

Outcome 7

HEARING SERVICES

A reduction in the incidence and consequence of hearing loss, including through research and prevention activities, and access to hearing services and devices for eligible people

Outcome Strategy

The Australian Government, through Outcome 7, aims to reduce the incidence and consequences of avoidable hearing loss in the Australian community and provide access to high quality hearing services and devices.

Currently one in six Australians is affected by hearing loss, and with an ageing population, the proportion of the population with hearing loss is projected to increase to one in every four Australians by 2050.¹ Hearing loss can reduce the capacity to communicate and participate in social situations and can affect a person's education and employment opportunities. Avoidable hearing loss, especially in young people and people in the workforce, will also increase unless preventive action is taken. Given the expected growth in demand for hearing services into the future, the Government has introduced measures to maintain the accessibility of hearing services and ensure that funding for hearing services is targeted at the most at risk groups in society.

The Australian Government offers free hearing services for eligible Australian citizens or permanent residents with a measurable hearing loss above a specified threshold. These services are provided by Australian Hearing, the Government provider of hearing services, and a range of contracted private service providers. To be eligible for these free hearing services, the applicant must hold either a Pensioner Concession Card, a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Repatriation Health Card, or a White Repatriation Health Card, or be a dependant of a person in one of those categories. Members of the Defence force, people in receipt of a sickness allowance from Centrelink, and people participating in Disability Employment Services - Disability Management Service are also eligible. In addition, hearing impaired children and young people under 26 years of age, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are over 50 years of age or who were/are participants in a Community Development Employment Program, can access free hearing services from Australian Hearing.

Outcome 7 is the responsibility of Regulatory Policy and Governance Division.

¹ Access Economics & Cooperative Research Centre for Cochlear Implant and Hearing Aid Innovation (Australia) & Victorian Deaf Society, 2006. *Listen hear! the economic impact and cost of hearing loss in Australia*: a report by Access Economics Pty Ltd CRC for Cochlear Implant and Hearing Aid Innovation: Vicdeaf, East Melbourne.

Program Contributing to Outcome 7

Program 7.1: Hearing Services

Outcome 7 Budgeted Expenses and Resources

Table 7.1: Budgeted Expenses and Resources for Outcome 7

	2011-12	2012-13
	Estimated	Estimated
	actual	expenses
	\$'000	\$'000
Program 7.1: Hearing services		
Administered expenses		
Ordinary annual services (Appropriation Bill No. 1)	386,476	404,179
Departmental expenses		
Departmental appropriation ¹	11,720	11,737
Expenses not requiring appropriation in the budget year ²	529	369
Total for Program 7.1	398,725	416,285
Outcome 7 totals by appropriation type		
Administered expenses		
Ordinary annual services (Appropriation Bill No. 1)	386,476	404,179
Departmental expenses		
Departmental appropriation ¹	11,720	11,737
Expenses not requiring appropriation in the budget year ²	529	369
Total expenses for Outcome 7	398,725	416,285
	2011-12	2012-13
Average staffing level (number)	84	85

¹ Departmental appropriation combines “Ordinary annual services (Appropriation Bill No 1)” and “Revenue from independent sources (s31)”.

² “Expenses not requiring appropriation in the budget year” is made up of depreciation expense, amortisation expense, makegood expense and audit fees. This estimate also includes approved operating losses - please refer to the departmental financial statements in section 3 for further information.

Program 7.1: Hearing services

Program Objectives

Support access for eligible clients to quality hearing services

The Australian Government, through the Hearing Services Program (HSP), provides access to free hearing services for eligible people. In 2012-13, the Department will continue to deliver the suite of 2011-12 Budget reforms aimed at better aligning the program to clinical need and improving and expanding access to hearing services through the Community Service Obligations component of the HSP.

In 2012-13, the Department will develop an online portal to allow the electronic lodgement of voucher applications and improve clients' access to information. The development of online services will be complemented by an evaluation of HSP communication materials. The Department will work closely with consumers and service providers throughout 2012-13 to ensure that program information and online services meet their needs.

