

For Immediate Release – 20 June 2006

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Auslan coffee shops a sign of the times

Friends and families of deaf and hearing impaired children now have the opportunity to practise their signing skills over a latte at one of several coffee shops across Victoria.

Deaf Children Australia introduced the Auslan coffee shops so that families and friends of deaf and hearing impaired children could meet and learn to sign in a relaxed environment.

90% of deaf and hearing impaired children are born into families who have little or no experience of deafness. Given that the majority of profoundly deaf children grow up to use sign language and that most parents of deaf children have no prior knowledge of sign language, deaf children are prone to significant delays in developing language. It is therefore in the family's best interest that the parents learn to sign with their children.

For one hour each week, families and friends of deaf children are encouraged to fine-tune their Auslan skills with a deaf tutor at a coffee shop in their area. The service is free – all they pay for is the coffee. A basic understanding of the language is required.

Coffee shop mornings are currently operating in Airport West, Berwick, Glen Waverley, Ringwood and even one as far as Coffs Harbour. More are opening across Australia in the coming months.

Brian Bernal, Auslan Program Coordinator, at Deaf Children Australia says: "It has been a great turnout and many parents have commented how much it is benefiting their skills in Auslan. It is also a fabulous way of parents of deaf children to meet, share their experiences and approach the future with greater confidence."

Damian Lacey, CEO of *Deaf Children Australia* says: "Our vision at Deaf Children Australia is that deafness is no barrier. These coffee shops will help bridge the communication gap between hearing families and their deaf children."

*Deaf Children Australia* - formerly VSDC Services - has been providing information, advocacy, support services and educational resources to enrich the lives of deaf and hearing impaired children and young adults for over 140 years. *Deaf Children Australia* represents the needs of 16,000 deaf and hearing impaired children throughout Australia. As a not-for-profit organisation, their service is made possible with the support of volunteers, the community, businesses and government financial grants.

For more information on Deaf Children Australia, please call 1800 645 916 or log on to [www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au](http://www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au).

For more information about this press release or to request an interview, please call Julie Postance on 9539 5362 or [jpostance@deafchildren.org.au](mailto:jpostance@deafchildren.org.au).

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