

Q & A

When do the new funding arrangements for hearing come into place?

The new funding contributions for ACC entitlements for hearing come into force on 1 July 2014. The inflationary adjustment for rates in the regulations will also happen at this time.

What are the key changes relating to fitting fees?

ACC will separately fund a hearing consultation allowance and the subsequent fitting of the device.

A separate financial contribution for the hearing consultation enables people to seek an optional second quote from a different audiologist to establish a range of device options at different prices. It is expected that audiologists are more likely to offer a range of devices at rates that are more affordable for people to encourage clients to not seek further quotes from elsewhere.

A flat contribution for clients' fitting fees will be introduced. The level of the ACC contribution for the fitting fee will no longer be a percentage based on the degree of hearing loss covered. It is now expected that in most cases clients will not be charged a co-payment for this service.

What are the key changes relating to repairs?

The proposed changes will allow for multiple repairs for each hearing device every two years up to the fixed amount of \$234.09 per year. This means clients with two hearing aids will not be disadvantaged. Previously, regulations allowed clients to have one repair per client every two years.

What are the key changes relating to ear moulds?

The changes will allow funding for ear moulds. Ear moulds are vital to the success of hearing devices and more than 16 per cent of clients require them. There was no provision in the regulations for ear moulds, which meant these clients would often use their repair contribution for ear moulds.

What are the proposed changes relating to children?

A separate policy is being developed to better meet the needs of children.

Excluding children under-18 years old from the regulations will allow their rapidly changing needs to be addressed more frequently. Previously, regulations only allowed for a contribution toward hearing devices once every six years.

How did the changes come about?

The changes are a result of significant consultation with the hearing sector and a client survey.

Other changes, including the annual cost of treatment adjustment

What are the key changes?

Changes are proposed to three sets of regulations:

- Accident Compensation (Liability to Pay or Contribute to Cost of Treatment) Regulations 2003 (Cost of Treatment Regulations)
- Accident Compensation (Apportioning Entitlements for Hearing Loss) Regulations 2010 (Hearing Loss Regulations)
- Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Compensation (Ancillary Services) Regulations 2003 (Ancillary Services Regulations).

The changes will see on 1 April 2014:

- An increase of 1.78 per cent to all payments for treatment under the Cost of Treatment Regulations. Note that the hearing loss changes including the inflationary adjustment occur on 1 July 2014.
- An amendment to the Ancillary Services Regulations to allow ACC to pay ambulances for transport of a body when a person has died at the scene of an accident.
- The name of the Ancillary Services Regulations will be changed to the Accident Compensation (Ancillary Services) Regulations 2002 to reflect the name change to the AC Act in 2010.

Why are these changes being made?

The prices set in the Cost of Treatment Regulations are reviewed annually and other changes are made as required. A payment increase of 1.78 per cent was recommended by ACC and approved by Cabinet.

The Ancillary Services Regulations prescribe payments to be made by ACC for specified ancillary services. An amendment was agreed by Cabinet to allow ACC to pay ambulances for transport of a body when a person has died at the scene of an accident.

When will these come into effect?

The Cost of Treatment Regulations and the Ancillary Services Regulations are expected to come into force on 1 April 2014.

The Hearing Loss Regulations changes, including the 1.78% increase, are expected to come into force on 1 July 2014.