



Australian Government

Department of Health

Notes from the Office of

Hearing Services

Hearing Services Online (HSO) Phase 3

The Office continues development of new functionality as part of the Hearing Services Online Portal.

A Devices Module is currently being used by the Office to register, edit and withdraw hearing devices from the *Device Schedule*. It is anticipated that this functionality will be extended to manufacturers and service providers in the near future.

Device Manufacturers – while current device procedures for manufacturers remain unchanged, the system now automatically generates e-correspondence to confirm device registration. The next stage is to include a new portal *user role* providing manufacturers with online submission capability for device management.

Device Schedules – Device schedules are now available online in real time.

Regulator Performance Framework

As part of the Government's commitment to reduce regulation, in 2014 the Australian Government developed the [Regulator Performance Framework](#) (the Framework).

The Office is responsible for regulating and contracting service, and on this basis, is considered to be a regulator and is subject to the Framework. The Framework consists of six key performance measures (KPIs) against which regulators must assess their performance and engagement with stakeholders. The Framework has applied since 1 July 2015 and the first assessment period is 2015-16.

With input from the [Service Provider Consultative Group](#) (SPCG), representing service providers under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (program), and the Hearing Care Industry Association (HCIA), the Office recently finalised a Framework Stakeholder Feedback Tool (the Tool). In the second half of 2016, using the Tool, the SPCG and HCIA will provide the Office with feedback on its regulatory performance against the Framework, as well as advice on where its performance could be improved. This feedback will help inform a report to Government, to be prepared by the Office, prior to 30 December 2016.

Further information about the Framework is available on the Office [website](#).

Direct Marketing Campaigns

Following a number of recent complaints and queries about direct marketing campaigns by some service providers, the Office has circulated Contracted Service Provider Notice 2015/27

[Direct Marketing Campaigns](#), to clarify the current position.

Service providers are required to:

- Comply with *The Privacy Act 1988** in particular the *Australian Privacy Principles* – Principle 7.
- Principle 7 is specifically about direct marketing and prohibits the use of personal information unless certain requirements are met, including that at the time of collection the client has an understanding of the expected use and disclosure of that information, and that there is a simple way for individuals to opt out of further contact
- Service providers must only contact clients and former clients who have agreed to receive marketing information
- Remind transferring clients of their right to opt out of the marketing activities from a previous service provider

- Comply with the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* and, in particular with the Australian Consumer Law (ACL), which is a schedule to the *Act*. For further information regarding ACL visit the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) website or telephone the ACCC small business help line on 1300 302 021.

*Please note that matters regarding the *Privacy Act 1988* fall outside the remit of the Office. Any queries, clarifications or complaints that you or your clients may have should be directed to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner at enquiries@oaic.gov.au.

Invitation to comment on the 2015-16 Office of Hearing Services Stakeholder Engagement Plan

This document has been developed to provide transparency in relation to the stakeholder engagement activities that will be undertaken throughout 2015-16, and the commitment of the Office to involving stakeholders in the planning, designing, undertaking and evaluation of these activities. For further information on the 2015-16 Stakeholder Engagement Plan please go to, [Open Consultations](#).

Stakeholders are invited to provide feedback to the Office by email to hearing@health.gov.au - please include the words 'Stakeholder Engagement Plan' in the subject line - or you may post it to the National Manager, Office of Hearing Services, MDP 113, GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601. Comments are welcome until June 2016.

Advice will be considered as it is received. This advice will also contribute to the evaluation of the 2015-2016 approach of the Office to stakeholder engagement and inform a longer-term approach to stakeholder engagement that will assist the Office to effectively deliver on its key responsibilities.

Publication of the Hearing Services Program – NDIS Transition Plan

The Office has been working for some time on planning for the transition of hearing services to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in order to support a smooth transition of eligible clients from the program by mid-2019. Partners and stakeholders have had the opportunity to provide early input to the transition design process to ensure that elements of the current system that work well for stakeholders are identified and retained. The transition of eligible clients is a complex process, and is based on a partnership approach with multiple Commonwealth agencies and sector input.

The *Hearing Services Program NDIS Transition Plan (the plan)* incorporates feedback from cross-agency consultation and Transition Planning Workshops held in 2015. The plan consists of 11 work-packages that will need to be addressed, including changes to the legislative framework that supports the program. The transition plan is available on the Office website at www.hearingservices.gov.au

It is expected that the transition plan will be further refined with opportunities for stakeholder consultation on the respective work packages to be confirmed as work packages are progressed.

Potential Service Delivery Framework (the Framework)

The recently established Hearing Care Expert Reference Group (HCERG) met in Sydney in November 2015 to discuss and provide feedback on the various components of the proposed Framework before release for broader consultation. The HCERG provides a strong sounding board for the proposed Framework as its membership comprises a broad representation of the industry including, the Practitioner Professional Bodies (PPB), the Department of Veterans' Affairs, NDIA, the HCIA, higher education organisations, and consumer advocacy groups.

The proposed Framework:

- Comprises a number of linked components, ranging from high level principles for business/practices to National Practice Standards
- Could be implemented on a self-regulatory basis
- Is expected to provide the safeguards necessary to support the introduction of greater contestability for delivery of services under the NDIS

- Requires further ground work and consultation by the HCERG to address implementation, monitoring, compliance and funding issues.

It is expected the Framework will be subject to broad consultation later in the first half of 2016. Practitioners are encouraged to put forward their views through their representative on the HCERG

Free Promotional Postcards

Free postcards encouraging people to check their eligibility and access to the program are still available from the Office. There are no limits on the number that can be ordered, and practitioners and service providers who have already received postcards are welcome to order again. For further information refer to [CSPN 2015/01](#).

Keeping up to date with information from the Office

Remember that you can keep up to date with Office activities through the [What's New](#) page on our website or subscribe to our [Rich Site Summary \(RSS\)](#) feed (refer to [CSPN 2014/22](#)), which will advise you when our website has been updated.