MEDIA RELEASE
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World-first hearing technology receives $1million AusIndustry grant and global interest

Hearing people speak in noisy environments is about to become a lot easier.

Sensear, Perth-based developer of a revolutionary noise filtering technology to prevent one of the world's largest occupational illnesses, Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL), has today been granted a $1,018,650 AusIndustry *Commercial Ready* grant to commercialise its world-first hearing technology and market it around the world.

The technology has been tested by Global 500 companies, with excellent feedback, and has sparked international interest from some of the world's largest innovation and safety firms.

Sensear's hearing technology is the first in the world to isolate and enhance the quality of speech for the listener, while suppressing background noise, all in real-time.

The technology was invented by Mr Sven Nordholm at the Western Australian Telecommunications Research Institute (WATRI), a joint venture between the University of Western Australian and Curtin University.

Sensear Managing Director Mr Justin Miller said the potential application was enormous, including infrastructure, manufacturing, mining, transport, entertainment, recreational, hospitality and domestic environments.

"Many industries throughout the world involve people working in noisy environments," Mr Miller said.

"Sensear's technology enables people to protect their hearing from noise, while still being able to hear each other speak clearly.

"This increases safety and productivity because it enables people in a noisy environment to clearly hear verbal communication, without the need to remove their hearing protection."

A recent study by Access Economics reports Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) cost Australia in excess of $4 billion in 2005.

“Prevention is the only cure when it comes to hearing loss,” Mr Miller said. “However, Sensear’s technology may also offer benefits in hospitality or domestic environments where our early testing has shown that it also enhances speech quality.” As a result, it can help prevent further hearing loss and the ability to vary the speech volume provides relief to people already suffering certain types of hearing loss.

Microphones fitted into an earpiece are connected to software which strips noise from speech by identifying the differences in sounds. The software cuts loud, constant background noise above 85 decibels, while amplifying speech.

Examples of noise, measured in decibels, include heavy traffic or lawn mowers which can generate 90 decibels, rock music 110 decibels, a jet plane 130 decibels and an air raid siren or military rifle 140-150 decibels. A normal conversation generates approximately 60 decibels.

Sensear’s technology differs from traditional hearing protection devices, which cut out noise based on sound frequencies so that both loud background noise and speech are either suppressed or amplified.

Negotiations are currently underway with three of the world’s leading innovation, safety and hearing protection companies to acquire the licence to commercialise Sensear’s technology for industrial use.

Sensear’s technology is incorporated in a number of headgear designs: a hard hat, ear muff and ear plug (for industrial use), and a cap and ear band , for hospitality and domestic use.

Sensear technology’s commercial applications include mining, manufacturing, hospitality, defence, law enforcement, medical emergencies and other service industries. Its use extends to hospitality and domestic situations where noisy environments make hearing speech difficult, for example, dining in a restaurant.

Sensear’s hearing technology can also be integrated with Blue Tooth, Two-Way systems and MP3 digital music systems.

About the AusIndustry *Commercial Ready* grant program

AusIndustry’s *Commercial Ready* is a competitive merit-based grant program administered by the Australian Government which supports innovation and its commercialisation. An eligible project must aim to produce, commercialise or establish the commercial or technical viability of a new, clearly identified product, process or service, by undertaking research and development, proof of concept and/or early-stage commercialisation activities.

About Noise Induced Hearing Loss

Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) has been identified as a major avoidable cause of permanent hearing impairment worldwide. It is one of the world’s most common occupational illnesses and the world’s biggest compensatable occupational hazard. NIHL is preventable.

About Sensear

Sensear Pty Ltd is an Australian company formed in 2006 which provides innovative technology that enables speech communication to be heard in high noise environments, without the need to remove hearing protection. The company was formed to commercialise the technology developed by WATRI (Western Australian Telecommunications Research Institute), a joint venture between two of Australia's most renowned and respected universities, Curtin University of Technology and the University of Western Australia.

Sensear's technology is the latest and most effective technological advance in the fight to eliminate Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL). The Sensear technology has numerous applications in industrial, commercial and social environments.

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