



HEARING AUGMENTATION IN AGED CARE FACILITIES AND CLASS 9C BUILDINGS

The majority of residents of aged care facilities will experience hearing loss. Therefore, it is important to ensure that appropriate hearing augmentation is provided to support the needs of residents and visitors who, without this will not be able to equitably participate in the lifestyle offered by the facility.

The minimum legal requirements are set out in the National Construction Codes - NCC (formerly Building Code of Australia - BCA) **D3.6 and D3.7**, and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Premises Standards. This includes areas that are classed as 9B areas in Class 9C buildings or floors.

Below are the recommendations of **Hearing Connections** which puts together a full approach to both the legal obligations and the needs of people with hearing loss in aged care facilities.

1. Why is Hearing Augmentation important

People with hearing loss commonly use hearing devices, like hearing aids or cochlear implants to improve their hearing. These hearing devices are generally great one to one, with no background noise. In an auditorium, however, the person with hearing loss hears the noise, but cannot understand what is being said. This is due to the “echoes” in the room (also called reverberation) which people cannot distinguish, but “blurs” the sound.

We know from the Australian Access Economics Report (2006) that:

- at least 1 in 6 people in Australia have hearing loss
- increasing to 1 in 4 in 2050.
- currently over 50% of people over the age of 50 have hearing loss
- increases to 66% over the age of 60 have hearing loss
- increases to 74% over the age of 70 have hearing loss.

In addition, further research has proven that untreated hearing loss increases the risk of dementia. Dementia Australia has further information and research on this topic.

2. Personal Amplifiers

Aged Care Facility Managers need a supply of personal amplifiers for people who lose their hearing aids, or for those whose hearing aids are being repaired. It is recommended that a minimum of two are available, and no less than one per 25 residents.

The best of these is the **Bellman Maxi** with headphones. The **Bellman Maxi** has large buttons, both volume and controls, and a simple interface making it easy for all clients to use.

These can be found [here](#).

3. Chapels, meeting areas, dining rooms and other locations where entertainment and/or announcements are made.

Aged Care facilities incorporate a range of areas to support residents lifestyles. These include Chapels, meeting areas, dining rooms, and other entertainment areas or spaces where announcements are made. Therefore, it is important that hearing augmentation is available so residents can participate in the life and activities on offer.

Hearing augmentation is required by NCC/AHRC, with a minimum coverage of 80% for hearing loop systems.

- a. Hearing loop systems should be installed in these locations.
- b. All seating locations should be included.
- c. Connect the hearing loop system to the installed audio system.
- d. If a portable audio system is used, install the hearing loop system with a connection point for the audio system.

4. Small TV and entertainment rooms.

Each room should include:

- a. All TVs should have an optical out which allows the TV speakers and the optical out to be used at the same time (not all TVs do this).
- b. Provide personal TV listeners which include the TV transmitter to wirelessly transmit from the TV to the personal listener.

The best of these is the **Bellman Maxi Pro**, with headphones for those without hearing aids, and with neckloops for those with the Telecoil on their hearing aids.

The Bellman Maxi Pro can be found [here](#).

5. Individual resident rooms.

All TVs should have an optical out which allows the TV speakers and the optical out to be used at the same time (not all TVs do this).

6. All Hearing Augmentation Systems should be installed as per the Australian Standard AS1428.5.

7. All Hearing Augmentation Systems should be installed as per the Australian Standard

These are also required because:

- some people who have a hearing loss do not have hearing aids, cochlear implants, BAHA or other hearing devices
- some hearing aids do not have a telecoil fitted
- some people have fluctuating hearing loss, and cannot be fitted with hearing aids
- many people with mild or moderate loss cannot afford to buy hearing aids
- some people forget to put their hearing aids in their ears (people with hearing loss are human too)!

Also,

- for testing hearing loop systems
- the testing the neckloops

Articles explaining these requirements can be found [here](#).

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions, email Andrew Stewart: Managing Director of Hearing Connections at andrew@hearconnect.com.au

Other articles are available [here](#)
Sign up to receive our newsletter [here](#)

About the Author

Andrew Stewart is qualified in electronics and has been leading research into hearing augmentation systems for over 30 years – including designing, installing, testing and commissioning of Hearing Augmentation Systems. He and his team have conducted their own research of comparison methodologies of installing hearing loop systems and designed and constructed test equipment. He's been involved in installations at Sydney Opera House, First Class Qantas Club Singapore, art galleries, museums, theatres and many others.

Andrew was a key leader in the development of AS 1428.5 - 2010, the authoritative document on Hearing Augmentation in Australia. He is also a life member of Deafness Forum of Australia (the peak body for hearing impaired people in Australia) and continues to represent them, as he has on many committees for over 20 years. Andrew has been hearing impaired all his life, with a progressive loss, and now wears two cochlear implants. He has 9 other family members who wear hearing aids and/or cochlear implants.

Why choose Hearing Connections

Hearing Connections is built on experience of Andrew Stewart, who:

- Has been **wearing hearing aids** since age 7, and now wears two cochlear implants.
- Knows both sides of the story – the **lived experience**, and the **electronics qualifications**.
- Has been **specialising** in Hearing Augmentation Systems for over 33 years.
- Was **instrumental** in the writing of the definitive Australian Standard **AS 1428.5**.
- Has conducted **research and development** of Hearing Augmentation systems for improved outcomes.
- Has over **33 years of design, installation and commissioning** of Hearing Augmentation systems (loop systems, FM systems, sound field systems and public address systems) for a range of public access buildings, from small halls to significant buildings and venues, including Sydney Opera House and airports.
- **Lectures** in Hearing Augmentation for building professionals.
- Provides **training** in Hearing Augmentation for Access Consultants, Building certifiers and surveyors, and architects.
- Over 20 years of **advocating** for the needs of deaf and hearing impaired people.
- Is a **life member** of Deafness Forum of Australia.
- Has won **numerous awards** for service in advocating for the needs of deaf and hearing impaired people.

Legal

This document is not a legal interpretation of the NCC. It is the opinion of the principal of this company and is based on more than 30 years of experience with hearing augmentation. He himself is hearing impaired. The information provided is general advice only and does not take into account your building site objectives, building site design and or building materials used or other relevant factors and cannot be relied upon for your specific needs.

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