

Hearing Australia Corporate Plan FY 2026–29

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

Acknowledgement of Country

Hearing Australia would like to acknowledge and pay our respect to the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work.

We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the longest continuing culture on Earth.

We extend our acknowledgement and respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we work with and serve, now and into the future.

Our Commitment

We commit to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at every opportunity to advance their health, wellbeing, and self-determination.

We commit to listening, learning, understanding, respecting, and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' diverse cultures and perspectives, and to reflecting this in how we work with community.

We commit to co-designing our services with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, peoples and communities to ensure they are holistic, culturally safe, and free from racism and discrimination, so communities can access the help they need, when they need it.

We will continuously improve the way we work and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, so that all people feel safe and respected.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers are critical to closing the gap in health outcomes. We are committed to increasing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working with us, particularly in remote and regional communities.

We will demonstrate these commitments in our work across Australia, every day.

We will show this in how we engage with and serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, through our corporate and business planning, and through implementing our Reconciliation Action Plan.

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Foreword

This Corporate Plan outlines how Hearing Australia will continue to provide world leading research and hearing services over the next four years.

Since our establishment in 1947 we have helped over two million children and adults experiencing hearing loss and have undertaken research that has changed the lives of many more around the world.

We exist to help anyone with hearing loss, from babies to the most senior members of our community, and to do everything we can to prevent avoidable hearing loss. Each week we help thousands of children and adults to hear better and to communicate with their families, their colleagues, and their communities. This is an important responsibility and a great privilege.

Over the 2024-25 financial year we focused on strengthening our operations and systems while continuing to deliver excellent outcomes for our clients, partners and the Australian Government.

At the time of preparing this Corporate Plan we are on track to meet our commitments to Government and to continue to grow our commercial operations.

Over the next four years we will build on this foundation to deliver even better hearing solutions for our clients, being agile in responding to client needs, fueled by high quality data and insights, and innovative approaches to service delivery. We will also play a key role in improving the hearing health of First Nations children and adults.

We will play a national leadership role in hearing healthcare, enhance our Government funded hearing services, grow our commercial business, and strengthen our organisation.

With a focus on revenue growth, productivity and disciplined cost management, Hearing Australia is committed to remaining financially sustainable and building on our proud history.

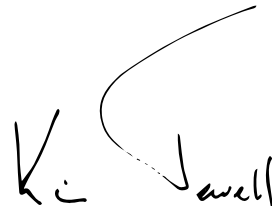
We will also continue to work proactively with the Australian Government and our partners to help shape and deliver policies and programs which improve the hearing health of all Australians.

In addition, and for the first time, over the next four years Hearing Australia will invest profit from our commercial operations into a new program to help people at risk of isolation to reconnect to the world of sound. The fund will support people ineligible for government funded hearing services including people experiencing homelessness and unemployment, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in remote communities.

We thank the Australian Government and our partners for their support and look forward to working with them over the coming years. It is only through partnerships that we can achieve our objective of improving the hearing health of Australians.



Elizabeth Crouch AM
Chair



Kim Terrell
Managing Director

Introduction

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

- this Corporate Plan (the Plan) has been prepared in accordance with the *Australian Hearing Services Act (1991)* (the AHS Act), the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act (2013)* (the PGPA Act) and with section 16E of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule)
- the Plan covers the four-year period from 2025–26 to 2028–29, and
- the reporting period for the Plan is the year beginning on 1 July 2025 and ending on 30 June 2026.

Overview

The AHS Act requires the delivery of the Plan to the responsible Minister and the Minister for Finance at least 60 days before the start of the first reporting period to which the Plan relates.

This Plan outlines how Hearing Australia will achieve its goals over the next four years by:

- playing a national leadership role in hearing healthcare
- enhancing our Government funded services
- growing our commercial business, and
- strengthening our organisation.

This public version of our Corporate Plan has been edited prior to publication to remove commercially sensitive information, consistent with Section 16E(4) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014.

Why we exist

Our purpose and functions

Hearing Australia is a corporate Commonwealth entity and accountable to the Minister for Health and Ageing and Minister for Disability and the NDIS. Our functions are defined under Section 8 of the AHS Act. These include:

- the provision of hearing services to eligible clients under the Australian Government's Hearing Services Program (HSP) and to designated persons eligible under the Community Service Obligations (CSO) Program – including children, young adults, adults with complex needs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- the provision of hearing services to Comcare clients and Commonwealth employees
- entering into arrangements for the supply, research, design and development of hearing services, including providing services to anyone with a hearing loss
- carrying out research
- providing advice, education, training and consultancy services in relation to hearing services, and

- any functions incidental to these functions.

