

Submission in relation to Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2014

DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

DECEMBER 2014



SUBMISSION IN RELATION TO BROADCASTING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DEREGULATION) BILL 2014

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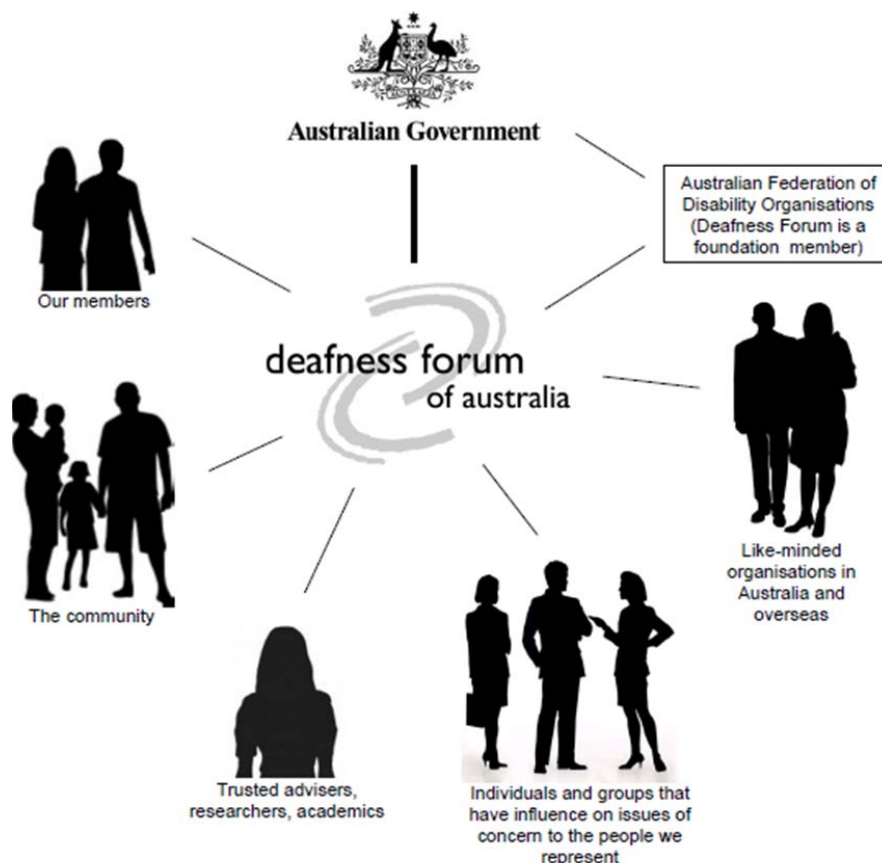
ABOUT DEAFNESS FORUM

Deafness Forum of Australia is a peak consumer member organisation, funded by the Australian Government to provide advice within its authority on public policy development and reform agendas.

It advocates on issues of consensus among constituents of the national deafness sector.

Deafness is among the largest groups within the disability community, with an estimated 3.5 million Australians affected to varying degrees, half of whom are of working age.

The total cost of deafness to the national economy is estimated at 1.4 percent of gross national product, according to the 2006 Access Economics report, Listen Hear!



INTRODUCTION

Deafness Forum of Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the *Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation Bill) 2014* as the primary national voice to government that fully represents the interests of people within the broad deafness sector in Australia.

Quality captions are a crucial service for the one in six Australians affected by hearing loss.

Deafness Forum consulted with members, other stakeholders and interested parties throughout Australia regarding these proposed measures.

We have chosen not to comment on all of the amendments listed in the Bill, but to focus on those areas of most concern.

We commend to the Senate Committee the complimentary submissions by Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Media Access Australia and various Deafness Forum members.

While acknowledging there are regulations in the current captioning framework that would benefit from refinement, this Bill has an emphasis on changes which would overwhelmingly benefit broadcasters and strongly disadvantage consumers by removing protections that safeguard access to quality captioning services.

Of significant concern is the proposal to move to a complaints based mechanism - to require individual consumers to lodge their own complaints of inadequate or poor captioning in place of refinements and the removal of genuine 'red tape' in the current regulatory framework. People with disability have firsthand knowledge that a complaints approach is ineffective, places the burden of cost on the individual and does not drive systemic reform.

This Bill gives no consideration to current failures in the provision of captioning and how the Act can be strengthened to address areas that have been identified by both consumers and providers as requiring improvement.

This Bill offers no benefit to the people that captioning is primarily intended for, which includes people who are hearing impaired, Deaf, people with chronic ear disorders and older Australians who benefit from captioning.

Deafness Forum recommends:

1. This Bill is not passed.
2. The amendments proposed and their impact on the community be assessed as part of the Australian Communications and Media Authority statutory review of the operation of the captioning requirements under the Act in 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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