

**Submission  
No 22**

**FIRST REVIEW OF THE WORKERS COMPENSATION  
SCHEME**

**Name:** Mr Ken Stranger  
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# SUBMISSION

I wish to submit the following information after what I consider an unfair decision regarding the progression of my industrial deafness and its effects on my life. My whole working life was spent in positions which required listening to excessive noise levels, as evidenced by the following:

- Commenced work in 1952 as apprentice electrical fitter at AWA. Time in machine shop on lathes, milling machines and surface grinder
- In 1958 I spent time in the Airforce National Service involving days spent on the rifle range using a Lee Enfield 303
- 1957 – Commonwealth Electronics, building and testing communications equipment. Long periods spent listening to audio tones through headphones
- E & C Electrics P/L – Design and installation of burglar alarms, fire alarms and security systems . Involved use power tools /ramset guns/ bells and sirens.
- Kosciusko National Park – Maintenance of reserves and walking trails involving use of chain saws and brush-cutters. Also construction of Thredbo to Kosciusko steel walkway using jackhammer to drive in hundreds of steel support posts During this time I was involved in a gas explosion resulting in hospitalisation with extreme trauma to my face and head.
- NSW Department of Education – 19 years as general assistant involving minor construction and maintenance of grounds and buildings at 5 different schools. This involved use of power tools, ride-on mowers and brush-cutters.

## IN NONE OF THESE JOBS DID EMPLOYERS DEEM IT NECESSARY TO PROVIDE HEARING PROTECTION

In 2001 I was diagnosed with industrial deafness and fitted with a hearing aid in my right ear.

In 2003 it became necessary for me to (unwillingly) retire because of my deafness and its effects on safety considerations in the schools. I was aged 67 and had intended to work longer.

In 2004 I was fitted with a hearing aid in the left ear and when the hearing aids became ineffectual due to the progression of the condition, I underwent surgery and was fitted with a cochlear implant on the right-hand side.

When I applied for further compensation due to the ongoing nature of deafness, my application was rejected as not affecting 10% of my body and the young doctor who provided the report interviewed me while I was wearing the cochlear implant and reported that he had no trouble conducting a conversation with me. If he had asked me to remove it, I would not have been able to hear him at all. No hearing tests took place at this time, but recent tests with the Sydney Cochlear Institute indicate that my hearing level in personal conversation in a quiet room is 90% with the cochlear but reduces to 70% when normal background noise is introduced.

Another point in the process which I find unacceptable is the fact that blame in these cases is attributed to the last employer (insurer unknown but probably GIO at that time) where, in my case, it was obviously a build-up of damage throughout my entire working life and unfair to expect the Department of Education to foot the bill. I also question the knowledge and experience of board members in cases of industrial deafness as well as that of the inexperienced doctor on whose report the rejection was based.

Although the cochlear has improved my hearing and I now act as a mentor for other deaf people, I now suffer problems with balance, which is associated with hearing loss, and struggle to live on the pension and keep up with medical costs. I trust that my experience will result in some serious thinking by the board and further education in industrial deafness so that others do not share the same fate