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# Submission to Senate Inquiry Education of Students with Disabilities

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Greg Lee 37 Simpson St

Warrnambool Vic 3280

0355629314 28/04/02

The education of hearing impaired children in the rural schools within the south west of Victoria is a disgrace. How do I know this? Because many parents of hearing impaired children have told me so. Many are isolated in fairly remote areas, and partly due to this most feel powerless. Almost all parents feel the current system fails their children miserably. Even schools with the very best intentions fail because the proper support, knowledge and infrastructure does not exist. I communicate with these parents in my role as president of the South West Hearing Support Group. We only formed in recent months following a public meeting held in Warrnambool. The meeting was organised by parents after the local principals in our region discarded the position of visiting teacher. (Newspaper article enclosed. No 1)

The attitude of the Education Dept at this meeting astonished the attending parents. The subsequent efforts of the Education Dept to ensure the position of VT wasn't reinstated was equally astonishing. (check Ed Dept letter of 30/11/01 written AFTER Minister Delahunty ordered the position of VT to be reinstated. Enclosed No 2) This correspondence is delusive at best. It became abundantly clear that the people charged with making critical decisions that ultimately have the potential to create unbearable hardship for our children, are totally ignorant of the impact of such decisions. Indeed, many fail to reconogise any significant failings within the system. However the truth is this, for this region anyway--- Nothing is in place that addresses the disadvantage endured by our children. The needs of hearing impaired children are very specific and cannot be measured by any generic formula of the type currently used within the system. Please take note of this point! We parents hope that advocates like Victorian Services for Deaf Children will successfully highlight the current system's failings with regard to this.

Four parents from our group went on a study tour of the Bendigo / Shepparton area. One of the group was reduced to tears. She is a single mother raising two hearing impaired children. To witness the huge disparity in the educational process of that area compared to ours caused her emotional grief. She felt guilty that her children had not been afforded a proper chance, and she wished she had known such services existed. As she said "If I'd known I would have shifted". Tell me, why should she have to? How can different regions of the state be treated so differently? Why should Bendigo/ Shepparton have an effective system when we have absolutely nothing? And make no mistake that is exactly what we've got. We find it perplexing that governing policies don't dictate the proper level of resources.

Almost all parents of hearing impaired children in this region are greatly concerned about their children's emotional and physiological state. They are often withdrawn in the school environment, but prone to emotional outbursts at home. My daughter is mild to moderately deaf in both ears and I can tell you, her problems are considerable. I could not begin to comprehend the difficulties of parents raising children with higher degrees of hearing loss. Their fragile emotional state, to a very large degree, is influenced by the acute lack of resources available to them. Studies have been conducted on people who have become both deaf and blind. Asked which of these senses they would chose to regain. Almost unanimously the choice was hearing. You see... communication is everything. The cost associated with the production of good educational outcomes for these children will undoubtedly be recouped many times over as they gain employment and contribute towards society.

I have included the submission that our group of parents presented to Minister Delahunty on 22/10/02 at a regional state cabinet Meeting. It still reflects the current state of affairs accurately (Enclosed No 3).

I would have appreciated a bit more time to compile a more detailed submission. Not a soul I've spoken to over the past fortnight had any knowledge of this senate inquiry. Accordingly, I would hope your committee doesn't misread the situation here in the South West of Victoria. If individual submissions are low for this area it will be for this reason and certainly not a indication of disinterest.(Enclosed No4) Certainly quite a few of the parents in our group would jump at the opportunity to meet with members on your committee.. I would be happy to make whatever arrangements are required to facilitate this. Perhaps you could visit this area. Alternately, we could meet in Melbourne. Canberra if we had to. We are crying out for help and will bend over backwards to pursue assistance. Our children are suffering, make no mistake.

Yours Sincerely



Greg Lee

Ps Attachments in mail

# Hearing concerns over education cuts

By BRADLEY GREEN

VICTORIAN Services for Deaf Children is willing to work with the Education Department and south-west families to help improve services in schools, a public meeting was told last night.

VSDC chief executive officer Damian Lacey told a meeting of parents at the Archie Graham Centre last night it believed families who had a child with a hearing impairment were being "inadequately served" by the Victorian Education Department.

The region has lost its specialist visiting teacher to assist children at schools and angry parents last night expressed their disappointment that the service was withdrawn without consulting affected families.

