



## Mandatory Hearing (Audiometric) Testing for Cotton Industry Workers

With the passage of new legislation in Queensland (effective 29 July 2025), all cotton-growing states — NSW, QLD, NT, and WA — now require employers to provide hearing tests (audiometric testing) for workers exposed to hazardous noise.

These laws align with the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations and ensure consistent protection for workers across the cotton industry.

### Who Needs Hearing Tests?

Businesses (PCBUs – Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking) must provide hearing tests for workers who:

- Are **frequently required to wear hearing protection** because workplace noise exceeds the exposure standard.
- May include: employees, contractors, apprentices, labour hire workers, and volunteers.

### Hazardous Noise & Exposure Standards

- Noise Exposure Standard:
  - LAeq,8h of 85 dB(A) (average over 8 hours)
  - LC,peak of 140 dB(C) (instantaneous maximum)
- Examples:
  - ~85 dB = lawnmower, blender, leaf blower (safe for 8 hours).
  - 91 dB = only safe for 2 hours.
  - 140 dB = instant damage (e.g., gunshot, sledgehammering).

### Testing Timeframes

| Worker Category  | Initial Test Deadline  | Ongoing Testing       |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| New workers  | Within 3 months of starting work (or within 3 months before start) | Every 2 years         |
| Existing NSW workers (employed before 1 Jan 2024)      | Test by 1 Jan 2026   | Every 2 years         |
| Existing QLD workers (employed before 29 July 2025)    | Test by 29 July 2027   | Every 2 years         |
| Workers exposed to very high noise ( $\geq 100$ dB(A)) | Baseline test required   | More frequent testing |

### Employer (PCBU) Responsibilities

Employers must:

- **Conduct noise assessments** in line with AS/NZS 1269.1:2005.
- **Pay for and organise hearing tests** by a competent person (audiologist).
- **Maintain confidential test records** and provide copies at the end of employment.
- **Consult with workers** and health & safety representatives about testing.
- **Take action if damage is detected:**
  - Review and improve noise controls.
  - Ensure PPE is effective and correctly fitted.



- Adjust work practices/equipment for safety (e.g., visual alarms, volume controls).

## Worker Responsibilities

Workers must:

- Use provided hearing protection correctly.
- Report unsafe conditions or signs of hearing damage (e.g., ringing in ears, difficulty hearing speech).

## Compliance & Enforcement

Inspectors will check for:

- Noise assessments and exposure records.
- Evidence of hearing tests.
- Worker consultation processes.

Non-compliance can result in:

- Improvement or prohibition notices.
- Fines and legal proceedings.

## Why This Matters

- Protects against **Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL)**
- Enables **early detection of hearing issues**
- Reduces employer liability
- Supports a **safer, more productive workforce**

## Testing Locations (in various cotton regions)

- [Mobile Screening](#)
- [Specsavers \(Various locations\)](#)
- [Amplifon \(various locations\)](#)
- [Audika \(Various locations\)](#)
- [Connect Hearing St George](#)
- [Bloom Hearing Biloela](#)

## Resources & Support

- **Audiology Australia** – (03) 9940 3900 | [audiology.asn.au](http://audiology.asn.au)
- **SafeWork NSW** – 13 10 50 | [contact@safework.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@safework.nsw.gov.au)

## Action for Cotton Grower Employers

If your workers frequently wear hearing protection:

- Schedule **baseline tests now** for new and existing workers.
- Ensure monitoring tests are in place by **2026 (NSW)** and **2027 (QLD)**.
- Keep clear records and review noise controls regularly.