

Outcome 7

## Hearing Services

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

### OUTCOME SUMMARY

Outcome 7 focuses on delivering affordable hearing services to eligible Australians through the Australian Government Hearing Services Program. The Government aims to achieve this outcome by funding high quality services through a national network of accredited private hearing service providers and the Government-owned provider, Australian Hearing, which compete to deliver services through a voucher system.

Outcome 7 is the responsibility of the Medical Benefits Division.

### The Year Ahead

In 2007-08, the Australian Government will work to improve outcomes for Hearing Services Program clients, and better meet the special needs of clients covered by Community Service Obligations arrangements.

### Key Strategic Directions for 2007-08

During 2007-08, the Australian Government will:

- improve hearing outcomes for Hearing Services Program clients through a new rehabilitation service;
- increase special needs clients' access to hearing services;
- enhance research efforts that focus on informing prevention activities; and
- improve the provision of appropriate hearing rehabilitation services by developing an improved clinical pathway in conjunction with general practitioners and hearing health professionals.

### Major Activities

#### Improved Outcomes for Hearing Services Program Clients

On 1 January 2008, the Australian Government will introduce a rehabilitation service for new Hearing Services Program clients, to help them cope with their hearing loss and to make the best use of their hearing aid.

Hearing service providers will offer the rehabilitation service to clients when they fit them for a free-to-client hearing aid. Providers can choose to deliver the service in either group or one-on-one sessions.

Through this initiative, the Government aims to improve client satisfaction and encourage better use of hearing aids.

### **Access for Special Needs Clients**

In 2007-08, the Government will continue to ensure that special needs clients covered by Community Service Obligations arrangements can access hearing services.

From 1 July 2007, the Government will provide additional funding to meet an increased demand and costs for hearing services for special needs clients. In addition, the Government will fund initiatives to improve the quality of devices provided to these clients and to upgrade ear level FM systems used by children in classrooms.

The Government will provide this increased funding to Australian Hearing,<sup>1</sup> which is responsible for the delivery of services to special needs clients. In 2007-08, the Department will manage a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government-owned provider, to ensure the delivery of Community Service Obligations arrangements at agreed service levels.

### **Investment in Hearing Research**

The Australian Government currently funds hearing research through the National Acoustic Laboratories (the research arm of Australian Hearing), to build the knowledge base on hearing loss, rehabilitation and the harmful effects of noise. The laboratories also examine ways to improve the community's understanding of these concepts.

From 2007-08, the Government will fund a new program of research and prevention activities over four years. The program will be managed by the Department and focus on preventing hearing loss.

### **Development of a New Clinical Pathway**

In 2007-08, the Australian Government will commence work with general practitioners to ensure that they have access to appropriate information when assessing a client's suitability for hearing services.

As part of the development process, the Department will consult with both general practitioner groups and hearing health professionals.

The Government expects to introduce the new clinical pathway in 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> Further information about Australian Hearing is available in the *2007-08 Human Services Portfolio Budget Statements*.

## Outcome 7 Resourcing

Table 3.1.7 shows how the 2007-08 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 2006-07 \$'000	Budget estimate 2007-08 \$'000
<b>Administered appropriations</b>		
<b>Program 7.1: Hearing Services</b>		
Appropriation Bill 1	252,434	296,148
	<b>252,434</b>	<b>296,148</b>
<b>Total Administered Appropriations</b>	<b>252,434</b>	<b>296,148</b>
<b>Departmental appropriations</b>		
<i>Health and Ageing</i>		
Output Group 1 - Policy Advice	2,131	2,455
Output Group 2 - Program Management	6,651	7,662
<b>Total price of departmental outputs</b> <i>(Total revenue from government and from other sources)</i>	8,782	10,117
Total revenue from government (appropriations) contributing to price of departmental outputs	8,537	9,882
Total revenue from other sources	245	235
<b>Total price of departmental outputs</b> <i>(Total revenue from government and from other sources)</i>	8,782	10,117
<b>Total Price of Outputs for Outcome 7</b> <i>(Total Revenue from Government and from other sources)</i>	8,782	10,117
<b>Total estimated resourcing for Outcome 7</b> <i>(Total price of outputs and administered appropriations)</i>	<b>261,216</b>	<b>306,265</b>
	2006-07	2007-08
<b>Average Staffing Level (number)</b>		
Department	77	79

## Measures Affecting Outcome 7

A summary of measures affecting this outcome is provided at Table 2.2, Section 2. Measure descriptions are published in full in *Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2007-08*, available on the Australian Government website at: <www.budget.gov.au>.

## Contribution of Administered Programs to Outcome 7

### Program 7.1: Hearing Services

The Hearing Services program provides funding for hearing services and devices under the voucher system and the Community Service Obligations components of the program. It also funds hearing research. 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 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
<b>Administered Funding – Hearing Services Programs</b>		
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.	The number of sites registered under the Hearing Services Program.	1,769 registered sites in 2007-08.
Clients benefit from the Hearing Services Program.	The number of clients that access services, including clients eligible through the new expanded access measures, available under the Hearing Services Program.	545,000 clients receive services in 2007-08.
Maintenance or increase in the proportion of fitted clients who use their device/s for 5 or more hours per day.	Annual Office of Hearing Services client survey.	56% 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.
<b>Cost: \$296.148m</b>		

**Performance Information for Departmental Outputs**

Indicator	Measured by	Reference Point or Target
<b>Output Group 1 – Policy Advice</b>		
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.
<b>Price: \$2.455m</b>		

Indicator	Measured by	Reference Point or Target
<b>Output Group 2 – Program Management</b>		
Administered budget predictions are met and actual expenses vary less than 0.5% from budgeted expenses.	Percentage that actual expenses vary from budgeted expenses.	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. Examples include committee meetings and surveys.
Quality of service provision and compliance with legislation by accredited providers is routinely monitored.	Audit activity statistics.	20% of accredited hearing service providers and 20% of qualified practitioners will be reviewed each year.
<b>Price: \$7.662m</b>		

**Evaluations**

The Department does not plan to undertake any evaluations under Outcome 7 in 2007-08.

**Major Reviews**

The Department does not plan to undertake any major reviews under Outcome 7 in 2007-08.