Parent and meeting organiser Greg Lee said he had spoken with several parents in a similar situation to his family's and was getting the same reaction.

"They are disillusioned with the services being provided," Mr Lee said. "The Education Department talk about the reality of resources, well a lot of parents deal with reality every single night."

The meeting heard there are about 40 children with a hearing impairment in Warrambool and district schools not being serviced by a visiting teacher dealing specifically with their disability.

Mr Lacey encouraged those parents to take their concerns directly to Education Minister Mary Delahanty when the Victorian Community Cabinet visits Warr-



Pam Sudmeyer (left) and Kerri Marney speak to VSDC chief executive officer Damian Lacey who is working to boost services for hearing impaired students at schools. Picture: LEANNE GOURLEY 01/10/71/G21



Parent Greg Lee addresses the meeting at the Archie Graham Centre, sparked after the region lost its specialist visiting teacher to assist students 01/10/71/G17

## staff get packages

MELBOURNE — Ansett administrators yesterday posted out offers of redundancy packages to 11,000 of the airline's employees.

Ansett staff, many stood down without pay when the airline went into administration on September 14, have been offered up to five weeks' payment in lieu of notice, to be made by the administrators as soon as possible.

Payments funded by the Federal Government's Special Employment Entitlements Scheme for Ansett employees (SEESA), including outstanding wages, accrued leave, long service leave, rostered days off, borrowed pay and up to eight weeks of redundancy pay, will be met next month as funds become available.

"Additional entitlements such as outstanding redundancy pay will be paid to employees where possible upon the completion of the administration," administrator Mark Mentha said in a statement.

"Employee entitlements will be paid before all ordinary unsecured creditors."

Not all redundancy applications would be granted to ensure Ansett retained workers with skills and experience to develop a viable airline, he said.

ARTICLE N° 1

Enclosed Article N° 1



ARTICLE N° 2  
Department of  
Education, Employment and Training

COPY

Warrnambool District

PO Box 1127  
Warrnambool, Vic. 3280

Telephone: (03) 55613398

Facsimile: (03) 55613419

November 30<sup>th</sup> 2001

Hon Mary Delahunty  
Minister for Education  
Floor 1, 2 Treasury Place  
EAST MELBOURNE 3002

Dear Minister

I write on behalf of the Warrnambool Area Network to convey our sincere concerns regarding the recent intervention by Government and DEET officials in the student services staffing requirements for our Network. We have been directed to engage a specialised teacher for the hearing impaired which goes against the priorities of the Network's service provision plan for directly employed and outsourced personnel and services.

Our Network (formerly District) has worked extensively over the past several years to determine the service provision needs of our students who attend state schools within the Network. Several committees of management surveys, service provider case study information and an independent consultant's survey, have been utilised to determine the specialised service needs of children within our schools. The level of service with regards to specialised teaching and diagnostic skills, desired service provision as determined by the program Support Group (PSG) processes, frequency of school, student and family contact, individual contact versus teacher/support personnel training or professional development have all been considered variously and collectively.

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With regard to the provision of a specialist service for the Hearing Impaired needs of the Network, it was determined, after very extensive consultative needs assessment processes, that the level of service was clearly in excess of need and that scarce resources were needed for other areas of critical or desired, need. The determination was made only after all factors relevant to needs of hearing impaired students within the state school catchment were fully investigated. Consequently, a position for a 0.8 EFT teacher was determined but the position was not filled.

To have a directive handed down without any consideration of the processes undertaken by a group of schools charged with the responsibility of providing appropriate support to school in order to service the very special needs of students, is disappointing and, we believe, not in the spirit of enhanced self-management. We certainly feel that such a directive has created a precedent which is disturbing and unwarranted in the context of the newly defined Network's role and responsibilities.

We have met and discussed the specific problems associated with appropriate specialised teaching and learning support for hearing impaired children. The parent delegation was certainly very keen to see their cause given a high priority and were delighted that they had achieved the outcome of the directive to employ a specialist teacher specifically to support hearing impaired children in our schools realised.

13 DEC 2001

As parents they were, quite understandably, concerned about a discriminatory outcome for their children but were not mindful of the Network's finite resources and the need for a sensitive approach to the provision of specialised resources where competing interests are constantly in focus within our schools.

