

Hearing Aids and Appliances

**Version 3.0
May 2016**

Contents

Policy	3
1. Purpose.....	3
2. Legislative Reference.....	4
3. Eligibility for Hearing Aids and Appliances	4
4. Requests for Hearing Aids and Appliances	4
5. Second Opinion.....	6
6. Hearing Aid(s) Fitting and Trial.....	6
7. Reimbursement of Costs for hearing aids and appliances	7
8. Hearing Aids and Appliances Maintenance and Replacement.....	10
9. Criteria for Veterans' Affairs Funding of Over-scale Aids and tinnitus maskers	13
10. Ear Wax Removal	14
11. Home visits by the audiologist.....	14
12. Annual hearing reviews	14
13. Weekly Battery Allowance	14
14. Hearing Dogs	15
15. Living Overseas.....	15
16. Travelling Overseas	15
17. Reviews, Appeals and Complaints.....	15
Appendix I: Pathway to Hearing Aids	16
Glossary	17

Policy

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on administering **veterans'** eligibility for hearing-related aids and appliances.

1.2 Under the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Act) hearing-related aids and appliances are deemed to be social rehabilitation services and this paper should be read in conjunction with separate papers on:

- *Rehabilitation Services Eligibility*
- *Rehabilitation Section of Your Plan*
- *Social Rehabilitation*
- *Social Rehabilitation Aids and Appliances.*

1.3 For the purpose of this policy:

Hearing aid is an electronic device designed to process and amplify sound in order to compensate for a hearing deficit. It may include:

- hearing accessories (see definition below)
- wireless systems (only to be considered for helping a veteran to obtain or maintain employment)
- bone anchored hearing aids (only to be considered when a veteran has no ear canal or cannot use a conventional hearing aid due to ear infection induced fluid in the ear, and surgical implantation is medically appropriate)

but excludes:

- cochlear implants, and
- devices that have microphones and amplification systems designed primarily for other uses such as stereos and mobile phones.

Hearing Aid Accessories are items that assist a veteran in using, or gaining full benefit from their hearing aid(s), i.e. they enhance the functionality of the hearing aid but are not necessary for the operation or maintenance of the hearing aid. Examples include remote controls, speakers and wireless devices.

Hearing Aid Consumables are items other than batteries that are required to be used or are recommended by the hearing aid manufacturer for the safe and effective use of the hearing aids and which need to be replaced routinely – such as wax guards, moisture control systems.

Hearing Assistive Devices include equipment for alerting and enhancing communication such as amplified telephones, room loop systems, and wireless headsets.

Tinnitus maskers are devices which are used to add natural or artificial sound into a tinnitus sufferer's environment in order to suppress or mask the perceived tinnitus noise. They may take the form of CD or MP3 recordings, bedside noise generators, or wearable tinnitus maskers that are built into hearing aids or which are worn like hearing aids. Tinnitus maskers that are not already incorporated as part of a hearing aid will require assessment as to their effectiveness as a solution to the veteran's tinnitus (see section 9).

2. Legislative Reference

- 2.1 The relevant legislation is the Act, sections 7, 87, 115, 120-124, and 212, and Part 1 of Schedule 2, clauses 6 and 8, Veterans' Support Regulations 2014 Part 3, regulations 27 and 28, Police Act 1958, section 42, and Policing Act 2008, section 110.

3. Eligibility for Hearing Aids and Appliances

- 3.1 Processing and consideration of the provision of hearing aids and appliances can commence once it has been determined that the veteran meets the service criteria and suffers from a hearing-related **accepted disability**.
- 3.2 A veteran may also be eligible for hearing-related aids and appliances if in receipt of Weekly Income Compensation. Where the veteran is seeking to access aids and appliances through Weekly Income Compensation the hearing loss must be the condition that prevents the veteran from undertaking employment.
- 3.3 A New Zealand police officer who is receiving a War Disablement Pension or Disablement Pension based on their service in the New Zealand Police between 1958 and 1972 can apply for the support set out in this policy.

