



Consumer guidance factsheet

It is important that clients of the Hearing Services Program (the program) make an informed decision about their hearing health and the services available to them.

Be prepared

Before you attend your first appointment with a hearing service provider it is important that you think about the problems you have noticed with your hearing and how you would like to address your concerns. It is important to talk about your concerns with your family or doctor. You should also arrange for a family member or friend to attend the appointment with you to help you find a suitable solution to your hearing concerns.

Understanding your results and choosing a suitable device

It is important that your practitioner explains your hearing test results to ensure you understand your hearing loss and how it will affect your communication. If you are not ready or do not want to be fitted with a hearing device you are under no obligation to do so, it is ok to say no. If you are unsure about getting a hearing device, you can ask your service provider if they offer free hearing aid trials. It is important to take your time to make a decision; you do not need to decide on a hearing device at the initial appointment. You should never feel pressured or rushed into making a decision – especially a financial decision.

Hearing devices

If your service provider identifies that you would benefit from a hearing device, your provider must offer you a high quality [fully subsidised device](#) available at no cost to you. There are approximately 250 fully subsidised devices available under the program. You can choose either a fully subsidised hearing aid or an [Assistive Listening Devices \(ALD\)](#). The technological features of these devices help most clients manage the effects of their hearing loss.

You may also be offered a [partially subsidised device](#), which may have more technological features to suit individual lifestyle choices. These devices can be more expensive and not all of the features may be necessary to address your hearing concerns. In addition, recent [research](#) has found that the additional features in partially subsidised hearing devices may not necessarily result in improved client outcomes. As hearing device technology has continued to advance so have the features available in the fully subsidised devices. It should not be assumed that a partially subsidised device will help you reach a better outcome any more than a fully subsidised hearing device might.

Hearing service providers

The Department of Health has contracts with approximately 280 service providers who are responsible for providing hearing services to clients of the program. You should be aware that your hearing service provider may receive commissions for selling certain hearing devices and some providers set sales targets for practitioners. 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.

It is important to have a good relationship with your service provider. If you don't feel comfortable with the information and recommendation you are provided, you can transfer your hearing services to a different service provider to get a second opinion. If you wish to seek a second opinion, ask your service provider for a copy of your hearing test results and a quote for the recommended partially subsidised device. You can then use this information to ask for quotes for the same or an equivalent device from other service providers so you can compare your options.

For more information on consumer rights and guarantees, please visit the [Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's \(ACCC\)](#) website.