Our Network has been required to negotiate a position of a specialised teacher for the hearing impaired with three neighbouring Networks and to cover all the salary, on-costs and travel and administrative costs from within existing budgets. Unfortunately this means that other priority service provision arrangements cannot be realised due to this imposed requirement.

Your recognition of our situation and any advice you can give, which could assist our Network with this dilemma of operating within imposed as against self-managed service provision outcomes, will be certainly appreciated. We have had extensive discussions with our Regional Officers and have received support and co-operation in dealing with this operational anomaly. A position has been advertised and a Position Statement which we believe best reflects the nature of the directive and our best efforts to support a position which enables all elements of a comprehensive service provision for students with hearing impairments, the schools responsible for these students and the parents of those students, has been prepared and actioned.

Please contact our interim chairperson, Brian Trotter (Principal - Hawkesdale College) with any response you may see as appropriate to our assertions and concerns.

Thank you anticipation

Yours sincerely



Howard J. Looney (Principal)  
(Warrnambool Area Network Management Committee - Interim)

cc: John Vogels MLA, Member for Warrnambool  
Stephen Franzi-Ford, ASCIV  
Trevor Fletcher, Regional Director BSWR

# ARTICLE N° 3

Ms. Anne Bayly,  
Spokesperson,  
Parents of Deaf & Hearing Impaired Children,  
Barwon South Western Region,  
9 Norma Avenue,  
HAMILTON 3300

The Minister for Education,  
The Honorable Ms. Mary Delahunty.

Dear Ms. Delahunty,

We are writing to seek a commitment and your support for the provision of adequate educational services for the deaf and hearing impaired children in the Barwon South West Region of Victoria.

Furthermore, we are seeking your personal commitment to oversee action and effective outcomes for our children.

## **Background**

Prior to 1992 there were four qualified specialist visiting teachers servicing the region. Two were for the hearing impaired and one each for the vision impaired and physically disabled. This arrangement was adequate as it enabled deaf children to be included in the local educational setting.

Our community of parents and children have experienced a gradual reduction and diminishing of this specialist teacher service since this time. By the year 2001 the visiting teacher service had diminished to the point that there was no visiting teacher left to service 57 children (45 deaf & 12 vision impaired). This position required the visiting teacher to travel distances of over 1000kms per week. This situation was clearly untenable for the visiting teacher and the recipients of the service.

We stood by and watched our children being actively discriminated against and by 2001 the situation deteriorated further in that our community was left with no specialist teacher to meet the educational needs of deaf and hearing impaired children.

We consider this to be seriously discriminatory and requiring an urgent response.

We enclose a list of recommendations and actions from parents in this region, that needs to be addressed with the utmost urgency.

Yours sincerely,

**Ms. Anne Bayly.**

## **ISSUES**

### **1. An Inequitable Education Program: Double discrimination - Disability & Location**

Inequitable access to specialist visiting teacher services across the State. In the Melbourne metropolitan area a more reasonable ratio of 20 to 1 exists, without huge travel distances.

### **2. The current system supports learning disadvantage**

The parents we represent believe their situation to be dire and completely disadvantages learning outcomes for their children.

### **3. There has been no consultation and community views have been ignored**

The consultation process has been totally non-existent and parents have been ignored. This has led to total frustration and disillusionment with your Department. When will the Bureaucrats listen? Parents understand the complexity of learning issues facing their children.

### **4. No recognition of the special needs of deaf and hearing impaired children**

The Department appears to be completely ignorant in its appreciation of the special learning needs of deaf and hearing impaired children. These needs relate to the basic cornerstones of education practice, language, clear communication, literacy, receptiveness to new information and ideas. Furthermore, the visiting specialist teachers' skill appears to be devalued and under-appreciated by decision makers in the bureaucracy, who at whim, facilitate the exit of these teachers. This is done without conscience or regard for our children's learning outcomes.

### **5. Commitment to Action**

We request that you personally oversee an effective and positive outcome for our children in this region.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS**

1. The specialist visiting teacher service should be immediately reinstated. This must be done with regard to a more realistic workload. Consideration must be given to the distances travelled and the number of students serviced.
2. In this region the establishment of a centre for deaf education is required that has the capability to service outlying areas.
3. A budget be established to cover travel expenditure required to access these services.
4. A working party be established, comprising of peak deaf educational bodies, local parents and education department personnel to implement these recommendations and to develop policies that will support the implementation process and improve educational outcomes for deaf and hearing impaired children. These policies should apply to all children in the education setting of their choice.

