

# John Castrilli MLA



## **Infant hearing program expanded**

Approximately one baby in every 1000 is born with a hearing loss in both ears.

If detected early, children can be assisted to reach their full potential in speech, language and learning ability.

Early intervention is crucial, which is why I am delighted the State Government's Newborn Hearing Screening Program will now be further expanded so that all babies born in Bunbury and the South West will be able to receive a free screening test.

Babies born in Bunbury Regional Hospital already receive the free test, which I pushed to see introduced, but parents of babies born at St John of God Hospital had been required to pay a fee for the test.

Health Minister Kim Hames' recent announcement that all babies born in both public and private hospitals throughout WA will be able to have the free Newborn Hearing Screening is great news for parents.

I started pushing for the expansion of the program in 2007, when babies born in Bunbury and other regional areas did not have access to the free tests, while newborns at Perth's public hospitals did.

Since then, I have been very pleased to see the free screening program expanded by Minister Hames in 2009 to include regional public hospitals.

Now, the Minister has gone one step further with private hospitals included in the program.

More than 140,000 babies have already been screened in WA through the program, with the test involving a non-invasive device picking up the baby's response to soft clicking sounds.

Babies can be tested from as young as 12 hours old.

## **System to recognise milestones**

My office has recently received several enquiries about the process of applying for congratulations letters for significant occasions such as 50th and 60th wedding anniversaries, and 90th and 100th birthdays.

Letters are not automatically sent out.

People need to fill out an application form in order to receive letters from the Prime Minister, Governor-General and in some case the Queen.

While applications for birthday and anniversary letters are handled by the Federal Member of Parliament in each area, my office can assist with general inquiries on 9791 3636.

Full details on requesting milestone letters are also available online at [www.itsanhonour.gov.au/anniversary](http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/anniversary)