



DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

VETERAN HEARING SERVICES

www.dfw.org.au/policy/hearing

Policy Objectives

DVA should assume full and direct administration of the provision of hearing services to gold card and white card (accepted hearing condition) holders, including development and application of guidelines.

Once diagnosis and severity of loss have been accepted, guidelines should apply the principles of rehabilitation to satisfy the veteran's wellbeing needs.

Background

Most cases involving hearing loss among members of the ADF, and veterans are of sensorineural hearing loss and/or tinnitus, both of which are incurable and can be treated only by prosthetic devices.

Veterans with hearing loss as a DVA accepted condition (or under DVA Gold Card provisions) are eligible to receive free or subsidised hearing aids through the Department of Health Hearing Services Program (HSP).

Guidelines for the HSP are developed by the Department of Health and are based on clinical need, such as the minimum hearing loss threshold.

In many cases, hearing aids provided for veterans through the HSP are inappropriate for the locations or settings the veteran needs to use them in. In some cases, this leads to the veteran paying full cost for hearing aids that are appropriate, or abandoning hearing aids altogether.

The Government recognises the need to shift veteran support focus from illness to wellbeing. Indeed, veteran rehabilitation and compensation legislation already provide that support is dependent on both the degree of impairment and the impact on the veteran's lifestyle.

DVA relying on the HSP to provide hearing aids and devices to veterans means that it is relying on the HSP guidelines.

HSP guidelines which focus on clinical need only are inconsistent with DVA's obligations to veterans.

How Should it be Fixed?

Where a veteran is entitled to hearing aids, need must be determined using two criteria:

1. The degree of hearing impairment.
2. The effect on a veteran's lifestyle.

While an audiologist must be employed to diagnose and assess the degree of hearing impairment, it is DVA's responsibility, in consultation with the individual veteran, to carry out an assessment of lifestyle needs.

Guidelines for hearing loss and lifestyle factors developed by DVA must be consistent with the principles of rehabilitation and the Unique Nature of Military Service.