ARTICLE N°

N° 4

**To:** mverick@national.acrod.org.au

**Subject:** senate inquiry

Dear Margart, I am involved with a group of parents who have hearing impaired children(South West Hearing Support Group) We learnt last week of the senate inquiry set down for Oct thanks to VSDC who we have recently affiliated with. My concern is this-- I have spoken to a large number of parents who have disabled children, several teachers and even a couple of school principals within the South West. Not one person knew anything of the inquiry. Submissions are to be in by 29/4. This situation is farcical and should be addressed in some way. Certainly late submissions should be received. Is this situation happening on a broad scale? How were parents expected to find out about this inquiry? We are certainly thrilled that it's happening. How ever it's effectiveness is certainly deminished without the voice of parents, who as you know , work at the coalface in caring for the disabled. Could you respond and/ or pass on these concerns to relevant persons. Greg Lee 37 Simpson St Warrnambool 3280 Ph 55629314



## Lee, Greg, DENNINGTON, Quality Assurance

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**From:** Margaret Verick [MVerick@national.acrod.org.au]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 18 April 2002 9:40  
**To:** Lee, Greg, DENNINGTON, Quality Assurance  
**Subject:** RE: senate inquiry

Dear Greg

Thank you for message, although it's disturbing to read that you have only become aware of the inquiry. I have heard that some people plan to contact the Senate Committee conducting the inquiry to ask for an extension for lodging submissions, but I have not heard if they have been successful. You can contact the Secretary of the Senate Committee, John Carter, on 02 6277 3520 to request an extension and express your concerns about the lack of information.

ACROD, which is the national industry association for disability services, originally circulated this information through ACROD State Divisions, its national committees and affiliated networks. I understand that the inquiry was also advertised in all the major newspapers, but it's always difficult to keep track of events that way. As ACROD represents the non-government organisations that provide services (mainly employment, accommodation, respite, day services) to people with disabilities, there is little direct contact with the education sector.

The Association for Children with a Disability in Victoria may well be making a submission. You can contact the Association on 9500 1232, (Michael Gourlay is the CEO) or email mail@acd.org.au <mailto:mail@acd.org.au>. This Association is also in the process of forming a national parent association, specifically for those with children aged 18 years and under. This is called the Australian Association for Families of Children with a Disability. You can find out more and / or register your interest online on the web site [http://www.acd.org.au/national\\_contacts/main.html](http://www.acd.org.au/national_contacts/main.html) <[http://www.acd.org.au/national\\_contacts/main.html](http://www.acd.org.au/national_contacts/main.html)>

In the meantime, we'll take your concerns into account when we make our submission.

Regards  
Margaret  
Margaret Verick  
Policy Officer

ACROD  
PO Box 60 CURTIN ACT 2605  
Phone 02 6282 4333  
Fax 02 6281 3488  
Email mverick@national.acrod.org.au  
ABN 52 008 445 485

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Greg.Lee@au.nestle.com [mailto:Greg.Lee@au.nestle.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 18 April 2002 8:30 AM  
**To:** Margaret Verick  
**Subject:** senate inquiry

Dear Margaret, I am involved with a group of parents who have hearing impaired children (South West Hearing Support Group) We learnt last week of the senate inquiry set down for Oct thanks to VSDC who we have recently affiliated with. My concern is this-- I have spoken to a large number of parents who have disabled children, several teachers and even a couple of school principals within the South West. Not one person knew anything of the inquiry. Submissions are to be in by 29/4. This situation is farcical and should be addressed in some way.

# bid for teacher

## Parents welcome move

end of last year but failed to attract any applicants.

South-west hearing support group president Greg Lee said the advertisement was too small and criticised the previous 11-month contract offered because it did not provide an incentive to potential applicants.

Department of Education, Employment and Training assistant director Peter Brain said the reassessed two-year full-time position would be advertised as soon as possible before the end of the month.

"It is an important need and the previous advertisement was unsuccessful," he said.

Mr Brain said the contract

important step forward." Mr Lee said the parent support group would help in any way to keep the process moving forward.

