

An Open Letter: Different Pathways, Shared Purpose

Recent public commentary has highlighted differences in the educational pathways of audiologists and audiometrists. While this observation is factually correct, ACAud believes it is important to ensure that such discussions do not unintentionally create confusion for consumers, healthcare professionals or policymakers.

Hearing healthcare in Australia is delivered by practitioners with different educational pathways, areas of expertise and scopes of practice, all working towards the same goal of improving outcomes for people with hearing loss.

Audiologists and audiometrists both play important roles in the assessment and rehabilitation of hearing loss across Australia.

Audiologists undertake broader education and training that extends into specialised areas such as paediatrics, vestibular assessment, electrophysiology, cochlear implants and complex diagnostic services.

Audiometrists undertake focused education and training in hearing assessment, interpretation of hearing test results, hearing device fitting, verification, validation and hearing rehabilitation.

These different pathways contribute complementary strengths to Australia's hearing healthcare workforce and help ensure consumers can access timely and appropriate care.

What should not be assumed is that a difference in educational breadth automatically means one profession is inherently more capable than another within a shared scope of practice.

Across Australia's healthcare system, many professions have different educational pathways while working collaboratively within overlapping scopes of practice. Hearing healthcare is no different.

Every hearing healthcare practitioner should be assessed against the services they provide, the competencies they demonstrate and the standards they are required to meet.

Consumers deserve confidence that when they seek care from an appropriately trained and credentialed practitioner, they are receiving safe, effective and professional services.

General practitioners deserve clear and balanced information about the hearing healthcare workforce so they can make informed referral decisions based on patient needs. This is particularly important because GP recommendations often play a

significant role in shaping a consumer's healthcare journey and their understanding of the professionals available to support them.

Policymakers deserve evidence-based discussions focused on access, quality, safety and outcomes rather than assumptions based solely on educational pathways.

Most importantly, Australians deserve a hearing healthcare system that values collaboration over division.

At ACAud, we believe the future of hearing healthcare lies not in diminishing one profession to elevate another, but in recognising the contribution each practitioner makes within their area of expertise.

The discussion should not be about which profession is more important. It should be about ensuring Australians have access to the right care, at the right time, from appropriately trained practitioners working within their recognised scope of practice.

Different pathways should be understood as a reflection of different roles and areas of focus within hearing healthcare—not as a measure of professional value.

As a profession, we should be building understanding, confidence and collaboration. Consumers are best served when all hearing healthcare practitioners are respected for the skills, knowledge and care they bring to the communities they serve.

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