



# Parents of Hearing Impaired Children, Victorian Federation Inc.

ABN 43056 859 827

## M E D I A R E L E A S E

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### **Families of deaf children express anger over withdrawal of transport to deaf facilities**

Families will be meeting on Sunday 10 September 2006 from 3 to 4.30pm at St Peters Eastern Hill Parish Hall, East Melbourne to express their anger over the State Government's withdrawal of transport to deaf facilities.

President of the Parents of Hearing Impaired Children, Victoria Federation, Emmanuel Karvelas, says

"The decision to withdraw transport services for deaf students to deaf facilities was made in a 2001 Review of School Bus Services commissioned by the then Minister for Education, Mary Delahunty. The Government provides excellent Deaf Facilities for deaf children located in 6 primary and 4 secondary mainstream schools in the Melbourne area. These allow deaf and hearing impaired children full access to a mainstream education with all the extra support they need to progress through their schooling. But withdrawal of transport has had a severe impact on the ability of many Victorian deaf children to access these facilities. This is imposing social and economic hardship on a growing number of families. Victoria is the only state where transport is not provided to deaf students attending deaf facilities. The Review was written with little consultation from families of deaf children. We are urging the State Government to reinstate the transport services for deaf students so that no more families have to suffer and no more children will have their future life choices restricted by inadequate education."

As a substitute for the withdrawn transport services, the Department of Education provides families with a 'Conveyance Allowance'. Working out to less than \$5 per day (maximum \$2,000/year), the allowance does little to resolve the problems arising from the policy change. Some families have transport costs of up to \$12,000 per year.

As a result of the policy change, many parents of deaf and hearing impaired children have been forced to give up jobs and forgo income to drive their deaf children hundreds of km a week to attend the closest deaf facility. Others now spend up to 2-4 hours in the car each day, travelling with babies or young children. Increased transport costs and the inability of one parent to work have caused financial hardship for many families. Young deaf children are catching up to three trams, trains and buses to get to deaf facilities. Many families have suffered moved house, disrupting siblings' education to move closer to deaf facilities. Others have removed deaf children from deaf facilities and placed them in local schools without the appropriate specialist support. The result is, deaf children are falling behind academically and socially.

Damian Lacey, CEO of Deaf Children Australia who is supporting the campaign says, "Deaf and hearing impaired children have every right, as hearing kids do, to access education that is best suited to their needs. Deafness should not be a barrier to any child. Our government has a moral obligation to do all it can to support children to achieve their full potential."

Helen Ziccone, parent of deaf son from Melton, was forced to give up a \$40,000 per annum job and drives her son 600km each week to and from school in St Albans. "This is an abuse of every child's right to an equitable education," she says.

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