The AHS Act also sets out a range of governance obligations and operational requirements for the organisation.

This means we work closely with Australian Government departments, agencies, and numerous partners to ensure our research and hearing services are of the highest standard and deliver improved hearing health outcomes for the community.

We support initiatives to prevent hearing loss and advocate for improved access to, and quality of, hearing services across Australia.

In addition, our First Nations Services Unit coordinates the delivery of our services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

We also run campaigns and events to raise public awareness of the importance of good hearing health and our research arm – the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) – regularly produces internationally recognised research on hearing health and collaborates with global partners on innovative products and clinical resources.

Our Operating Environment

Hearing Australia operates in a rapidly changing and highly competitive marketplace. As such, we must anticipate and respond to:

- the evolving needs and expectations of Australia's ageing population, which is living longer, being more active later in life, and shifting from reliance on the age pension to self-funded retirement
- demographic trends among our clients, coupled with a need to make our services safe and accessible for all Australians
- increases in hearing loss associated with an ageing population, noise induced hearing loss, and high levels of ear disease in First Nations children
- broader Australian Government priorities, including in relation to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Aged Care sector, First Nations peoples' health, and the Hearing Services Program
- ongoing technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI), to enhance hearing solutions, personalise client experiences, and improve operational efficiency
- the increasing use of data to inform healthcare, coupled with increasing uptake of digital solutions and hybrid service models
- a marketplace dominated by large, multinational manufacturers and their subsidiaries, as well as emerging non-traditional competitors
- cost of living pressures impacting our clients, along with broader consumer trends
- a tight labour market, where the demand for people with the skills critical to our success is high and likely to remain so into the future
- increases in cyber security threats, coupled with associated supply chain impacts, and
- an increased focus on integrity, reconciliation with our First Nations peoples and our environmental, social and governance responsibilities.

Hearing loss in Australia

Over 3.6 million Australians have some level of hearing loss, and this number is forecast to double to an estimated 7.8 million people by 2060¹. This is a major economic and social challenge, compounded by further factors which pose challenges for the primary health system to identify and support people with hearing loss.

The Australian hearing healthcare market is valued at around AUD \$1.2 billion per annum, with 54 per cent of services delivered through the Hearing Services Program funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. The remaining 46 per cent of hearing services are paid for directly by clients².

Hearing loss can profoundly impact an individual, leading to reduced workforce participation and social isolation. If not addressed early, hearing loss impacts the way children speak, learn and interact with others and can have lifetime effects.

Hearing Australia has a sustained focus on improving the hearing health of Australia's First Nations peoples, particularly young children. Our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has found that around 29 per cent of children under the age of six experience undiagnosed middle ear infections and 20 per cent have a hearing loss, with five per cent requiring referral to specialist ear, nose and throat (ENT) practitioners and 11 per cent requiring referral for speech pathology services³.

Our clients and our services

In 2024-25 Hearing Australia will provide care to approximately 284,000 children and adults with hearing loss, including helping ten babies each week hear for the first time.

Our clients are at the heart of everything we do. We deliver accessible, high-impact hearing solutions tailored to diverse needs, ensuring exceptional service for everyone, regardless of financial circumstances, age or location.

We offer government-funded services to eligible individuals and provide high-quality support for those who do not qualify for Australian Government funding.

1. Deloitte Access Economics (2017). *The social and economic cost of hearing loss in Australia*

2. Hearing Australia estimates from aging population and estimates on Hearing Services Program

3. Hearing Australia HAPEE data July 2019 – February 2023

People eligible for Government funded services include:

- pension concession card holders
- recipients of Centrelink sickness allowance
- holders of a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold and White card
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants
- children and young adults under the age of 26 years
- adults with complex hearing needs, and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged over 50 years or who are participating in Community Development Programs.

