

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES.

A SUBMISSION BY
THE GIPPSLAND DEAF EDUCATION ADVISORY
GROUP.

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We believe deafness should not be incorporated in the broad definition of DISABILITIES. It is a language acquisition issue and should be addressed as a group of people of a language and cultural minority, in a similar way to that of Koori programs. Deaf children would benefit far more if the assessment and funding arrangements for them was not part of the Disabilities and Impairments Program.

The degree of deafness should not be the main criteria for government funding, but the linguistic and educational needs of each child. Each child should not be assessed primarily on their audiogram or level of deafness. Deafness is a complex language issue. Deaf children should not, and in fact do not need to, struggle to acquire proficiency in their first language. Auslan is accessible to all deaf children, spoken English is not. Therefore, all deaf children have a right to be given the opportunity to develop Auslan as their first language and English (be it spoken or written or both) as their second language. A medical pathological view of deafness as the basis for assessing and funding, is a negative and limiting view. Amplification alone is not the answer to the educational needs of deaf children.

Early diagnosis combined with quality early intervention programs are CRUCIAL to the establishment of language be it oral, sign or both. Then deaf children can enter school with a language base equal to their hearing peers. Far greater emphasis and resources must be directed into early intervention programs if deaf children are to gain better educational outcomes.

All deaf children should have access to quality early intervention and educational programs regardless of where they live. Because deafness may have an isolating effect on a child's life, living in a rural or remote area can be further isolating and therefore educational facilities need to have the resources to remedy this. There should be a central hub/satellite educational facility in regions across the state. It should provide transport both to and from the facility, and provide an outreach service to all children who need it. The service should include training for other teachers and parents and be a centre for resources and professional development in that area. It would be preferable to have strong links to the Victorian College for the Deaf.

Differing funding arrangements for early intervention, pre-school and primary/secondary, mean that transition for the child is disjointed and

time is lost whilst the next organization or department tries to address the needs of the child.

Teacher training courses for Teachers of the Deaf are grossly inadequate in giving teachers the skills they need to support and teach deaf children. A Teacher of the Deaf **MUST** be fluent in Auslan **AND** have a good understanding of bilingual pedagogy and methodology.

There is a great need for more research and resources developed specifically for the education of deaf students, especially in the area of literacy.