

From
Roslee Fyfe

Re; Senate Inquiry into Hearing Health In Australia

I am the mother of an 8 year old daughter whom has a moderate to severe sensorineural hearing loss in both ears. She was only diagnosed with this at the age of 6 (due to lack resources in our area) but it is believed she had been that way since her birth. In the last 2 years I have made a personal, but fruitless campaign to assist my daughter socially and educationally. The most major hurdle I have confronted has been the Education Department. I constantly over the last two years have asked for assistance for Megan at school (she does at this stage receive extra reading work as she also has a severe language problem in a lot of areas) but the CONSTANT buck passing within the Education Department has at times driven me to tears. The Victorian Government Handbook for Children with a disability states that a child even with a mild hearing loss may be entitled to a Visit from a Teacher of the Hearing Impaired but we have not had access to one in our area for one and a half years. What is infuriating that 30 minutes in either direction of where we live hearing impaired children have access to a visiting teacher. This service is vitally important as normal teachers at schools need guidance on how to manage having a hearing impaired student in their midst. I have taken constant time off from my work in the last 2 years to spend time at the school talking to them on what to do. (When my daughter was first diagnosed I asked many departments for information for the teachers and the only pamphlet I was given was so old that it suggested pipes and cigarettes be removed from the teachers mouths when talking to deaf children) . This week alone I have spent a lot of time at the school setting my daughter up with an FM unit and educating the teachers concerned in the use and benefits. This Unit should have been set up along time ago but I believe I knew nothing of how it worked but have researched into the benefits and instigated its installation. This should have been done by the Education Department along time ago.

Another area that I believe is lacking is information. I have no idea of entitlements and or support that may be able to assist our daughter. I presently pay from my own pocket Private Speech Pathology lessons. We do receive help from Australian Hearing with the care and use of Hearing Aids but many other areas of support are not available to us or unknown to us.

In summary I find accessing help/support for my daughter SO FRUSTRATING that at times I feel like giving up (I am closer to this now) I am beginning to believe (and have heard) that the Departments that are meant to help you have budgets and the harder they make it for you to get assistance the better is it for them.

What suggestions I have are, maybe a single entity that deals with all Departments on your behalf ie: Centrelink/Education Department/Australian Hearing and Human Services this could eliminate a lot of buckpassing. Another one would be to make it fair for all Hearing Impaired Children across Australia to receive equal services no matter where they live. (And no we do not live in a remote location even though at times with these Departments it feels like it)

Thank you for your time, and I hope you are listening as I am that close to giving up to the detriment of my daughter.

Roslee Fyfe