Section 42 of the Police Act 1958, section 110 of the Policing Act 2008 and section 7 and Schedule 1 clause 6 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

4. Requests for Hearing Aids and Appliances

- 4.1 On acceptance of a hearing-related injury or illness, a veteran applying for aids and appliances and who is accessing this service from Veterans' Affairs for the first time will have a Case Manager appointed if he/she does not already have one.
- 4.2 The Case Manager will establish the veteran's social and vocational situation and rehabilitation needs and goals and enter these into the veteran's Your Plan (e.g. the veteran needs hearing aid(s) for employment or voluntary work, or to participate in certain social activities; or the veteran stays at home with restricted activity such as listening to the radio and watching television).

- 4.3 The Case Manager will advise the veteran to see an audiologist for a full hearing test, if one has not already been carried out in the previous six months and will pass information about the veteran's stated social and vocational situation and goals to the audiologist.
- 4.4 The audiologist will be required to complete a hearing needs assessment form and include the results of the full hearing test in his/her report to Veterans' Affairs.
- 4.5 Any recommendations for hearing aids or appliances the audiologist makes must be approved by Veterans' Affairs. The aid provided must match the social and vocational rehabilitation needs identified in the Your Plan and should be cost effective. To this end the audiologist should provide Veterans' Affairs with details as to why he/she is recommending a specific hearing aid(s), including how the aid will best deliver the veteran's combined social, vocational and hearing needs. If possible, alternative options should be identified in case the aid proves unsuitable during the trial and fitting process. The recommended aids should be within the maximum caps per aid as set by Veterans' Affairs, i.e. \$900 (excl. GST) per standard aid, and \$2,000 (excl. GST) per overscale aid.
- 4.6 In assessing the audiologist's recommendation for appropriate aid(s) Veterans' Affairs must consider:
- the purchase price
 - the benefits provided relative to the veteran's needs
 - the potential life-long cost of repairs (where these are known from previous experience of the hearing aid make or model)
 - the ability of the hearing aids to be adjusted to meet changes in the veteran's needs over the expected life of the hearing aids.
- 4.7 The outcome of the hearing needs assessment will be that hearing aid(s) are, or are not, required, and if not whether or not a hearing assistive device/assistive listening device may better meet the veteran's hearing needs in a cost effective manner. A cost effective aid is defined as one that satisfactorily meets the reasonable hearing needs of the veteran at the lowest possible price. Veterans' Affairs will review purchasing trends periodically.
- 4.8 The combined veteran's social and vocational needs as identified in the **veteran's Your Plan** and hearing needs as assessed by the audiologist must be utilised when determining the effectiveness of the hearing devices during the trial period. (NB the audiologist will not be sent a copy of the veteran's Your Plan, but only the details of the veteran's social and vocational needs and goals relating to his/her hearing).
- 4.9 Upon receipt of the audiologist's report and recommendations, the Case Manager will further develop the rehabilitation section of the veteran's Your Plan if ACC or another agency is not already providing this service as part of the veteran's rehabilitation or injury compensation (**see sections 4 and 5 of the separate paper on Rehabilitation Section of Your Plans**). In developing

the Your Plan, the Case Manager will take into account the audiologist's recommendations and will discuss with the veteran the expected outcomes and goals of the aiding.

- 4.10 The Rehabilitation Advisor must confirm that this is the appropriate method of rehabilitation and that the rehabilitation section of the veteran's Your Plan relating to hearing is complete. The Case Manager will manage and support the veteran's expected outcomes.
- 4.11 For any first time aiding, once Veterans' Affairs has accepted the aids, the trial and fitting process has occurred (**see section 6**), the veteran's Individual Care Plan has been signed, and the Your Plan is complete, the Case Manager will advise the Administrator to activate the VSS payments section of the veteran's file for approval by the Senior System and Business Administrators or Manager, Business Services of the payment of the Battery Allowance (**see section 13**) to be paid with the veteran's ongoing entitlement.
- 4.12 If the veteran requires further hearing equipment, e.g. a telephone, his/her needs will be assessed by the relevant **health practitioner** and the rehabilitation section of the veteran's Your Plan will be updated depending on the outcome of the health practitioner's assessment and approval of the rehabilitation advisor. The veteran will not be required to undergo a new whole-person **impairment** assessment.

5. Second Opinion

- 5.1 Veterans' Affairs may reserve the right to seek a second opinion (i.e. independent advice on the veteran's hearing needs).
- 5.2 If the veteran seeks a second opinion he/she does so at his/her own cost and Veterans' Affairs may take that opinion into consideration.

