

## **ACC'S GOT IT WRONG OVER INJURED HEARING AS WELL**

ACC has got it wrong over sexual abuse counselling, and it's time it accepted it has got it wrong over funding for workplace hearing injuries as well, the National Foundation for the Deaf said today.

NFD Chief Executive Louise Carroll has welcomed the admission by ACC Minister Nick Smith yesterday that he was not satisfied with ACC's handling of the counselling issue, and she says he should also front up over hearing injuries.

"ACC was clearly wrong on the counselling issue, and the fact virtually everyone in that sector – professionals and victims – were opposed to ACC's stance reflects this," Mrs Carroll said.

"The same applies to ACC's decision to restrict access to hearing rehabilitation for people with workplace sound injury.

"The entire hearing disability sector – professionals, consumers, victims, and representatives of other groups – explained to the government through the submission process why it was wrong to restrict hearing injury rehabilitation, and the government ignored us all.

"It was wrong then and it is still wrong, and it's time Dr Smith faced up to this."

Mrs Carroll said ACC had changed the way it provided hearing rehabilitation because its projections based on historical claim numbers suggested the cost of hearing rehabilitation was rising too far.

However, she said ACC was not waiting for the results of research being done for it by Auckland and Massey universities, due in a few months, which suggested current claim numbers were a bulge moving through the system.

"In the meantime, ACC has introduced a threshold for hearing injury cover and is introducing part-charges for rehabilitation, that allows no account to be taken of the individual merits of each person's case," she said.

"ACC has admitted the changes are driven by dollars instead of the claimant's need, and that is just plain wrong. Instead of making changes based on sound science, it is making them for the wrong reasons, and just as with the counselling issue, Dr Smith should be dissatisfied with ACC's handling of this issue as well."

The NFD has asked MPs to make themselves available to people with hearing disabilities to discuss hearing issues at their electorate clinics on September 18 – Be Heard Day.

Ends

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