



MEDIA RELEASE
For immediate release
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World leading facility opened for Australian hearing research

A \$115m HEARing Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) and the University of Melbourne's new state-of-the-art Audiology, Hearing and Speech Sciences facility will be co-launched by Senator Kim Carr today at 4.30pm at 550 Swanston Street, Melbourne.

Hearing loss affects one in six Australians, with the real economic cost estimated to be \$11.7 billion per annum – with an aging population and increasing noise in our everyday lives, prevalence and costs are projected to rise.

The HEARing CRC is a consortium of Australia's foremost hearing research, clinical and industry organisations. The CRC will receive \$32.5 million in Commonwealth funding over seven years, funding began in the 2007 financial year.

With additional funds as cash and in-kind contributions from the five core members (Australian Hearing, Cochlear Ltd Pty, Macquarie University, Siemens Ltd Pty and the University of Melbourne) and 21 support members, the total investment in hearing research will be over \$115 million.

It will be launched in conjunction with the opening of the University's world leading Audiology, Hearing and Speech Sciences building, which is the CRC's new home.

"Together with the internationally renowned University of Melbourne Department of Otolaryngology, and our research and industry collaborators, the innovation and research, teaching and training of students in this building will be of the highest level," said A/Prof Robert Cowan, CEO of the HEARing CRC.

"We are very excited about the CRC's official launch at its new home today," he said.

The University's new \$3.5 million custom designed facility at 550 Swanston Street has been a major refurbishment project. It contains the largest sound booth in Australia for cutting edge acoustic research, high spec engineering facilities, as well as state-of-the-art AV equipment for teaching and research.

The building also houses the University's Audiology Clinic, which like the Department of Otolaryngology, retains close connections with the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and its world-renowned Cochlear Implant Clinic.

"These new University facilities and collaborative research partners will help to ensure that hearing impaired Australians remain productive as they age and that children with hearing loss get the best possible start in life," said Prof Richard Dowell, Head of the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of Melbourne

“It means the next generation of audiology professionals and researchers will receive state of the art training in their quest to eradicate the problems of childhood hearing loss for good,” he said.

Recent research findings made by the University of Melbourne and the HEARing CRC include:

- evidence that bilateral cochlear implants result in a greater ability to hear in noisy environments and to locate the origin of sounds in every day life; and
- early intervention with cochlear implants in infants provides children with the opportunity for typical language development and other opportunities comparable with hearing peers.

New areas of research include:

- an international clinical trial of a new cochlear implant electrode array that has been designed to retain residual hearing and could thus be used in patients with partial hearing loss; and
- investigation into genetic aspects of hearing loss in order to prevent or reduce environmental and age-related hearing loss.

Filming opportunities from 4pm

- Parents Naomi and Paul Baulch and their two year old twins with bilateral hearing loss and implants, Lochie and Ben and their older sister Emily.
- Students using the new teaching and learning facilities in the Audiology, Hearing and Speech Sciences building

Interview opportunities:

- A/Prof Robert Cowan, CEO of the HEARing CRC
- Prof Richard Dowell, Head of University of Melbourne Department of Otolaryngology
- Graham Clarke, pioneer of the Cochlear implant
- Parents Naomi and Paul Baulch

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