

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2017-2018 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome: National Disability Insurance Agency

Question No: NDIA SQ17-000106

Topic: Hearing

Hansard Page: Spoken

Senator Siewert, asked:

Senator SIEWERT: I have a limited amount of time, was asking about unilateral hearing loss. You also said: A program client who has a unilateral hearing loss that meets the Minimum Hearing Loss Threshold (greater than 23dB) and could benefit from a hearing aid will be offered a hearing aid.

Mr Bowen: That will only apply to those people approaching the scheme who would have qualified for Australian Hearing support—so children and younger people. For older people, it is a higher decibel range.

Senator SIEWERT: What is the adult—

Ms Rundle: I was looking for the question on notice—

Senator SIEWERT: Sorry, didn't I read it out? It is SQ17-000016.

Ms Rundle: I think we should confirm that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: You have already said 23 decibels is the proxy threshold. Is it going to be the final one for children? You can take that on notice. For an adult, what is the proxy level, and when will you have the full one?

Ms Rundle: We will.

Answer: Please note: The following information has not yet been published.

Proposed amendments regarding National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) access for hearing impairment for children and young Australians aged 0-25 years inclusive is as follows:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will be satisfied that a person meets the early intervention requirements without further assessment when the person:

- is aged between birth and 25 years of age; and
- has confirmed results from a specialist audiological assessment (including electrophysiological testing when required) consistent with auditory neuropathy or hearing loss \geq 25 decibels in either ear at 2 or more adjacent frequencies, which is likely to be permanent or long term; and
- the hearing loss of the person necessitates the use of personal amplification.

The effect of this change is that prospective participants who are aged 0-25 (inclusive) who meet the audiometric criteria will meet the early intervention requirements without further assessment. Children and young Australians currently receiving hearing aids and associated supports from Australian Hearing will be eligible to receive hearing aids and associated supports through the NDIS. Australian Hearing will remain the sole provider of paediatric and complex supports throughout transition.

Proposed amendments regarding National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) access for hearing impairment for adults aged from 26 to 65 years is as follows:

Generally, the NDIA will be satisfied that hearing impairments of ≥ 65 decibels in the better ear (pure tone average of 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz and 4000Hz) result in substantially reduced functional capacity to perform one or more activities. This audiometric criteria reflects the lower limit of what is likely to constitute a substantially reduced functional capacity to undertake relevant activities.

Hearing impairments < 65 dB decibels in the better ear (pure tone average of 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz and 4000Hz) in conjunction with other permanent impairments (for example vision or cognitive impairments), or where there is evidence of significantly poorer than expected speech detection and discrimination outcomes, may also be considered to result in substantially reduced functional capacity to undertake relevant activities.

The effect of this change is to signal the expectations for section 24 (1) (c) under the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (NDIS Act)*, that is, a severe, bilateral hearing impairment or greater, and facilitate the identification of participants transitioning from the Hearing Services Program. Prospective participants are required to address other aspects of NDIS access process as usual.

In addition, proposed amendments regarding National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) access for adults aged from 26 to 65 years with profound bilateral hearing impairment is as follows:

The following text has been added to list A of the NDIS Operational Guideline - Conditions which are likely to meet the disability requirements in section 24 of the *NDIS Act* - as point 7: “Permanent bilateral hearing loss ≥ 90 decibels in the better ear (pure tone average of 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz and 4000Hz)”. The effect of this is that prospective participants who are diagnosed with this condition (profound bilateral hearing impairment) will meet the disability requirements without further assessment.