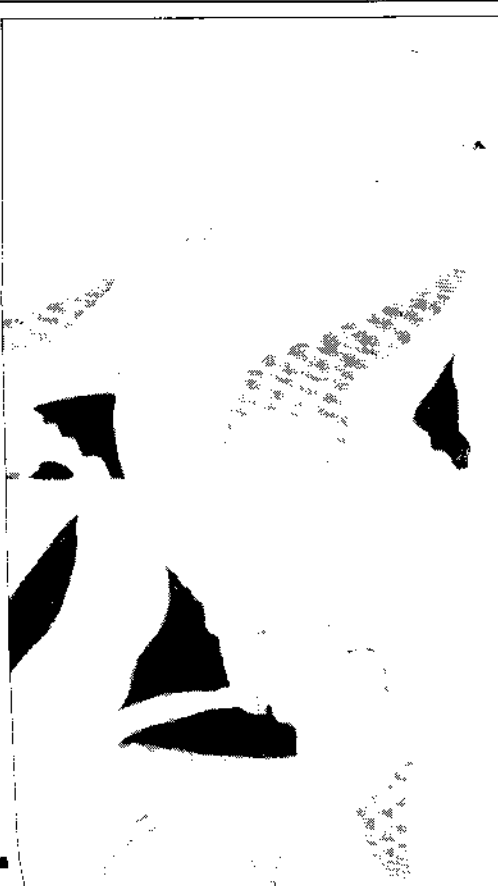
Mr Vogels said the education department's decision to re-advertise was an excellent result for the district.

"It just goes to show what a group of hardworking parents can make happen," he said.

However, Mr Vogels said it was crucial the education department allocated extra funding to the schools that will use the visiting teacher so that they did not have to cut funding to other programs to afford the new service.

Mr Brain said the position would have to be funded from the schools' existing student wellbeing fund budgets.

## paints a rosy future



## Credit card practice is a problem

CANBERRA — Publicans and other traders had been holding credit cards from Aboriginal people and allowing them to rack up debts for years, ATSIIC chairman Geoff Clark said yesterday.

Mr Clark was commenting on revelations of a practice in Western Australia in which publicans sold alcohol to Aboriginal people if they left their cards and PIN numbers with them.

... was one.

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**Lean & Tender Stewing \*  
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**2 kg for \$11 \***

**MARINATED CHICKEN WINGS \***

**2 kg for \$5.00 \***

**\* CHEAP AS**

**CASTLE COCKTAIL FRANKS \***

**\$4.99 kg SUPA BUY \***

**CASTLE TASTY SAVELOYS \***

**2 kg for \$4.99**

**\* TASTY SAVORY PATTIES \***

**2 kg for \$8.50 \***

**CHIPS \*  
SKINLESS DICED CHICKEN BREAST**

**\$9.99**

Greg Lee

Department - Brove  
Wed 27/1/02

# Teacher for hearing impaired needed

By JULIE GRIFFITHS

HEARING impaired children in Portland and Heywood could miss out on the services of a specialized teacher again this year after an education department advertisement failed to attract any applicants.

The department advertised for a visiting teacher for hearing impaired children in December, to fill a position which had been vacant since late 2000.

South West Hearing Support Group president Greg Lee said five Portland children and one Heywood child were among 56 hearing impaired children in the south-west who were being discriminated against by the department's "poor" attempt to recruit a teacher.

He said the newspaper advertisement was too small and offered no additional incentives to potential applicants to lure them to the south-west.

"The advertisement was unacceptable. The eleven month tenure it offered was not going to attract suitable applicants to this region," he

said.

"In the meantime hearing impaired children are missing out on the invaluable assistance of a visiting teacher."

A spokeswoman for the visiting teacher service for hearing impaired children claimed south-west children were being "disadvantaged" by the department's failure to recruit a visiting teacher to the region.

"Visiting teachers are freely available in the city, but in the country it is very hard to obtain that same level of expertise," she said.

"These children are missing out on constant monitoring, and classroom teachers are not getting specialist support in the classroom."

Department of Education, Employment and Training regional assistant director Peter Brain said consultations with south-west public schools and parent support groups expected to take place would consider "the best way to meet the needs of hearing impaired children in the south-west region", following the failure to attract applicants.

The South West Hearing Support Group will meet at Lake Pertobe at midday on January 27.

# Deaf children lose out again

By ALISON McADAM

SOUTH-WEST children with a hearing impairment could be without a specialised teacher again this year after an education department advertisement failed to attract any applications.

The department advertised for a visiting teacher for the hearing impaired late last year, to fill a position which had been vacant during 2001.

