Hearing Australia
Corporate Plan
2019 – 2023

Providing world leading research and hearing services for the wellbeing of all Australians
Foreword

Over the past 70 years Hearing Australia has developed a rich history of helping Australians with hearing loss and is now recognised as a world leader in the delivery of research and hearing services.

This Corporate Plan (the Plan) outlines how we will build on this legacy and provide even better services to our clients, better value to government and improve our organisational performance.

The Plan details the strategic priorities and initiatives we will pursue over the next four years to meet these objectives and ensure we are an efficient, ethical and sustainable organisation.

This includes increasing our focus on the prevention of hearing loss and improving the services we provide to over 250,000 clients through our 166 hearing centres and over 470 visiting sites across Australia, through our home services and screening events, and via our call centre and digital channels.

Over the next 12 months we will improve accessibility to our services where they are needed most, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to enhance the lives of those affected by hearing loss and, where possible, to prevent it arising in the first place. We will do so with the greatest level of professional care and in the most effective and cost efficient ways.

We will continue to improve the delivery of the Community Services Obligation (CSO) program funded by the Commonwealth. This includes supporting children and young adults, adults with complex needs, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients test their eligibility for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Importantly, over the coming year Hearing Australia will work with the Department of Health to establish a program to help prevent hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-6 years in regional and remote parts of Australia. This will help address one of the biggest hearing health challenges facing government and the broader Australian community.

We will work closely with government agencies to share our knowledge and expertise and to support initiatives to improve the hearing health of the nation.

The Plan also contains a strategy to ensure the ongoing financial viability of Hearing Australia along with supporting performance measures to track our progress.

Finally, the Plan outlines how we will operate in a very competitive sector with increasingly rapid advances in technology and service delivery models. A key part of the Plan involves building our brand and capabilities to grow our client base, to promote choice and competition in service delivery, to offer evidence based leadership in improvements to the customer pathways, and to improve our systems, our workforce and our risk management and compliance programs.

This approach will enable Hearing Australia to deliver the maximum value possible to its clients, to government and the communities we serve.

Dr Peta Seaton AM
Chair

Kim Terrell
Managing Director
Introduction

Overview

The Board of Hearing Australia (the Board), as the accountable authority, advises that:

• this Plan has being prepared in accordance with section 35(1)(b) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (the PGPA Act) and sections 36–40 of the Australian Hearing Services Act 1991 and in accordance with section 16E of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014

• the reporting period for the Plan is the year beginning on 1 July 2019 and ending on 30 June 2020 (financial year 2019–20), and

• the Plan covers a four year period from 2019–20 to 2022–23.

The Australian Hearing Services Act 1991 requires the delivery of a Corporate Plan to the Minister for Government Services at least 60 days before the start of the first reporting period to which the plan relates.

Our purpose

Our vision

Our Vision as an organisation is to provide world leading research and hearing services for the wellbeing of all Australians.

Our vision explains our purpose, why we are here and what we aspire to achieve. We have a clear responsibility to deliver the best possible hearing health care for our clients and the communities we serve and to provide significant value to government and our stakeholders.

We also care and seek to have a positive impact in our day-to-day work and contact with all of our stakeholders, our clients and their families and communities, government, our suppliers, our staff and our competitors.

What we do changes lives and we do this with the greatest level of care and professionalism.

Functions

Hearing Australia’s functions are defined in the Australian Hearing Services Act 1991 (the Act) with specific functions outlined in Section 8 of the Act.

The functions include:

• the provision of hearing services to Voucher holders under the Government’s Hearing Service’s Program and designated persons eligible under the CSO program

• the provision of hearing services to Comcare clients and Commonwealth employees

• entering into arrangements for the supply, research, design and development of hearing services

• carrying out research, and

• providing advice, education, training and consultancy services in relation to hearing services.

The Act also sets out a range of governance and operational requirements for the organisation.
For Australians raised in a hearing world, the act of listening seems so effortless that it is not until we strain to hear that we realise how important hearing is to our wellbeing.

