

WHAT FUNDING SUPPORT AM I ELIGIBLE FOR?

FACT SHEET

So, you have taken a very important step on your hearing healthcare journey by having a diagnostic hearing assessment and discovered you have a hearing loss. What now?

When it comes to hearing healthcare, there are many funding options available. These depend on many factors, including: the cause of the hearing condition; the referral pathway; the healthcare professionals or clinics involved; and whether devices or other treatments are needed. As there are many sources of funding, it can sometimes be difficult to know which is the best option. If you need more advice, talk to your GP or audiologist. Ask lots of questions. Remember, if your provider doesn't offer a funding scheme you are eligible for, you can always go elsewhere.

Some hearing conditions require medical treatment, possibly including a referral from your GP to a specialist. If this is the case, your medical treatment and related diagnostic hearing tests may be covered by Medicare and/or private health insurance. If your hearing healthcare journey involves hearing aids or other assistive technologies, there are a number of funding pathways that you may be eligible for.

HEARING SERVICES PROGRAM

The largest public funding source is the Australian Government's Hearing Services Program (HSP): <https://hearingservices.gov.au/> The aim of the HSP is to help people with hearing loss to improve their quality of life. HSP also works to reduce the consequences of hearing loss by helping with access to high-quality hearing services and assistive devices. Through this program, people who

are eligible pension concession card holders can receive subsidized services. These services include counselling and the fitting of hearing device(s). Program services are delivered through two streams:

1. The Voucher stream delivers subsidised hearing services to holders of an Australian Government concession card.
2. The Community Service Obligations stream delivers subsidised hearing services to disadvantaged populations (for example, adults with specialist hearing needs; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50)

STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS

State and Territory governments are important providers of hearing healthcare in Australia. Examples of where services are provided include hospitals, health centres, community care and prisons. Referral to these healthcare services is often via your GP.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS (DVA)

Eligible DVA card holders are also able to access subsidized hearing services, including tinnitus assessment and rehabilitation. There are a few steps involved in obtaining hearing devices from the DVA:

ADDRESS

1 Hamilton Place
Mount Waverley
Vic 3149

HEARING LINE

1300 242 842

For hearing, social & emotional support, & general enquiries,
Monday to Friday,
9am – 5pm

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#MoreThanJustEars
#MoreThanJustDevices

“ ”

I moved to Australia from Ethiopia in 2018 and sought asylum here. I was granted a scholarship to study at university, and my university's audiologist put me in touch with Soundfair so that I could get a hearing aid from the hearing bank – Abrham

1. Make an appointment with an audiologist and discuss your need for hearing aids
2. During the appointment let your audiologist know that you are a DVA card holder. Ask the audiologist to seek approval from the DVA
3. Wait for the approval to come through before you purchase your hearing aids

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)

Funding is available through the NDIS to support people with a disability in Australia, including those with profound (severe) hearing loss. Accessing NDIS funding involves six steps:

1. Check your eligibility at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-access-checklist.html>. If you are eligible, contact the NDIA for an Access Request Form on 1800 800 110.
2. Obtain evidence of your hearing impairment (for example, a report from an audiologist).
3. Apply for access to the NDIS using the Access Request Form.
4. If your access request is successful, an NDIS planner will contact you to make an appointment to develop your NDIS plan.
5. Apply for access to the Office of Hearing Services (OHS) Program using the OHS Application for NDIS Participants.
6. Make an appointment with your audiologist once access to the OHS is granted and your plan is approved. Your audiologist will then fit your hearing aids/assistive listening devices.

PRIVATE OPTIONS

Some private health insurers cover audiology services and hearing aid devices under their extras products. Contact your private health insurance provider for more information. If private health insurance doesn't fully cover the cost of the hearing aids, then other private options may help. You may

look at accessing some of your superannuation to help cover the cost of your hearing aids, or setting up a payment plan with your hearing clinic. Some people are fully self-funded, meaning they pay for the entire cost of their hearing aids themselves, or, if they are eligible for funding through the HSP as outlined above, they may have the option of paying extra to obtain a more advanced hearing aid than the standard offering (this is referred to as a 'top-up' payment).

OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

People who are ineligible for the HSP and are unable to afford hearing care may be able to have a hearing aid device fitted at a reduced cost through a hearing aid bank. Hearing aid banks are available in most states and territories, see: <https://soundfair.org.au/what-funding-am-i-eligible-for/>

The Telstra Disability Equipment Program is available to people whose hearing affects their ability to use a standard telephone handset: <https://www.telstra.com.au/aboutus/community-environment/community-programs/disability/disability-equipment-program>

Job Access – an government organisation providing resources related to employment for people with disability, their employers and service providers – has the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF). This can help cover the cost of assistive and communications technology and Auslan interpreting. Additionally, Job Access can help cover hearing condition awareness training for your colleagues. For more information about the sorts of workplace changes that could help you if you have a hearing condition, see the website here: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/people-with-disability/funding-changes-workplace>

If you have sustained a hearing loss due to noise exposure at work you may be entitled to workers' compensation in the form a payment, or payment for the cost of hearing aids. Specific state legislation applies.

This factsheet is intended to be a guide of a general nature, having regard to general circumstances. The information presented should not be relied on as a substitute for medical advice, independent judgement or assessment by a healthcare professional, with consideration of the particular needs and individual circumstances. This factsheet reflects information available at the time of its preparation, but its currency should be determined having regard to other available information. Soundfair disclaims all liability to users of the information provided.

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Author: Natalie Fletcher

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