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MEDIA RELEASE

Akermanis supports deaf children

AFL star Jason Akermanis will help launch a booklet aimed at families of newly diagnosed deaf and hearing impaired children on Tuesday 10 July 2007 at 11am at Deaf Children Australia on St Kilda Road.

Akermanis will speak about his personal experience of deafness and about the importance of breaking down barriers between the deaf and hearing community at the launch, which will also feature the Pearcedale Children's Signing Choir and parents of deaf children sharing their personal stories.

The booklet entitled *Where do we go from hear?* is a collection of real-life stories written by parents of children with hearing loss, who describe their personal experiences in both overcoming the initial shock and embracing the challenges of raising a deaf child.

The booklet was created by Joanna Fricot, mother of seven year old deaf girl, Estelle - in collaboration with Deaf Children Australia - to help families realise that they are not alone.

"I wanted to replace the 'showbag' full of daunting medical terminology that was given to me when Estelle was diagnosed. This is a book which families will connect with," says Joanna, who will be speaking about her experiences as the mother of a deaf child.

Brownlow Medallist Jason Akermanis, whose parents-in-law are profoundly deaf, is fluent in Australian Sign Language (Auslan) and a great supporter of the deaf community.

In Australia, 95% of deaf and hearing impaired children are born to hearing families, who have little or no experience of deafness. Many parents report struggling with issues such as connecting with other families with a deaf child and how to cope when their child complains of feeling isolated or being bullied due to communication barriers.

The CEO of Deaf Children Australia, Damian Lacey says: "Our vision at Deaf Children Australia is that deafness is no barrier. Raising a deaf or hearing impaired child can be a challenging experience and parents of deaf children have to deal with many important issues. This booklet will connect families in a unique and personal way."

Deaf Children Australia is a national not-for-profit organisation representing the needs of 16,000 deaf and hearing impaired children and their families across Australia and has been enriching their lives for over 140 years.

For information, support or referral, people can contact Deaf Children Australia's national helpline on 1800 645 956, or visit www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au.

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