

POSITION STATEMENT

TITLE: MEDICARE BENEFITS - AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

ISSUE:

The ability to acquire available audiology services which assist the Deaf and hearing impaired to hear must be available to all persons who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment, not just those who have sufficient financial resources and those eligible for the government's hearing services program. While the government's hearing services program provides free hearing tests and associated services for pensioners and others entitled to use it, there is no fee relief available to those who are not eligible for the government's program.

That means, for low-income earners, the government should provide assistance via its Medicare or hearing services programs.

It is a very curious anomaly that Australians can have their sight tested and receive benefits from Medicare for that testing, but cannot do the same in respect of a hearing test (unless specifically referred by a general practitioner). There is not considered to be any valid reason why Medicare refunds should not be available for the testing of hearing and associated consultations by audiologists/audiometrists, without a referral from a general practitioner.

When it is considered that the hearing impaired population is growing rapidly in tandem with the ageing of Australia's population, a government review and redress of this unequal treatment of essentially similar services, is considered to be urgently needed.

POSITION:

That Medicare benefits be paid for all hearing health consultations.

COSTS OF POSITION:

Deafness Forum has not undertaken any costing.

RESEARCH BASIS:

Deafness Forum has not undertaken any specific research.

APPROVED: AGM - 1999.

REVIEWED: Board - March and July 2000. 2nd NDSS - October 2001. Board - March 2002, April 2003, October 2004. CEO - November 2004.



DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW: No further review currently scheduled.