



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP

**Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care
Minister for Indigenous Health
Member for Hasluck**

The Hon Michael Keenan, MP

**Minister for Human Services and Digital Transformation
Member for Stirling**

Trent Zimmerman, MP

Member for North Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Test a Sound Scout for Hearing Loss in Australian Children

Hundreds of thousands of school aged children will benefit from an Australian-developed app that delivers a user-friendly hearing test, with the Morrison Government funding a \$4 million national rollout.

In an innovative and cost-effective approach, the free tests will be conducted online using Sound Scouts, a fun, tablet-based game that detects hearing issues in children.

The new tests were announced today by the Minister responsible for hearing services policy, Ken Wyatt AM, Minister for Human Services and Digital Transformation Michael Keenan and Trent Zimmerman, Member for North Sydney.

Minister Wyatt said that last year, 600 five to seven year olds received hearing aids for the first time and our Government was determined to ensure children with hearing loss were identified and helped earlier.

“The Sound Scouts program is engaging and fun, but with some serious benefits for our nation’s children,” said Minister Wyatt.

“A recent study found that up to 1.3 million Australians are living with hearing conditions that could have been prevented.

“We know that delays in recognising and treating hearing loss in children’s first few years of school can be profound and long lasting, undermining their future prospects.”

A Macquarie University study analysed the Sound Scouts system, finding it delivered a \$10 return in benefits for children and the community, for every \$1 spent on the app.

“Children with hearing problems may be unable to hear their teacher or understand their friends talking to them in a noisy classroom,” said Minister Keenan.

“They are more likely to struggle to meet learning milestones or develop social skills and can quickly fall behind their peers.

“Once identified through the Sound Scouts system, these young children can be referred for further testing and appropriate support and have the best chance of reaching their full potential.”

Mr Zimmerman chaired the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport which wrote the report *Still waiting to be heard – report on the Inquiry into the Hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia*.

“I’m proud that our Government has acted on the Committee’s recommendation to start the ball rolling on a universal hearing screening program for schoolchildren,” he said.

“I’ve heard first-hand the impact of undetected hearing loss, how it affects not only schooling but also children’s ability to make friends and develop healthy self-esteem.”

The program will start in 2019 and will run for up to five years, ensuring that up to 600,000 Australian children age 4-17 have their hearing checked using the Sound Scout test.

Australian Hearing has been provided a grant of \$4 million through the Department of Health to deliver these online hearing tests through the Sound Scouts app.

Sound Scouts is currently the only tool of its kind available in Australia validated by the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), the research arm of Australian Hearing.

For more information on Sound Scouts, see <https://www.soundscouts.com/>

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