



SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIA 2020 SUMMIT

**Communities and Families - strengthening communities, supporting families and social inclusion**

The Australian Federation of Deaf Societies (AFDS) as an organisation representing deaf service providers in Australia strongly supports the broad social inclusion policy for disadvantaged and disabled persons.

The Federal Government acknowledged Auslan as a “community language other than English” in 1987 and 1991. Regardless, the AFDS identifies that there is a significant lack in Federal Government funding and policy supporting the use of Auslan as an official community language. Auslan is not available as an alternative language to Deaf and hard of hearing persons at many life-important services, public and community events and some professional appointments. As such, Deaf and hard of hearing people are often without access to services and Australian cultural life.

The Federal Government currently provides subsidised interpreting services through the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service (NABS) and the Auslan For Employment (AFE) program.

However, there are many areas where interpreters can not be accessed due to lack of funding arrangements. These include public events, education by private RTO’s and community colleges, funeral services, private legal and financial appointments, and some civil court matters. In these cases organizations are often unable to provide interpreters without financial hardship. Here, the cost of the interpreting service prohibits Deaf people from accessing these events. In some cases not-for-profit service providers such as Deaf societies absorb the cost, however often do so despite the financial loss.

The current situation requires Deaf and hard of hearing people to pay to be able to equitably access public services. This significantly limits the social inclusion that Deaf and hard of hearing persons require. The AFDS would strongly support:

- a Federal Government subsidy and funding program, that would enable Auslan interpreters to be provided at public events, professional

interviews (legal and financial appointments) and at other necessary times (funerals, major public speeches);

- The widening of access to broadband for regional and remote communities, as Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services can be provided more effectively and enhance community inclusion.

The advantages of providing free interpreting services are vast. Deaf and hard of hearing people would no longer feel isolated with the general community and social inclusion policy would finally include Deaf and hard of hearing people.

The AFDS looks forward to Deaf and hard of hearing people being considered as part of the Federal Government's social inclusion policy, as the needs of the Deaf community have previously gone unjustifiably ignored.

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