



Sub 32

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.

ABN : 43 056 895 827

President:

Jo Quayle
Phone 9544 6896
Fax 5480 6636
jojo@echuca.net.au

Secretary:

Faye Batt
17 Thornton Avenue
Bundoora 3083
Phone 9466 9608
Fax 9440 1132
mumflower@hotmail.com

Asst Secretary:

Jill Watson
Ph & Fax 9478 0130

Treasurer:

Julie Carver
Phone 9544 6896
carver@mira.net

Link Up:

Nanne Stubbs
575 Gladsville Blvd
Patterson Lakes 3197
Phone 9776 1435
Fax 9772 1260
nms@surf.net.au

Telephone Support:

Lee Ewing
Ph & TTY 9489 9993
leewing@alphalink.com.au

Parent Advocates:

Lyn Chudleigh
Phone 9707 2728

Speakers Program:

Jill Watson
Phone/Fax 9478 0130

**Australian Hearing
Services Liaison:**

Lois O'Connor
Phone/Fax 5461 4557

**Australian Caption
Centre Liaison:**

Jo Quayle
Phone 9544 6896
jojo@echuca.net.au

Resources:

58 Cooper Street
Essendon 3040
mbartlet@bigpond.net.au

Website:

www.surf.net.au
Go to home pages
/nms (Hearing Impaired)

**Mrs Jo Quayle,
68 Francis St,
Echuca,
Vic. 3564
03 54806004
24.4.02**



**Senate Education Committee.
'Inquiry For Students With Disabilities'.
Parliament House,
Canberra. A.C.T.
2600**

**Enclosed is a submission PHICVF sent to the Victorian
Government in January 2002.**

**This submission represents our response to the proposed changes
to disability funding and related structures within the Victorian
Department of Education.**

**This submission highlights existing problems and inequities with
regards the education of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students
throughout the state of Victoria.**

**PHICVF has serious concerns with the present delivery of services
to Deaf and Hearing Impaired students and we believe that " there
must be a fundamental understanding of the needs of individual
Deaf and Hearing Impaired students before 'best practice' can be
achieved".**

**PHICVF welcomes the 'Inquiry for Students with Disabilities' and
we appreciate the opportunity to participate in this much needed
investigation.**

Yours sincerely,

Jo Quayle



Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.

ABN : 43 056 895 827

President:

Jo Quayle
Phone 9544 6896
Fax 5480 6636
jojo@echuca.net.au

Secretary:

Faye Balf
17 Thornton Avenue
Bundoora 3083
Phone 9466 9608
Fax 9440 1132
mumflower@hotmail.com

Asst Secretary:

Jill Watson
Ph & Fax 9478 0130

Treasurer:

Julie Carver
Phone 9544 6896
carver@mira.net

Link Up:

Nanne Stubbs
5/75 Gladesville Blvd
Patterson Lakes 3197
Phone 9776 1435
Fax 9772 1260
nms@surf.net.au

Telephone Support:

Lee Ewing
Ph & TTY 9489 9993
lewing@alphalink.com.au

Parent Advocates:

Lyn Chudleigh
Phone 9707 2728

Speakers Program:

Jill Watson
Phone/Fax 9478 0130

**Australian Hearing
Services Liaison:**

Lois O'Connor
Phone/Fax 5461 4557

**Australian Caption
Centre Liaison:**

Jo Quayle
Phone 9544 6896
jojo@echuca.net.au

Resources:

58 Cooper Street
Essendon 3040
mbarbet@bigpond.net.au

Website:

www.surf.net.au
Go to home pages
/nms (Hearing Impaired)

The Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc supports and advocates on behalf of all parents and families of Deaf and Hearing Impaired children regardless of the type or degree of hearing loss or the method of communication used.

The Parent's Federation shares a belief that parents have the right and responsibility to make decisions about the health, education and social welfare of their children, based on access to full and unbiased information.

