

DYNAMIC HEARING



Digital delight: Elaine Saunders of Dynamic Hearing. Picture: DAMIEN HORAN

Hearing deal a winner

MELBOURNE company Dynamic Hearing has developed new technology that promises improved sound for the hearing impaired.

Digital technology software embedded into hearing aids keeps sounds loud enough to hear, but soft enough to be comfortable.

Dr Elaine Saunders, chief executive of Dynamic Hearing, said excess loudness in noisy situations was the most common complaint among those using conventional hearing aids.

This was because most hearing aids used a strategy known as compression, resulting in a wide range of sounds being "compressed" into a narrow range.

The digital technology — its trademark name is ADRO — separated sounds into 64 independent channels, which kept loud and soft sounds at a comfortable level.

"ADRO takes advantage of the digital signal-processing capabilities of modern hearing aids, which actually contain miniature computers, smaller than the head of a match and able to run for days from a tiny battery," Dr Saunders said.

"The ADRO technology makes speech sound clearer in a noisy environment."

Dr Saunders said the technology would be used in 40 countries after a deal was signed with French-based hearing aid manufacturer Intrason.

Dr Saunders said Intrason was the first commercial customer to use the technology of Dynamic Hearing, a spin-off company of the Co-operative Research Centre for Cochlear Implant and Hearing Aid Innovation, the advanced hearing research centre associated with Melbourne University (CRC HEAR).

"Our technology is good for the hearing-impaired and, as an exporter, it's good for

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the economy," Dr Saunders said.

Dynamic Hearing, established 15 months ago, received \$5 million in venture capital from Nanyang Ventures and GBS Ventures.

"You've got to have a good product, business plan and people to attract venture capital," Dr Saunders said.

A staff of 14 consists of scientists, engineers and audio experts.

Dr Peter Blamey, Dynamic Hearing's chief technical officer, invented the technology six years ago while working at the CRC HEAR.

Dr Saunders is excited about the deal with Intrason.

"Globally, Intrason is a recognised leader in technological innovation and we're delighted by its endorsement of ADRO," Dr Saunders said.

"ADRO is Dynamic Hearing's first product and we are thrilled by its rapid acceptance so soon after our spin-off from the CRC HEAR."

Dr Saunders said 74 per cent of hearing aid users preferred the ADRO technology to conventional hearing aid sound-processing products when clinical trials were undertaken by independent researchers at CRC HEAR in Melbourne last year.

"We currently have negotiations under way with several international hearing aid players," she said.

"What we have done could not have been executed on analogue (hearing aids)."

Dynamic Hearing intended licensing the technology to other global hearing aid manufacturers that sell their products in Australia.

Intrason was looking for a distributor for its hearing aids in Australia.