It is estimated that one in 650 babies are born with hearing loss and that one in seven Australians (some 3.6 million people) currently experience some form of hearing loss, with this number set to double by 2060 with our ageing population.

We also know that certain parts of our community, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, face unacceptably higher levels of hearing loss compared to other parts of the community and that too many people are missing out on the sounds of Australia.

This highlights the need for much more effort to be focused on the prevention of hearing loss through better awareness campaigns and strategic initiatives to minimise the hearing loss associated with middle ear disease.

We further know that consumers are demanding more and more from health and wellness providers.

With baby boomers reaching retirement age, changing consumer behaviour is driving innovation in health care delivery models. “Connected Health” is making personalised services and outcomes more and more achievable for increasingly well-informed consumers.

The need for convenient access, digital service options, personalised solutions, and the desire to take charge are now strong consumer traits. At the same time we know some consumers are concerned about the stigma of hearing loss and the integrity of parts of the hearing service market.

In addition, the Australian market for hearing services is heavily influenced by global providers and product manufacturers.

Hearing Australia must respond to these opportunities and challenges. Over the period covered by this plan, we have to innovate and improve our services.

We have to support our clients to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and ensure that there are no unintended consequences for our clients and government.

We have to embrace new technology and promote choice and increased competition to deliver better outcomes for our clients and government.

We also have to build strategies and alliances to prevent or mitigate hearing loss. And we have to demonstrate health and social benefits while becoming increasingly more efficient and productive in delivering our services.

**Government and Partners**

As a statutory body Hearing Australia must provide high quality support and advice to the Minister for Government Services and work closely with relevant government departments and agencies and external partners.

We have a key role to play in supporting the development of government initiatives to prevent hearing loss and improve access and quality of services to those that have hearing loss.

This includes assisting with the implementation of new approaches to service delivery.

Hearing Australia must also work with government and a wide range of partners to prevent and address hearing loss, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

As part of this, it is important for Hearing Australia to understand the needs of its key stakeholders and support the development of sustainable solutions.

In addition, the rising cost of providing quality, accessible and affordable healthcare is placing legitimate expectations on organisations such as Hearing Australia to demonstrate improved efficiencies, effectiveness, expertise and value for money for the community and taxpayers.
We also have the opportunity of working with our research arm, the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), to take the lead in supporting better education and research outcomes and innovation in service delivery to help prevent and avoid adverse hearing health outcomes.

Our clients
Hearing Australia has been delivering hearing services for 71 years. In 2017-18 we helped more than 259,000 clients through our hearing centres across Australia and through our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach program. This includes children, young adults, families, pensioners, veterans and adults with complex needs.

Our clients are at the heart of everything we do. And we know we make a positive difference to their lives. In 2017-18 we saw another decrease in the age that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who need a hearing aid get the help they need. We want to see further similar improvements and to maintain high levels of satisfaction with the services our clients receive from Hearing Australia.

Growing advances in technology
Advances in technology are impacting every aspect of our daily lives and the traditional delivery model of healthcare is shifting.

Consumers want healthcare solutions that allow them to take charge of their health. Consumers are demanding real-time information and more accessible services, including new digital services. This means we must innovate and build a mix of traditional, online and blended services to support our clients.

Hearing device technology is also continuing to advance at a rapid rate. Consumer adoption of wearables is influencing hearable technology and encouraging companies outside the traditional hearing arena to enter the market. Emerging technology has the potential to deliver increased functionality at a lower cost and with greater aesthetic appeal.

Hearing Australia must stay abreast of these developments and ensure that we leverage the best possible hearing device solutions for the benefit of our clients.

Financial performance
Hearing Australia operates in a competitive environment and must remain financially sustainable. This Plan sets out a strong financial strategy to ensure the ongoing financial viability of Hearing Australia along with supporting performance measures to track our progress.

