

Community Affairs Reference Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
INQUIRY INTO HEARING HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA
Human Services Portfolio
19 March 2010

Agency: Australian Hearing

Topic: Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia

Senator: Senator Siewert (Chair)

Question reference number: Question 4

Question: Could Australian Hearing provide information on the recent change in policy regarding provision of hearing services to prisoners?

Answer: Previous advice from the Department of Health and Ageing's Office of Hearing Services indicated that Australian Hearing should not provide services to people in prison even if those people met the eligibility requirements for the Australian Government Hearing Services Program.

On 9 March 2010 the Office of Hearing Services updated this advice and has indicated that people who meet the eligibility requirements under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program retain their entitlement to services while in prison, in custody on remand, or in juvenile justice centres provided that person's eligibility is current while in custody.

Where the request for services is initiated by the client and the client is still eligible the service is covered by the Program. Where the service is initiated by the custodial authority or provided by a service provider working for or on behalf of that authority, the service is not covered by the Program and all costs remain the responsibility of the State or Territory Government.

Eligibility to receive hearing services at the time of being in custody will vary according to individual circumstances. A summary of the criteria pertaining to eligibility for some individual circumstances is listed in Attachment A.

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ELIGIBILITY FOR HEARING SERVICES FOR PRISONERS

PENSIONER CONCESSION CARD HOLDERS

Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holders who are in prison but who have not yet been convicted (ie are on remand) do not lose their card entitlements and therefore their eligibility is not affected. Note also that minor maintenance arrangements are not affected by whether a person is imprisoned or not.

VOUCHER HOLDERS

If the client has a valid voucher they are entitled to continue to receive voucher services while in prison until such time as their voucher expires. If a client enters into a maintenance agreement under a valid voucher, then the maintenance agreement should be honoured until it expires even if the voucher itself has expired.

It is the Office of Hearing Services' (OHS) responsibility to confirm a client's eligibility to receive a voucher should they apply for a voucher while in prison. Should OHS issue a voucher to a client in prison the above situation applies.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OBLIGATION (CSO) CLIENTS

It is Australian Hearing's responsibility to ensure that a CSO client is eligible for services before these services are provided. The eligibility of the various CSO groups is set out below.

Young adults under 21 years of age

These clients are eligible to receive hearing services while in prison, remand or in a juvenile justice centre provided they are Australian citizens or permanent residents.

Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders over 50 years of age

These clients are eligible to receive services while in prison.

Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders who are CDEP participants

CDEP participants lose entitlement to hearing services as soon as they are imprisoned unless the following criteria applies.

Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders who were CDEP participants between 1 December 2005 and 30 June 2009 and who are no longer a participant (valid until 30 June 2012)

These clients are eligible to receive hearing services while in prison.

Complex clients or clients in remote locations who are receiving services under a voucher

Refer to voucher clients above.

Complex clients or clients in remote locations who are receiving services under the CSO program

Clients who lose eligibility while in prison:

- PCC holders
- Dependant children
- Centrelink sickness allowance recipients

Clients who do not lose eligibility while in prison:

- DVA Gold Card holders and DVA White Card holders
- The partner of an eligible person
- Members of the Australian Defence Force

