

For Immediate Release – 10 December 2007

MEDIA RELEASE

Pop goes the language barrier for deaf theatre-lovers

Event: *'Pop Goes the Wiggles Show', an Auslan Interpreted Performance for members and friends of the deaf community*

Date: Wednesday 12 December 2007

Place: Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne

Cost: \$27 per person (plus booking fee)

Booking forms and flyer: <http://www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au/>

Who: Arts Access-Ease Ticket Service and Deaf Children Australia

Start Time: 1pm

Street:

597 St Kilda Road,
Melbourne, VIC 3004

Postal:

PO Box 6466,
St Kilda Road Central,
Melbourne, VIC 8008

Tel: + 61 3 9539 5300

Fax: +61 3 9525 2595

TTY: +61 3 9510 7143

Helpline: 1800 645 916

info@deafchildren.org.au

www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au

ACN 108 025 207 ABN 57 108 025 207

A rare Auslan interpreted (sign language) performance of the latest Wiggles show, will be performed for members and friends of the deaf community, courtesy of Arts Access and *Deaf Children Australia*.

"This interpreted stage performance will bring one of the most popular children's group to the deaf community together, whilst helping to break down the social barriers for deaf children," stated Damian Lacey, CEO at *Deaf Children Australia*.

Mr Lacey explained that there are not enough opportunities for the deaf and hearing impaired to attend Auslan interpreted performances like 'Pop goes the Wiggles Show', but that whilst they help strengthen deaf community networks, they also highlight the inadequacies of our government in providing appropriate support services for the deaf and hearing impaired.

Whilst this is a wonderful opportunity for members and friends of the deaf community to access entertainment which the hearing community expect and often take for granted, Australia is severely lagging behind in its support services for the deaf and hearing impaired. Almost 4 million people living in Australia (or 1 in 6) are deaf or have hearing loss and an anticipated trip to the theatre can turn-out to be an incredibly disappointing experience.

With only 12 captioning cinemas in our entire country and rare interpreted performances like this one, Australia falls short of supporting the growing demand in facilities and opportunities for the deaf and hearing impaired in comparison to the United Kingdom and the United States of America. With an aging population, these deficiencies are set to increase our nation once known as the 'lucky country', unless drastic improvements are made.

There is a severe skills shortage and availability of Auslan interpreters, who help to deliver performances to deaf and hard of hearing people. Interpreters are essential for providing basic support services and ensure quality of life. Just like any other cultural group in Australia, specific needs are essential in the provision of training, employment opportunities and access to their services for the deaf and hearing impaired in an integrated society.

One of the big issues that deaf people face is that they do not often get the opportunity to attend organised entertainment activities because most mainstream service providers do not offer communication support, such as Auslan interpreting or captioning.

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In October, due to the relentless support of the issues faced by deaf and the hearing impaired by Democrats Senator Natasha Stott-Despoja, the Communications Minister, Helen Coonan, announced a long overdue Government inquiry into access to electronic media for the deaf and hearing impaired.

The inquiry will focus on the current levels of captioning in Australia; a comparison with captioning levels overseas; and an investigation of appropriate technology and its costs, among other issues. The government is due to deliver its findings by the end of April 2008, which can't come soon enough for the growing numbers of deaf and hearing impaired Australians.

Deaf Community members were quick to applaud Stott-Despoja's perseverance on the issue on a deaf organisation's online discussion; however some fear the government will be slow to act on the findings and phasing-in the recommendations. Their fears are that by the time government responds, hand held voice recognition software (which automatically generates captions to the palm of the hand) will be widely in use, making increased captioning redundant.

Committed to improving access the arts for deaf children and in line with their vision that 'deafness is no barrier', *Deaf Children Australia* support deaf and hearing impaired children to access events and entertainment, whilst helping to broaden their friendship networks with the assistance of deaf organisations, and Arts organisations.

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. It 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.

Families interested in more information:

Helpful websites:

www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au
<http://www.theatrecaptioning.com.au/>

For ticketing information email:

ease@artsaccess.com.au



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For more information on Deaf Children Australia, please call 1800 645 916 or log on to www.deafchildreinaustralia.org.au. For more information about this press release please call Julie Postance on 9539 5362 or jpostance@deafchildren.org.au.