We are committed to maintaining high levels of client satisfaction and making it easier for the Australian community to access tailored hearing solutions, expert advice and ongoing care. Through our network of over 185 permanent and 300 visiting sites, telehealth services, digital solutions, and outreach programs in rural and remote communities, we ensure support is always within reach. Additionally, we collaborate with local partners to extend our services to the most vulnerable, making quality hearing care accessible to all. We empower our clients with cutting-edge hearing solutions, harnessing the latest technology to enhance their quality of life and keep them connected to the sounds and life they love.

Furthermore, we actively raise awareness about noise induced hearing loss among employers and workers in high-risk industries, providing education and resources to help mitigate risks. By promoting positive behaviour change and implementing preventative measures, we aim to protect long-term hearing health and create safer working environments for all.

First Nations hearing health

Hearing Australia's First Nations Action Plan was launched in 2022 by the then Minister for Government Services and aims to improve the hearing health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The Action plan is a multi-year commitment to working in partnership with Australia's First Nations peoples and was co-designed with knowledge-holders representing twenty-seven stakeholder organisations.

The Action Plan details Hearing Australia's commitment to supporting system improvements, accelerating access to care, building capability within the health and education sectors, and referring First Nations families to specialist services, where needed.

The Action Plan aligns with the priorities under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031. It also underpins Hearing Australia's long-term goal of halving the rate of hearing loss in First Nations' children by half by 2029.

Under this plan we have partnered with local communities to develop models of care which are culturally appropriate, streamlined and accelerate access to services; are working with partners to remove barriers and reduce waiting times for surgery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; and building a culturally informed evidence base to inform improved ear and hearing health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

A key aspect of the Action Plan is our commitment to working with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and more than 100 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to make hearing health a priority in First Nations communities across Australia, to ensure that children with ear disease or hearing loss are identified early and get the help they need, and to help build primary health workforces across Australia.

Hearing Australia's Hearing Assessment Program – Early Ears (HAPEE) is critical to achieving this objective. We have now seen over 45,000 young First Nations children over the past six years in urban, regional and remote locations across Australia and are actively helping many of these children with ear disease and hearing loss get the help they need. Funding for the HAPEE program ends in June 2026 and we will work with the Government to seek an extension of funding to ensure that First Nations children can get the hearing help they need.

Our people

Our people are at the heart of our success. We strive to be an employer of choice, fostering a highly engaged, skilled, and dedicated workforce. We recognise the importance of investing in our people and enhancing their skills and capabilities to drive even greater organisational performance. Committed to recognising and rewarding high performance, we create an inclusive workplace that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to thrive and generate positive outcomes.

Our Employee Value Proposition 'It matters more at Hearing Australia' reflects our unwavering commitment to purpose – transforming lives and creating positive outcomes. It celebrates the dedication of our people, acknowledging their vital contributions to serving our clients and the success of our organisation.

We are proud of the significant progress we have made in implementing of our fifth Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), reflecting our deep commitment to advancing reconciliation both within our organisation and with our partners. This plan reflects our dedication to enhancing our understanding and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning. It also focuses on improving employment outcomes by boosting recruitment, retention and professional development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, while fostering positive relationships through anti-discrimination strategies.

Our partners

Hearing Australia collaborates closely with a diverse network of partners across Australia and internationally.

As a government entity, Hearing Australia works collaboratively with Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies, including the Department of Social Services, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the National Disability Insurance Agency, Safe Work Australia, and various State and Territory departments of health and education.

We also work closely with NACCHO and over 100 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. This includes working with local services to co-design hearing partnerships and service delivery arrangements which meet the needs and expectations of local communities in culturally safe ways. These initiatives also support the development of better ear health knowledge and skills in local workforces.

Hearing Australia also works closely with a wide range of primary health services, not-for-profit organisations, universities, hearing device manufacturers and peak bodies to improve the hearing health of all Australians and particularly those people with hearing loss.

We are grateful for the support of our partners and are committed to continuing to grow, strengthen and deepen these relationships.

World leading hearing health research

Hearing Australia is committed to providing world leading research into hearing health through our research division, the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL).

A highly regarded world leader, NAL's mission is to drive research and evidence-based innovation to improve hearing health and transform the lives of people with hearing difficulties.

NAL delivers a wide range of projects funded by the Australian Government, granting organisations, commercial partners, and Hearing Australia, to support ongoing policy reform and improvements to service delivery, clinical outcomes, and the prevention of avoidable hearing loss.

NAL enjoys a strong reputation and is active in evidence-based research and innovation to support and enhance the lives of people globally with hearing difficulty and the professionals who care for them.

