

# HearChoice: a digital decision tool to educate, engage and empower adults with hearing difficulties

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## Background

Challenges in hearing health care

9 years of no action

Poor knowledge  
Misinformation  
Unrealistic Expectations

2:3 with hearing loss do nothing

Limited range of hearing options offered

40% of people leave clinics empty handed

Can these challenges be addressed through guided support in decision-making?

HearChoice is a modular, unbiased, trusted decision-support app that offers informed choice and control in hearing healthcare.

**Aims**

1. Understand patient needs in help-seeking and decision-making
2. Co-develop the HearChoice app
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of HearChoice
4. Co-design an implementation plan

## Methods: work packages

- WP1: Understand barriers and enablers to help-seeking and decision-making  
Participants: Adults with hearing difficulties (AHD), hearing care professionals (HCP)  
Mixed methods:
  - Semi-structured interviews (n=16 AHD), focus groups (n=9 HCPs)
  - Survey (n=300 AHD; n=43 HCPs)
- WP2: Co-develop HearChoice using an iterative participatory approach with key stakeholders (e.g., AHD, HCPs)
- WP3: Evaluate effectiveness and feasibility of HearChoice (ongoing)
  - Online randomised controlled trial (RCT; n=841 eligible AHD)
  - Process evaluation via interviews (n= approx. 20) and surveys (n=841)
- WP4: Co-design implementation for scale-up and sustainability (ongoing)
  - Real-world clinic testing
  - Commercialisation (clinics, hearing aid manufacturers, big business)

## WP1: Identifying barriers and enablers

*"I feel a little bit clueless about going forward. And I think that's a barrier that a lot of people feel in my position. Because you don't have that information, you just, you feel a bit defeated."*

*"I just want basic information about what it might cost me, what I might be able to get from the government, what I might be able to do, those types of things"* 62 yo lady

**Factors influencing help-seeking and decision making**

**Knowledge**

- Signs and symptoms
- Realistic expectations
- Benefits of hearing healthcare
- Costs and funding

→

**Features of HearChoice**

Trusted 'go-to' for clear and accessible information and advice

→

Improved knowledge

**Feeling of trust in hearing care**

- HCP offers clear explanation
- HCP addresses individual needs

→

Unbiased advice about hearing care

→

Increase trust and self-efficacy

**Hearing practitioner factors**

- HCP offers clear explanation
- HCP addresses individual needs

→

Empower users to self-advocate

→

Help individuals influence quality of care, earlier

Barriers and enablers: Help-seeking n=28; Decision-making n=14 (Bothe et al, 2025)

## WP2: User experience (UX) testing

Highly usable, useful and impactful

Information 4.9

Aesthetics 4.6

Functionality 4.6

Engagement 4.1

Mobile App Rating Scale (UMARS)

Awareness 5.0

Help-seeking 5.0

Knowledge 4.8

Intention to takeup 4.8

Behaviour change 4.8

Attitudes 4.5

Perceived Impact

★★★★★4.5 System Usability Scale 93.4%

Purpose of HC clear  
Very clear and unbiased  
"Easy to navigate"

Easy to understand  
"I'm impressed - everything you need is here"

Well-structured  
Great explanations  
"Simpatico & inviting"

## WP2: HearChoice outline - co-developed with key stakeholders

**Learn**

Understanding hearing loss is step one

**Services**

How hearing health care services can help you

**Choose**

It's your hearing. It's your choice.

**Non-device options**

- Do nothing  
Take no action, and continue as you are
- Learning to listen better  
Practical tips to get the most out of hearing, and training the brain to listen better
- Wellbeing and connection  
Get support on multiple levels, such as social, emotional and wellbeing

**Technology options**

- Technology to support hearing  
Consumer-grade devices to help you hear better, especially with background noise
- Sound enhancing devices  
Consumer-grade devices for mild hearing loss, which make sounds louder
- Hearing aids  
Advanced, medical-grade electronic devices that make sounds louder

**Plan your path to better hearing**

Communication skills training

View more info

I'm going to take action

I haven't decided or I'm not ready to take action yet

Take part in a free evidence-based online programme  
By 14 February 2025

Hearing aids

View more info

I'm going to take action

I haven't decided or I'm not ready to take action yet

Contact a hearing care professional  
By 31 January 2025

**HearChoice**

You've made a great choice. Taking action for your hearing health is the first step in improving your hearing and connections. What you do next depends on your personal preferences. You might choose to:

- See a hearing care professional. A hearing care professional is the best person to help you take care of your hearing health and give you advice on the best option for you. You can get this plan and take it with you. Find an audiologist or audiometrist at [Audiology Australia](#), the Australian College of Audiologists or the Independent Audiologists Australia directory.
- Make an appointment with your GP to discuss next steps.
- Link in with hearing organisations. Australia has a number of organisations dedicated to improving the lives of people with hearing difficulties. Check out [Saverhill](#), [Better Hearing Australia](#), the [Hearing Forum](#), [Hearing Australia](#) or [Hearing Matters Australia](#).

**Choices I have decided to act on**

**Communication skills training**

Take part in a free evidence-based online programme  
By 20 February 2025

Free online programmes include [Clearer and Easier](#). Click on the links to take you to the programs. Evidence shows that people find these programs very helpful to help them communicate in their everyday life.

**Hearing aids**

Contact a hearing care professional  
By 28 February 2025

It will be helpful to think about which features of hearing aids you like before you see a hearing care professional. Remember that your hearing care professional might not always be able to provide you with exactly the kind of hearing aids you want - this will depend on your individual needs, budget, and hearing levels.

You can find an audiologist or audiometrist near you at [Audiology Australia](#), the [Australian College of Audiologists](#), or on the [Independent Audiologists Australia](#) directory.

(Ferguson et al, 2025)

## WP2: HearChoice prompts behaviour change

Wish I'd known this before I saw the audiologist  
Going to see about HA now – was waiting until after holiday

67 yo lady

Normalises HL, reduces stigma, you're not alone  
I'm going to start wearing my hearing aids again

70 yo lady

Didn't know there were so many other options  
I'm going to get a TV streamer later today

69 yo man

## Summary and Conclusions

- There are many barriers to help-seeking and decision-making in hearing healthcare
    - Large unmet need
  - Missed opportunities in hearing health
    - Non-hearing aid options likely to act as 'gateway' products
  - Co-development with users' voice at its core
    - High support for HearChoice
  - HearChoice rated as highly usable, useful and impactful
    - Prompts behaviour change (e.g. uptake of hearing healthcare)
  - Evaluation of HearChoice
    - Clinical effectiveness via RCT; real-world clinic testing
  - Commercialisation of HearChoice to implement into clinical practice
    - Scale-up and sustainable across Australia, + UK, Europe, USA
- Ask Mel for a demo
- HearChoice**