The strategy will see Hearing Australia provide better services and support to clients while improving our brand recognition within the community to better resonate with people who have hearing loss and need our help.

Risk management and corporate governance
Hearing Australia operates in a complex and rapidly changing environment and must meet in full its various legislative, policy and corporate governance requirements.

We recognise this as a high priority and are committed to improving our risk management and compliance programs over the coming 12 months. This Plan recognises the importance of this work and outlines how we will move forward.

National Acoustic Laboratories
The NAL is the research division of Hearing Australia. NAL’s mission is to lead the world in hearing research and evidence-based innovation, to improve hearing health and transform the lives of people with hearing difficulties.

NAL’s key objectives are (i) to become more involved with commercialisation of technology, (ii) to diversify its funding sources, and (iii) to produce innovation with impact.

The first objective will be accomplished through partnerships with commercial entities such as hearing device manufacturers. The second objective will be met through a variety of initiatives that generate revenue: grants, sponsored research, and intellectual property monetisation. The third objective will be met by focusing resources on projects that maximise the potential impact on benefit to patients, healthcare providers, and the hearing industry. These areas of focus are defined by NAL’s strategic objectives.
Key Strategic Priorities

Hearing Australia has identified three key strategic priorities for the organisation over the next four years. The three priorities focus on Hearing Australia:

• delivering excellent client outcomes
• providing great value to Government and our partners, and
• being a high performing organisation.

Each priority underpins our vision to provide world leading research and hearing services for the wellbeing of all Australians.

The following sections provide further details on these priorities and the actions that Hearing Australia will undertake to achieve them.

Our strategic focus

Strategic Priority 1: Deliver Excellent Client Outcomes

We will pursue three initiatives to achieve this strategic priority.

(a) Lead and contribute to measures that reduce the incidence of preventable hearing loss across Australia, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with the objective to reduce the current rate of hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by at least half by 2029

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

• implement a new program to undertake hearing assessments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–6 in rural and remote communities. This will support primary health care services to identify otitis media earlier and prevent progression to more serious forms of ear disease and associated hearing loss. This is a high priority given the prevalence of ear disease in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

• support the implementation of the 2019 Roadmap for Hearing Health developed by the Hearing Health Sector Committee. This includes specific domains on preventing hearing loss and closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ear and hearing health

• play a leadership role in driving broader policy to prevent hearing loss, including in relation to the CSO program

• increase our capacity to proactively identify and deliver hearing loss prevention projects and to expand current initiatives including HEARsmart

• support the implementation of the Sound Scouts program to raise community awareness and help identify children that may have hearing loss so that they can get the help they need, and

• work with the Department of Health to develop clear hearing prevention outcome performance measures with supporting metrics.

1. In 2016 the ABS reported that 8.4 per cent of Indigenous children aged 0–14 reported hearing loss compared to 2.9 per cent for non-Indigenous children
(b) Lift the quality of life of our clients and the well-being of communities through better research, data, education, diagnostic and clinical services

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

- deliver the CSO program in full, meeting all the KPIs set for the program by the Department of Health and delivering services to over 57,000 children, young adults, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and adults with complex needs
- continue to excel in core service delivery while gaining a greater understanding of client needs and ensuring that they are provided with the best possible hearing solutions
- enhance our product range to improve the quality of life of our clients, and
- work with our clinicians and NAL to identify improvements to our services for our clients and the broader community.

(c) Transform our clients’ service experience, including through digital channels

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

- introduce new service offers and new ways for customers to engage with Hearing Australia, including through our digital channels. This will provide our clients with greater convenience, improved service and better outcomes, and
- use teleaudiology to improve access to services, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults in remote areas.

Strategic Priority 2: Great Value to Government and Partners

We will pursue four initiatives to achieve this strategic priority.