Our Strategic Focus

This Plan sets out how Hearing Australia will achieve its strategic objectives over the next four years and build on our success to date.

Strategic Pillars

Hearing Australia's four strategic pillars will guide the organisation over the next four years. These are:

- providing national leadership in hearing healthcare
- enhancing our Government funded services
- growing our commercial business, and
- strengthening our organisation.

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

The pillars include the actions we will take to continue to provide world leading research and hearing services over the next four years.

This Plan includes a focus on:

- continuing to improve our technology to support the delivery of services through multiple channels
- using data to further enhance our client services
- supporting continuous improvement and improved productivity, and
- providing our people with the skills and tools that will enhance their capability and productivity, and build a strong culture of performance, inclusion and innovation.

Our key priorities are outlined in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Corporate Plan Priorities 2025-2029

National leadership in hearing healthcare	Enhance our government funded services	Grow our commercial business	Strengthen our organisation
A1. We will work with the Australian Government and our partners to deliver national hearing health reforms	B1. We will improve the hearing health of First Nations children	C1. We will deliver commercial revenue growth and productivity gains so that we can invest in the hearing health of the nation.	D1. We will invest in our people, processes and systems to improve performance and engagement.
A2. Through NAL, we will deliver an outstanding research program to improve the lives of people with hearing loss.	B2. We will optimise the delivery of the CSO program	C2. We will optimise investment in our network of hearing centres, marketing, and digital touchpoints to drive client growth and improve our market share.	D2. We will deliver against strong commitments to social responsibility, governance and sustainability.
A3. We will invest in a Profit for Purpose program to provide hearing services to members of the community not eligible for Government funded hearing services.			

Strategic Pillar 1: Providing national leadership in hearing healthcare

Hearing Australia delivers important services on behalf of the Australian Government and is committed to working with the Government and our partners to help shape and deliver policies and programs which improve the hearing health of our nation and to increase the value of these services to the taxpayer.

Our key priorities in this area are:

- A1. Strengthening our engagement with the Australian Government.** We will enhance our voice and thought leadership on key issues critical to national hearing health, advocating for policy settings and funding arrangements that support better hearing health outcomes. In alignment with broader Government priorities, we will continue to collaborate with partners to integrate and enhance service delivery, ensuring Australians can easily access high-quality hearing services.
- A2. Advancing research to improve the lives of people with hearing loss.** We will continue to invest in and support our research arm, the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), to conduct world-class research which delivers meaningful impact. By strengthening NAL's role as a leader in hearing health research, we aim to generate insights that benefit Hearing Australia, the Australian Government, our broader network of partners, and the Australian community.
- A3. Investing in profit for purpose.** We will establish a 'Profit for Purpose' program to help people at risk of isolation to reconnect to the world of sound. This program will be funded from profit generated by our commercial operations and help people experiencing unemployment, homelessness or financial hardship who are ineligible for Australian Government funded hearing services.

Strategic Pillar 2: Enhancing our government funded services

Hearing Australia is dedicated to enhancing the delivery of its government-funded services to provide even greater value to the Australian Government and taxpayer. We are committed to improving the hearing health of First Nations children, meeting the hearing needs of CSO clients and maximising the value of the CSO program.

Our key priorities under this pillar are:

- B1. Improving the hearing health of First Nations children.** We will actively maximise the value and impact of the HAPEE program and ensure it continues to improve the hearing health of young First Nations children, increases awareness of the importance of good hearing health, and builds local hearing healthcare workforce capabilities. We will also seek to have the funding for this program extended beyond 30 June 2026 given the level of undiagnosed ear disease and hearing loss in young First Nations children and the impact that this has on their learning and development.
- B2. Optimising the delivery of the CSO program.** We will refine our delivery of the CSO program, including using client insights, to ensure that our services and resources are maximised across our network of hearing centres, outreach communities, and our digital channels. We will also work with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing to ensure the program remains adequately resourced and sustainable into the future.

Strategic Pillar 3: Growing our commercial business

We are committed to expanding our commercial business to increase our ability to provide hearing solutions for those who pay part or full costs of their services, to maintain our financial sustainability and to allow us to invest in initiatives that deliver meaningful positive impacts for the hearing health of the nation.