President of the south-west hearing support group Greg Lee said the notice was inadequate.

He said the newspaper advertisement was small and offered no added incentive to lure potential applicants to Warrnambool.

"I would say the local education department officials are not displeased that the position was not filled because they have demonstrated where they're coming from by the size of the ad," Mr Lee said.

"Our big concern was attracting a qualified person down to Warrnambool and to do that they needed to offer job security, which they didn't do because it's only an 11-month contract."

Department of Education, Employment and Training regional assistant director Peter Brain con-

firmed the position had failed to attract an application.

While refusing to say whether or not the position would be re-advertised Mr Brain said it would be "one of the options considered".

"We will maintain our communication with representatives of the hearing-impaired community in the region and we will also consult with the school networks as to which is the best way to proceed from here," he said.

The previous visiting teacher, who helped children in schools

with a hearing impairment, left the position at the end of 2000.

Mr Lee, whose daughter has a hearing impairment, said there was "no doubt" about 40 children with hearing impairments in the south-west had suffered at school without a specialised teacher, and would continue to do so.

"There are a whole range of things that have to happen and the visiting teacher role is just the first role towards a better solution for our children."

The issue was raised with Minis-

ter for Education Mary Delahunty in October.

She told Mr Lee and Member for Warrnambool John Vogels that she would advertise and fill the vacancy for 2002.

Mr Lee has written to her asking that the vacancy be re-advertised.

Mr Vogels said he would speak to her next week about the issue.

"I spoke to her in the spring session and again when she was here. As far as I knew the problem was fixed," Mr Vogels said.

Mr Lee said Catholic schools in the region were investigating ways to meet the needs of their students.

The parents group will meet at Lake Pertobe at midday on January 27.

## Region fails to lure specialist teacher

# Public gets down to business at centre open day

# Hearing, vision impaired lack support teacher

HEARING and vision impaired children in Hamilton, Portland, Warrnambool and Camperdown are being deprived of in-school support services in the absence of a visiting teacher.

The most recent visiting teacher, servicing Hamilton and Portland, resigned in mid August this year and the appointment of another teacher is yet to be confirmed.

Hamilton resident, Anne Bayly, believes the absence of a visiting teacher has a detrimental effect on children with hearing impairments.

Anne's two children, Reece, 14, and Abbi, 10, both have progressive hearing loss and have used the services of the visiting teacher since Reece was diagnosed with the impairment.

"The visiting teacher for the deaf over the last 11 years has been invaluable in supporting and implementing specific strategies, resources, equipment and ongoing support and advocacy ..."

Anne said.  
Before 1992, four full time qualified visiting teachers serviced the deaf and hearing impaired and the physically disabled in Hamilton, Portland, Warrnambool and Camperdown.

A short time after, this was reduced

to one fully qualified teacher, who covered the same area.

Anne believes location plays an integral part in the availability of services and the requirement of broad band coverage can be somewhat burdensome in regional areas.

"I do not want my children to be disadvantaged or discriminated against due to their disability and their rural location," she said.

With a number of other parents of hearing and vision impaired children concerned about the situation, a public meeting is being held in Warrnambool to highlight the issue.

Representatives from the Society of Deaf Children and the Department of Education will attend the meeting which will provide an arena for concerned parties to discuss the views and opinions.

"We don't want hand aid solutions, we want fixed policies," Anne said.

One idea to be discussed at the meeting will be the possibility of setting up a centre for deaf education in Warrnambool that has outreach capabilities to service outlying areas.

The meeting will be held at the Archie Graham Centre in Timor St, Warrnambool on Wednesday at 7pm.



TIME for improvements — Abbi Peters and mother Anne Bayly are calling for better support for Hamilton and district residents effected by hearing, vision and physical impairments.

01101313

# Meeting seeks action on support services

A PUBLIC meeting to address the lack of in-school support services for hearing and vision impaired children in Hamilton, Portland, Warrnambool and Camperdown has drawn a strong response from the community.

More than 50 people attended the meeting in Warrnambool including Department of Education and Victorian Services for Deaf Children (VSDC) representatives, district school principals and parents of children with vision and hearing impairments.

A number of parents expressed anger about the withdrawal of a visiting teacher service without their consultation.

The most recent visiting

teacher, servicing Hamilton and Portland, resigned in mid August this year and has not been replaced.