(a) Provide high quality, trusted and influential advice to government

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

- provide the Minister with high quality, timely support and advice
- build our policy capabilities and work closely with other government departments and agencies to support the development and implementation of initiatives to improve hearing health outcomes. This includes implementation of the Roadmap for Hearing Health, and
- work collaboratively with key agencies to ensure the smooth transition of eligible clients to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

(b) Improve access by Australians to our services

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

- explore options to increase competition and choice in the hearing services market, particularly for those in most need who currently are unable to or do not qualify for government funded services.

(c) Be more active in working with our partners to deliver better outcomes

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

- work collaboratively with the Hearing Health Sector Committee and other fora to improve outcomes for Australians who are deaf or hard of hearing, and
- actively seek opportunities to share information and expertise and partnerships.

(d) Ensure NAL continues to produce world-leading research and associated services

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

- support NAL to deliver its Commonwealth funded research priorities
- invest $1 million of funding in NAL to undertake research into specific clinical and service delivery improvements which improve Hearing Australia’s operations and client outcomes, and
- support NAL in building partnerships with other organisations within the hearing industry.
Strategic Priority 3: A High Performing Organisation

We will pursue six initiatives to achieve this strategic priority.

(a) Grow our business and improve our operational efficiency

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

• invest in transforming our services to provide better client outcomes and an increase in market share
• explore options to increase access to our services for people who do not qualify for government funded services
• continue to improve the efficiency of our operations, including maintaining tight controls on staffing levels and discretionary expenditure
• improve our approach to marketing and sales to grow our market share
• improve staff efficiency and tracking metrics
• continue to improve internal processes and systems, and
• improve the efficiency of our service footprint.

(b) Deliver high quality (aligned) leadership at all levels of the organisation

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

• increase the capabilities of Board and Senior Management Team members to help lead Hearing Australia through a significant change agenda, and
• provide development opportunities to grow leaders and build leadership capacity at all levels of the organisation.

(c) Build and maintain a highly engaged, flexible and skilled workforce that is committed to our success

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

• provide high quality, regular communications to Hearing Australia staff to help them engage and support the delivery of Hearing Australia’s strategic priorities
• implement initiatives that help our staff deliver better client service
• respond to issues raised by staff in our regular engagement surveys
• improve our workforce planning and implement our RAP and Diversity and Inclusion plans, and
• increase our internal workforce capabilities, including in client experience, strategic HR, strategy, data and analytics.

(d) Simplify and improve our processes and ICT systems (especially CRM) to deliver better services and efficiencies

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

• commence work on modernising our ageing technology and data platforms in order to deliver better client services, productivity improvements and the reduction of operational risk, and
• build our capability in data analytics to drive better services and efficiencies.

(e) Improve our brand and reputation to better define what we stand for and our value to clients and government

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

• implement a new brand and trading name to better connect with our clients, our stakeholders and the communities we serve, and
• implement marketing campaigns to raise awareness of our new brand in the community.

(f) Improve our risk management and compliance

In 2019–20 Hearing Australia will:

• improve the level of resourcing of our risk management and compliance programs to strengthen Hearing Australia’s focus and efforts in these areas to ensure we meet in full our legislative, policy and regulatory requirements
• ensure our risk management compliance programs are supported by robust policies, frameworks and procedures and that staff understand their risk management and compliance obligations and responsibilities
• build a proactive, risk-conscious culture at all levels of the organisation, and
• implement in full its obligations under the Undertaking agreed with the ACCC in September 2018.
Our governance arrangements

The Board of Hearing Australia is established under the Act and consists of the Chair, the Managing Director, four Non-Executive Directors and a Special Purpose Director. The Board’s functions, under the Act, are to decide the objectives, strategies and policies to be followed by Hearing Australia and to ensure that the organisation performs its functions in a proper, efficient and economical manner.

The Board reports to the Minister for Government Services and is supported by four committees:

- the Audit and Risk Management Committee
- the Innovation and Strategy Committee
- the Research Committee, and
- the Remuneration Committee.