Our key priorities in this area are:

C1. Driving strong commercial revenue growth and profitability. Based on client insights, we will evolve the way we attract and retain our clients to improve our competitiveness, productivity and responsiveness to emerging opportunities. This includes shaping our services to better meet the needs of our commercial clients, making it easier for clients to access our services, building the value of our brand, and lifting the impact of our marketing strategies.

C2. Increasing client reach and value. We will continue to invest in our network of hearing centres, our call centre and our digital services to improve our clients' experience. We will provide our clients with outstanding services and products at competitive prices. We will also maximise the performance of our hearing centres, target areas of growing commercial demand, and establish commercial agreements with new business partners to drive growth.

Strategic Pillar 4: Strengthening our organisation

Hearing Australia aspires to be a high performing organisation that delivers on its commitments to its people, the Australian Government and the broader community. Over the next four years we will continue to strengthen our organisation and contribute to social and environmental sustainability.

Our key priorities in this area are:

D1. Enhancing our workforce and digital capabilities.

We will continue to invest in our people, equipping them with capabilities and lift our organisational performance. We will recognise and reward our people for high performance and provide an inclusive workplace that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. We will continue to invest in digital solutions to simplify and automate processes, particularly our network administration, and we will grow our digital maturity to enable more effective service delivery and client value management.

D2. Upholding integrity, social and environmental responsibility. We will maintain our reputation as an organisation that values integrity, including meeting in full our governance, legal and policy requirements, strengthening our commitments to social responsibility, promoting reconciliation with Australia's First Nations peoples, and reducing our environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions.

Our Governance Arrangements

The Board of Hearing Australia is established under the AHS Act and consists of a Chair, the Managing Director, four Non-Executive Directors and three Special Purpose Directors.

The Board's functions under the AHS 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 Health and Ageing and Minister for Disability and the NDIS and is currently supported by three committees:

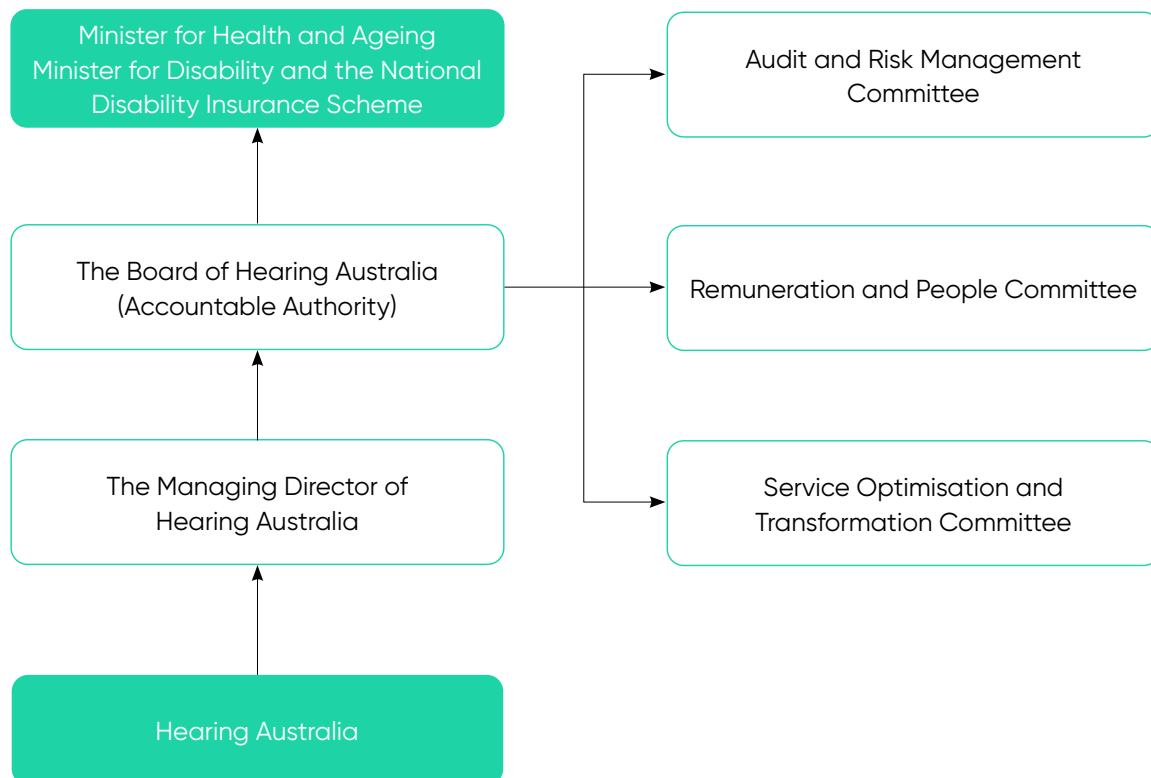
- the Audit and Risk Management Committee,
- the Service Optimisation and Transformation Committee, and
- the Remuneration and People Committee.

