



Natasha
 Pls send to
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17 June 2002

Senator Lyn Allison
 Senator for Victoria
 Australian Democrats
 Eastbourne House
 62 Wellington Parade
 EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Senator Allison,

Re: Equal access to educational resources for Deaf and hearing-impaired students

I have been reading with interest the fact that the Senate has agreed to an Australian Democrats-initiated inquiry into the education of students with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities.

The Australian Caption Centre is currently working on the promotion of captioning in educational institutions for Deaf and hearing-impaired students. Captions are the re-creation of a television, video, DVD or cinema soundtrack in text format and appear across the bottom of a screen in a similar way to subtitles. Captions differ from subtitles in that they also provide descriptions of sound effects and other audio cues.

Videos are used widely in Australian schools for all age groups. Many entertainment titles are captioned which means that English and Contemporary Studies students can access these, assuming the schools are aware of such resources. However, there are very few videos in other subjects that have captions, including areas such as: science, history, economics, Australian studies and nutrition. *Teacher training and professional development* in the area of communication resources such as captioning will provide educators with another learning tool in the classroom.

Television programs are often recorded and replayed in classrooms at more suitable times. The recording of the captions and replaying of the video with captions will ensure that all students, regardless of their level of hearing, can understand and learn from the resource. The knowledge of and provision of appropriate equipment is essential to providing this service.

The consequence of a lack of captioned material is that Deaf and hearing impaired students do not have the same level of access as other students and may be discouraged from studying certain areas. This then impacts strongly on future access to tertiary education and work skill areas.

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Another of the terms of reference for the inquiry is *the nature, extent and funding of programs that provide for full or partial learning opportunities with mainstream students*. The Australian Caption Centre considers captioning integral for the integration of Deaf and hearing-impaired students with mainstream students.

The ability to read accurately and spell correctly is essential for succeeding at school. Difficulties with literacy affect all aspects of the school curriculum. Children identified with reading difficulties have been found to be less motivated to read, think they are less capable of reading than others, get less practice reading and consequently they can fall further behind their peers academically. The use of captions on educational videos provides students with a rich visual image that has proven to enhance their ability to learn language and literacy skills.

The Australian Caption Centre, along with the Deaf and hearing impaired communities, would like to see that the report on the inquiry reflects the current use of captioning in learning institutions and would like to see the Government ultimately adopt a more formal approach to the use of captions as an educational resource.

Should you have any questions on captioning, I can be contacted on Ph/TTY 1800 777 801.

Yours sincerely,



Allayne Woodford
SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER