

WIMMERA HEARING SOCIETY INC.

Reg. No. A0021322J

A voluntary hearing-support organisation
established in August 1981.



The Wimmera Hearing Society Inc wish to submit our recommendations to the Senate Inquiry to deaf education.

The Wimmera Hearing Society is a group founded in 1981 to help and educate deaf and hearing-impaired people in the Wimmera region of Victoria. Over the years this group has grown into a well-respected body that has helped countless people and instigated many changes to the services that country deaf and hearing-impaired people receive.

It has been of great concern to us over the past years on the way that deaf education has declined for country students. Over the years it has gradually got worse with the Wimmera Hearing Society Inc having to lobby and fight to retain the services of a specialist visiting teacher for the deaf in the area on several occasions.

As my deaf son is now 24, the services that he received compared to what is available now is not even comparable. He was able with the help of the Visiting Teacher for the deaf to obtain his VCE and attend tertiary education and to fulfill his ambition of becoming an accountant. I know that if he were to be at school now this would not be an option for him.

The role of the visiting teacher service, especially to country students, who in most cases are the only deaf student with in the town attending the local school, is a vital link to their future, as was the case with my son. This is now not possible for students as they are lucky if they have access to the visiting teacher once a term, this is not acceptable to these students.

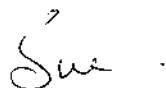
As I now act as a Parent Advocate for deaf students it is appalling to see the responsibility that is placed on the school staff and integration aids that have no formal training in deaf education, many students are not completing their education to a standard that would allow them to go onto further studies.

The recommendations that I would like to put to your inquiry include;

- Those children that are deaf or have a hearing loss come under the one specialist umbrella for deaf. E.g. state wide body. This body to allocate all funding for deaf and hearing impaired students, allowing country students a better opportunity to access services.
- Have equal access to education, the same services available to them as the city deaf and hearing-impaired students receive.
- Parents shouldn't have to over exaggerate their child deafness to receive support (this seems to be only way deaf students can access educational services)
- Extra professional staff being made available in the country. More teachers of the deaf to be trained.
- Training for support staff, integration aids and school staff and parents be available. In the country regions too much is placed on integration staff. It is unbelievable to sit in a Parent Support meeting and the only person that gives a report is the integration aid who, in most cases has not had any formal training in teaching deaf students or teaching any students.
- Parents also need to be educated by professionals to help them assist their child in education. This should be available from when the child is diagnosed, so services can be put in place for the child and when they are ready for school they will not be so far behind other hearing students.
- Deaf and hearing-impaired students should be given the same career opportunities as hearing students. Without specialist support staff this does not happen in country areas. They are usually taken up by group training employment. Deaf people are deaf they are not dumb; with the right education and training they are able to achieve the same goals as hearing students.

It is very pleasing to see that the Senate are conducting this inquiry in to deaf education, I hope that some positive outcomes will be the result and that country deaf and hearing impaired students and their families are given a much better opportunity to be given the best education possible to enable them to fulfill their life's dreams and goals.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue".

Mrs Sue Ward,
Executive Officer,
Wimmera Hearing Society Inc.