

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Finance & Administration Portfolio**

**Department of Human Services**

Additional Estimates February 2005

**Question:** HS57

**Outcome 1, Output 1.1 – Effective delivery of Australian Government services to eligible customers**

**Topic:** Australian Hearing Services facilities and services

**Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice:** Written

**SENATOR McLUCAS** asked on 15 February 2005:

- (1) Is it correct that the Australian Hearing Services facilities in Sydney (at 175 Castlereagh Street) have lost their lease and that there is now no ability to offer services in the Sydney CBD?
- (2) Is it correct that Australian Hearing has now closed facilities that provide hearing tests for children under the age of 3 years in the Sydney CBD at Bankstown, Chatswood and Hurstville?
- (3) Please provide a list of AHS offices around Australia, noting those that provide services to children under 3 years?
- (4) Please provide a list of AHS offices around Australia which have closed in the last 3 years?
- (5) Please provide a list of AHS facilities for testing children under 3 which have closed in the last 3 years.

**Answer:**

(1) The lease for the premises at 175 Castlereagh Street Sydney was not renewed by Australian Hearing. The Centre has moved to temporary accommodation at 155 Castlereagh Street Sydney while the fitout of the permanent centre in York Street is being completed. Services are available at the temporary site for all clients except for children under 3 years. It was not possible to install the highly specialised facilities required for these clients in the temporary premises. Children under 3 years were offered the option of accessing services at other metropolitan areas. Some families have elected to defer their appointment until the new Centre is operating in the CBD. Services to children under 3 years will be available again when the Centre moves to new premises in April.

(2) Sydney CBD: It was not possible to provide services to children under 3 years in the temporary accommodation. This service will be available again in April when the Centre moves to new premises in the CBD.

Bankstown: The Bankstown centre suffered severe damage when a hot water system burst. Services for adult clients were moved to more accessible accommodation at Bankstown Square. It was decided to consolidate specialist services for children and adults with complex needs to other local Hearing Centres at Liverpool and Hurstville.

Chatswood: A specialist paediatric centre operates from 126 Greville Street at Chatswood and provides services to children from birth to 21 years.

Hurstville: The Centre recently relocated to 39 Park Road at Hurstville. Services are provided to all eligible clients including children under 3 years of age.

(3) The list of Australian Hearing centres is attached. Information on centres with facilities for testing young children is included. Australian Hearing has two business streams, directed to voucher services and Community Service Obligation (CSO) clients. Australian Hearing establishes some Hearing Centres specifically for voucher clients. Similarly some Hearing Centres focus on the specialised needs of CSO clients.

(4) The permanent Centre at Bankstown closed in October 2003. Services to voucher clients are provided from premises in Bankstown Square. Specialist services to Community Services Obligation clients were consolidated to local Centres at Liverpool and Hurstville.

(5) In the last 3 years service provision to children under 3 years was withdrawn from Bankstown, Morley and Fremantle centres. Bankstown clients can access services at Liverpool or Hurstville centres. Clients from Morley or Fremantle are referred to the Perth CBD centre for services. This was done on the basis of the need to have specialist services equipment and resources focussed at specialist centres to ensure high quality client care.