



Noise control invention receives a global hearing

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Several global companies are negotiating to use an invention by a Perth company which prevents noise-induced hearing loss.

Developed by Sensear, which started up last year, the noise-filtering technology isolates speech and suppresses background noise, and is already being tested by workers on mine sites and in pubs.

Chief executive Justin Miller said it may also have military applications.

The Federal Government has recognised its potential by granting Sensear a \$1 million AusIndustry Commercial Ready grant to help commercialise the technology.

Invented by researchers at Curtin University and the University of WA through the WA

Telecommunications Research Institute, it cuts out background noise which is louder than 85 decibels, typically the same amount of noise a bus passing a pedestrian makes. It is effective to around 115 decibels, which is louder than a

typical cement plant.

With around \$4.5 billion spent a year in Australia on noise-induced hearing loss, Mr Miller said there was no similar technology anywhere in the world.

The company has done several trials with major companies including at Rio Tinto's Pilbara iron ore mines and Alcoa's aluminium operation.

Mr Miller, a past finalist in Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Award, said the device had been well received by workers.

"At the end of the day you can have, in safety, a top-down push from corporate management but if the people at the coal face aren't going to wear it, it's a waste," he said.

The device can be used in industrial ear muffs or with a smaller palm-sized device with headphones.

Negotiations with three multinational safety and protection companies to make their safety products with the new technology

are under way.

While these discussions are proving fruitful, Mr Miller said that if no licensing agreement could be reached in coming months, Sensear would make its own products by the middle of the year.

Alongside the \$1 million government grant the company also has another \$1.5 million of backing.

"It's not a huge amount of capital but when you think about what we have done already it is significant," Mr Miller said.

Just 18 months ago the technology was the size of a refrigerator, before being reduced to the size it is now.

Sensear is still continuing to research the technology but is now more focused on its other applications rather than making it any smaller.

The company's capital will fund planned research but Mr Miller said a future stock exchange listing was not out of the question.



Taking off: Sensear managing director Justin Miller, left, and Tim Caporn on a test in a noisy environment. Picture: Greg Keating