If I live in rural Victoria, what services are available?

Living outside a metropolitan area presents a number of additional challenges for families of a baby who has been diagnosed with a hearing loss. You will probably need to travel greater distances to access specialist and audiological services. Issues about work, looking after other children and travelling with a small baby increase the stress for rural families. It can seem like you have just arrived back home and you have to travel again.

This will improve over time. There will be fewer appointments and you will be able to attend an Australian Hearing Centre closer to home. There are some services available to you that can relieve the financial burden. Ask your doctor, audiologist or hospital social worker about financial assistance for travel and accommodation.
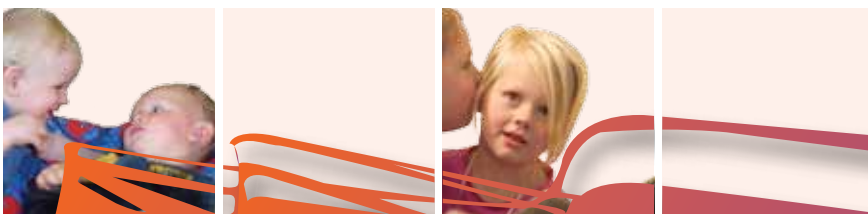
Some things to keep in mind

- Travel safely. Don't drive if you are upset. It might be better to stay overnight after an appointment and drive home when you and your baby are rested and more relaxed.

- Be organised. Keep all the information about your baby in one place. Remember to bring forms to your appointments that may need to be signed.

- Write all your questions down ahead of time. Don't allow the doctor, audiologist or other professionals to rush you. You have travelled a long way to attend the appointment and you should return home feeling the visit was worthwhile.

- Try and organise appointments at times that will be easiest for you and your family. For example, late Friday afternoon or early Monday morning may be less disruptive to family life.

- And most importantly, remember that the people who care about you would like to offer you help and support. Ask them when you need help. There will be other times when you can repay the favour.[1]

1 Aussie deaf kids, in *Building blocks: A parent's guide for families whose baby has been diagnosed with a hearing loss* (**www.aussiedeafkids.com**).

Every child, every opportunity