



## **Australian Government**

### **Department of Health**

#### **Notes from the Office**

With 2015 fast drawing to a close, the Office of Hearing Services (the Office) would like to advise practitioners of the following:

#### **Button Batteries**

The Office is asking for the help of practitioners and service providers to warn clients of the dangers posed to young children from swallowing the button batteries used in hearing aids and other products. These coin-sized batteries can get stuck in a child's throat and cause severe burns or death in a very short time. A safety campaign called [Battery Controlled](#) has been launched to inform the public of this danger. The Product Safety Australia website contains a [safety fact card](#) and [poster](#) which can be ordered at no cost to promote battery safety awareness. You are encouraged to use these resources. For further information refer [CSPN 2015/21](#).

#### **Hearing Services Online processing of manual claims**

Following the August 2015 release of manual claims processing on the Hearing Services Program's (the program) Hearing Services Online (HSO) portal, 78% of manual claims have been submitted via the portal. Information on manual claiming is available on the [Submitting a Manual Claim for Payment](#) page on the website, as well as [CSPN 2015/13](#) and [CSPN 2015/16](#).

Concurrently, the Office is receiving an increased number of rejected e-claims via the portal. These are often due to simple errors: incorrect claim amounts, incorrect device codes or incorrect dates. Rejected e-claims should be checked for accuracy before an attempt is made to resubmit through the e-claim system. If you are unsure why a claim has rejected, please email [hearing@health.gov.au](mailto:hearing@health.gov.au) for advice, and Office staff will attempt to help you resubmit your e-claim successfully.

#### **Changes to the Wishes and Needs Tool (WANT)**

A recent review of the WANT questions identified the need to clarify wording on the questionnaire, and the term '*hearing aids*' has been changed to '*hearing device/s*' to ensure clients understand that this includes assistive hearing devices such as Alternative Listening Devices (ALDs).

Please make sure that the [WANT questionnaire](#) has been updated for use at all your sites.

#### **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Transition**

The program will transition in part to the NDIS by 2019-20. A series of NDIS Transition Information sessions were held around Australia in June 2015 in partnership with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Finance. As a follow up to the information sessions, more focussed NDIS Transition Planning workshops were held by the Office in August and September 2015. These workshops were attended by a broad mix of stakeholders who raised concerns about how changes to the existing arrangements will affect client services, particularly for infants and young children. Further workshops are being considered and details will be made available on the Office website at [www.hearingservices.gov.au](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au).

A [summary](#) of the issues raised at the information sessions and the workshops presentation is also available on the Office website.

The Office is developing a Transition Plan that details activities and work that will be undertaken to address the key concerns raised by stakeholders. The NDIA will be a key partner in this Transition Plan. A Communications Strategy will also be developed to support the Transition Plan. When available, these documents will be placed on the Office website, along with further updates and opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the activities needed to support the transition.

### **Potential Service Delivery Framework**

In March 2015, the Office engaged Australian Healthcare Associates to develop high level principles to underpin a possible Service Delivery Framework for the voucher component of the program, which would aim to simplify current regulatory arrangements for service providers and provide an appropriate, quality assurance structure for the future. A discussion paper, seeking comment, was published on the Office website in June 2015.

Thirteen responses were received from Practitioner Professional Bodies, community and consumer advocacy organisations, and organisations representing the needs of hearing impaired children. A summary of the [consultation feedback](#) is available on the website.

Stakeholders will be consulted later in 2015 on how these proposed principles would apply at the operational level of the service provider (ie the organisation) and examples of how a service provider could demonstrate that the expected client outcomes have been met.

In parallel to this work, the Office is also supporting the sector to develop draft National Practice Standards for Hearing Care, which will describe the way in which practitioners in the hearing care workforce (ie audiologists and audiometrists) are expected to work to maximise client outcomes. A Hearing Health Expert Reference Group has been established for this purpose and includes broad stakeholder representation, including the Practitioner Professional Bodies.

### **Free Promotional Postcards**

Free postcards promoting 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 [CSPN 2015/01](#).

### **Hearing Awareness Week**

Hearing Awareness Week 2015, held 23-29 August, was sponsored by the Office and organised by the Deafness Forum of Australia. A Hearing Awareness Week Expo was held in Canberra, at which over 30 organisations exhibited, including the Office. Other promotional events were held throughout Australia.

### **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 [CSPN 2014/22](#)), which will advise you when our website has been updated.

### **Feedback & Suggestions**

The Office welcomes feedback and suggestions. Email [hearing@health.gov.au](mailto:hearing@health.gov.au).