

For Immediate Release – 2 November 2006

MEDIA RELEASE

Deaf Children Australia's urgent plea for support to build house for isolated deaf kids

Deaf Children Australia is asking for urgent support to help raise \$1 million to build a house for isolated deaf and hearing impaired children.

The challenge is many rural Victorian deaf and hearing impaired children are not getting the specialist support they need because no deaf services exist in their areas. Relocating to Melbourne is not financially viable for many families so deaf children are forced to attend local schools. As a result, their most crucial learning years are being severely damaged because of the lack of communication support, such as teachers of the deaf and interpreters.

The house, which will be erected in Gissing Street, Blackburn, will answer the prayers of four rural families whose children aged 3-6 will then be able to attend the deaf preschool, Aurora.

Deaf Children Australia is currently operating an accommodation programme to assist deaf children from country areas to attend schools appropriate for their needs. However, these children are being housed in expensive and temporary rental units until the house has been built.

Deaf three-year-old Hamish Rookes is one of the children currently assisted through the Deaf Children Australia accommodation programme. "The grief we experienced when we found out our little boy was deaf increased tenfold when we discovered that the only school to meet his needs – Aurora- was located in Melbourne, a six hour round trip from our country home. Relocating to Melbourne was simply not an option, so we would have sent Hamish to the local school, where there is no support for him.

"Deaf Children Australia threw us a lifeline by giving us a home in Melbourne close to Aurora deaf preschool. Now Hamish has the opportunity to do what most other kids take for granted – attend a school that meets his needs, and have friends he can communicate with. Because of them, we can approach Hamish's future with confidence, knowing that he has been given the best possible start in life."

Damian Lacey, CEO of Deaf Children Australia says: "Our vision at Deaf Children Australia is that deafness is no barrier. Your donation will give deaf and hearing impaired children the chance to access vital education services they desperately need and allow them to fulfil their true potential."

Deaf Children Australia - formerly VSDC Services - has been providing information, advocacy, support services and educational resources to enrich the lives of the 16,000 Australian deaf and hearing impaired children and young adults for 144 years. As a not-for-profit organisation, their service is made

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possible with the support of volunteers, the community, businesses and government grants.

To make a donation to help build a house for deaf children, please call 1300 365 196 or go to www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au