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MEDIA RELEASE



Increasing employment opportunities for deaf people

The Australian Government has announced an additional \$5 million in funding in the 2006-2007 Budget to provide over 1750 deaf employees access to an Auslan interpreter so that they may attend their induction training, occupational health and safety training and team meetings.

This funding will also allow 3500 of their co-workers to attend introductory deafness awareness training and Auslan courses.

Damian Lacey, CEO of *Deaf Children Australia* is delighted with the funding allocation: "The Government's commitment is a major breakthrough for deaf people in employment. It has created opportunities for employment satisfaction and removes barriers to gaining, maintaining and developing a career for profoundly deaf people.

"The Government's announcement is a major incentive to business to engage deaf employees. It also is a great opportunity for deaf employees who will now get a fairer go in the workplace and be able to develop in their careers with support without being reliant solely on the generosity of their employer to actually fund that," says Damian Lacey.

In the past, many employers have perceived to lack of access to interpreter services and training a barrier to employing a deaf person or retaining that person in ongoing employment. In particular, the funding will support small businesses who are the major employers of deaf people."

Over the last four months, a pilot program has developed an estimate of the actual cost to facilitate this program: "We are very pleased that the government have responded favourably to the information; it demonstrates the value of the small commitment of \$200,000 that was invested in the pilot," says Damian Lacey.

A partnership between *Deaf Children Australia* and *Deaf Services Queensland* specialises in employment services for deaf and hard of hearing people under the banner of **Sign On Employment**. Located in Melbourne, Toowoomba and Brisbane, these services provide around \$1.5 million worth of contracted services to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Deaf Children Australia 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 or to request an interview, please call Julie Postance at *Deaf Children Australia* on 9539 5362 or jpostance@deafchildren.org.au

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