

## Hearing Aid Services

28 June 2011

### Management of hearing aid services

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) is pleased to announce that, following a formal tender process, Accessable has been selected as the new national provider for the management of hearing aid services. Accessable is based in Auckland and also manages the provision of Equipment and Modification Services (EMS) on behalf of the Ministry in the Auckland/Northland region (north of the Bombay Hills).

This new service, which replaces the existing contracts the Ministry holds with both Enable New Zealand and Accessable, will commence on 1 July 2011 for the administration of all Ministry funded and subsidised hearing aids.

Under the new contracting arrangements, the national provider, Accessable, will be referred to as the Hearing Aid Services Manager. As part of the changes to this new service, funding for hearing aids will be managed through two distinct funding schemes. These schemes will replace the three existing funding streams by combining funding for children and adults:

1. **Hearing Aid Funding Scheme** - the price of the hearing aid is paid by the Ministry for eligible children and adults
2. **Hearing Aid Subsidy Scheme** - a subsidy of \$511.11 (incl GST) is paid by the Ministry towards the cost of each hearing aid for eligible adults.

Please note that no change has been made to the overall level of funding available for all hearing aids. Only one change has been made to the guidelines about who can get funding for hearing aids – this relates to the number of times children can get replacement hearing aids.

### Hearing Aid Services Notice

The Ministry is also introducing a Hearing Aid Services Notice, which outlines its requirements for audiology providers who apply for hearing aids or claim the subsidy on behalf of people who have hearing loss. The start date for this Notice is 1 July 2011.

Key features of this Notice that will impact on people with hearing loss are:

- Funding for hearing aids for adults (covering both schemes as above) will be available no more than once every 6 years for each ear.
- Funding for hearing aids for children will be available no more than three times within a six year period.
- Funding for replacement hearing aids will be considered more frequently where a person has genuine and exceptional circumstances.
- The audiologist will need to give the person specific information including the most cost-effective types of hearing aids to meet their needs and the prices of the recommended hearing aids and associated service fees. This will include a written

quotation for all costs and a copy of the Ministry of Health's *Guide to Getting Hearing Aids* which is currently being prepared.

The Services Manager, Accessable, will pay the hearing aid manufacturer directly for all hearing aids provided for people through the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme. This means that people will not need to pay for any costs of hearing aids funded through this scheme, except service fees which have been clearly identified to the person in their written quotation. The Ministry does not pay for any service fees charged by audiologists.

Please note that all hearing aids need to be carefully fitted and follow up with the audiologist is essential to make sure that the type being trialled is the best option to meet the hearing needs of the person.

If you have any questions about the above information please contact Accessable. Contact details for Accessable are:

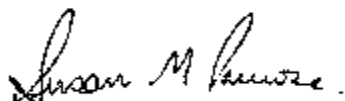
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Primrose".

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