SUBMISSION

**Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian
Government Schools
A Review of Educational Services for Students with
Special Educational Needs**

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.
Submission: Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools
A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Educational Needs

**The Meyer Report:
 Financial Incentives That Emphasise Disability and Dependence**

For a student to access the level of support required, it is necessary to emphasise the reason for the need for that support, i.e., to emphasise the disability. How is it proposed to overcome this and yet still provide the appropriate level of support?

Loss of Statewide Consistency and Expertise

The Parent Federation has been ‘beating this drum’ for several years. If the schools are going to decide what is appropriate support, how is there ever going to be consistency? If Regions are going to determine levels of support, how will consistency be assured across regions?

Loss of commitment to Inclusive Education, Innovative Practice and Strategic Planning

The Parent Federation has been concerned for many years at the lack of available expertise in Deaf Education. There has been a serious decline in both the numbers of trained Teachers of the Deaf and those undertaking Teacher of the Deaf training. The Department of Education has consistently tried to ‘get rid of’ Visiting Teachers by removing any incentives to apply for positions. Visiting Teachers have been asked to re-apply for their jobs year after year -- ‘career paths’ are non-existent and there is no incentive to move to rural settings for positions with limited tenure. It is hardly surprising that so few are electing to undertake Teacher of the Deaf training!

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.
Submission: Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools
A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Educational Needs

Recommendation 1

Principles

- * Inclusive education programs, services and environments are the goals of public education to ensure full acceptance and participation of all students in the life of the community.
- * All students with special educational needs should have access to learning environments, appropriate program goals and targets as well as appropriate support from specialist professionals.
- * Parents are partners in the educational process and play an important role in setting learning priorities for their children.
- * The views of the student should be sought and reflected in instructional arrangements.

Parent Federation supports the goal of 'Inclusive Education'. However, in order to achieve this goal for Deaf and Hearing Impaired students, the Department of Education must firstly identify the needs of these students and, then, properly understand the significance of these needs.

Parent Federation does not believe that this is possible under the current needs framework for Children with Disabilities.

Parent Federation believes that any proposed funding changes to support structures for Deaf and Hearing Impaired students can only take place after a 'review' of the needs of these students.

How does the Department of Education hope to achieve the 2nd principle of this Recommendation when presently:-

- (a) the specific needs of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students are not properly understood,
- (b) there are insufficient trained Teachers of the Deaf and Teachers of the Deaf in training,
- (c) Many Deaf and Hearing Impaired students cannot access integrated Deaf Facilities because of serious inequities in the provision of transport,
- (d) Rural students who require access to special settings, i.e., The Princess Elizabeth Junior School and the Victorian College for the Deaf need accommodation. Who is responsible for providing this accommodation?

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.
Submission: Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools
A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Educational Needs

(e) Many rural Deaf and Hearing Impaired students are unable to access integrated Deaf Facilities and rely on the Visiting Teacher of the Deaf for support. The shortage of trained Teachers of the Deaf is acute in rural regions.

Parent Federation strongly supports the principle that 'Parents are partners in the educational process'. Is the Department of Education to provide the required training in advocacy skills etc which would be necessary for a successful outcome? What happens to those students whose parents are either reluctant or have no interest in this 'partnership'? Will the Department engage skilled advocates for these students?

Parent Federation believes that for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students, 'professional expertise' means Trained Teachers of the Deaf, Trained Interpreters (Auslan and Signed English), Trained Notetakers and Trained Integrated Aides.

Recommendation 2

* That a model of inclusive educational practice be based on the most promising practices developed by schools and networks of schools.

Parent Federation believes that this can be achieved only after a comprehensive evaluation of the needs of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students.

It must be recognised that not all disabilities require the same inclusive practices. In Deaf Education there are varying degrees of inclusive practice. What will be considered to be 'best practice' for a student whose first language is Auslan? What will be considered to be 'best practice' for a student who utilises the Auditory/Verbal or Oral communication strategies? Without a comprehensive understanding of the needs of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students, inclusive best practice cannot be properly achieved.

