



Specialist Hearing Services

The Department of Health (the Department) funds [Hearing Australia](#) to provide specialist hearing services through the Community Service Obligations (CSO) component of the Hearing Services Program (the program). Specialist hearing services are available for clients of the program who need additional assistance to manage their hearing loss and communication needs.

Hearing Australia is the sole provider of specialist services under the program. Services may include access to a broader range of fully subsidised hearing devices, communication training, ongoing services and support to assist clients with their hearing loss.

Conditions for eligibility

Program clients who meet at least one of the conditions below may be eligible for specialist services:

- A person with a three-frequency average hearing loss (3 FAHL) of 80dB or more in their better ear
- A person with hearing loss and communication impairment that:
 - prevents the person from communicating effectively in his or her daily environment; or
 - is caused or aggravated by significant physical, intellectual, mental, emotional or social disability.

Examples of communication impairment that prevents the person from communicating effectively in his or her daily environment:

- A person who uses a cochlear implant
- A person who is unable to wear an air conduction device and chooses to be fitted with an implantable bone conduction device
- A score of $\leq 50\%$ auditory alone on an open sentence speech test when optimally aided

Examples of communication impairment caused or aggravated by significant physical, intellectual, mental, emotional or social disability include:

- Cognitive impairment such as dementia, where the 3 FAHL cannot be established using standard audiometry, or where the client cannot negotiate their own goals or manage their hearing loss
- Visual impairment that significantly limits the ability to access visual cues
- Intellectual impairment that makes it difficult to complete hearing assessment or hearing aid fitting
- Mental health issues affecting the client's ability to manage their hearing loss

Record Keeping

As per Section 50 of the *Hearing Services Program (Voucher) Instrument 2019*, if clients are eligible to receive specialist services providers must notify the Department of Health. Using the Hearing Services Online Portal, providers can select the specialist client marker on the client record. Clients must be informed of the specialist services available to them through Hearing Australia and must be provided with the option to relocate. Alternatively, clients can choose to stay with their current provider. Providers must document the discussion of specialist services to eligible clients on the client record.

It is important to note that providers other than Hearing Australia do not receive funding for specialist hearing services from the program.

For more information, please contact the Department by emailing hearing@health.gov.au or call 1800 500 726 (or National Relay Service 1800 555 660).