Hamilton resident, Anne Bayly, has two children with progressive hearing loss and believes her children are being inadequately catered for without the assistance of a visiting teacher.

"It's time to take a new direction, set up new policies," Anne said.

"This needs to be across the board, to encompass all schools — private and public.

"There needs to be a clear path for parents to know they can follow the child's educational needs."

Ms Bayly said the meeting was positive with many seeking to find a solution to the problem.

One possibility included

the establishment of a group comprising parents, teachers and Department of Education officials to identify the educational needs of children with a hearing and vision disabilities.

A report in the Warrnambool Standard stated that the VSDC would seek to work with the Department of Education to help improve services in the south west.

"Things are going to happen, we're not going to lay down," Ms Bayly said.

VSDC chief executive officer, Damian Lacey was quoted as saying that the organisation would be happy to work with the Education Department in creating a regional plan that was proactive for the hearing and vision impaired.

opinion

# Back into battle for the deaf

**I**S it cruel? Does it deprive deserving children of a chance to live normal lives?

Does it say that the State Government doesn't give a stuff about protecting services for regional people?

Ask Horsham district parent Campbell Trewin and you'll get a pretty direct answer.

He's a Horsham city councillor, Horsham branch Liberal Party secretary, and he's the father of a girl who stands to suffer through cuts to hours for a visiting teacher for the deaf.

He spoke out after learning that the teacher's hours would shrink from three days to one in the vast Wimmera region.

With the reallocation of funding it just means that these Wimmera kids are left off," he told the **Wimmera Mail-Times** in anguish.

**Mail-Times**

editorial

"That they're no longer important in the scheme of things according to the government."

Campbell Trewin is no stranger to a stoush.

He made enough noise through the Mail-Times in 1998 to have teaching hours for the hearing-impaired increased to realistic levels in Horsham.

But the victory has been short-lived.

Wimmera Hearing Society has backed his new campaign opposing cuts in hours and every lobby group will highlight the absurdity of one teacher spending one mere day a week attempting to answer the needs of hearing-impaired children across the broad Wimmera.

But a management group of Wimmera principals believes the level of support is sufficient, with chairman Iain McNee saying in today's Mail-Times that hearing-impaired students have appropriate support for next year and that some resources have been reallocated to other priority areas.

Our fear is that department bureaucracy works in a world of ratios and equations which clinically distance it from reality.

The same reality couldn't be more apparent to someone like Campbell Trewin who has mustered enough guts and gumption to speak out in the interests of saving sufferers, families and friends from enduring more hardship.

He'll need the impassioned voice of the community to be raised in anger to enable him to be heard.

TO GREG LEE

# Service decline concerns parents

## Public meeting to tackle issue

By EVE LAMB

PARENTS concerned about in-school services for south-west hearing and vision impaired children have called a public meeting next week to highlight the issue.

The Warrnambool parents of a hearing impaired eight year old, Greg and Trish Lee, said that in 1992 there was four visiting specialist teachers for the region and now there were none.

"This is unacceptable and changes must occur," said Mr Lee who will personally present issues raised at the meeting to Education Minister Mary Delahunty when the Victorian Community Cabinet meets in Warrnambool on October 22.

"There are people in outlying areas who have nothing now and what we've got now is falling far short of the needs," Mr Lee said.

"Our contact with parents in the Warrnambool, Portland, Hamilton and Camperdown areas has highlighted a most urgent need."

Pam Sudmeyer said she and her husband, Henny, had become so disillusioned with the level of service their hearing impaired son was receiving they had taken him out of school and were teaching him at home through Distance Education Centre of Victoria.

Mrs Sudmeyer said her 10-year-old son, Callum, had attended a mainstream south-west state school for four-and-a-half-years but was seriously affected by the loss of the south-west's last remaining visiting specialist teacher last year. "When the visiting teacher service stopped late last year there was nobody advocating for him and the projects which were up and running when she was there were let go," Mrs Sudmeyer said.

Despite learning the education department curriculum at home, Callum had lost the \$9000 in annual specialist funding support which he had received for attending a regular classroom, she said.

An Education, Employment and Training Department spokesman yesterday said the Warrnambool school district had a budget to provide a wide range of special needs support services.

"The visiting teacher service is a

resource that may be purchased by the school district to support students with sensory impairments in the districts' schools," he said.

He said that over recent years one teacher was shared between the Warrnambool district and the Portland/Hamilton districts.

