The Listener

Accent Hearing
EXCELLENCE IN LISTENING

Summer 2026/27

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Grafton - Glen Innes **www.accenthearing.com.au**

Welcome to the Summer 2026/27 edition of The Listener. Exploring helpful hearing tips on all hearing issues.

Big Study Finds Hearing Loss Linked to Mortality Risk!



A multinational study published in The Lancet Healthy Longevity found that adults with hearing loss who used hearing aids had a lower risk of death than nonusers. Led by Dr Chuan-Ming Li of the NIDCD, researchers analysed pure-tone audiometry data from 64,128 adults across Australia, Iceland, the United States and Norway over 10 to 16 years.

Compared to normal hearing, mild hearing loss was associated with a 19% higher adjusted hazard of all-cause mortality, rising to 55% for moderate loss. However, among participants with hearing loss, hearing aid use was linked to a 9% lower risk of all-cause mortality and a 15% lower risk of cardiovascular death in pooled analyses. Norwegian data mirrored these trends.

Despite adjusting for health factors, the study shows correlation, not causation. Commentator Dr Janet S. Choi cautions that hearing aid users may differ in income, healthcare access and overall function. While findings align with previous research and trials like ACHIEVE, which show hearing aids preserve social connections and reduce neuroinflammation markers, we cannot yet promise that hearing aids prolong life.

Li and colleagues, The Lancet Healthy Longevity

Why do people choose Accent Hearing for their hearing care?

Patients choose Accent Hearing to access a level of clinical rigor and independent care that large corporate retail chains typically do not provide.

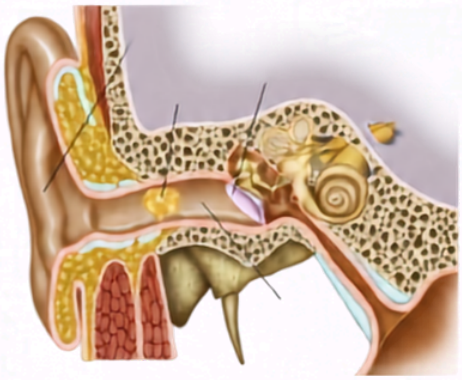
The practice stands out in the Northern Rivers & New England areas through six main pillars:

- **Unmatched Clinical Expertise:** Care is directed by a qualified Doctor of Audiology; a rare level of specialised education and the only credential of its kind in the region.
- **True Independence:** Free from corporate sales targets and manufacturer restrictions, the clinical evidence–based focus remains entirely on objective assessments and personalised solutions rather than pushing specific device brands.
- **Veteran Empathy and Insight:** Led by a 20-year veteran of the Royal Australian Air Force, our Audiologist offers a lived understanding of the specific hearing health challenges and care pathways (including DVA processes) faced by ex-service members.
- **Deep Community Trust:** Operating in the areas of the Clarence Valley & New England since 2011, the clinics are an established, independent healthcare provider embedded in the local community rather than a transient retail storefront.
- **GP & ENT Preferred Patient Referral:** Although a referral is not necessary, Accent Hearing is the 'go to' dedicated referral pathway for many patients requiring comprehensive hearing healthcare in the Clarence Valley areas.
- **Service Second to None:** Beyond clinical rigor, we pride ourselves on providing a warm, friendly environment where patients can expect genuine, old-world service. We take the time to truly listen to and care for our patients, prioritising long-term outcomes and relationship-building over rushed appointments and device sales.

The Hidden Risks of Traditional Ear Wax Removal:

Why You Should Consult a Doctor of Audiology

Routine ear health maintenance is a critical component of overall well-being, yet cerumen (ear wax) management is frequently mishandled. For decades, traditional water flushing or syringing was the standard method for clearing blockages. Today, modern clinical standards strongly advise against this practice in favor of specialised care administered by a Doctor of Audiology.



Water irrigation to remove earwax carries significant, documented risks to the delicate structures of the middle and inner ear. The clinical landscape has shifted dramatically due to the severe complications associated with this outdated method. This is not a minor risk; it is a leading issue in medical liability. According to medical liability data and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), 1 in 5 (20%) of all medico-legal cases involving General Practitioners & Nurses are related to complications from ear syringing.

In short, flushing ears is still a very big problem in the Clarence Valley, with clinicians bursting ear drums. Continuing this practice exposes patients to a completely avoidable probability: the forceful intrusion of water into the ear canal, putting hearing health at risk.

The Audiology Advantage

Transitioning your ear care to a qualified Doctor of Audiology ensures that cerumen removal is performed safely, effectively, and without the use of pressurised water. Professional audiologists utilise advanced, dry-removal techniques that protect the eardrum.

Direct Visualisation

Procedures are performed under high-powered magnification and illumination, ensuring the practitioner has an unobstructed view of the ear canal and eardrum at all times.

Micro-Suction Technology

Gentle, calibrated vacuum systems safely lift wax away from the ear canal, eliminating the hydrostatic pressure risks of flushing.

Manual Instrumentation

Specialised clinical tools, such as curettes, are used for the precise, controlled extraction of stubborn blockages.

The Danger of Ear Flushing

Prioritising your hearing means abandoning risky, outdated procedures. By scheduling regular ear wax assessments with a Doctor of Audiology or Audiologist, you completely bypass the risk of eardrum perforation while ensuring your auditory health is managed to the highest clinical standards. For decades, traditional water flushing or syringing was the standard method for clearing blockages, but modern clinical standards strongly advise against this practice in favour of micro-suction.