Recommendation 3

* That the definition of students with special educational needs be broadened to focus on the needs of students with disabilities and those with learning difficulties.

If the population of students with special needs is to be broadened then where is the funding to come from?

This recommendation must be appropriately funded. Those students already receiving support should not expect reductions in their allocations to support the implementation of this recommendation.

Parent Federation is greatly concerned that the needs of individual Deaf and Hearing Impaired students will be lost in the 'whole school approach'

Recommendation 4

* That a Special Educational Needs Program be established by merging the funding in the existing DAI, SLN, Alternative Settings and aspects of Student Support Services and that there be three funding elements within this program:

- (a) Targeted intervention for named moderate/severely disabled students
- (b) Special Educational Needs (SEN) School Allocation
- (c) Special Educational Needs (SEN) Network Allocation

Parent Federation is very concerned for those Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students who currently receive Levels 1 and 2 funding. A high proportion of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students fall into these categories. many of these are 'Oral Deaf' Students who require access to VISITING TEACHER, Speech Therapists, Integration Aides and Notetakers. Who is to decide how funds are to be allocated? At present, funding allocations for Levels 1 and 2 are often insufficient for adequate VISITING TEACHER Note-taker, Interpreter or Aide support even

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.
Submission: Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools
A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Educational Needs

though the need is there. Is this support to be further compromised? Unless there is a proper understanding of the needs of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students then 'best practice' for these students cannot be achieved. Where do Visiting Teachers fit in the 'networks'? This vital support service should be mandated, not just left to the schools to decide.

Recommendation 5

*That action research programs be initiated in a number of networks to identify how regular and special schools can best work in partnerships in the delivery of most promising inclusive practices for students with special educational needs.

Parent Federation supports the notion of these partnerships, however:-

(a) What happens to those Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students (mainly rural) who do not live in close proximity to integrated Deaf Facilities? What kinds of partnerships are envisaged for Students and Teachers in rural settings, e.g., the integrated Deaf Facilities in Bendigo are the closest centres of expertise for schools in Swan Hill and Mildura, however the distance between them is immense.

(b) Who is going to be responsible for determining the 'need' to tap into these networks? An Oral Deaf Student will often present very well and conclusions are often then drawn by Generalist Teaching staff that there is no 'need' of support required.

The Parent Federation considers Special Deaf Settings such as Victorian College for the Deaf, Princess Elizabeth Junior School and the Furlong Park School for Deaf Children to play an integral part in Deaf Education. If there is to be an enhanced role for Specialist schools, will they receive increases funding to allow them to support new outreach programs?

Parent Federation has recommended in the past that Visiting Teachers of the Deaf be based at integrated Deaf Facilities. Visiting Teachers of the Deaf need professional enhancement and opportunities for the development of career pathways. This may be one step in overcoming the acute shortage of trained expertise in Deaf Education.

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.
Submission: Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools
A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Educational Needs

Recommendations 6 and 7

*Quality assurance of assessment services and service delivery

Parent Federation does not believe that the current Educational Needs Questionnaire is satisfactory in determining the status of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students as generally these Students meet only one of the criteria for Disability and Impairment. Consideration must be given to

- (a) the nature and significance of the hearing loss and
- (b) the mode of communication used, e.g., Auslan, Signed English and/or Oral English.

It must be strongly emphasised that the use of Hearing Aids and the Cochlea Implant does not mean the acquisition of 'normal hearing'.

Exactly what is meant by moderate/severe disability in the context of Deafness and Hearing Impairment? This must be very clearly defined. For example, how is a student with a moderate to severe hearing loss who wears hearing aides and whose chosen method of communication is Auslan to be categorised? This Student will need considerable hours of interpreting time with a well trained Auslan interpreter. There are many variables when considering the 'needs' of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students!

