



THE DEAF SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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1 October 2010

Honourable Ian West, MLC
Committee Chair

The Standing Committee on Social Issues - Inquiry into Services Provided or Funded by Ageing,
Disability and Aged Care (ADHC)
socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr West

The Deaf Society of NSW wishes to sincerely thank members of the Standing Committee for the opportunity for Colin Allen, Director of Services, and Stephen Nicholson, Manager of Consumer and Consumer Services, to give evidence to the committee members at the Public Inquiry into Services Provided or Funded by Ageing, Disability and Aged Care (ADHC) held on 27 September 2010.

The Deaf Society of NSW has been providing life important services for deaf people and their families for almost 100 years. We provide much needed professional services in a culturally and linguistically appropriate method to Deaf people, and we are very proud of our long history of excellent service delivery. However, our recent Strategic Plan highlighted the dearth of services and lack of opportunities available to deaf people within New South Wales, particularly those in regional areas of the State.

Additional funding would provide us with the opportunity to enhance and improve service delivery in both the metropolitan and regional areas of NSW as well as better meet the needs of older deaf people and those deaf people with additional disabilities. We would also like to be able to provide much needed holistic approaches in assisting families of deaf children. However, this would incur an even greater financial burden for an organisation which is already subsidising service delivery from our own resources of almost \$500,000 per annum.

We do hope that the "wish list" document, requested by the Standing Committee will provide the basis for further discussion between the Department and the Deaf Society of NSW and that we can work together at ensuring equity for Deaf people within our State.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Everson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



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Response to the Standing Committee on Social Issues - Inquiry into Services Provided or Funded by Ageing, Disability and Aged Care (ADHC)

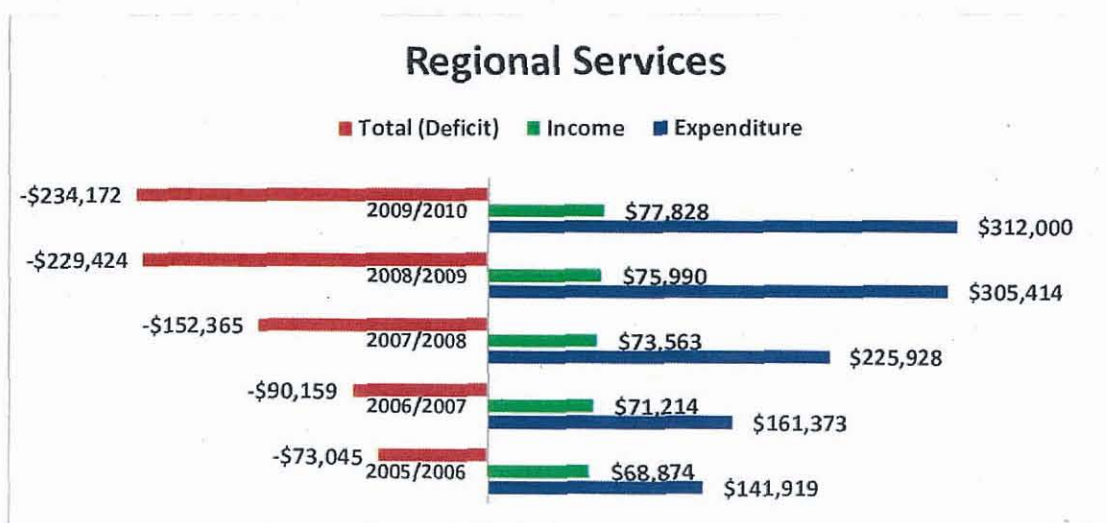
On the 27 September 2010, the Deaf Society of NSW (DSNSW) representatives, Mr Colin Allen (Director of Services) and Mr Stephen Nicholson (Manager, Consumer and Community Services) gave evidence at the Public Inquiry mentioned above. The Standing Committee requested that the DSNSW to provide a 'wish list' of services that urgently need to be funded by ADHC.

In this document we have set out our recommendations in order of priority. We hope that the standing committee will acknowledge these issues and can assist us to be able to offer an increased quality of services for deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing people and their families in NSW. The recommendations include funding required to provide for unmet need. Further information on how these figures were attained can be provided.

1. Community Services in Regional NSW:

The DSNSW currently receives approximately \$80,000 in funding annually from ADHC to provide client services to deaf people in regional areas.

The graph below shows the government income, DSNSW expenditure and the deficit for regional services for the past five years. In total the DSNSW has contributed \$779,165 from its own sources to try and meet some level of demand in regional services. We believe that recurrent funding of a further \$450,000 per annum would be required to meet the needs of the Deaf Community in regional NSW.



2. Community Services in Metropolitan Sydney

The DSNSW contributed \$801,416 over the past five years to meet the deficit incurred in providing client services in the Sydney metropolitan area (see graph below). We believe that an additional \$250,000 per annum recurrent funding would be required to adequately provide services to deaf people in the Sydney metropolitan region.



