



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health**



**Hearing Services Program**

## **Consumer guidance factsheet**

*and*

**Am I eligible to receive subsidised hearing services?**



## Consumer guidance factsheet

### Achieving your hearing outcomes

Establishing an effective relationship with your chosen hearing service provider is an essential part of making sure you receive the right level of care as a client of the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the program). You should feel confident at the end of your appointment that the services and support discussed are the right ones to help you manage your hearing loss. Here are some suggestions to help you get the most out of your hearing appointments.

Hearing service providers under the program are contracted by the Office of Hearing Services (the Office), on behalf of the Australian Government, to provide services and supports to eligible clients of the program.

### Before your appointment

- Discuss your hearing concerns with your doctor to ensure your hearing is not affected by a treatable medical condition.
- Obtain a [medical certificate](#) from your doctor if your hearing concern is not medically treatable. Take this to your first hearing appointment.
- Contact a [hearing service provider](#) to arrange an appointment.
- Ask for assistance such as an interpreter (if required).
- Ask someone to attend the appointment with you as two heads are often better than one. The experiences of those closest to you in relation to your hearing loss may be important.
- Prepare a summary of your hearing concerns and any questions.

### During your appointment

- The hearing service provider can apply for the program on your behalf – prior to providing any services.
- You can expect to be asked for comprehensive details about your lifestyle including the situations when hearing is difficult for you or frustrating for those close to you.
- You can expect to undergo initial tests such as a hearing assessment.
- You should be given time to ask questions regarding specific services such as what services can I expect to receive under the program? Will I have any out-of-pocket costs under the program?

### Hearing devices

As a program client, if the results of your assessment indicate that a hearing device would be of assistance to you, your hearing service provider must offer you a fully subsidised hearing device to manage your hearing loss. The fully subsidised devices meet performance and technical requirements prescribed by the program, which are designed to appropriately manage most hearing loss.

You may also be offered a partially subsidised hearing device that contains additional features beyond those generally required to help you manage your hearing loss. You are under no obligation to purchase a partially subsidised hearing device - it is a personal choice, and can be quite costly.



You should be aware that your hearing service provider may receive commissions for selling certain hearing devices and some providers set sales targets for clinicians. Commissions and preferred supplier arrangements must be disclosed to you, as they may influence the price, type and brand of hearing aid being recommended to you. Here are some example questions you may wish to ask your hearing service provider about hearing devices.

- Do I really need a hearing device?
- Why will the partially subsidised hearing devices suit my needs better?
- Can I trial the fully subsidised device?
- Can I trial the partially subsidised device before committing to buy it?
- What happens if the hearing device doesn't assist as much as I expected?
- What is the manufacturer's warranty period for the hearing device?<sup>1</sup>
- Will I receive detailed information about ongoing maintenance for my hearing device and how much will that cost after the warranty period?

<sup>1</sup> We encourage you to ask your hearing service provider to list what the extended warranty includes over and above the automatic consumer guarantees. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) website has further information about [consumer guarantees](#) and [extended warranties](#) which may assist you. Remember, you can get a second opinion and/or quote from another hearing service provider.

### At the end of your consultation

- You should be given the opportunity to clarify anything you do not understand.
- You should be given a written statement detailing your hearing loss along with copies of any test results and recommended ongoing management.
- You should be given a copy of the document explaining fully and partially subsidised hearing devices. This document will also detail the device you have chosen, as well as any out of pocket costs that may be associated with this. You will be asked to sign this document.
- If you need services and supports that are not available under the program, you should expect to receive support as to what hearing management plan suits your needs better. Alternatively, you should receive a written quote for any out-of-pocket expenses along with reasons why you need a particular device.
- Take your time to make any decisions – it is ok to say no. You should never feel pressured or rushed into making a decision – especially a financial decision.

### After your appointment

- You should make a follow-up appointment to ask further questions.
- If you are not comfortable with the information and hearing management plan, you may wish to seek a second opinion from another hearing service provider.
- If you are not satisfied with the service and supports you are receiving from your hearing service provider, please contact the Office by email to [hearing@health.gov.au](mailto:hearing@health.gov.au), or call **1800 500 726** or **(National Relay Service) 1800 555 660**.

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Office of Hearing Services



## Am I eligible to receive subsidised hearing services?

Eligibility to the program is set out in legislation. This information is general advice only, you should check your eligibility prior to making an appointment for services.

### Voucher component of the program

You are eligible for the voucher component of the program if you are an Australian citizen or permanent resident 21 years or older and you are

- a Pensioner [Concession Card](#) holder
- a Department of [Veterans' Affairs Gold Card](#) holder
- a Department of [Veterans' Affairs White Card](#) holder issued for specific conditions that include hearing loss
- receiving Sickness Allowance from Centrelink
- a dependent of a person in one of the above categories
- a member of the [Australian Defence Force](#)<sup>1</sup>
- referred by the Disability Employment Services (Disability Management Services) Program or
- a [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\)](#) participant with hearing needs, referred by a planner from the National Disability Insurance Agency

Please note that a **Seniors Health Card does not** provide eligibility for the program.

If you are a **young adult aged 21 to 25 (inclusive)** you can choose to receive services through either the Voucher Program (if you meet one of the eligibility criteria listed above) or through the CSO Program (details below).

Voucher services are provided by a network of hearing services providers throughout Australia.

### Community Service Obligations (CSO) component of the program

You are eligible to receive hearing services through the CSO component (specialist hearing services) of the program if you are an Australian citizen or permanent resident and you are

- a person from the above eligibility groups who has complex hearing or communication needs or lives in a remote area
- an Aboriginal person and/or Torres Strait Islander person who
  - is over 50 years of age or
  - is a participant in the Community Development Programme (formerly known as the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) and the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program).
  - or a person who was a CDEP program participant on or after 30 June 2013; has since ceased participating in the program; and was receiving hearing services from Australian Hearing prior to ceasing participation
- a person [under 21 years](#) of age who
  - is an Australian citizen or
  - is a permanent resident or
  - is a young NDIS participant

Australian Hearing is the sole provider of CSO services. You can contact Australian Hearing on 131 797 or visit their website at [www.hearing.com.au](http://www.hearing.com.au).

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## **Eligibility checker**

This information is general advice only. If you think you may be eligible for the voucher component of the program, you can [check your eligibility](#).

## **I'm not eligible - where can I get help?**

If after using the eligibility checker you are [not eligible, but require assistance](#) you may be able to have a hearing aid fitted at a reduced cost through a hearing aid bank.

## **I'm not eligible - how can I ask for a reconsideration?**

Information has been prepared on how to [request a reconsideration](#) of a decision, and the circumstances under which a reconsideration can be made. A request for a reconsideration must be lodged within 28 days of the original decision.

For all enquiries please e-mail [hearing@health.gov.au](mailto:hearing@health.gov.au)

Telephone enquiries please call 1800 500 726

National Relay Service (NRS) 1800 555 660

<sup>[1]</sup>For the purpose of eligibility to the program, a member of the Australian Defence Force is considered to be

- a current member of the Permanent Navy, the Regular Army or the Permanent Air Force or
- a current member of the Reserves who is rendering continuous full-time service.

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Office of Hearing Services

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