6. Hearing Aid(s) Fitting and Trial

- 6.1 Hearing aid fitting and associated appointments (including adjustments and evaluation) must be conducted according to New Zealand Audiological Society best practice guidelines and must include:
 - measuring the acoustic performance of the hearing aids
 - instructing the veteran on how to operate the hearing aid(s) and how to best use them for maximum hearing benefit, and
 - assessing the veteran's (physical and sensory) ability to manage and effectively use the hearing aid(s).
- 6.2 The hearing aid(s) must be used by the veteran for at least 4 weeks in as many as possible of the situations in which the veteran's Your Plan has indicated the veteran needs to improve their hearing. The hearing aids must be adjusted where necessary based on the veteran's experiences during the trial period and each adjustment shall be assessed for effectiveness by appropriate measurements and trial.

- 6.3 If necessary to achieve satisfactory performance (as required by the veteran's Your Plan), the audiologist may need to repeat the fitting and trial process using different aids of the same cost. If the aid(s) in this further fitting and trial process are of a higher cost the audiologist will need to discuss his/her reasons for selecting to trial this aid(s) with Veterans' Affairs. The trial period with each hearing aid (or pair of aids) must be long enough (at least 4 weeks per trial period) to allow the veteran to trial the aids in a range of situations where they have specific hearing needs.
- 6.4 The trial process will cease either when the veteran and the audiologist agree that the hearing aid(s) being trialled meet the needs identified in the veteran's Your Plan or when they agree that none of the trialled hearing aids are suitable (failed fitting – **see also section 7 regarding failed fittings**). When the trial concludes successfully, the Individual Care Plan must be completed and sent to Veterans' Affairs with the audiologist's invoice for services provided and the cost of the hearing aid(s).

7. Reimbursement of Costs for hearing aids and appliances

- 7.1 All hearing services require prior approval from Veterans' Affairs through the veteran's Your Plan.

Assessments and Reassessments

- 7.2 Veterans' Affairs will pay up to \$150 (excl. GST) for an initial hearing assessment including history, PT audiometry (air/bone conduction), speech audiometry, immittance audiometry (tympanometry and acoustic reflexes) and the written report and summary of results to Veterans' Affairs.
- 7.3 Hearing reassessments require prior approval and if approved will also be funded up to \$150 (excl. GST) for the full assessment as described in paragraph 7.2. Grounds for re-assessment may include that the veteran considers the aids are no longer meeting his/her needs, or the veteran feels their hearing has deteriorated to the extent that adjustment of the aid(s) or possibly early replacement may be required.

Fitting Fees

- 7.4 For the fitting of hearing aids, Veterans' Affairs will fund up to a maximum of \$1,050 (excl. GST) for two hearing aids and up to \$750 (excl. GST) for one hearing aid. This covers computer tuning, real ear verification, counselling and education, regular follow-up appointments within the trial period, re-adjustments and trouble-shooting, post fitting questionnaires, trial of alternative hearing aids if necessary. It excludes ear moulds, ear impressions and any fault finding after the trial period. For complex hearing devices (see section 9) Veterans' Affairs will fund up to \$900 for the fitting fee. If an assistive hearing device is required after the fitting of hearing aids, e.g. remote control, this fee does not apply as Veterans' Affairs pays retail cost for these items, therefore the pairing of the device is expected to be in this cost.

7.5 Veterans' Affairs' funding of or contribution towards the costs of any failed fittings will depend on the circumstances as follows:

- if after the fitting of two different types of hearing aids or appliances, but before the Individual Care Plan is signed, the veteran decides he/she no longer requires the hearing aids, Veterans' Affairs will pay the audiologist's fitting fee, up to \$1,050 (excl. GST) for two aids and \$750 (excl. GST) for one aid, but
- if the veteran raises concerns that the audiologist's fitting was faulty and the veteran still requires the hearing aids, Veterans' Affairs will not automatically pay the fitting fee.