Recommendation 8

* That the allocation of resources to schools for students identified with moderate/severe disabilities be conditional on the establishment and maintenance of an ongoing Program Support Group.

Parent Federation supports this recommendation, however,

- (a) Who will ensure PSG's will occur?
- (b) How will parents be informed of their rights?

Parent Federation believes that PSG's should be used for all students with hearing loss, i.e., bi-lateral hearing loss, unilateral hearing loss and conductive hearing loss.

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.
Submission: Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools
A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Educational Needs

Recommendation 9

* That increased professional development is provided for teachers on the accountability framework for students with special educational needs as explained in Measuring Academic Progress against each KLA -- Students with Disabilities.

Parent Federation supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 10

* That reviews of allocations to schools for students with disabilities be made regularly concentrating initially on those students whose support has not been reviewed for five or more years.

It is proposed that all future allocations come with designated time limits after which they will be reviewed. This is to ensure that the allocations are still appropriate for the individual student's educational needs.

Parent Federation supports regular reviews of allocations. In the context of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students it must be remembered that if a student makes a considerable improvement because of the level of support provided it does not necessarily follow that the student can then sustain a reduction in that level of support. With Deaf and Hearing Impaired students it often follows that an increase in support is required as the nature of the work becomes more complex and abstract.

Recommendation 11

* That a comprehensive professional development plan be developed to build the capacity of the educational profession to provide most promising inclusive educational practices in all Victorian schools.

In order to achieve the most promising inclusive educational practice for Deaf and Hearing Impaired students in Victorian Schools these students must be supported by trained Teachers of the Deaf. It would not be

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.
Submission: Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools
A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Educational Needs

acceptable for Generalist Integration Teachers to support the language needs of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students.

The ability of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students to access the best possible education is solely dependent upon the development of good language skills. Deaf students whose first language is Auslan need experienced Auslan teachers and well-trained Auslan Interpreters. 90% of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students use total communication, oral or auditory/verbal strategies and are schooled in various integrated settings -- the integrated Deaf Facility and the normal classroom. These students need the on-going support of trained Teachers of the Deaf, well-trained Notetakers and well-trained Integration Aides.

Good inclusive practice means that generalist teachers are well supported in the classroom!

Recommendation 12

* That a significant sample of schools be selected to trial the implementation of the Special needs Program in 2002.

This recommendation proposes a staged approach to the trialling and implementation of the new Special Educational Needs Program.

Parent Federation does not support this recommendation.

A taskforce must be formed to analyse the needs of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students before a trial implementation can take place.

Conclusion

Fundamental to the needs of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students is access to appropriate language. A quality inclusive education for Deaf and Hearing Impaired students can only be achieved through provision of appropriate methods of communication facilitated by trained Teachers of the Deaf, and skilled Notetakers, Interpreters and Integration Aides.

There cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach to Deaf education. There must be a fundamental understanding of the needs of individual Deaf and Hearing Impaired students before 'best practice' can be achieved.

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc.
***Submission: Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government
Schools***
***A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special
Educational Needs***

Students whose first language is Auslan need the support of well-trained Teachers and Interpreters. Normally hearing students in schools do not expect to be taught 'Pidgin English'. Deaf students should not expect to be schooled in 'Pidgin Sign'!

Oral Deaf students, many of whom wear hearing aides or use cochlea implants, need access to specialist support, i.e., trained Teachers of the Deaf and skilled note-takers and Integration Aides. The use of hearing aides and cochlea implants does not mean that these students can miraculously 'hear'. These devices serve only to amplify the existing residual hearing of the student. The needs of these students are significant and must be clearly understood for 'educational best practice' to be achieved.

The Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation Inc strongly recommends that the Department of Education establish a BALANCED taskforce to closely analyse the needs of Deaf and Hearing Impaired students. It would be hoped that such a taskforce could then determine 'best practice' for these students within the framework of the Better Services, Better Outcomes Review.