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## ***Audiometry Project – Assessment and Recommendation for Hearing Aids***

The Ministry of Health undertook a project in 2009 to determine which allied health professional groups (in relation to hearing) should be approved to undertake assessments for the purpose of recommending hearing aids funded (either subsidised or fully funded) by the Ministry of Health and whether there should be specific requirements for accreditation.

The project considered the differing levels of training and experience of people working within the field of audiology in New Zealand, Australia, the United States of America and United Kingdom. Perspectives were also gathered from key stakeholders as to the current and potential future role of audiometrists in New Zealand.

It was concluded that audiometrists need to work under supervision of an audiologist and the level of supervision may vary based on the level of training and proficiency of the audiometrist. Those audiometrists with sufficient training, demonstrated competence and appropriate clinical supervision arrangements should be able to access Ministry hearing aid funding on behalf of eligible clients.

A series of recommendations were made that included:

- Recognising suitably qualified audiometrists who work under supervision from an experienced audiologist (who is an NZAS member) to submit subsidy applications for Ministry of Health funding
- Requesting that the New Zealand Audiological Society (NZAS) widen their membership and strengthen the role of audiologists in providing supervision to audiometrists.
- Strengthening quality systems
- Considering opportunities for New Zealand based training for audiometrists

A full copy of the report is published on the NZAS and Association of New Zealand Audiometrists Incorporated (ANZAI) websites.

The Ministry accepted the recommendations from the 2009 report and has established a project to co-ordinate the work required to implement and support those recommendations from the 2009 *Audiometrists and Access to Ministry of Health Funded Hearing Aids* report that are mutually agreeable to all parties. In particular the project includes those recommendations that ensure quality control and self-regulation. The Project will use an expert working group with membership from NZAS, ANZAI, employers, University of Auckland, University of Canterbury and the Ministry.

The project has recently commenced and is expected to conclude early in 2011. Further information about the project is available from Christine Howard-Brown, project manager, email: [chris.hb@paradise.net.nz](mailto:chris.hb@paradise.net.nz) or 021 439 775.