7.6 Failed fitting fees are only payable if at least two sets of hearing aid(s) have been fitted, trialed, adjusted and rejected by the veteran. Veterans' Affairs will investigate the reasons for the failed fittings and determine whether it is appropriate to fund the failed fitting. Veterans' Affairs will have a discussion with both the veteran and the audiologist about the failed fitting and may seek independent advice, removing all identifying information and supplying only information on which it needs independent comment in line with privacy requirements. Further, payment of the failed fitting fee to an audiologist will disqualify that audiologist from fitting any other hearing aids to that veteran for a period of 12 months from the date of the failed fitting invoice. The veteran may obtain a hearing aid fitting from one (only one) alternate audiologist during this twelve months period.

Appliances or Accessories

7.7 Appliances or accessories that Veterans' Affairs may pay for or contribute towards include:

- standard hearing aids up to \$900 (excl. GST) per aid
- over-scale aids with prior approval up to \$2,000 (excl. GST) per aid (see also section 9)

7.8 Veterans' Affairs may also, only with prior approval from the veteran's Case Manager, pay or contribute towards the following items at retail cost or as agreed beforehand with the audiologist who will provide details in writing as to why they are required and the cost:

- hearing accessories including, but not limited to, remote controls, standard dri kit
- consumables including, but not limited to, moisture guards, wax guards, domes, tubing, receivers, filters, microphone covers, auragel, dry tablets
- assistive hearing devices including, but not limited to, amplified telephones, room loop systems and wireless headsets, and bed shakers which may be considered if they will assist a veteran with outcomes such as employment or safety.

- 7.9 Hearing appliances that are alternatives to hearing aids such as an audio port (a jack on a computer to which a audio device such as a microphone or amplifier can be connected to enhance sound) will not be funded by Veterans' Affairs in addition to a hearing aid, rather they may be supplied instead of hearing aids.
- 7.10 For veterans with profound deafness, Veterans' Affairs may fund or contribute to the loan cost of a Captel telephone, but will not cover the ongoing broadband, battery and repairs costs.
- 7.11 Appliances or accessories Veterans' Affairs will not pay for include:
- smart devices such as a smart phone or tablet that may be used as a remote to adjust hearing aids or a microphone for meetings
 - phones with dual handset, answer machine, emergency alert (as funding for medical alarms may be considered under the Veterans' Independence Programme if the veteran is eligible for this)
 - excess insurance (i.e. the contribution the insurance company requires the person insured to pay in the event of an insurance claim for lost or damaged aids)
 - cochlear implants.
- 7.12 Veterans' Affairs funding of both a landline phone and a cell phone designed for the hearing impaired will only be considered on a case by case basis. Ordinarily, where a veteran is not employed Veterans' Affairs will fund only one phone. Veterans' Affairs is not responsible for connection and service fees associated with the use of a landline phone or cell phone. Veterans' Affairs may on a case by case basis (for employment purposes only) consider cell phone connectivity via a phone clip device which talks to the aids via Bluetooth.
- 7.13 Veterans' Affairs is not required to provide any hearing aid or appliance if the veteran already:
- owns a hearing aid(s) or appliance(s) with a similar function to aid(s) or appliance(s) being claimed for
 - has an aid(s) or appliance(s) on permanent loan from a person or organisation, including a hospital or health service,

unless the aid(s) or appliance(s), because of its age or condition, is unsuitable to assist the veteran's hearing loss.

Clause 8(3) Schedule 2, of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

- 7.14 Veterans' Affairs will take into account any payment or contribution from another agency towards the costs of a hearing aid or appliance when determining what Veterans' Affairs will pay or contribute.
- 7.15 Scheme Two veterans cannot switch from ACC funding to Veterans' Affairs funding for hearing aids and appliances. Where Veterans' Affairs has

approved a switch from ACC to Veterans' Affairs funding for a Scheme One veteran it will let ACC know.

Section 87 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

8. Hearing Aids and Appliances Maintenance and Replacement

8.1 The veteran will be required to insure his/her hearing aids against loss and damage. The insurance needs to have effect from when the veteran receives the aid(s), including during the trial period.

Replacement or repairs Veterans' Affairs will not cover

8.2 Veterans' Affairs is not required to meet the costs of:

- providing aids or appliances when the veteran has disposed of aids and appliances that are still suitable for his/her service-related hearing needs and would have been within the required review period (which as a matter of policy has been set at 6 years)
- maintaining, repairing, or replacing any aid or appliance or replacing any items used in association with the aid or appliance if the veteran has neglected, abused, or misused an aid or appliance

Clause 8(4) and (5), Schedule 2 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014

- replacing any aid or appliance that are lost during the trial period (though Veterans' Affairs will pay the fitting fee).

