



## Webinar Summary: 'Tinnitus Unveiled'

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**Date:** 6 February 2025

**Time:** 1pm to 2:30pm (AEDT)

### Webinar Overview

As part of Tinnitus Awareness Week 2025, Deafness Forum Australia hosted a free webinar titled 'Tinnitus Unveiled.' This session brought together experts Myriam Westcott, Ben Hoddinott, and Victoria Didenko to talk about tinnitus—what causes it, how it impacts people, and ways to manage it. The speakers explained how tinnitus affects the brain, the role of stress and emotions, different treatment options, and the importance of seeking support and more research on the condition.

### Speakers

**1. Myriam Westcott, BSc GradDipAud,** Audiologist and Director of DWM Audiology

Myriam shared insights into tinnitus as a common condition, often linked to hearing loss, and explained how tinnitus is created in the brain. She also highlighted how stress, muscle tension, and other factors can make tinnitus worse.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Tinnitus is a common condition that is usually linked to hearing loss but can happen even without hearing problems.
- Stress, especially tension in the jaw, can make tinnitus worse (this is called tensor tympani syndrome).
- How the brain processes sound and emotional reactions can affect how loud or bothersome tinnitus feels.
- Understanding how tinnitus works in the brain can help create better treatment plans.
- Managing tinnitus can include techniques like sound therapy, managing stress, and helping the brain respond better to the condition.

**2. Ben Hoddinott,** Clinical Audiologist and Co-Founder, The Little Hearing Co.

Ben built on Myriam's presentation by explaining how the brain responds to changes in hearing. He also shared a case study of a woman whose tinnitus was linked to hearing loss from damaged eardrums, showing how stress and lack of proper sound stimulation worsened her symptoms.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Tinnitus can start from small changes in hearing and often gets worse with stress and worrying about the sound.
- It's important to understand how the brain works when dealing with tinnitus for better treatment.

- In the case study, a woman with hearing loss and tinnitus found relief with a bone conduction implant that reduced both her listening effort and the tinnitus sounds.
- The Tinnitus Functional Index is a useful tool to understand how tinnitus affects a person and create a treatment plan.
- Stress management and understanding how the brain reacts to sound are essential to managing tinnitus.

### 3. Victoria Didenko, Lived Experience Consumer Advocate

Victoria shared her 11-year journey with tinnitus, talking about the emotional and physical challenges she faced, including the lack of effective treatments and the stigma around hearing loss. She encouraged others to seek help, stay active in finding treatments, and support better research on tinnitus.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Not all people with tinnitus experience it the same way—some can get used to it faster, while others struggle for longer.
- Many people with tinnitus feel unsupported by doctors and have to pay high costs for treatments, like hearing aids and tests.
- Stigma surrounding hearing loss and tinnitus creates additional emotional distress for sufferers.
- She found relief through proactive measures such as hearing aids, counselling, sound therapy, and lifestyle changes like reducing caffeine and alcohol.
- Victoria called for more research into tinnitus and better awareness about its impact on people. She also encouraged others to speak up instead of suffering in silence.

## Closing Remarks

- “We need more funding for tinnitus research and hearing health in Australia”  
-Victoria Didenko
- “Understand what is going on and seek education from experts in the field is such an important part of tinnitus. . .so find someone who knows what they’re talking about and talk to them.”  
-Ben Hoddinott
- “Have hope. Even if you’re very distressed by your tinnitus and struggle to cope with it, you’re not locked in there. . .there is help out there and your suffering is heard. You are being heard and being seen.”  
-Myriam Westcott

## Additional Resources

- Watch the Webinar [Recording](#).

## Contact Information

Jane Lee  
National Manager, Health Programs  
[Jane.lee@deafnessforum.org.au](mailto:Jane.lee@deafnessforum.org.au)