



28 July 2011

Dear Dr Holland

RE: Enquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Mental Health Services

In October 2009 Deaf Children Australia co hosted the 4th World Congress on Mental Health and Deafness. The Congress provided an opportunity to raise awareness within the Mental Health sector of the prevalence and needs of deaf Australians.

Over 3 million Australians are affected by some degree with hearing loss. Of this population, 800,000 also experience mental health problems at some time. Deaf and hard of hearing people have an increased risk of mental health issues due to social, cultural and linguistic barriers. They are at high risk of abuse and emotional vulnerability.

Currently there is only one dedicated mental health service in Australia which responds specifically to the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people. The Princess Alexandra Hospital Deafness and Mental Health Service was established in Brisbane, Queensland in 2007 and is staffed by 2.1 full time equivalent staff. This service responds to the recognised need for specialised services for deaf and hard of hearing people in Queensland.

In 2010 Deaf Children Australia with other partners across the nation continued the work of raising awareness of the mental health needs of deaf people through a national Healthy Deaf Minds tour (*see report attached*). Prior to the tour a national reference group was established and through this a consensus statement (*p14 attached report*) recommending a National Strategy for Research and Information on Mental Health and Deafness was endorsed by professionals and services across the sector.

The four key areas of recommendation arising from the Healthy Deaf Minds tour (*p10 attached report*) requires the support of all States and Territories. Deaf Children Australia encourages the Standing Committee on Social Issues to consider and apply these recommendations as part of the Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services.

Yours sincerely

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