



Client Information

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

What services are available?

Services are provided by over 270 service providers at over 3000 sites across Australia, and includes

- a choice of service provider
- a hearing assessment
- advice and support about hearing loss
- if needed, the fitting of a subsidised hearing device and a contribution to the maintenance of these devices.

How do I find a service provider?

If you are eligible for the program, as part of your welcome pack you will receive a list of up to 20 service providers in your area. You can also search for a service provider online, by visiting the program's website, www.hearingservices.gov.au.

If you live in a remote location you may be eligible to receive services through the Community Service Obligations (CSO) component of the program. CSO is delivered by Australian Hearing, who can be contacted on 131 797 or email info@hearing.com.au

What devices are available?

Through the program, if you have a hearing loss you may be able to receive a subsidised hearing device, which will be either a hearing aid or an assistive listening device (ALD).

Fully subsidised hearing aids

If a hearing assessment identifies you would benefit from a hearing device, you will be offered a fully subsidised hearing device. There is a wide range of fully subsidised hearing devices available under the program, made by leading manufacturers. These hearing devices are provided at no cost to you, and contain a range of beneficial features to help you manage the impact of your hearing loss.

To help you understand how a fully subsidised hearing device can be of assistance, a list of common hearing goals and different features that may be available in fully subsidised hearing devices to assist with those goals, can be found at the end of this publication.

Partially subsidised hearing aids

You may be given the option to purchase a partially subsidised hearing device, which may have more technological features to suit individual lifestyle choices. In this case, the program contributes the amount that would have been paid for a fully subsidised hearing device to your service provider, and you pay the additional amount quoted to you for the hearing device (i.e. the “gap”).

It is important to note that the program will not reimburse you for the additional cost of purchasing a partially subsidised hearing device.

The additional cost of purchasing a partially subsidised hearing device will vary and can be substantial, depending on the price set by your service provider. If you are considering purchasing a partially subsidised hearing device you might wish to seek quotes for the device from other service providers, to compare prices before making your decision.

Assistive listening devices

There are also a number of fully subsidised ALDs available, for people with a hearing loss who do not want to wear hearing aids, or cannot manage them. These include devices to help you listen to the television, or hear better in one-on-one conversations. Your service provider can help you decide if an ALD is suitable for you.

What costs will I need to pay?

While most services and devices under the program are fully subsidised, there may be situations where you will be asked to pay additional costs.

Annual maintenance agreement (including batteries and device repairs)

Service providers will offer you the option of entering into an annual maintenance agreement. This covers services, repairs and batteries for your hearing device for a year. If you take up the option of a maintenance agreement, you may be asked to make a payment towards the cost, and the program makes an additional contribution to your service provider as well.

You should be aware that the annual maintenance fee for a partially subsidised device may be higher than for a fully subsidised device. If you are considering purchasing a partially subsidised hearing device, you should discuss maintenance costs with your service provider.

If you choose not to have a maintenance agreement, you will need to pay for the batteries, and the servicing or repair of your hearing device yourself. You should discuss with your service provider the warranty arrangements for your hearing device and any additional costs to you in the case of repairs. These costs can quickly add up and could exceed the cost you would have paid for an annual maintenance agreement.

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Replacement device fees

If you lose your hearing device or it is damaged beyond repair, you need to contact your service provider. If your replacement hearing device is from the fully subsidised device schedule, the replacement fee is \$30.

If you choose a partially subsidised hearing device as a replacement, you will be responsible for the additional cost involved in purchasing this device. The program will not reimburse you for the additional cost of a replacement partially subsidised hearing device.

Department of Veterans Affairs clients

If you hold a Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold or White Card (for hearing loss), you are eligible for services and devices under the program. DVA will also pay the maintenance and replacement fees for fully subsidised devices, as well as paying for assistive listening devices and tinnitus treatment for eligible clients.

The range of fully subsidised devices can be accessed through the program and should meet your needs in the majority of cases. If your provider believes that fully subsidised options are not suitable to meet your clinical hearing needs, they can contact DVA by emailing Health.Approval@dva.gov.au to discuss your circumstances.