8.3 As cochlear implant surgery is not a form of treatment that Veterans' Affairs will pay for or contribute towards, Veterans' Affairs will not fund cochlear implants. In addition, Veterans' Affairs will not pay or contribute towards the maintenance, repair or replacement of cochlear implants.

8.4 Should a veteran connect to a smart device and due to that connection, anything goes wrong with his/her smart device or hearing aid(s) Veterans' Affairs will not be able to assist in the repair or replacement of the smart device or hearing aid(s).

Timeframe for Replacement and reasons for non-coverage

8.5 Veterans' Affairs may pay or contribute to the cost of replacement of hearing aids no more than once every 6 years since the first-time provision of the hearing aid or since the date of the last replacement and only if the aid(s) cannot be fixed cost-effectively. The audiologist will always first examine the hearing aid using best practice to determine whether the hearing aid is working, whether the acoustic coupling is functioning correctly, and whether the hearing aid is performing according to its specifications (this may include hearing aid test box tests or in-situ tests).

8.6 Veterans' Affairs will not approve replacing hearing aid(s) that were fitted less than six years ago when:

- the request is based primarily on new technology being available
- the hearing aids recommended by the audiologist are rejected by the veteran for cosmetic reasons rather than specifically for achieving his/her rehabilitation outcomes;
- the hearing aids recommended by the audiologist are rejected by the veteran for other reasons and the hearing aids the veteran wants are unsuitable for achieving the veteran's rehabilitation outcomes (e.g. because there is less capacity for adjustment compared with the recommended aids).

The audiologist should state this clearly in the request for hearing aid(s) at the start of the aiding process, so that both the veteran and Veterans' Affairs can make a suitable judgement.

Criteria for acceptance of early replacement

8.7 Any replacement earlier than 6 years would need to meet the following criteria:

- a severe deterioration must have occurred in the veteran's hearing levels requiring new hearing aids to address this (i.e. the veteran's hearing levels as per an audiometry comparison have deteriorated beyond the level that would normally be expected during the time the veteran has worn the hearing aids); or
- the hearing aids no longer meet the veteran's needs (e.g. the veteran was not working at the time the hearing aids were fitted, but they now have a job and their current aids do not meet their needs in their working environment, but Veterans' Affairs may not fund a replacement hearing aid so the veteran can play bridge, but may rather look to cover an assistive device instead); and
- there are no economic repairs or adjustments that could be made to the aids that would allow the current aids to continue to meet the veterans' needs (a report from the audiologist via the hearing aid supplier and a valid quotation for repairing the hearing aid must be supplied. Veterans' Affairs will reimburse for the manufacturer-invoiced charges for obtaining the report and any applicable fees for on site reset/repair service and handling directly resulting from the audiologist's assessment of the hearing aid and sending it to the hearing device supplier).

8.8 A hearing aid will be considered to be beyond economical repair if it was fitted 5 or more years ago and the repair cost exceeds 60% of the wholesale cost of the hearing aid. If a veteran has two hearing aids and only one requires repair, then both aids may be replaced only if an exact replacement for the aid requiring repair is not available and the cost of repairing that aid exceeds 85% of the wholesale cost of the hearing aid or nearest equivalent.

Clinical Evidence for Replacement

8.9 The audiologist must apply for approval for replacement and must provide sufficient clinical evidence to support the decision that the hearing aids are not

meeting the needs of the veteran, including a statement signed by the veteran that their current hearing aids are unsatisfactory. With prior approval from Veterans' Affairs a hearing reassessment may be conducted to investigate the veteran's reported hearing difficulties, including otoscopy, otological history, an air conduction audiogram and a speech audiogram and where necessary this can be upgraded to a diagnostic hearing assessment. A hearing needs reassessment may also be conducted (also with prior approval). The assessment must document real-ear verification measurements of the current hearing aid settings and the available range of those settings. Veterans' Affairs may choose to seek a second opinion.

