



**Australian Government**  

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**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

## **Factsheet HSV22 – Hearing Services**

### **Purpose**

This Factsheet provides information on hearing services available to the veteran community to meet their clinical hearing needs.

### **What is the Australian Government Hearing Services Program?**

The Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the program) provides eligible people with access to a range of hearing services, including hearing assessments, management, advice and support, and the fitting of a hearing device where needed. The program is managed by the Office of Hearing Services (OHS) in the Department of Health.

### **Am I eligible?**

As a DVA client, you are eligible to receive hearing services under the program if you are:

- the holder of a Gold Repatriation Health Card for all conditions
- the holder of a White Repatriation Health Card for conditions that include hearing loss;
- the holder of a DVA Pensioner Concession Card; or
- a dependent or spouse of one of the above categories.

### **What is clinical need?**

Unfortunately hearing loss is a loss. Unlike eyesight, which can often be simply corrected by glasses, hearing loss can be 'assisted' by rehabilitation and/or a device; however the damage to your hearing will remain. It is not realistic to expect any hearing device to restore your hearing to its pre-damaged condition.

Any hearing devices funded under DVA arrangements will meet your hearing needs as far as it is reasonable to do. This is known as your clinical need. The device will not necessarily include all possible features. Some hearing aid features found in very expensive devices maybe helpful but are considered extra to those to meet your needs and are not funded by the Government.

### **What are some of the key points of the program?**

Some of the key points of the program include:

- If you need a hearing device you will be offered a free, high quality hearing device appropriate to your hearing needs.
- The program also allows for 'top-up' hearing devices which have additional features which may be helpful but are considered extra to those necessary to meet your hearing needs. Your hearing services provider may offer you the option of purchasing a top-up hearing device. For further information refer to 'top-up' Hearing Devices below.

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- If you hold a Gold or White (hearing specific) DVA card and have chosen a free device, you do not have to pay the annual maintenance agreement fee.
- If you have been informed that the technology or quality of free hearing devices will not be appropriate for your individual circumstances please contact OHS on 1800 500 726.

### How do I access OHS hearing services?

If you meet the eligibility criteria you can apply by clicking on the 'Apply Now' button on the [OHS website](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au) at [www.hearingservices.gov.au](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au)

In most cases your online application will take a few minutes to complete and you will be told if you are eligible once you have submitted your application. If you are eligible, you will be sent a welcome pack to the program.

If you are unable to apply online you can apply by:

- visiting a hearing service provider who can help you apply for the program; or
- email the [OHS inbox](mailto:hearing@health.gov.au) at [hearing@health.gov.au](mailto:hearing@health.gov.au) or OHS call 1800 500 726 for assistance.

Before visiting a hearing services provider you will need to obtain a medical certificate from your Doctor. Your Doctor will need to confirm that there are no medical reasons to prevent you wearing a hearing device, if this is needed.

### How do I find a hearing services provider?

You can visit the online Local Provider Directory on the OHS website and search for a provider at a location of your choice. Visit the [OHS website](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au) at [www.hearingservices.gov.au](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au) and click on the 'Find a hearing service provider' button. Services are provided by over 200 hearing services providers at over 2,000 sites across Australia.

### Are there free hearing devices?

There is an extensive range of high quality hearing devices with many features appropriate for your hearing needs. This wide range of high quality digital devices includes both in-the-ear and behind-the-ear hearing devices.

If your hearing services practitioner determines you have a hearing loss requiring a hearing device they will provide you with a free hearing device, as well as any support required to operate the hearing device.

You may be presented with different hearing device options but you must be offered a clinically suitable free device. You may be offered a top-up hearing device.

### What are top-up hearing devices?

The program also allows for top-up hearing devices which have additional features which may be helpful but are considered extra to those necessary to meet your hearing needs. Your hearing services provider may offer you the option of purchasing a top-up hearing device.

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Top-up hearing devices, due to their additional features, are only partially subsidised by the program and if you choose top-up hearing devices, you will have to pay the additional cost. This additional cost could be substantial and will vary depending on the hearing devices you have chosen. DVA or OHS will not reimburse you the cost of this device.

If you choose a 'top-up' hearing device there may be additional ongoing maintenance costs (see maintenance and batteries below). You should discuss these additional costs with your hearing services provider. DVA or OHS will not reimburse you the extra cost of the maintenance fee for a top-up device.

If you are presented with a top-up hearing device that offers additional features you are under no obligation to your hearing services professional to accept it. If you choose a top-up device you may wish to obtain quotes from different providers.

### **Is there a trial period?**

You may be offered a trial period for top-up devices only. This ranges from two weeks to two months and should be discussed with your hearing services provider. If at the end of the trial period you choose not to proceed with the purchase of the top-up device there may be small service fee charged.

