



CLIENT INFORMATION

Welcome to the Hearing Services Program (the program). The program provides eligible people with access to hearing services.

What services are available?

Services are provided by over 200 hearing services providers at over 2,000 sites across Australia.

Services under the program can include:

- choice of hearing services provider;
- a hearing assessment;
- advice and support;
- hearing rehabilitation programs; and
- if needed, the fitting of an appropriate hearing device to meet your hearing goals and a contribution to maintenance and repair of hearing devices.

How do I find a hearing services provider?

As part of your welcome pack, you will receive a list of up to 20 hearing services providers in your area. You can choose one of these businesses or you can visit the online **Local Provider Directory** on our website and search for a provider at a location of your choice.

<http://www.health.gov.au/hear>

How to find a hearing services provider

If you already have a hearing services provider, and would like to stay with them, ask them if they are contracted to provide services under the program.

What devices are available?

If your hearing test shows that you would benefit from a hearing device, your hearing practitioner will help you select a model that best suits your hearing needs and goals. Hearing loss develops over time and people can forget how certain things sound. Your hearing practitioner can advise you how to get used to these sounds and to the feel of your device. This process may take several months.

There are a large range of free devices available under the program. In some situations your hearing practitioner may offer you a device which comes with additional non-essential features. These are called 'top-up' devices are made by the same manufacturers as free devices. The program will only cover a part of the cost for top-ups; you will be expected to pay the additional costs. The program will not repay you, if you choose a device with non-essential features.

There are also a number of 'alternative listening devices' available. These include devices to assist in listening to the TV or on the phone. Your hearing practitioner can help you decide which may be best for you.

In the program, you can receive a hearing device **OR** an 'alternative listening device', but not both.

Office of Hearing Services

What costs will I need to pay?

Most services and devices under the program are free. If your clinical hearing needs require a device outside of these free options, your provider may arrange this with the Office. There may also be situations where you will be asked to pay additional costs:

Top-up devices: If you choose to purchase a top-up device, rather than a free-to-client device, you will be asked to pay part of the cost of the device. Your practitioner must offer you a suitable free-to-client option. You are **not** required to purchase a top-up device under the program and there will be a free-to-client device or non-standard device that will meet your needs. If you choose to buy a top-up device the program will not repay you for any costs associated with this purchase.

You should ask for a quote with all costs involved, including ongoing maintenance and repairs, before making any decision. If you are thinking about choosing the top-up recommendation, you may wish to contact another hearing services provider to obtain comparison quotes for the device and maintenance charges.

Device Maintenance: You can choose to pay a maintenance fee to your hearing services provider each year. This will cover service, repairs and batteries for your hearing device. The program may also contribute separately to these costs. The fee should be paid on your first follow-up visit and then every year on the same date your hearing device was first fitted.

The annual maintenance fee for a top-up device may be higher than a free-to-client device and will need to be discussed with your hearing services provider.

If you choose not to pay the annual maintenance fee, you will regularly need to buy batteries and pay for the servicing and repair of your device. These costs can add up quickly and could exceed the cost of the annual maintenance fee.

Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold or White Card (for hearing loss) holders are exempt from the maintenance fee on **free-to-client devices**. The Department of Veterans' Affairs will pay the maintenance fee for you. However, if you choose a **top-up device**, you will need to pay the costs above the standard fee.

Minor maintenance: Includes ear mold renewal and repair, ear mold cleaning and replacing minor parts such as tubing. Replacing major electronic parts and supplying batteries is not included. If you lose your eligibility for the program you are still eligible for minor maintenance for five years. There is no annual maintenance fee for these services.

Replacement fees: If you lose your hearing device or it is damaged, you need to contact your hearing services provider. If your device is lost you will need to fill in a statutory declaration form letting us know how the device was lost. If your device is damaged beyond repair your hearing services provider must supply the office with a letter from the manufacturer stating this. The Office will then consider the application for a replacement. There is a small fee for replacing your device. If you have chosen a free device, the Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card and White Card (for hearing loss) holders do not pay this fee.

Repair costs: All devices offered by the program have at least a 12 month warranty period. If you choose to pay the annual maintenance fee, repairs will be covered this may include repairs that don't meet the warranty conditions such as batteries. Contact your hearing services provider about the warranty arrangements for your hearing device and your options in the case of repairs.

Office of Hearing Services

Additional assistance: For any personal expenditure, you may also be eligible for further financial assistance through Australian Government taxation rebates or your private health insurance. If you have private health insurance please contact your health fund to discuss possible rebates. For further information about taxation rebates please contact the Personal Tax Info line on 132 861.

Rehabilitation Plus – ‘Rehab Plus’

Rehab Plus is available to people who are being fitted with a free-to-client hearing device for the first time. Rehab Plus provides an opportunity for you to learn how to manage your hearing loss and make the most of your communication skills. The program aims to give you communication tips to help you get the most out of your device. To find out more information on Rehab Plus, talk to your hearing services provider.

Clients Rights and Responsibilities

You have the right to be treated with respect, to be informed about treatment options, to be given a choice of hearing devices, to be informed about services and costs and the confidentiality of your personal information. You have the responsibility to tell your provider any relevant medical information. You must respect staff, actively participate in ongoing care and raise treatment issues with your hearing services provider.

The Client Rights and Responsibilities fact sheet can be viewed and downloaded from www.health.gov.au/hear.

Feedback

Please discuss any concerns about your hearing services with your hearing services provider. If you do not want to discuss your concern with your hearing services provider or are unable to resolve the issue with them, you can contact the Office.

We will contact you about your enquiry within seven business days and aim for your enquiry to be resolved within thirty days. Your feedback is important to help us improve the services and quality of care you receive.

Where can I get more information?

For further information please visit our website. You can view and download a range of fact sheets.

Website: www.health.gov.au/hear.

Email: hearing@health.gov.au

General Enquiries: 1800 500 726 (free call)

Telephone Typewriter (TTY): 1800 500 496

Postal Address: Customer Service Section
Office of Hearing Services
Department of Health
Mail Drop Point 113
GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Office of Hearing Services

www.health.gov.au/hear

1800 500 726

hearing@health.gov.au