

\$15,000 hearing aid grant sought for workers suffering deafness

WORKERS suffering occupational deafness should get a \$15,000 grant to buy hearing aid and other equipment, a working group says.

A review of the Occupational Deafness Compensation Scheme has also recommended

that employees get better protection in the workplace.

The group's draft report proposed that people who could only hear sounds of 40 decibels and higher be included. The current level is 50 decibels.

The report said workers in

the plastics, glass and paper processing industries should also fall under the scheme.

The qualifying period in five of the 17 existing occupations should be reduced from 10 to five years, it said.

The 10-year requirement

encouraged workers to stay in their jobs while damaging their health.

The group stressed that any measures should apply to new applicants and those who had already claimed compensation.

But the Labour Department

was worried the compensation fund would have a deficit in five years if the measures were implemented.

The Government has provided the fund with a one-off \$100 million and a \$115 million interest-free loan.

About 1,000 workers currently qualify.

Under the scheme, a person who is totally deaf will get a maximum of \$860,000. Other workers receive an average of \$200,000.

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