

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

Question: E12-094

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: Hearing Aid Vouchers

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Siewert

Question: Has the voucher system set up incentives for service providers to pursue people who technically, but not psychologically, qualify for a government funded hearing aid? If yes, what are you doing to address the problem?

Answer:

The Hearing Services Program (the Program) voucher system has not set up incentives to service providers to pursue people who may be technically eligible but do not wish to have a hearing aid.

There are a number of client protections built into the voucher system. From the beginning, a person entering the Program is an active participant in the decision making process. The person makes a decision to seek help about their hearing loss and then obtain and fill in a voucher application form. This includes visiting a medical practitioner to seek clearance prior to submitting the form to the Office of Hearing Services (the Office) for eligibility checking. The client then decides on a contracted service provider from which to access voucher services. At the initial hearing assessment, all clients that fall below the minimal hearing loss threshold (falling within the normal hearing range) are offered other rehabilitative services rather than a hearing aid, unless exceptions under regulation are met. The Office also has a client complaints mechanism in place.