

# Empathy for hearing impaired rewarded

After struggling through her own hearing loss Sister Cecilia Creigh devoted a quarter of a century to the care and advocacy of hearing impaired people.

The 71-year-old will be awarded an Order of Australia Medal today for her service to people with a hearing impairment.

Sister Cecilia's hearing loss started when she contracted an ear infection in 1963 as an infant teacher at the Junction School, Newcastle.

Surgery offered no answer and hearing was lost entirely in her right ear, while a good amount remained in her left.

What was left of Sister Cecilia's hearing faded over time and the frustration is what motivated her later work.

"Even though I am someone who should be used to it, you never get used to it, it is just so frustrating," she said.

With what hearing she has left, Sister Cecilia is smothering the frustration for others.

In the early 1980s, after hearing loss and associated illness forced Sister Cecilia out of the classrooms,



**HELPING HAND:** Sister Cecilia Creigh was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for her work with the hearing impaired.

she turned her attention to people with similar ailments.

Sister Cecilia taught at the Dominican School for the Deaf at Waratah from 1986 to 1993 while overseeing the inception of community organisations for the deaf

and volunteering with Australian Hearing in Newcastle from 1999.

She became secretary of the Chatswood Self Help for Hard of Hearing (SHHH) group in 1989 after joining in 1984.

In 1995 Sister Cecilia co-

founded the Hunter's first SHHH group where she maintained her commitment until 2006.

Sister Cecilia, who is part of the St Joseph's Congregation, Lochinvar, said her commitment to the hearing impaired is a result of her empathy.

"I have a good insight into how it feels for people who are suffering from hearing loss," she said.

"Helping hearing people with bad hearing is not about holding their hand through every little thing. It's just about support and letting them know that you know what they are going through."

Sister Cecilia said her award serves a greater purpose than acknowledging her contribution to the community.

"I am happy, but I am also aware of how many other people deserve this award.

"But it is letting people know what an important thing it is to help hearing impaired people."

The Order of Australia Medals will be awarded as part of the official ceremony in Maitland Park today.