have booked.

This will be the only opportunity for staff to access this service within the time period.

For schools in Metropolitan, North Coast and South East Regions

All staff identified as part of the Hearing Conservation Program (listed again below) are to call **Attune Hearing** directly on **1800 344 677** to arrange a time to have their hearing test:

- Instrumental Music Teachers and Instructors
- Manual Arts/Industrial Technology & Design Teachers
- Manual Arts/Industrial Technology & Design Teacher Aides
- Schools Officers/Janitor Grounds staff (full-time, part-time and casual staff working a minimum of 10 hours per week).

If staff are unable to attend an appointment time with Attune Hearing the individual or school is to notify Attune Hearing on **1800 344 677**. *Please note:* A non-attendance fee of \$100 will be charged directly to the school if the staff member (or school) fails to advise Attune Hearing of a cancellation 24 hours prior to the appointment. This is in line with Attune Hearing's standard procedure for non-attending clients.

The following table lists anticipated costs for services provided by Attune Hearing:

Service delivered by Attune Hearing	Cost per person (excludes GST)
Hearing test	\$240
Musician's Earplugs for Instrumental Music Teachers/Instructors (fit and supply)	\$150

3. Hearing Protection

From 2013, schools pay for hearing protection for all staff, this includes Musician's Earplugs for Instrumental Music Teachers.

As part of the audiometric testing process, Instrumental Music Teachers are fitted and provided with specialist hearing protection called Musician's Earplugs. These are individually moulded to the wearer's ear and can only be worn by the individual.

The type of hearing protection required by Manual Arts/Industrial Technology & Design (ITD) Teachers and ITD Teacher Aides and Schools Officers/Janitor Groundstaff is commonly used in industry and readily available in both regional and metropolitan areas. Ear Muffs that meet Australian Standard requirements start at approximately \$40.

As part of this process schools need to review the current hearing protection they have in place for staff and how this is being used. Hearing protection only works if it is being worn, and being worn consistently in accordance with instructions.

Factsheets about hearing protection are available on the Creating Healthier Workplaces website.

4. Education and Training

Education and instruction regarding healthy hearing including the appropriate use of hearing protection will be provided to staff by Attune Hearing when they have their hearing assessment.

Further Information

For information regarding exposure to noise, hearing protection and healthy hearing access the Creating Healthier Workplaces website at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/safety/hazards/noise.html>

- For hearing test appointments contact: **Attune Hearing - 1800 344 677**
- For questions regarding the Hearing Conservation Program contact: Bronwyn Goopy
- Organisational Safety and Wellbeing at: bronwyn.goopy@det.qld.gov.au