- 8.10 Where hearing tests indicate that the veteran's hearing difficulties will be overcome by adjusting their hearing aid the audiologist may provide a fault finding service. This will comprise tuning the hearing aids, instructing the veteran on the correct use of their hearing aids, counselling regarding expectations, scheduling and conducting follow-up appointments to assess the effectiveness of the refitting and making any further adjustments that are clinically indicated.

Other replacement and repair costs Veterans' Affairs may cover

- 8.11 Veterans' Affairs may also fund, upon prior approval:
- up to \$75 (excl. GST) for minor repairs (e.g. replacing tubing or domes, battery covers, battery drawers or tone hooks and similar items), as long as these repairs do not affect the warranty, when these are carried out by an audiologist and for 6 and 12 month follow up appointments if required (each appointment) and up to \$65 (excl. GST) when carried out in a consultation with a non-audiologist
 - up to a maximum of \$300 (excl. GST) per hearing aid for repairs or maintenance carried out by the manufacturer once the warranty has expired
 - up to \$140 (excl. GST) for ear moulds and \$60 (excl. GST) for each ear impression for ear moulds
 - up to \$20 (excl. GST) per package for packaging, delivery and handling of aids, accessories or devices to be sent for repair to the manufacturer. In the case of two aids these may be sent in two separate packages. The veteran may need to pick up the aid from the audiologist in order to have it fitted or adjusted.
- 8.12 As with aids and accessories, where the assistive hearing device requires repair and is within the manufacturer's or supplier's warranty period, the manufacturer or supplier is obligated to cover the cost of any repairs. Where repair is not possible, the manufacturer or supplier should provide replacement of the assistive device. Where the warranty has expired but the life of the device was not reasonable within the context of the Consumer Guarantee Act 1993, further investigation will be undertaken to ascertain whether the cost of the repair or replacement if necessary, should lie with the supplier or the manufacturer.

Replacement or repairs when aids are self-funded or other agencies are involved

- 8.13 If a veteran with an accepted hearing disability has self-funded his/her own hearing aids Veterans' Affairs may, with prior approval, contribute:
- up to \$900 (excl. GST) per aid or \$2,000 (excl. GST) per over-scale aid if the aids are suitable for the veteran's needs and if Veterans' Affairs has not already supplied hearing aids within the previous 6 years
 - the repair and maintenance of those aids if the repairs and maintenance fall within the guidelines set out in this section of this policy
 - a Battery Allowance if Veterans' Affairs deems the aids to be suitable for the veteran's needs and the criteria of the Battery Allowance are met
 - costs of hearing reassessment if the aids are no longer meeting the veteran's needs or his/her hearing has deteriorated to the extent that adjustment of the aid(s) or possibly early replacement may be required (as per paragraphs 7.2 and 7.3)
 - trial and fitting costs for replacement aid(s).
- 8.14 Where ACC has provided a veteran with hearing aids, Veterans' Affairs will consider repair or replacement of the aid(s) on a case-by-case basis and only with prior approval and if the veteran has hearing as an accepted disability and has exhausted their ACC allocation.
- 8.15 Where an insurance company has paid for the replacement of a Veterans' Affairs funded hearing aid(s), Veterans' Affairs will treat the hearing aid(s) as if they were provided by Veterans' Affairs.
- 8.16 If a veteran has hearing aids which are ACC funded and they need new ear moulds, or consumables (excluding batteries), the veteran must first approach ACC for funding. If funding from ACC has been exhausted, Veterans' Affairs may, with prior approval, cover these costs if the veteran has hearing as an accepted disability.

9. Criteria for Veterans' Affairs Funding of Over-scale Aids and tinnitus maskers

- 9.1 Approval for over-scale aids will depend on the complexity of hearing needs that the veteran has. A complex hearing loss client will have:
- profound hearing loss (a hearing loss where the average hearing threshold level for 0.5, 1 and 2 kilohertz in the person's better ear is greater than, or equal to, 80 decibels); or

- hearing loss and severe communication impairment. Severe communication impairment means communication difficulty that prevents the person from communicating effectively in his or her daily environment; or is caused or aggravated by significant physical, intellectual, mental, emotional or social disability.