Accent Hearing carries out micro-suction Monday to Friday in their Grafton Clinic and Visiting Site in Glen Innes monthly. No referral required.

Please Remember: Ear Candles DO NOT WORK!!

You can damage your eardrum with hot ash falling into the candle cone itself!





Research Reveals Why Some People Don't Enjoy Music

Researchers have determined that specific **musical anhedonia**; the inability to enjoy music despite having normal hearing and general reward processing is caused by a neurological disconnect between the brain's auditory and reward networks.

Key findings from the research include:
The Mechanism: Brain imaging shows that both the auditory system and the reward circuit function normally on their own in affected individuals (e.g., they process melodies accurately and enjoy other rewards like winning money). The lack of musical pleasure stems entirely from a failure of these two distinct networks to communicate.

Measurement: The team developed the Barcelona Music Reward Questionnaire (BMRQ) to identify the condition. It evaluates music enjoyment across five facets: emotion, mood regulation, social connection, movement/dance and novelty.

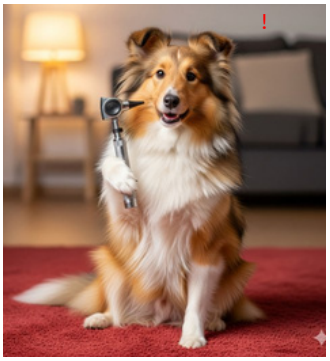
Causes: The condition arises from a mix of environmental and genetic factors. Recent twin studies suggest that genetics account for up to 54% of an individual's capacity to enjoy music.

Broader Implications: This discovery challenges the traditional assumption that the brain's reward responsiveness is an "all-or-nothing" trait. It suggests that other specific anhedonias (such as a lack of pleasure from food) or disorders like addiction may also stem from faulty connections between the central reward circuit and specific sensory processing regions.
The research team is currently working with geneticists to identify the specific genes.

Aug 22, 2025 | Auditory Processing Disorders, Research

A word from Dr Vinsky
The Sheltie Hearing Doctor





Listening fatigue

Ever notice how some days feel more exhausting than they should? Your ears might be part of the reason! If your hearing isn't as clear, your brain has to step in and work overtime to fill in the gaps.

It has to guess missing words, piece together conversations, and basically just try to keep up. That extra effort adds up, especially in busy or noisy environments! If you've been feeling mentally drained after simple conversations, it might be your hearing asking for a little support. When do you feel the most "listening fatigue" during your day?

Special Christmas Fundraising Event Conducted by Our Audiologist!



Why not come along and support the newest Christmas Fundraiser in the Clarence Valley in the Barn! For the price of a large tank of petrol, you'll be supporting patients & staff at Grafton Hospital in purchasing much needed equipment that Government funding will not pay for.

Please Scan QR Code above for more details!



THIS is perhaps one of the biggest misunderstandings we hear from patients! Too many adults believe they only need to wear their hearing aids when they're out with friends, at church, or somewhere they "need to hear."

But your brain needs to hear 24 / 7 / 365. Auditory input is a continuous biological signal that helps stimulate and maintain the neural networks responsible for processing sound, speech, communication, memory and so much more. That's why I tell my patients that treating hearing loss is NOT simply about "hearing better." In many ways, we think of hearing better as a side effect of treatment! What we are really doing is restoring access to the acoustic biological input the brain needs to remain stimulated and engaged as we age and increasingly, the science supports CONSISTENT treatment. Recent research published in Neurology found that the risk of cognitive impairment and dementia decreased as hearing-aid use became more frequent. A hearing aid sitting in the drawer isn't treating hearing loss and occasional use may not provide the same brain-health benefit as consistent use.

Once you decide to treat hearing loss, treatment shouldn't be something you turn on only when you think you "need" to hear. Your brain ALWAYS needs to hear at its best.

Dr Keith Darrow, PhD | Neuroscientist | Podcast Host | Speaker | Researcher | Author | Consultant | Audiologist | Philanthropist | Clinic Owner

Australia's Everyday Sounds and Your Hearing: What Patients Should Know!

Everyday Australian sounds from city traffic and construction to loud regional wildlife like cicadas and cockatoos, often exceed safe volumes. Combined with modern habits like headphone use, home-office noise, and DIY projects, Australians face unprecedented daily noise exposure that can lead to listening fatigue and long-term hearing strain.

Steps to Protect Your Hearing:

Lower headphone volume: Keep audio at safe, comfortable levels.

Take quiet breaks: Step away from noise periodically to rest your ears.

U**se hearing protection:** Wear earplugs or earmuffs during loud activities.

When to seek help: If you notice ringing in your ears, muffled hearing, or find yourself putting more effort into listening, booking a simple hearing check is the best first step.

PLEASE NOTE:
All clinics will be closed from 3:00 pm Tuesday 22 December and will reopen at 23 Queen St on Monday, 9:00 am, 18 January 2027.
Business Hours for 2027:
9:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday - Thursday
9:00 am to 3:00 pm Friday



Accent Hearing Clinics - 1300 859 828

GRAFTON | 23 Queen Street, Grafton NSW.

GLEN INNES | Glen Innes Chiropractic Centre, 113 Meade Street, Glen Innes NSW

Accent Hearing is independent and is locally owned. Our clinician Dr Greg Butcher is a University trained Doctor of Audiology; a fully Accredited Member of Audiology Australia and Independent Audiologists Australia; and a qualified Medicare Hearing Services Provider.