



Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Research Strategy – Hearing Health

Supporting hearing research through the
National Acoustic Laboratories



Hearing
Services
Program

Research Strategy – Hearing Health

Introduction

The Hearing Services Program aims to:

1. provide hearing services, including devices, to eligible people to help manage their hearing loss and improve engagement with the community
2. support hearing research, with a focus on ways to reduce the impact of hearing loss and the incidence and consequence of avoidable hearing loss.

Annual funding is provided to the National Acoustic Laboratories to support the hearing health research objective listed above.

Objectives

This research strategy, together with the Department of Health and Aged Care's (the Department's) agreement with the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), aims to ensure that research activities undertaken by NAL using program funding align with program objectives and are visible to the hearing health sector and broader community.

Each year, the Department and NAL agree the research activities and strategic focus for the year(s) ahead using program funding. All agreed research activities fall under one or more of following research fields:

1. Adult hearing loss
2. Paediatric hearing loss
3. Technology
4. Supporting improved Hearing Services Program outcomes

In addition to the above, NAL will perform research to improve outcomes for specific populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people with limited access to hearing healthcare.

Setting the Research Agenda

As an internationally recognised preeminent hearing research and development organisation, NAL is well-placed to identify hearing sector research needs and opportunities. The Department will collaborate with NAL to discuss emergent research needs and consider a range of inputs to inform research activities under this strategy—including (but not limited to) actions relevant to:

- the [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031](#)
- the [National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030](#)
- the World Health Organization's [World report on hearing](#)
- the Hearing Services Program Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Examples of significant research projects funded through the Department's Agreement with NAL include the:

- Longitudinal Outcomes of Children with Hearing Impairment (LOCHI)

- Children with Unilateral Hearing Loss (CUHL)
- Clinical and cost effectiveness of upgrades in Cochlear implant sound processors in older adults

Outcomes from these and other research activities provide important evidence to inform future policy settings, and identify future research needs and opportunities.

Key stakeholders

The Department and NAL will engage with key stakeholders to identify research priorities to inform future activities.

Key stakeholders with an interest in hearing research may include (but are not limited to):

- People with hearing loss and their families
- Hearing Services Program clients, contracted providers, practitioners
- Providers and practitioners not associated with the Hearing Services Program
- Hearing sector Practitioner Professional Bodies
- Consumer advocacy groups
- Research organisations
- State and territory governments

The Department's [Ear health](#) website also provides information on how stakeholders can suggest potential research priorities consistent with objectives under this strategy (directed to the hearing@health.gov.au mailbox).

Raising awareness of funded research activities

To help raise awareness of hearing research being undertaken, NAL publishes a summary of research activities on its [Completed projects - NAL](#) webpage. NAL will also publish the results of its research activities, where applicable, in peer-reviewed journals and disseminate its findings through conferences, social media and media releases.

NAL's research project pages identify which research field/s each activity relates to and include:

- title of research activity
- research field
- research objectives
- activity completion date
- research findings/outcomes
- links to related publications and presentations.

Providing this information publicly:

- enables greater impact by facilitating use of research findings by a broad range of stakeholders,
- increases public awareness of investments into improving hearing health of Australians
- supports sector engagement on identifying future research priorities.

Regular engagement

The Department and NAL meet quarterly to support ongoing engagement and provide regular opportunities to discuss emerging research needs and findings, as well as any risks/issues relevant to agreed research activities.

Review

The Department and NAL will periodically review this strategy and adapt as necessary to ensure research objectives are being met.

Health.gov.au/hear

All information in this publication is correct as at November 2023