If you have been fitted with a hearing device through the program and also require an Assistive Listening Devices (ALD), you will need to seek approval from DVA directly as the program will only fund a hearing device or ALD, not both.

DVA will consider funding partially subsidised hearing devices where exceptional clinical circumstances determine a need and where all available fully subsidised options have been explored. If you choose to purchase a partially subsidised hearing device without prior approval, you will need to pay the additional cost (i.e. the gap) for the hearing device. If you choose to have a maintenance agreement for your partially subsidised hearing device, you will need to pay the service provider the amount quoted for the maintenance agreement. If you choose not to have a maintenance agreement for your partially subsidised hearing device then you will have to pay for all batteries, servicing and repairs.

It is important to note that neither DVA nor the program will reimburse you for the additional cost of purchasing a partially subsidised hearing device, or for the maintenance, repair, servicing or replacement of a partially subsidised hearing device without prior approval.

Prior Approval requests should be directed to Health.Approvals@dva.gov.au. More detailed DVA specific information is available on the program website www.hearingservices.gov.au

Additional assistance for any out-of-pocket costs

If you have purchased a partially subsidised device, you may be eligible to receive financial assistance through Australian Government taxation rebates or your private health insurance. If you have private health insurance you should contact your health fund to discuss possible rebates. For further information about any taxation rebates which may apply to you, you can contact the Personal Tax Infoline on 132 861.

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Rehabilitation Plus – ‘Rehab Plus’

Rehab Plus is available to eligible clients who are being fitted for the first time through the program and who have selected a fully subsidised device. Rehab Plus is an opportunity for you to learn how to better manage your hearing loss, and learn communication tactics and strategies. For more information about Rehab Plus, talk to your service provider.

Your rights and responsibilities through the Hearing Services Program

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

The Client Rights and Responsibilities factsheet can be found on the program’s website, and will also be displayed in your service provider’s clinic.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to help us improve the services and quality of care you receive. In the first instance please discuss any concerns about your hearing services with your service provider. If you are unable to resolve the issue with them, please contact us.

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.hearingservices.gov.au

Email hearing@health.gov.au

Phone **1800 500 726** (free call) or National Relay Service (NRS) **1800 555 727**

How can the features in fully subsidised hearing aids help you?

Hearing loss (and the help hearing aids can provide) differs for everyone. If a hearing test shows you would benefit from a hearing aid you will be offered a fully subsidised hearing device, chosen from a large range of hearing devices available at no cost to you through the program.

Hearing aids each have differing combinations of features. As not every fully subsidised hearing aid will have every feature, thinking about what you would most like to improve through using a hearing aid will help you to choose the right device for you (for example, improving your listening when in a group or a meeting, or when on the telephone). You should talk with your service provider about what you would like to hear better and the features available in fully subsidised devices that can assist you.

The table below lists common situations where people might want to improve their ability to hear and the hearing aid features that can help in those situations. The dots (●) in this table are a general guide as to how these hearing aid features could help you in these situations, or could work to improve how other features in the device perform. For more information, talk to your service provider.

Common listening situations	Noise reduction	Directional microphone	Multiple listening programs	Environmental adaptation *	Feedback cancellation	Autophone	Telecoil (T-switch) **
One on one conversations	●	●		●	●		
Television, radio, multimedia	●	●	●	●	●		●
Using landline telephones					●	●	●
Small groups of people and meetings	●	●	●		●		
Theatre, movies, places of worship		●			●		●

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Listening over distance		•			•		
Listening comfort	•	•	•	•	•		
Convenience of use	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

* The hearing aid tries to identify the sounds around you (for example, if you are listening to speech in a quiet or noisy place, or to music) and changes how it processes these sounds to help you hear better, with less need to adjust the settings of the hearing aid yourself.

** The telecoil is a feature of many hearing aids which helps you hear a particular sound through the use of an accessory which you can purchase (for example, compatible telephones). Many public places have a hearing loop installed, which will help you hear better when your telecoil is enabled. Places you can use a telecoil include theatres, places of worship, banks, government offices, or anywhere you see the international hearing loop logo displayed.



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