9.2 Complex hearing needs include one or more of the following factors:

- fluctuating hearing (e.g. Meniere's Disease)
- unilateral hearing loss
- auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder
- dead regions/Ski slope hearing losses
- poor speech discrimination compared to audiogram
- auditory processing disorders
- tinnitus, hyperacusis and severe recruitment
- severe or profound hearing loss.

9.3 Veterans' Affairs will fund tinnitus counselling if deemed necessary. Tinnitus maskers that are not already incorporated as part of a hearing aid will require assessment as to their effectiveness as a solution to the veteran's tinnitus.

10. Ear Wax Removal

10.1 Veterans' Affairs will fund ear wax removal (aural toilets) as required up to \$65 (excl. GST) per occurrence. This does not need to be carried out by an audiologist.

11. Home visits by the audiologist

11.1 Home visits by the audiologist will require pre-approval from the Rehabilitation Advisor as a part of the veteran's Your Plan. Where approved, Veterans' Affairs will pay \$80 (excl. GST) per home visit and contribute 50 cents for each km travelled (return trip) on the shortest distance (according to AA maps) from the audiologist's office to the veteran's home regardless of the route taken.

12. Annual hearing reviews

12.1 Veterans' Affairs will not fund annual hearing reviews.

13. Weekly Battery Allowance

13.1 A veteran who is using a hearing aid(s) suitable for his/her service-related hearing loss and approved by Veterans' Affairs is entitled to a Weekly Battery

Allowance which is CPI adjusted annually (**Go to Factsheet on Rates and Allowances**).

- 13.2 A veteran will not be entitled to a Weekly Battery Allowance if he/she has been supplied with hearing aid batteries or funding for hearing aid batteries from anyone other than Veterans' Affairs.

Regulations 27 and 28 of the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014

- 13.3 Veterans' Affairs will not pay or contribute towards batteries for cochlear implants.

14. Hearing Dogs

- 14.1 Veterans' Affairs does not provide funding for hearing dogs. Veterans will need to apply to Work and Income for this assistance paid through the Disability Allowance, or ACC may consider coverage in certain circumstances.

15. Living Overseas

- 15.1 If a veteran has access to hearing aids through the public health system in the country in which they are residing the expectation is that they will test their eligibility for hearing aids from those services first (e.g. New Zealand veterans living in Australia can contact the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing Office of Hearing Services at www.health.gov.au/hear to establish if they are eligible under their scheme of assistance).
- 15.2 Other aspects of the hearing aid and appliances policy apply equally to all New Zealand veterans irrespective of country of residence.