3. HACC Services

Many older deaf clients are missing out on support from the services available through HACC. The staff employed by agencies funded by HACC are not equipped to provide effective support to deaf people as they are not trained to communicate or understand the needs of deaf people. A further barrier to access to this program is that funding made available for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is not accessible to the DSNSW as Auslan is not recognised as a language by that program. Many older deaf people are isolated in their homes without communication or basic support services.

The DSNSW would like to see a partnership develop between the DSNSW and HACC so that the DSNSW can deliver services such as case management, social support, domestic assistance and personal care to senior members of the Deaf community. As the exact demand is not known, we recommend that a pilot project is conducted over one year to deliver the program and assess the needs of the over 65 deaf population in the Sydney Metropolitan and Hunter regions in terms of what HACC can provide.

| Project | Approx Cost |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Project officer | \$99,500 |

4. Attendant Care Program (ACP):

Currently the DSNSW accesses this funding for only one client (\$55,376 in 2009/10). In the past, Deafblind people were eligible to access this support but they are no longer, this is a gap that needs to be filled. Deafblind people are no longer eligible to access this funding. This results in a number of

disadvantaged people being unable to access appropriate care and support. One such client is described in the following example:

- *A deafblind person's health is deteriorating due to longstanding alcohol problem. She used to have a very elderly carer looking after her assisting her with shopping and attending various appointments. This carer passed away and there's no one able to provide support to the client to ensure her independence is maintained. She now relies on the DSNSW to support her doing what the carer used to do in the past. HACC advised this client that she is not eligible to access HACC programs due to her age and she was denied access to the ACP.*

The DSNSW strongly urges the ADHC to consider broadening the criteria for this program so that individuals such as those described above can access appropriate services. The DSNSW is aware of at least 12 individuals who currently require support, at an estimated \$405,000 recurrent funding.

| Clients | No. Of hours required | Cost |
|---------|-----------------------|-----------|
| 12 | 20 (average) | \$405,000 |

5. ADHC website accessibility:

There are two pages on the ADHC website that the DSNSW highly recommends be made accessible in Auslan.

- Information, Feedback and Complaints – <http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/dadhc/Contact+DADHC/Information+Feedback+and+Complaints.htm>
- NSW Disability Service Standards – http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/898B1EC7-FFED-4F87-83F0-E7C25D504C61/668/Standardsinaction_93582882.pdf (Appendix 4 only)

These projects would be filmed using the DSNSW Translation Service. The Disability Service Standards would be produced in a deaf friendly format by using various presenters to introduce and explain each standard and including role-plays to give examples of how each standard may relate to a person with a disability. Following each role-play the presenter would summarise the standard in relation to the role-play.

| ADHC Information | Cost |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Information, Feedback and Complaints | \$5,940.00 |
| NSW Disability Service Standards | \$15,950.00 |
| TOTAL: | \$21,890.00 |

6. Unfunded Interpreting

Currently the DSNSW is absorbing the costs of providing interpreting in many life important situations for deaf clients in areas that are currently unfunded. These unfunded areas include: private legal appointments, private financial appointments, civil court matters, real estate/strata matters and funerals.

Please find below a detailed description of services provided over the last three financial years:

| Unfunded Area | # of requests 09/10 | Cost 09/10 | # of requests 08/09 | Cost 08/09 | # of requests 07/08 | Cost 07/08 |
|--|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Financial | 8 | \$1,610.00 | 14 | \$2,660.00 | 17 | \$3,317.50 |
| Funerals | 48 | \$11,715.00 | 59 | \$11,275.00 | 48 | \$9,642.50 |
| Legal | 41 | \$9,110.00 | 32 | \$6,250.00 | 33 | \$6,425.00 |
| Real Estate/Strata | 4 | \$940.00 | 8 | \$1,610.00 | 7 | \$1,420.00 |
| Sponsorship (Deaf community events/conferences/ where no other funding is available) | 13 | \$5,347.50 | 3 | \$1,300.00 | 12 | \$2,472.50 |
| Cancelled | 6 | - | 10 | - | 9 | - |
| Unable to Provide | 16 | - | 11 | - | 9 | - |
| TOTALS | 114 | \$28,722.50 | 137 | \$23,095.00 | 135 | \$23,277.50 |

It is important to acknowledge that the number of requests displayed above is not an accurate reflection of the true demand for interpreting in these areas, only a reflection of how many requests were made through the DSNSW.

The DSNSW requests that \$60,000 per year of recurrent funding is made available to provide interpreting in these unfunded settings. The DSNSW could administer this funding and report on a quarterly basis to ADHC. We would suggest that a review of this funding be undertaken after 12 months to ascertain actual levels of demand.

Another area of unmet need has been identified in the area of private education for example – hobby/lifestyle courses provided by community colleges. As the DSNSW does not provide free interpreting in this area there are no statistics available to us to indicate the unmet demand need in this area. Please see appendix for more information about the current status of deaf education in NSW.

