

Outcome 7

Hearing Services

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

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Outcome 7 focuses on reducing the incidence of hearing loss and the consequence of hearing loss for eligible Australians. The Australian Government will work to ensure that people have access to the high quality hearing services and devices that they need. It aims to achieve this outcome by funding high quality hearing services in both the public and private sectors, and research and prevention programs.

Outcome 7 is the responsibility of the Medical Benefits Division.

Key Strategic Directions

- Improve research and prevention efforts that focus on reducing avoidable hearing loss.
- Increase support for, access to, and delivery of, hearing services to special needs clients including Indigenous Australians, children and clients with complex hearing needs.
- Improve hearing outcomes for clients.
- Improve the provision of services under the Hearing Services Program.

Major Activities

Investment in Hearing Loss Prevention

The Australian Government will increase prevention efforts by establishing a Hearing Loss Prevention Program to conduct targeted research and implement prevention programs. The program will have a particular focus on Indigenous Australians, young people and those in the workplace. Throughout 2008-09, to ensure there is an appropriate evidence-base for prevention activities, the Department will initially focus on commissioning research that addresses critical gaps in knowledge.

A key challenge in implementing this initiative is identifying the areas of greatest need within target groups. Once these needs have been identified by consultation with experts, the Department will use this information to procure relevant research and prevention activities.

Increased Access for Special Needs Clients

The Australian Government aims to ensure that Australians who may have difficulty in accessing appropriate hearing services receive the services they need.

In 2008-09, the Australian Government will improve access to, and the delivery of, hearing services for special needs clients covered by Community Service Obligation (CSO)

arrangements. This includes Indigenous Australians, children, eligible people with complex needs and people living in remote locations.

The Government will provide additional funding to Australian Hearing to meet the need for hearing services for special needs clients. In addition, the Government will improve the quality of devices provided to these clients and upgrade ear level Frequency Modulation (FM) systems used by children to hear more clearly in noisy classrooms.

The Department will manage a Memorandum of Understanding with Australian Hearing to ensure that the delivery of the CSO arrangements meets appropriate service levels and standards, and enhances access to services by clients.

Improved Outcomes for Hearing Services Program Clients

The Australian Government aims to improve client satisfaction and encourage better use of hearing aids through the introduction of a new rehabilitation service for Hearing Services Program clients fitted with a free-to-client hearing device(s) for the first time. The new service will help clients cope with their hearing loss and make the best use of their hearing device.

In 2008-09, the Department expects that the initial service uptake will gradually increase over time while service providers develop their rehabilitation programs and as clients become aware of the availability of this service. However, by the end of 2008, all eligible clients fitted for the first time should be offered a high quality rehabilitation program.

Improved Provision of Services

The Australian Government aims to improve service provision by ensuring the delivery of a consistent standard of hearing assessment, providing improved information on the assessment to general practitioners (GPs) and ensuring quicker referral of clients occurs when specialist attention is indicated.

To achieve this, the Australian Government will introduce a new clinical pathway for the Hearing Services Program on 1 July 2009. Under the new pathway, clients will receive a hearing assessment from hearing service providers prior to visiting a GP for medical clearance to receive further services under the program.

Throughout 2008-09, significant consultation and developmental activities will be required to gain the cooperation of hearing service providers and GP professional groups to implement these changes. The Department will seek agreement with professional groups on the requirements for a hearing assessment and the necessary knowledge and skills required to deliver the assessment. Industry training and support will be developed and delivered, in consultation with industry prior to implementation. The Department will also facilitate the discussions between GP and hearing service provider groups on the exchange of information relating to the hearing assessment results and medical clearance to enable effective and efficient implementation of the changes.

Funding for these major activities is sourced from Program 7.1 – Hearing Services.

Outcome 7 Resourcing

Table 7.1 shows how the 2008-09 Budget appropriations translate to total resourcing for Outcome 7, including administered expenses, revenue from government (appropriations), revenue from other sources, and the total price of outputs.

Table 7.1: Total Resources for Outcome 7

	2008-09 Total estimate of available resources \$'000	2007-08 Estimated actual \$'000
Outcome 7 Administered and Departmental Output Resources		
Program 7.1: Hearing Services		
<i>Administered Items</i>		
Annual Appropriation Bill 1 (Ordinary Annual Services)	311,999	285,911
<i>Departmental Outputs</i>		
Annual Appropriation Bill 1 (Ordinary Annual Services)	9,596	10,086
Revenues from other sources (s.31) for goods and services	191	186
Subtotal for Program 7.1	321,786	296,183
Total Resources for Outcome 7	321,786	296,183
Outcome 7 Resources by Departmental Output Group		
Department of Health and Ageing		
Output Group 1: Policy Advice	2,222	2,332
Output Group 2: Program Management	7,565	7,940
Total Departmental Resources	9,787	10,272
	2008-09	2007-08
Average Staffing Level (Number)	78.7	82.0

Measures Affecting Outcome 7

A summary of measures affecting this outcome is provided at Table 1.3.1, Section 1. Measure descriptions are published in full in *Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2008-09*, available on the Australian Government website at <<http://www.budget.gov.au>>.

Contribution of Administered Programs

Program 7.1 – Hearing Services

The Hearing Services Program provides funding for hearing services and devices under the voucher system and the CSO components of the program. It also provides funding for hearing loss, research and prevention. The contribution to this outcome is measured by the number of clients receiving 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 two output groups: policy advice and program management. Outcome 7 reports on both output groups. Refer to Section 2.1 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 7.2.

Table 7.2: Key Performance Information for Outcome 7

Performance Information for Administered Programs

Indicator	2008-09 Reference Point or Target
Program 7.1 – Hearing Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administered Items 	
Increased level of access to hearing services by eligible clients through the maintenance of, or addition to, the number of sites registered to provide audiological services under the Hearing Services Program.	1,900 registered sites in 2008-09.
Clients benefit from the Hearing Services Program. Measured by the number of clients that access services, including clients eligible through the new expanded access measures.	510,000 clients receive services in 2008-09.
Maintenance or increase in the proportion of fitted clients who use their device/s for 5 or more hours per day. Monitored by the annual Office of Hearing Services client survey.	56% of clients use their devices for 5 or more hours per day.

Indicator	2008-09 Reference Point or Target
Program 7.1 – Hearing Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administered Items 	
Timely issuing of vouchers to eligible clients. Measured by application processing statistics.	On average, eligible clients are issued with a voucher within 14 days from receipt of a correctly completed application.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental Outputs¹ 	
Resourcing: \$321.786m	

Performance Information for Departmental Outputs

In relation to the following program:

- 7.1: Hearing Services.

Indicator	2008-09 Reference Point or Target
Output Group 1 – Policy Advice	
Quality, relevant and timely advice for Australian Government decision-making measured by Ministerial satisfaction.	Ministerial satisfaction.
Production of relevant and timely evidence-based policy research.	Relevant evidence-based policy research produced in a timely manner.
Output Group 1 Resourcing: \$2.222m	

Indicator	2008-09 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 measured by comparison of actual expenses against budget.	0.5% variance from budgeted expenses.

¹ The Department has four standard performance indicators for departmental output groups. See 'Performance Information for Departmental Outputs' for further information.

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Indicator	2008-09 Reference Point or Target
Output Group 2 – Program Management	
Stakeholders participate in program development through a range of avenues, such as surveys, committees, meetings, and submissions on departmental discussion papers.	Stakeholders participate in program development.
Routine monitoring of quality of service provision and compliance with legislation by accredited providers.	20% of accredited hearing service providers and 20% of qualified practitioners will be reviewed each year.
Output Group 2 Resourcing: \$7.565m	