"Services to hearing impaired students in the Warrnambool district are now provided at a similar level through a range of sources," he said. "These include support

through a newly appointed district special education consultant personnel from South West Access Deadlink and teleconferencing with the school for the deaf in Melbourne.

The district also provided funds to schools which applied for extra support for particular students and many hearing impaired students were also funded through the department's Disabilities and Impairments program, he said.

"The Warrnambool district regularly reviews the range of students with special needs in its schools, matching its priorities to best meet these needs," he said.

The public meeting would be held on October 17 at 7pm at Warrnambool's Archie Graham Centre.

Two representatives from the Victorian Society of Deaf Children and Education Department representatives were expected to attend.



Dearna Dart, 8, (left), Jenna Lee, 8, Ratea Lee, 4, and Nikita Dart, 4, and Trish Lee. They are concerned about the decline in vision and hearing services in schools. Picture: ANGELA MILNE. 01108

Picture: ANGELA MILNE

The Standard Tuesday October 9, 2001-5



Mr Greg Lee

President, South West

Hearing Support Group

37 Simpson St Warrnambool

3280 02/01/02

The Minister for Education,

The Honorable Ms Mary Delahunty

Dear Ms Delahunty

Our group would appreciate your response to a situation that is unacceptable to us. We refer to the Visiting Teacher position which failed to draw an application. This was not surprising given the extent of advertising that was used to attract applicants. One 30mm by 34mm advertisement in the Age on 8/12 and a one line advertisement in one edition of the Education Times. Additionally, as discussed extensively, a reasonably long tenure would be required to attract suitable applicants into a rural setting such as Warrnambool. But what was advertised? Eleven months!!

I have spoken to Peter Brain and he has informed me that even if a late application occurred (closing date 20/12) the position could not be filled. I gathered this was due to recruitment policy and because, as Mr Brain explained, the "network structure" had changed and this may cause a change in funding allocations. This we do find surprising! We want to know, Have we received a commitment to fill the VT position, or haven't we?

At the Regional Cabinet Meeting in Warrnambool we were overjoyed with your response to our submission. You spoke of formulating a recruitment strategy to ensure a qualified V T was sourced. What has gone wrong? Why have people within your department handled this situation in such an apathetic manner? Two negligible advertisements and nothing more! Surely some contact with the bodies that provide the education for the people we are attempting to source would have been appropriate. Surely it's not too late to rectify this debacle. We are requesting your immediate intervention to ensure our children receive the same support that is provided in other areas of the state. The appointment of a single V T will fall well short, but it will at least be a start..

Four members of our group completed a two day study tour of the Bendigo and Sheparton and were stunned at the disparity with regard to the levels of service between that area and ours. Whilst programs and services are in place in those areas, absolutely nothing exists, by comparison, in our area. Quite frankly, our children are being discriminated against. Whilst we have not received a documented response to our written submission as yet, it is the successful sourcing of a VT that commands our immediate attention. Our children deserve the best future we can give them and we desperately need your help.

Greg Lee

## Lee,Greg,DENNINGTON,Quality Assurance

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**From:** Lee,Greg,DENNINGTON,Quality Assurance  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 2 October 2001 14:01  
**To:** 'comcab@dpc.vic.gov.au'  
**Subject:** submission for chat with Mary Delahunty on 22/10/01

I wish to explain the significant disadvantage endured by the deaf and vision impaired children in the region encompassing Portland, Hamilton, Camperdown and Warrnambool.

1 In 1992 this area had four specialist visiting teachers servicing this area. By 1999 we were left with one. A sub committee from the all-schools group of principals downgraded this one last qualified person. With an impossible workload to manage, she resigned.

What is happening now, in a nutshell, is that whilst the Government is providing funding for these children, a great many schools are using this money ineffectively. Many parents in this area are quite distraught at the current situation.

A delegation from The Victorian College of the Deaf have offered to conduct a meeting on 17/10 in Warrnambool. On route they will stop in Geelong and speak with Trevor Fletcher. At this meeting we intend to invite all interested parties, including the principles involved in the whole process. Obviously many parents will be attending, and many of them have heart rendering stories to tell.

The minister needs to know just how the current system is failing our children. This is a problem that can be rectified with good management and understanding. I hope a brief interview can be organised

Regards, Greg Lee

P S Richard Morrow says hello!