The Department will continue to manage, monitor, and evaluate the operation of the HSP to ensure timeliness, quality, and consistency in the delivery of hearing services to eligible clients. This includes the issuing of vouchers to eligible Australians; assessment and monitoring of contracted service providers; and transparent complaints management.

In addition, from July 2012, the Department will implement a more targeted, risk based, audit program of hearing services providers to assess their compliance with contractual and legal obligations. The audit process will help ensure that information, processes and hearing services are delivered in a clinically appropriate and timely manner to meet client needs.

Support research into hearing loss prevention and management

The Australian Government is committed to reducing the incidence of avoidable hearing loss in the community. The number of people affected by hearing loss in Australia is expected to increase over time.

In 2012-13, the Australian Government will fund a range of research organisations through the Hearing Loss Prevention Program, to identify strategies to reduce avoidable hearing loss in the general community. Priority areas include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, young people and/or those in the workplace. In addition, the Australian Government will support research by the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) into hearing loss and its management.

The Department will continue to monitor the outcomes of research and ensure that relevant authorities and the public are made aware of the outcomes of completed projects.

Program 7.1 is linked as follows:

- The Department of Human Services (Medicare Australia – Program 1.1) issues payments made to hearing services providers against services provided under the HSP vouchers.

Program 7.1 Expenses

Table 7.2: Program Expenses

	2011-12 Estimated actual \$'000	2012-13 Budget \$'000	2013-14 Forward year 1 \$'000	2014-15 Forward year 2 \$'000	2015-16 Forward year 3 \$'000
Annual administered expenses					
Ordinary annual services	386,476	404,179	442,424	481,618	539,112
Program support	12,249	12,106	11,744	11,386	11,472
Total Program 7.1 expenses	398,725	416,285	454,168	493,004	550,584

Program 7.1: Deliverables²

Table 7.3: Qualitative Deliverables for Program 7.1

Qualitative Deliverables	2012-13 Reference Point or Target
Support access for eligible clients to quality hearing services	
HSP clients can lodge voucher applications through an online portal	An online portal is available from early in 2013
Implementation of a risk based audit program for service providers	Audits commence from 1 July 2012, with monitoring and evaluation of program efficacy and risk indicators to occur throughout 2012-13
Support research into hearing loss prevention and management	
Funding round for the allocation of research grants under the Hearing Loss Prevention Program completed	At least one funding round held in 2012-13

² In 2012-13, all deliverables and key performance indicators have been reviewed and updated to ensure targeted performance reporting.

Table 7.4: Quantitative Deliverables for Program 7.1

Quantitative Deliverables	2011-12 Revised Budget	2012-13 Budget Target	2013-14 Forward Year 1	2014-15 Forward Year 2	2015-16 Forward Year 3
Support access for eligible clients to quality hearing services					
Number of people who receive voucher services nationally	627,000	662,000	699,000	738,000	779,000

Program 7.1: Key Performance Indicators

Table 7.5: Qualitative Key Performance Indicators for Program 7.1

Qualitative Indicator	2012-13 Reference Point or Target
Support access for eligible clients to quality hearing services	
Policies and program reforms are developed and implemented in consultation with consumers and service providers	Opportunity for stakeholders to participate through a range of avenues including through consultative committees, meetings, focus groups and online

Table 7.6: Quantitative Key Performance Indicators for Program 7.1

Quantitative Indicators	2011-12 Revised Budget	2012-13 Budget Target	2013-14 Forward Year 1	2014-15 Forward Year 2	2015-16 Forward Year 3
Support access for eligible clients to quality hearing services					
Proportion of voucher applications processed within 14 days of receipt	80%	82%	85%	85%	85%
Proportion of claims for a hearing aid fitting that relate to voucher clients who have a hearing loss of greater than 23 decibels	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%