The Board and its Committees meet on a regular basis and maintain a strong level of guidance and oversight of the organisation and its operations.

This includes a focus on Hearing Australia's:

- operational and financial performance
- progress against key initiatives and key performance indicators
- clinical quality and client outcomes
- risk management and compliance programs, including in relation to fraud and corruption
- internal audit program and compliance with Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) requirements and PGPA Act requirements, and
- reporting to the Minister for Health and Ageing and Minister for Disability and the NDIS.

The Board is committed to ongoing professional development and is updated regularly on emerging governance issues, government policy changes and the implications for Hearing Australia. The Board may also appoint additional members to Board committees, where required, to ensure that it has timely access to key skills and experience.



Risk Management

Hearing Australia manages risk in accordance with section 16 of the PGPA Act, the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy, and the international standard ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management—Guidelines.

The Board and the Audit and Risk Management Committee oversee risk management, with the support of the Chief Risk Officer. Members of the Executive Team are also responsible for managing risks within their business and operational units.

Our approach to risk

We recognise that risk management is an integral part of good business and are committed to building a culture where conscious and deliberate consideration of risk is an integral part of our way of working.

Hearing Australia manages risks as a routine part of our strategic and operational business planning processes. Risks are assessed and mitigation actions taken in line with the Board's Risk Appetite and Hearing Australia's purpose and strategic priorities.

Hearing Australia's Risk Management Policy ensures that a clear and consistent approach to risk is applied across our business. The Risk Management Framework also helps our people actively manage risk in their day-to-day work.

Our strategic risks

The Executive Team regularly reviews the organisation's strategic risks and reports to the Audit and Risk Management Committee on a quarterly basis. All strategic risks are assigned a risk owner from the Executive Team. Risk owners must ensure risks are actively managed, with emerging threats and opportunities identified and addressed.

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 AHS Act.

The tables in **Attachment A** outline the performance activities and targets that Hearing Australia will use during 2025-26 to 2028-2029. The indicators used this year have been updated to better align with our growth aspirations and our overall strategy, and will provide the framework that is used to measure our business performance.

These performance indicators and metrics will be monitored regularly by management and the Board.

ATTACHMENT A – Performance metrics

The following table outlines Hearing Australia’s key performance metrics for the next four years. These metrics are adjusted each year to ensure they remain aligned with, and support, the key priorities in the Corporate Plan. These measures have been developed based on the assumption that Australia will not experience any significant economic shocks over the next four years.

Strategic Pillars	Performance Measurement	Estimates 2024-25	Target 2025-26	Target 2026-27	Target 2027-28	Target 2028-29
National Leadership role in hearing health reforms	1. Quality of advice and support to government and partners	On Track	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved
	2. Dissemination of NAL research through Papers and Conference presentations	30	30	30	30	30
Enhance delivery of government funded programs	3. Combined client satisfaction rates	86	86-90	86-90	86-90	86-90
	4. Number of CSO clients seen	68,000	70,000	71,000	72,000	73,000
	5. Number of First Nations children aged 0-6 years seen	13,000	13,000	Subject to funding	Subject to funding	Subject to funding
	6. Number of First Nations communities visited	270	270	270	270	270
	7. Number of commercial clients seen	188,000	201,000	208,000	216,000	224,000
Strengthen our organisation	8. Staff engagement survey results	70+	70+	70+	70+	70+

Key Assumptions:

- These figures are based on best estimates as of March 2025.
- These estimates also assume ongoing funding for the delivery of the Australian Government Community Service Obligations Program.
- HAPEE program funding assumed to cease at end of FY26.

About the artist

Artwork created by Davinder Hart who is an Aboriginal artist born in Perth, Western Australia. His family roots connect from Bibbulmun and Katanning in the south west region of the Noongar people.

