

COMMUNIQUE FROM THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT PANEL OF THE REVIEW OF THE HEARING SERVICES PROGRAM

2 September 2021

RELEASE OF THE FINAL REPORT

On 2 September 2021, the Independent Expert Panel delivered the *Report of the Independent Review of the Hearing Services Program* (the Report) to the Hon Dr David Gillespie MP, Minister for Regional Health and the Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment.

The previous Minister (the Hon Mark Coulton MP) appointed us as the Independent Expert Panel in August 2020 and we have undertaken detailed analysis of available data, considered the evidence from research and previous reviews and consulted broadly with the hearing sector over the past twelve months to prepare our Report.

Consultation activities and submissions

In December 2020, we released a [Consultation Paper](#) and sought submissions from, and consulted with, stakeholder groups comprising consumer advocates and clients, industry (including service providers and hearing device manufacturers), professional associations and academics. Further stakeholder feedback was sought on our [Draft Report](#) in May/June 2021, including by way of four virtual sessions with many stakeholders. All responses were considered when finalising the Report. Stakeholder submissions are now available online.

The Report

We have heard repeated commentary that the Hearing Services Program is highly valued by those with hearing loss and those who support them in their personal and work lives. However, it is clear that there are opportunities to: provide clients with greater choice and control over the management of their hearing loss; improve the equity, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of service delivery; ensure good governance; and modernise the Program to reflect changes in policy, markets and technology.

Our Report's recommendations include extending eligibility under the Hearing Services Program to: people who are Low Income Health Care Card holders from 26 years of age to Age Pension-eligibility age; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people from 26 years of age; and permanent residents of Aged Care Homes. Contracted service providers should be required to offer a more holistic assessment of clients' communication and hearing needs and deliver a broader range of services to better address those needs. Consumer choice should be enhanced by providing people with hearing loss greater information on the services that may assist them, the benefits of those services and their costs. Fully subsidised hearing devices should incorporate a greater range of new technologies.

We extend our appreciation to all who participated in the Review and made this Report possible. We encourage all stakeholders to be actively involved in improving the Hearing Services Program.

Space



Professor Michael Woods



Dr Zena Burgess