Diagram One: Organisational Governance Structure

The Board and its Committees meet on a regular basis and provide a strong level of guidance and oversight of the organisation and its operations. This includes oversight of Hearing Australia’s:

- financial and operational performance
- progress against strategic initiatives and key performance measures
- regular reporting to the Minister for Government Services
- risk management and compliance programs
- workforce and HR processes

- internal audit program and compliance with Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) requirements, and
- annual reporting to the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and for Government Services, including financial performance reporting.

The Board is also committed to the ongoing development of its members to ensure that it has the right level of skills and capabilities to enable it to successfully perform its functions. The Board will also appoint additional members to its committees where required to ensure that they have access to the necessary skills and experience in order for them to fulfil their functions.
Our performance measures

This section of the Plan is prepared in accordance with item 4(c) of the table in subsection 16E(2) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 and Section 38 of the Australian Hearing Services Act 1991.

The tables below detail the performance activities and target results that Hearing Australia will use during 2019–20 and over the period to 2023.

The tables also include financial targets detailing the key business indicators and financial goals for the four years covered by this plan.

While the majority of activities included below are output measures, over the coming 12 months we will work towards introducing more client outcome metrics that focus on hearing improvements for individuals and communities.

Performance Activities

Table Six: Performance Activities

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Deliver excellent client outcomes</td>
<td>1.1 Implement agreed hearing loss prevention initiatives</td>
<td>Agreed measures successfully implemented</td>
<td>New activity</td>
<td>All initiatives implemented (as listed at Our Strategic Focus – Strategic Priority 1(a))</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.2 Prevent hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–6 years</td>
<td>Work with partners in regional and remote communities</td>
<td>New activity</td>
<td>A ten percent reduction in hearing loss for children living in rural and remote communities by mid-2023</td>
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<td>1.3 Help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with hearing loss</td>
<td>Reduce the age of first fitting of hearing devices</td>
<td>6 years, 7 months</td>
<td>Reduce the average age of first fitting to under 5 years by mid-2023</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.4 Screening to identify and prevent hearing loss</td>
<td>Total number of people screened</td>
<td>72,000</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>76,500</td>
<td>78,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.5 Services provided to all Community Service Obligation (CSO) clients</td>
<td>Scheduled services for CSO clients</td>
<td>159,000</td>
<td>163,500</td>
<td>168,500</td>
<td>173,500</td>
<td>178,500</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.6 Services provided to children and young Australians</td>
<td>Scheduled services for clients up to age 26</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>83,000</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>88,500</td>
<td>91,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Deliver excellent client outcomes</td>
<td>1.7 Services provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
<td>Scheduled services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (&gt;50 years)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>13,500</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.8 Services provided to adults with complex hearing needs</td>
<td>Scheduled services for complex adults</td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>72,000</td>
<td>74,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.9 Services provided to voucher holders</td>
<td>Scheduled services for all voucher clients</td>
<td>395,000</td>
<td>411,000</td>
<td>427,000</td>
<td>444,000</td>
<td>462,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.10 Services provided to Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Clients at Outreach sites</td>
<td>Increase the number of services</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>8,800</td>
<td>9,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.11 Client satisfaction</td>
<td>&quot;Voice of the client&quot; Net Promoter Score after assessment or fitting</td>
<td>+76 NPS</td>
<td>+77 NPS</td>
<td>+78 NPS</td>
<td>+79 NPS</td>
<td>+80 NPS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.12 Assessments to prevent and detect hearing loss in Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–6</td>
<td>Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–6 assessed</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>11,878</td>
<td>24,492</td>
<td>25,450 (program end)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.13 Number of active clients</td>
<td>Number of active clients served in the last 12 months</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>275,000</td>
<td>287,000</td>
<td>299,000</td>
<td>310,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Great value to government/partners</td>
<td>2.1 Delivery of CSO services</td>
<td>CSO services provided against the Dept. of Health Memorandum of Agreement</td>
<td>All Key Performance Indicators met</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2 Corporate governance obligations met</td>
<td>Compliance with legislation and policy requirements</td>
<td>Not achieved</td>
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<td>Achieved</td>
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