

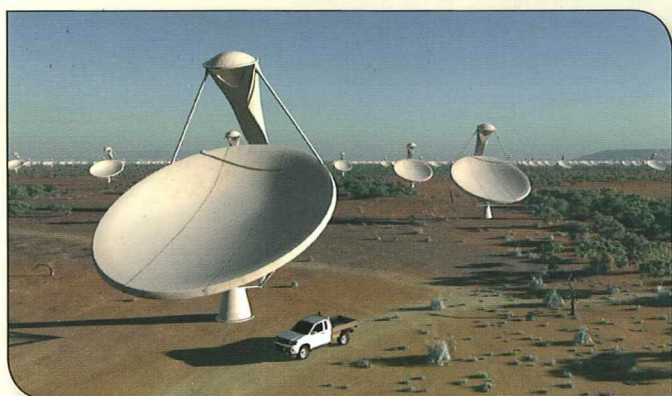
SCIOS



JOURNAL OF THE SCIENCE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

inside this issue:

- Turning a deaf ear to Sonic Silence
- Worlds of Wonder
- The Square Kilometre Array
The Biggest Science Project this Century
- Fabulous Amphibia The Motorbike Frog
Litoria moorei



Turning a deaf ear to Sonic Silence

Kate Elder

Director of Communications and Marketing, Scitech Discovery Centre

A new exhibit at Scitech is revealing how just six minutes on an MP3 player at full volume can mean a lifetime of hearing loss for young people.

Developed in collaboration with Edith Cowan University and funded through the Federal Government's Office of Hearing Services, this interactive aural exhibit known as *Sonic Silence* takes people on a journey into a socially isolated world of distorted sounds and confusing conversations.

Designed to look like an oversized set of headphones, the two listening booths that make up the exhibit offer a range of hearing loss experiences for people to explore, including simulated noise-induced hearing loss and tinnitus.

"This exhibit aims to highlight some of the issues around preventable hearing damage, and encourages young people to actively change their behaviour," says Scitech CEO, Alan Brien. "Many young people are aware of situations that can cause hearing damage such as rock concerts and MP3 players, but very few take preventative measures to minimise this damage. Most people, young or old, probably don't realise that even a few minutes of listening to music at a gig registering more than 100 decibels can result in hearing loss and tinnitus. Many people leave a concert with ringing in the ears (tinnitus). This can be an early warning sign of potential hearing damage."

Associate Professor Paul Chang from Edith Cowan University has undertaken significant research in the area of people's



Edith Cowan University's Associate Professor Paul Chang with his daughter Martha using the new exhibit. Photo courtesy Scitech.

perceptions of hearing loss and so provided vital insights into the development of the exhibit experience. He explains that by allowing people to enter an interactive world where sounds are distorted, the exhibit offers a unique insight into living with hearing loss.

"Young people are highly social and any hearing loss is something that can have a significant impact on enjoying social situations," explains Professor Chang. "By experiencing what it's actually like to live with this injury, they can discover how socially isolating it can be, as it's often just too hard to try and engage in social situations when it's impossible to follow a conversation."

Key findings from the research include: 50.6 per cent of 12-17 year-olds listen to music with personal, in ear headphones; 87.2 per cent of people aged 18-25 reported sometimes - always coming home from a concert with ringing ears; and, 68.3 per cent of teenagers reported that they do not wear any form of hearing protection.

Students from Dalzell College were among the first to test out the exhibit when it was officially opened by the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon. Mark Butler MP at Scitech in June. The exhibit is open every day at Scitech and is included as part of a Scitech exhibition excursion. For information about excursions to Scitech please visit www.scitech.org.au or call 9215 0740.



Year 7 students from Dalzell College with the Honourable Mark Butler MP. Left to right: Darcy-Rose Taylor, Emily Jarman, Joshua Young, Dylan Turner, Bevan Eales and Honourable Mark Butler MP. Photo courtesy Scitech.