

Outcome 7

Hearing Services

Australians have access through the Hearing Services program to hearing services and devices

OUTCOME SUMMARY – THE YEAR AHEAD

Responsibility for Outcome 7 and the administration of the Australian Government Hearing Services Program lies with the Office of Hearing Services within the Department's Medical and Pharmaceutical Services Division. In 2006-07, the Government will continue to fund the delivery of quality hearing services through a national network of private providers and the public provider, Australian Hearing. The Department, as the Government funder and regulator will:

- deliver hearing services for eligible adult clients through a voucher system;
- fund and monitor the provision of services by Australian Hearing to special needs clients as a community service obligation (CSO); and
- support research activities into hearing loss, prevention and community education by funding the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), the research arm of Australian Hearing.

Australian Hearing is an agency within the Human Services Group, which is part of the Finance and Administration portfolio. Further information is available in the Portfolio Budget Statements of the Department of Human Services.

Key Strategic Directions for 2006-07

During 2006-07, the Australian Government will:

- continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the voucher system;
- continue to ensure quality hearing services are provided to special needs clients;
- clarify the role of Government in assessing professional qualifications of hearing services practitioners; and
- maintain the emphasis on quality assurance of service provision.

Major Activities

In 2006-07, the Department will work to implement the recommendations of the recent review of professional qualifications. This process will clarify the role of the Department in assessing qualifications and set out the competencies required to deliver services under the Program.

The Department will be implementing new auditing arrangements to more effectively ensure that consumers are provided with quality services under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program. The new arrangements are more transparent for practitioners and service providers, who will be given the opportunity to participate in information forums and will be given information packs to assist them with understanding the changes.

Budget Statements – Department of Health and Ageing

In 2006-07, new Hearing Rehabilitation Outcomes will be phased in to replace the current Clinical Standards in specifying the quality requirements for services. The Hearing Rehabilitation Outcomes are client focused outcomes rather than prescriptive standards.

A major focus for the delivery of CSO services will be ensuring that Indigenous Australians aged 50 years and over and Community Development Employment Projects participants, who were granted eligibility in the 2004-05 Budget, are making use of the hearing services provided by Australian Hearing.

In October 2005, the Government introduced new minimum device specifications allowing clients of the Hearing Services Program to access higher quality devices at no personal cost. The Office of Hearing Services, in consultation with suppliers, will review the minimum device specifications after January 2007 to ensure that consumers still have access to high quality devices in line with advances in the industry.

Outcome 7 Resourcing

Table 3.1.7 shows how the 2006-07 Budget appropriations translate to total resourcing for Outcome 7, including administered expenses, revenue from government (appropriation), revenue from other sources, and the total price of outputs.

Table 3.1.7: Total resources for Outcome 7

	Estimated actual 2005-06 \$'000	Budget estimate 2006-07 \$'000
Administered appropriations		
Program 7.1: Hearing Services		
Appropriation Bill 1	257,499	290,607
	257,499	290,607
Total Administered Appropriations	257,499	290,607
Departmental appropriations		
Health and Ageing		
Output Group 1 - Policy Advice	2,105	2,062
Output Group 2 - Program Management	5,990	5,868
Total price of departmental outputs <i>(Total revenue from government and from other sources)</i>	8,095	7,930
Total revenue from government (appropriations) contributing to price of departmental outputs	8,095	7,930
Total revenue from other sources	-	-
Total price of departmental outputs <i>(Total revenue from government and from other sources)</i>	8,095	7,930
Total Price of Outputs for Outcome 7 <i>(Total Revenue from Government and from other sources)</i>	8,095	7,930
Total estimated resourcing for Outcome 7 <i>(Total price of outputs and administered appropriations)</i>	265,594	298,537
	2005-06	2006-07
Average staffing level (number)		
Department	76	75

Measures Affecting Outcome 7

There are no Budget Measures for this outcome.

Contribution of Administered Programs to Outcome 7

Program 7.1: Hearing Services

The Hearing Services Program reduces the consequences of hearing loss in the Australian community by providing funding for hearing services and devices under the voucher system and the CSO components of the Australian Government Hearing Services Program. Research funding provided to NAL benefits the Australian community by building the knowledge base on hearing loss, rehabilitation, harmful effects of noise, and community education. The contribution of this item to the outcome is measured by the number of clients receiving services; the number of sites providing services; the level of hearing aid use by clients; and the timeliness of voucher issue within the Program.

Contribution of Departmental Outputs to Outcome 7

The Department describes its core activities in terms of three output groups: policy advice, program management and agency-specific service delivery. Outcome 7 reports on policy advice and program management. Refer to Section 3.1 for more information on output groups.

Performance Information for Outcome 7

Performance information for administered programs, individual outputs and output groups relating to Outcome 7 are summarised in Table 3.2.7.

Table 3.2.7: Key Performance Information for Outcome 7

Performance Information for Administered Programs

Indicator	Measured by	Reference Point or Target
Administered Funding – Hearing Services Programs		
Increased level of access to hearing services by eligible clients through maintenance of, or addition to, the number of sites registered to provide audiological services under the Hearing Services program.	The number of sites registered under the Hearing Services Program.	1,613 registered sites.
Clients benefit from the Hearing Services Program.	The number of clients that access services available under the Hearing Services Program.	500,000 clients receive services in 2006-07.
Maintenance or increase in the proportion of fitted clients who use their device/s for 5+ hours per day.	Annual Office of Hearing Services client survey.	70% of clients use their devices for 5 or more hours per day.
Timely issuing of vouchers to eligible clients.	Application processing statistics.	On average, eligible clients are issued with a voucher within 14 days from receipt of a completed application.
Cost: \$290.607m		

Performance Information for Departmental Outputs

Indicator	Measured by	Reference Point or Target
Output Group 1 – Policy Advice		
Quality, relevant and timely advice for Australian Government decision-making.	Ministerial satisfaction.	Maintain or increase from previous year.
Relevant and timely evidence-based policy research.	Production of relevant and timely evidence-based policy research.	Relevant evidence-based policy research produced in a timely manner.
Price: \$2.062m		

Indicator	Measured by	Reference Point or Target
Output Group 2 – Program Management		
Administered budget predictions are met and actual expenses vary less than 0.5% from budgeted expenses.	Percentage that actual expenses vary from budgeted expenses.	Less than 0.5% variance from budgeted expenses.
Stakeholders to participate in program development.	Opportunities for stakeholder participation through surveys, forums, meetings and invitation for written feedback.	Opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders to participate in program development.
Price: \$5.868m		

Evaluations

There are no evaluations planned to be undertaken in 2006-07.

Major Reviews

There are no major reviews planned to be undertaken in 2006-07.

Performance Improvement Initiatives

There are no performance improvement initiatives planned to be undertaken in 2006-07.