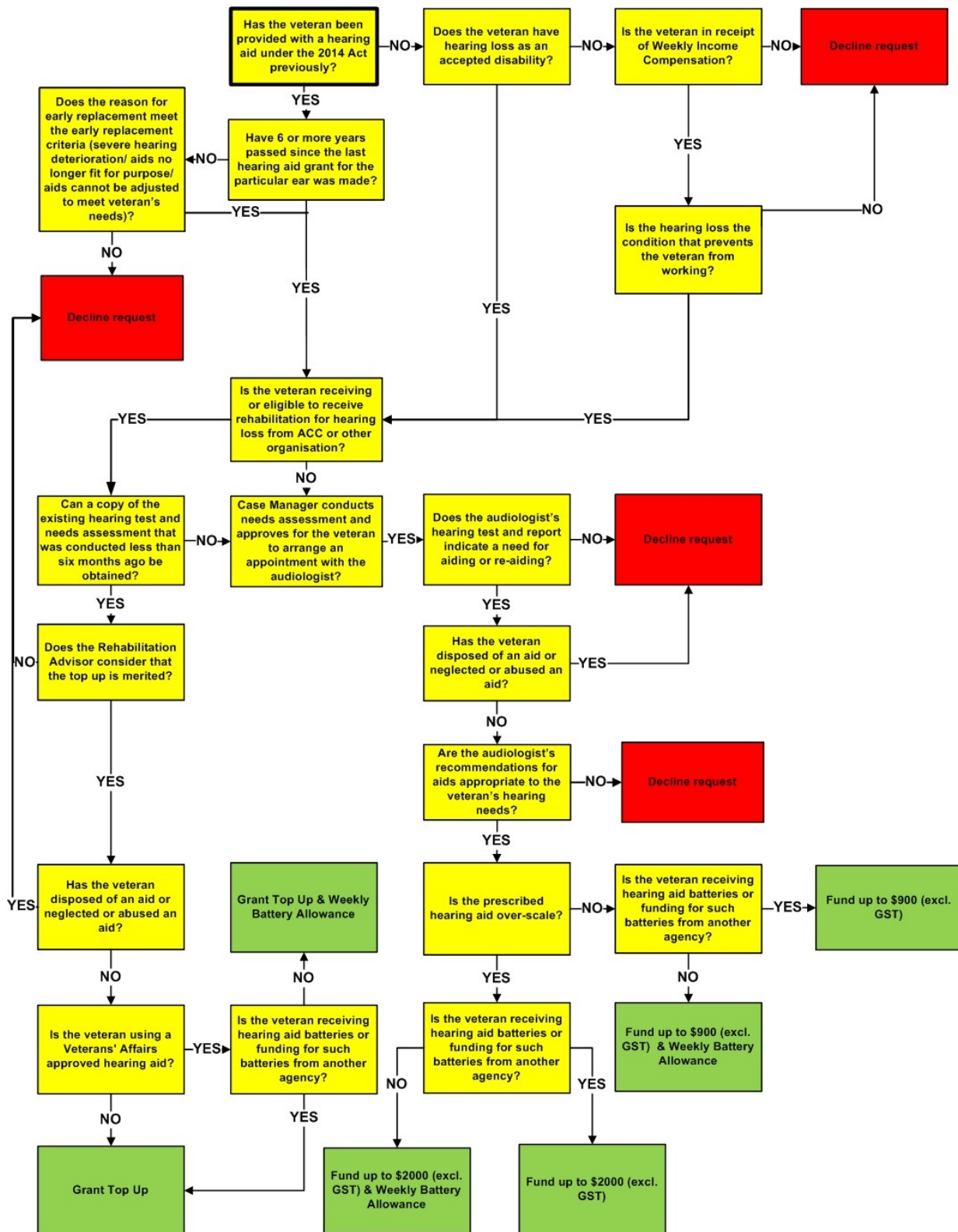
16. Travelling Overseas

- 16.1 Veterans' Affairs will not cover the cost of replacement or repair of hearing aids and appliances lost or damaged when veterans are travelling overseas. Veterans with hearing aids and appliances should ensure that these are covered by travel insurance against loss or damage.

17. Reviews, Appeals and Complaints

- 17.1 If a veteran disagrees with a decision concerning eligibility for an entitlement or service **go to separate policies on Reviews and Appeals**. If a veteran is concerned about Veterans' Affairs' administration of an entitlement or service **go to separate policy on Complaints**.

Appendix I: Pathway to Hearing Aids



Glossary

accepted disability [policy definition]

Means an injury, illness or condition that Veterans' Affairs accepts as being service-related.

aid or appliance [clause 7 Schedule 2]

Means any item likely to assist in restoring a veteran to independence.

Audiologists [regulation 6]

A person who is an audiologist is a treatment provider if the person:

- (a) is a member of the New Zealand Audiological Society Incorporated; and
- (b) when acting as an audiologist, is not acting:
 - (i) in the course of his or her employment by a supplier of hearing aids; or
 - (ii) as a supplier of hearing aids.

health practitioner [section 7]

Has the same meaning as in section 5(1) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

impairment [section 7]

Means a loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical function or structure.

service-related [section 7]

In relation to an injury, an illness, a condition, or a whole-person impairment, means an injury, an illness, or a whole-person impairment caused by, contributed to by, or aggravated by qualifying service.

veteran [section 7]

Means:

- (a) a member of the armed forces who took part in qualifying operational service at the direction of the New Zealand Government; or
- (b) a person:
 - (i) who has been:
 - (A) appointed as an employee of the Defence Force under section 61A of the Defence Act 1990; or
 - (B) seconded to the Defence Force with the permission of the Chief of Defence Force; and
 - (ii) who took part in qualifying operational service at the direction of the New Zealand Government; or
- (c) a person who, immediately before the commencement of Part 3 of this Act, is eligible for a pension under the following provisions of the War Pensions Act 1954:
 - (i) section 19 (but only if the person was a member of the forces);
 - (ii) section 55 or 56;
 - (iii) Parts 4 and 5