



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Ms Naomi Bleaser
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2066

Dear Ms Bleaser

**Request for Amendment to Evidence Provided at
Inquiry into Hearing Health Hearing on 19 March 2010**

I am writing to correct a statement that I made at the hearing of the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Hearing Health on 19 March 2010.

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked the following question:

“Could you explain to me what facts and circumstances gave rise to the need to cut \$34 million out of the budget for hearing services with the introduction of the hearing threshold announced in the 2009-10 Budget? Is this your way of dealing with the problem? You introduce a threshold so that fewer people are going to be able to access hearing services.”

My response was as follows:

“The intention of the measure was to direct hearing services and clinical devices to people who have significant hearing loss. The threshold measure was where people have normal hearing. That is so the devices, which are quite expensive to provide, are not directed to those people. We can redirect them to those who really need a hearing device. It is really trying to target the government subsidy for hearing aids to people who have the greatest need for them. We do have exceptions criteria that we have recently been working on with industry. Some people might be 23 decibels over three frequencies but they have a loss at a high frequency level and we have worked with industry to identify a benchmark for them so that they are not excluded from having an aid.”

It has been brought to my notice that this response requires clarification to correct some minor miscommunications. The response should now be amended as follows (changes are underlined):

“The intention of the measure was to direct hearing services and clinical devices to people who have significant hearing loss. The threshold measure was where people who have normal hearing are not subsidised. That is so the devices, which are quite expensive to provide, are not directed to those people. We can redirect them to those who really need a hearing device. It is really trying to target the government subsidy for hearing aids to people who have the greatest need for them. We do have exceptions criteria that we have recently

been working on with industry. Some people might be at the threshold of 23 decibels over three frequencies, but they have a loss at a high frequency level and we have worked with industry to identify a benchmark for them so that they are not excluded from having an aid.”

Senator Fierravanti-Wells stated:

“There were people who clearly before would have accessed hearing services but now. Because of the change to the threshold, are not going to.”

My response was as follows:

“Because they had an entitlement which was linked to their need”

It has been brought to my attention that this statement requires clarification. The response should be amended as follows (changes are underlined):

“Because they had an entitlement which was not linked to their clinical need.”

Yours sincerely

Teressa Ward
National Manager
Office of Hearing Services
8 April 2010