If you have chosen a free device and are unhappy in any way with the performance or fitting of the hearing device you have been provided with, please notify your hearing services provider immediately. Your hearing services provider will ensure the hearing device is appropriately fitted and check it is working properly.

### **Will I need to pay for future maintenance and batteries?**

Maintaining your hearing device and buying batteries can be costly. Maintenance Agreements are an optional agreement between you and your hearing practitioner where, for an annual fee, your hearing practitioner will supply batteries and service and repair your hearing device for 12 months under the Program.

If you hold a Gold or White (hearing specific) DVA card and have chosen a free device, you do not have to pay the annual maintenance agreement fee. These charges are fully subsidised by DVA. This exemption does not apply to top-up devices. If you choose a top-up device, you may be expected to contribute to the cost of your annual maintenance agreement. You should discuss these costs with your hearing practitioner.

DVA does not pay the annual maintenance fee for hearing devices provided to:

- DVA Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holders,
- spouses
- dependents

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## What is the DVA Rehabilitation Appliance Program (RAP)?

DVA card holders can access Alternative Listening Devices (ALD's) via the DVA Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP). An ALD is one which is designed to help the user hear better in a specific situation (e.g. a headset for the television, or a personal amplifier for people who cannot manage hearing aids or do not wish to wear them). They may be used in conjunction with hearing devices or as an alternative to them

To access ALD's under RAP, your hearing services practitioner can contact the RAP section on 1300 550 457 (Metro) or 1800 550 457 (regional).

## What is the DVA Tinnitus Program?

Tinnitus is a noise noticeable in the head or ears in absence of an external source. Many people notice tinnitus but for some it can be annoying and for a few it can be very disturbing.

Most current independent tinnitus research indicates wearing hearing aids can help manage tinnitus. The effectiveness of well fitted digital hearing aids is on par with hearing aids said to be designed especially for tinnitus. For DVA card holders with mild tinnitus and hearing loss it is recommended they are fitted with free-to-client hearing aids to manage their tinnitus and hearing loss.

For disturbing tinnitus or tinnitus that remains troublesome post hearing aid fitting the hearing services provider should write to the veteran's GP suggesting referral to an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist. After a complete investigation the ENT can present recommendations to DVA regarding a program of tinnitus therapy. Such programs involve a good deal of counselling and commitment to working with a therapist over several appointments.

## What are some other initiatives?

If you are not eligible for these programs you may be able to obtain help through your State or Territory governments or through hearing aid banks. Further information about services outside the above programs is available on the [OHS website](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au) at [www.hearingservices.gov.au](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au)

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this Factsheet is general in nature and does not take into account individual circumstances. You should not make important decisions, such as those that affect your financial or lifestyle position on the basis of information contained in this Factsheet. Where you are required to lodge a written claim for a benefit, you must take full responsibility for your decisions prior to the written claim being determined. You should seek confirmation in writing of any oral advice you receive from DVA.

## Related Factsheets

- [HSV60 Repatriation Health Card – For All Conditions \(Gold\)](#)
- [HSV61 Repatriation Health Card – For Specific Conditions \(White\)](#)

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## More Information

### DVA General Enquiries

Metro Phone: 133 254 \*

Regional Phone: 1800 555 254 \*

[Email](mailto:GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au): GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au

[DVA Website](http://www.dva.gov.au): www.dva.gov.au

[Factsheet Website](http://factsheets.dva.gov.au): factsheets.dva.gov.au

\* Calls from mobile phones and pay phones may incur additional charges.

### Office of Hearing Services (OHS)

*(Contact OHS for more information about hearing aids)*

General Enquiries: 1800 500 726

Telephone typewriter (TTY) users:  
1800 500 496

[OHS Email](mailto:hearing@health.gov.au): hearing@health.gov.au

[OHS Website](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au): www.hearingservices.gov.au

### Using the National Relay Service (NRS) to contact DVA General Enquiries

*(If you have a hearing or speech impairment, please contact DVA through the NRS using the below numbers)*

Metro TTY users phone: 133 677, then ask for 133 254

Metro Speak and Listen users phone: 1300 555 727, then ask for 133 254

Metro Internet relay users: connect to the NRS, then ask for 133 254

Regional TTY users phone: 1800 555 677, then ask for 1800 555 254

Regional Speak and Listen users phone: 1800 555 727, then ask for 1800 555 254

Regional Internet relay users: connect to the NRS, then ask for 1800 555 254

[NRS Helpdesk Email](mailto:helpdesk@relayservice.com.au): helpdesk@relayservice.com.au

[NRS Website](http://relayservice.gov.au): relayservice.gov.au