

6th October 2009

Re: Inquiry into Hearing Health in Australia

To the Community Affairs References Committee
(community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au):

I would like to make a submission to the Hearing Health Inquiry.

I am a deaf professional living and working in Australia. I have worked in the Deaf Education area for 18 years and am a mother of a 22 months old toddler who is also deaf.

As a deaf person I find the current Australian hearing health system inadequate, expensive and inaccessible. I often worry about my son's and students' future if the current system remains the same.

As a deaf individual, it is a common occurrence to be denied or being given little access. Here are some examples of limited or no access that either I or other deaf individuals have experienced:

- I enjoy going to the movies. In order to access movies, I need to wait until the cinema in the city is showing a film with open captions. Most of the time, I miss out because they would pick films I do not want to see or films are scheduled at times when I cannot attend as I work full time. Last month, I was excited to see that the local cinema (Palace Verona, Oxford Street, Paddington) is showing an English-speaking film with open captions and audio description. I went to see Public Enemy and enjoyed the experience like others. So you can imagine my disappointment when a mere two weeks later, the cinema stopped advertising films with open captions. I have emailed the Palace Cinemas' headquarter asking why this is the case and I have not yet received a reply.
- My son loves the Wiggles. However I am not willing to fork out \$100 plus for the tickets to take my son to see it because I know that I will not be able to follow what is being sung or said on stage and therefore will not be able to explain to my son what is being said.
- I had to pull out of going to a workshop for professional development because the organisation who was hosting the workshop cannot afford

to pay for two Auslan (Australian sign language) interpreters. I can speak for myself but I cannot hear or follow what is being presented.

- The students that I have taught for the last 8 years are now studying for their HSC. The students found it difficult to watch the interpreters and/or hear their teachers while taking down notes. They are struggling to remember the lesson content afterwards.
- I needed to see my G.P. urgently. Although there is an existing interpreting program for private health appointments (NABS – National Auslan Booking Service), they were unable to provide an interpreter at a very short notice.

Recommendations:

The Federal Government to seek, implement and support the following:

- Real-time and remote captioning initiatives that are cost effective and easy to administer in any situations like the situations I have mentioned above. For example, the students who are studying their HSC could access real time captioning via the internet on their laptops or I could use my mobile phone to read live captions during the Wiggles concert.
- Regulations that support and encourage use of captioning in the health, education and entertainment services to ensure access and accuracy at all times.
- Subsidies to be made available for deaf and hearing impaired individuals and not for profit organisations to access real-time captioning for any work and/or health related situations.

Thanks for accepting my submission.

Sincerely,

Leonie Jackson