

What is HAPEE?

The Hearing assessment program Early Ears.



Program overview

The Australian Federal Government is investing \$27.8 million in the Hearing Assessment Program – Early Ears (HAPEE) run by Hearing Australia. The HAPEE prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the years before school and has a national focus across all Australia.

HAPEE engages with primary care clinics, early education providers, communities and families with children to:


- provide diagnostic hearing assessment and follow-up treatment;
- strengthen management of ear health in primary care; and
- increase community awareness about the importance of ear and hearing health.

Where will HAPEE happen?

HAPEE is now available across all Australia including remote, rural and metro communities. Hearing assessment services will be available in a variety of

locations such as Aboriginal community-controlled health services (ACCHSs), government clinics, other mainstream primary care clinics and with interested early education providers.

What will the HAPEE provide?

-  **Initial Ear Health Assessment** – Primary health care professionals or Hearing Australia audiologists will undertake initial ear health assessments to identify eligible children who require a diagnostic hearing assessment.
-  **Diagnostic Hearing Assessment** – Hearing Australia audiologists will provide hearing assessments to children who have been identified to be at risk of hearing loss. Hearing Australia may discuss hearing aid options and will offer ongoing support.
-  **Follow-up Treatment** – Hearing Australia will report back to the primary care clinic if any further referral action is recommended. Other Australian Government programs will support timely access to follow-up treatment, e.g. ENTs, speech therapy and surgery.

How will HAPEE work?

Community Engagement

Aboriginal Community Engagement Officers will work to build meaningful and strong engagement at a local level by:

- working collaboratively with ACCHSs, primary health clinics, early education providers and other key stakeholders;
- supporting local services to develop hearing assessment clinics in partnership with Hearing Australia; and
- undertaking activities to raise community awareness of the importance of ear and hearing health.

They will assist with tailoring the HAPEE to the needs of individual communities and clinics.

Upskilling

Hearing Australia audiologists can provide primary care staff with upskilling during outreach visits. Hearing Australia will provide a Hearing Helpline for primary health care clinics to enable access to advice from audiologists if needed between outreach visits.

Expected Program Outcomes

- A reduction in the long-term effects of ear disease through early rehabilitative hearing services and early referral for specialist treatment; and
- Increased capacity within primary health services to identify, manage and monitor ear health.

Children are particularly vulnerable to ear infections. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience some of the highest levels of middle ear infection in the world, with rates almost 4 times those of non-indigenous Australian children^{1, 2}.

Otitis media can often begin within weeks of birth, have repeated episodes, and can persist into adolescence. Hearing loss can lead to delayed speech and educational development.



For further information on the Hearing Assessment Program – Early Ears (HAPEE) please contact:

HAPEE@hearing.com.au

1. Access Economics. *The cost burden of otitis media in Australia* (2008). Report prepared for GlaxoSmithKline, Perth.

2. World Health Organization. (2004). Chronic suppurative otitis media: burden of illness and management options. Geneva: World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/42941>

