

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Inquiry into Hearing Health
19 March 2010

Question no: 13

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: CHILD HEARING SCREENINGS

Written Question on Notice

The Committee asked:

Can the Department provide a breakdown of the numbers of child hearing screenings provided in Australia, by state / territory, and by age group from 0 to 10 years of age, for each of the past five years?

Answer:

The Department does not collect data to provide a breakdown of the numbers of child hearing screenings provided in Australia. These services are delivered by state and territory governments.

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Inquiry into Hearing Health
19 March 2010

Question no: 14

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: UNIVERSAL NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING DATABASE

Written Question on Notice

The Committee asked:

A number of witnesses remarked on the importance of a national database to track universal newborn hearing screening outcomes. The argument is such a tool would facilitate follow-up and long term tracking, improve data quality and epidemiology (see for example Submission 68, Australasian Newborn Hearing Screening Committee). Does the department have any plans to develop such a database to support universal newborn screening?

Answer:

The Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) has asked its Neonatal Hearing Screening Working Group to develop a screening pathway to support improved population coverage for neonatal hearing screening; minimum national standards for screening and post screening services; a national quality and reporting framework and national approach to data collection and management.

This work is currently being undertaken. It is to be considered by AHMAC later this year.

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Inquiry into Hearing Health
19 March 2010

Question no: 15

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: ONGOING HEARING SCREENING FOR CHILDREN

Written Question on Notice

The Committee asked:

The Committee has heard evidence from a number of experts that whilst universal newborn hearing screen is a very important initiative, it is equally important that all children are also screened again at around 18 months of age, and again in their first year of school. Would the department like to respond to this point?

Answer:

The neonatal hearing screening program will provide all Australian newborns with assessment for permanent hearing loss as early as possible. It is anticipated that the program will be implemented by states and territories across Australia from 1 January 2011.

Ongoing screening for acquired hearing loss in early childhood is the responsibility of state and territory health departments.

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Inquiry into Hearing Health
19 March 2010

Question no: 16

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR AUDIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS

Written Question on Notice

The Committee asked:

Is the department aware of any agreed national standards covering audiological assessments in Australia (e.g. what tests should be undertaken and to what standard)? If not, is the department aware of any plans to develop and implement such a standard? If so, are audiologists under any obligation to comply with those standards?

Answer:

The Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the Program) standards are set through the Hearing Rehabilitation Outcomes (established in regulations) a standard battery of tests for assessment for contracted service providers who may also determine any additional tests required. For client safety and quality purposes there are set indicators for referral to medical practitioners for further evaluation. The Program does not set a clinical standard for assessment as these are determined by the professional bodies.

The Program registers hearing practitioners who have the required academic qualifications and have been certified as meeting professional competencies through membership of an Approved Professional Body.

The competencies for audiologists are determined by relevant educational institutions and the professional bodies of the hearing industry.

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Inquiry into Hearing Health
19 March 2010

Question no: 18

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: FUNDING OF SOUND FIELD SYSTEMS FOR CLASSROOMS

Written Question on Notice

The Committee asked:

Many witnesses, including Australian Hearing, have testified to the effectiveness of sound field systems and acoustic treatments in classrooms where there are a significant number of hearing impaired children. Are there any Australian Government programs under which schools or education systems can access funding support to install sound field systems and acoustic treatments in classrooms? Is the department aware of any state or territory government programs along these lines?

Answer:

The Department is unaware of any funding arrangements available for sound field systems and acoustic treatments in classrooms. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations may be able to provide further information on any funding arrangements available to schools to install sound field systems and acoustic treatments in classrooms.

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Inquiry into Hearing Health
19 March 2010

Question no: 20

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: ACCESS FOR PRISONERS TO HEARING SERVICES

Written Question on Notice

The Committee asked:

The Committee has heard evidence that Australian Hearing is not permitted to provide hearing services for people serving a custodial sentence. Can the department confirm whether this is the case? If so, can the department explain what steps would be required to review this in future?

Answer:

A person who has already had a hearing problem diagnosed, and is already in receipt of Commonwealth funded hearing services at the time they become incarcerated, may continue to receive Commonwealth funded hearing services during the period of their incarceration, provided that the prisoner initiates provision of these services.

Any medical attention leading to the diagnosis of a hearing problem, or provision of hearing services, which is initiated by a custodial authority, or carried out on behalf of a custodial authority, must be funded by the relevant state or territory government.