7. Seniors Liaison and Support Coordination

The DSNSW has provided support to older deaf people for almost 100 years. However, there is evidence of increasing demand for support in this area, in particular the need for contact point to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information on what services are available for older deaf people. Recurrent funding of \$79,500 would enable the DSNSW to provide appropriate coordination, as well as liaise with existing residential care services for older deaf people to increase awareness about the needs of older deaf people in residential care. The cost set out below includes some information to be translated into Auslan.

| Project | Approx Cost |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Community Worker (seniors) | \$79,500 |

8. Deaf Friendly Families

The DSNSW provides a number of specialist, holistic support programs for families and children, including mentoring, playgroups and language acquisition, and visual baby cry alarms. However, our Deaf-Friendly Families program is unfunded.

It can be difficult for parents of deaf children to know where to find information that enables them to make informed choices, especially if they have never had contact with deaf people before. We provide a comprehensive and unbiased source of information and can refer parents and deaf children to other appropriate services. This provides parents with the opportunity to learn about different perspectives towards deafness, communication methods and education approaches.

| Project | Approx Cost |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Deaf Friendly Families | \$148,000 |

Conclusion

The Deaf Society of NSW wishes to sincerely thank members of the Standing Committee for the opportunity to provide this information for consideration.

Please find set out below a summary of our estimates for the costing of the eight projects detailed in this document.

| Projects | Amount |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Regional Services | \$450,000 |
| 2. Metropolitan Services | \$250,000 |
| 3. HACC Services | \$99,500 |
| 4. Attendant Care | \$405,000 |
| 5. ADHC Website Auslan Translation | \$21,890 |
| 6. Unfunded Auslan Interpreting | \$60,000 |
| 7. Seniors' Liaison and Support | \$79,500 |
| 8. Deaf-friendly families | \$148,000 |
| Total | \$1,513,890 |

Appendix No 1

PARENT COUNCIL FOR DEAF EDUCATION, DEAF AUSTRALIA (NSW), DEAF SOCIETY OF NSW

Summary of Issues in the Education of Children Who Use Auslan to Access the Curriculum in NSW Public schools

INTRODUCTION

PCDE, NSWAD, and DSNSW represent the needs of deaf adults and children who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) to communicate. Our concerns relate to the education of children for whom Auslan will be the optimal way to access the curriculum in NSW public schools.

BACKGROUND

Mainstreaming is now the most common method of educating deaf children within NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) programs. While this is beneficial for a number of children, there is a significant percentage of deaf children for whom Auslan will be the optimal way to access the curriculum. Staff employed to work with these students are not currently required to have any level of competence in Auslan, and a strong push towards mainstreaming is eroding the provision of dedicated classes for this group of students.

Furthermore, early intervention programs for children 0 – 5 years old in NSW frequently do not appear to encourage the use of Auslan. Children are therefore placed at risk of severely delayed language acquisition, with the assumption that technology supporting the auditory pathway is sufficient. Insofar as DET is responsible for the provision of early intervention programs in sensory impairment, they are also responsible for minimising this risk through providing early Auslan programs, but do not attempt to do so.

Approaches to DET have been made in the past on the issue of the needs of children who use Auslan (and other signed communication) to access the curriculum, with concerns not yet addressed satisfactorily. In a recent meeting, representatives from DET have stressed these needs as individual rather than systemic issues.

POSITION

It is our position that these issues, far from being individual, are systemic issues which threaten the wellbeing and human rights of deaf children, the integrity of DET programs, and the ability of schools to meet their obligations to students in their care. There are three main problems which are of critical concern to parents of deaf children:

1. That early intervention programs do not all appear to take seriously the risk of delayed language acquisition or the potential for early Auslan programs to eliminate this risk.
2. That staff who teach or support students who use Auslan to access the curriculum are not required by DET to be fluent in Auslan. This situation is analogous to hearing students being taught subjects such as Maths and Science by a teacher with little or no competence in English.
3. That NSW lags behind other states in the adoption of Auslan as a language of instruction rather than total communication for those children who use signed communication to access the

curriculum. In other states there have been more positive developments in training teachers in Auslan and methodology of teaching in Auslan, than in NSW.

SOLUTIONS

We call for the immediate introduction of measures to alleviate these problems and reduce the risks to deaf children, including measures such as:

1. The introduction of a language acquisition "Bilingual Safety Net" policy for early intervention programs for deaf or hard of hearing children which are run or funded by DET.¹
2. The adoption of a benchmark for fluency for staff employed to work with children who access the curriculum using Auslan, whether teacher aides, learning support officers, interpreters or teachers of the deaf. This benchmark should be NAATI Paraprofessional level accreditation or recognised Deaf Relay Interpreter training or accreditation as a minimum.²
3. The provision of bilingual-bicultural programs in support units (hearing) across NSW where there is a "critical mass" of students who use signed communication to access the curriculum, in order that these programs become centres of excellence for the education of children who access the curriculum through Auslan or other forms of signing.

¹ A "Bilingual Safety Net" refers to the need for children to have access to a visual language to eliminate any risk that might arise from their not acquiring spoken language at an age-appropriate rate.

² The choice between employing a qualified teacher of the deaf or employing other support staff working with hearing teachers should of course continue to be determined according to the needs and age of the child as well as questions of critical mass.