

Geraldine Morgan  
RMB 2230  
SEATON 3858  
VICTORIA  
28/4/02

To the Senate Committee reviewing Deaf Education,

I am the parent of a four year old deaf boy. Although my exposure to the deaf culture may only extend three and a half years, I have learnt a great deal in this, what may appear to some, short time.

I believe all deaf children, no matter what degree of hearing loss, should be BILINGUAL.

That is the delivery of both AUSLAN and the ENGLISH language to deaf children with equal emphasis from time of diagnosis.

BILINGUALISM SHOULD BE THE RECOMMENDATION OF ALL PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED - ENT SPECIALISTS, AHS SERVICES, EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES etc.

Bilingualism ensures that a deaf child establishes a LANGUAGE. Whether that child later choses to predominantly use an aural or signing means of communication is not the issue. DEVELOPMENT of a language is paramount for the child's future. Not only academically, but also socially, to be part of society in full and not a dependant.

DEAFNESS IS NOT A DISABILITY, IT IS A LINGUISTIC ISSUE.

Sweden is a perfect example of bilingualism. They have had bilingualism legislated as part of the education of all deaf children for more than 20 years. Deaf children and adults learning capabilities are equal to their peers, provided the delivery is appropriate - AUSLAN and ENGLISH.

Amplification alone is not the answer. Amplification is often more satisfying to the parents than the child. A deaf child must concentrate very hard to use the residual hearing they have to convert the amplified noise - they still rely very heavily on visual cues, eg expression, lip reading, gesticulations to put the full picture together.

My son is four years old, very oral with beautiful speech however, I still want him to be bilingual. To achieve this, we travel to Melbourne 3 days per weeks - a 6 hour round trip from our home. Why? So that my son may reach his FULL linguistic, cognitive and social capabilities.

THE ANSWER to our current flaws in Deaf Education are:

- ADOPT SWEDEN'S MODEL FOR DEAF EDUCATION
- INCREASE FUNDING TO EARLY INTERVENTION FOR DEAF CHILDREN
- INCREASE TEACHER OF DEAF TRAINING NUMBERS - provide scholarships
- AUSLAN TO BE A L.O.T.E IN SCHOOLS - taught by interpreters with accredited AUSLAN standard, not by people who have done a very basic level 1-3 AUSLAN course.
- USE OF DEAF ADULTS IN SCHOOLS - NATIVE AUSLAN USERS CANNOT BE EQUALLED.
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IN VICTORIA for example:-

VICTORIAN COLLEGE FOR THE DEAF have education programs in place that are suitable for all deaf children.

This organisation should utilise their knowledge and skills to set up SATELLITE SCHOOLS throughout the state.

These should be INTEGRATED INTO PRESENT SCHOOLS WITH OUTREACH PROGRAMS FOR THOSE GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED.

PLEASE review deaf education from a parent's perspective, who can see bilingualism as a means of fulfilling any deaf child's dreams.

Yours Sincerely,

Geraldine Morgan.